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Social Work Students’ Perceptions of Gender Based Violence and their Perceived Preparedness for Practice

by

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Abstract

Gender based violence is a critical social issue, not only in South Africa, but in the rest of the world. What social workers think, know and do not know about gender based violence will impact on how they deal with this social issue. This dissertation presents findings from research on the perceptions of student social workers regarding gender based violence. There is scant research on whether social workers are adequately prepared to intervene in gender based violence and how they perceive the issue. This research presents the findings of interviews and a focus group that were conducted with student social workers who are in the final year of their studies. The research focused on two main questions: the perceptions of social work students of gender based violence and how they would intervene with victims and perpetrators. It became evident from the results of this study that student social workers know about gender based violence and to some extend understand its complexities. However, the participants felt less prepared to intervene on gender based violence especially within the macro level of social work practice.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Gender based violence is amongst one of the social issues identified as a global health and developmental problem (World Conference on Women & United Nations, 1996). Gender based violence is defined as any form of violence, such as physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse or economic abuse, deprivation of liberties and harm or suffering inflicted on another person due to their gender, whether occurring in public or in private life and in the context of a relationship or not (UN, 2015; KPMG, 2015). In South Africa the statistics of gender based violence are amongst the highest in the world, especially for a country that is not at war, it has been reported that one in every three women is likely to be raped in her lifetime in South Africa (Moffett, 2006). A national study on female homicide conducted in South Africa has revealed that a woman is killed every eight hours by her intimate partner (Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, Lombard & Jewkes, 2013). These statistics highlight the seriousness of gender based violence and the need for robust attention by social service professionals so that they can address this issue. Social workers in particular are endorsed as ‘frontline providers’ in delivering supportive, therapeutic and preventative services to address violence against women and girls, hence their understanding and preparedness to deal appropriately with this issue is critical (National Association of Social Workers, 2002).

The ability of social workers to detect and intervene in addressing gender based violence is critical given the prevalence of this problem in South Africa. It is important to determine what student social workers who are about to graduate and practice as social workers, understand about the complexity of gender based violence and whether they feel competent to intervene in this issue. This knowledge will enable institutions to plan for best practice training that can produce competent social workers who are able to intervene appropriately and confidently in gender based violence. This dissertation contributes to the knowledge base of social work education, and particularly, to gender based violence. This study also aims to increase awareness of how student social workers perceive gender based violence and whether they consider themselves prepared to intervene in the issue.
1.2. Motivation for the study

Social workers are trained to be generalist workers in the human services sector. This means that a social worker, upon qualifying, is not limited to any particular field within social services. The profession of social work is defined by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels" (IFSW, 2014, p.1). According to this definition it means that a social worker can work with any environment such as a hospital, school, governmental or non-governmental sector. A social worker can also work with children, the elderly, immigrants, prisoners, substance abusers, victims and perpetrators, including those of gender based violence. However, in a study on the South African welfare academic agenda Schmid (2014) indicates that new social work graduates were less-equipped to handle practice demands in resource-poor and transforming (post-apartheid) environments. This is an indication that although social workers are trained to intervene in any environment, there can be an element of less preparation to handle specific social issues adequately with a generalist training.

The South African government, notably the Department of Social Development, has launched an initiative to train more social workers through a bursary scheme. This initiative is aimed at addressing the need of social workers to intervene in social issues that are affecting South Africa, gender based violence being one of them (Department of Social Development, 2010). Thanks to this initiative, many more social workers than before are being trained and enter the workforce in the governmental, non-governmental and private sector where they are more likely to come across cases of gender based violence.

Cases of gender based violence are more complicated due to their co-occurrence with other pressing social issues in South Africa such as HIV/AIDS and poverty (Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2003). The high rates of crimes such as murder, rape and robbery in South Africa further complicates the issue of gender based violence, since most of these crimes also co-occur with gender based violence (Gevers, Jama-Shai & Sikweyiya, 2013). In order to intervene in social issues, deal with gender based violence
and problems that co-occur with it in South Africa, the services of social workers are important.

The motivation for this study is to contribute information that can be used to prepare social workers in addressing gender based violence. The findings from the research can be used by educational institutions when preparing curriculum to equip students with the knowledge and skills of intervening in gender based violence. Newly-qualified social workers are more often than not expected to perform the full duties of a social worker, however, due to the scarcity of social workers in the field, this sometimes happens without or inadequate supervision (Engelbrecht, 2013). This is due to a “lack of adequate training, structural support and unmanageable workloads of supervisors” (Engelbrecht, 2013, p. 457). With supervision being a challenge, a social worker may be confronted with seeing a victim or perpetrator of gender based violence without the immediate support of a supervisor, due to the high levels of gender based violence in South Africa. In Gauteng alone, a study of gender based violence indicators by Gender Links and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) has revealed that over half of the women who participated in the research have experienced gender based violence in their lives (Machisa, Jewkes, Lowe Morna & Rama, 2011). The same study was conducted in three other provinces in South Africa, namely, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape. The results of these studies were consolidated and it has been found that South Africans totalling more than three quarters, have been perpetrators of gender based violence (Gender Links, 2011). Given the prevalence of gender based violence in South Africa, new social workers are highly likely to be confronted with cases of gender based violence. The problem is not only facing South Africa. An international study has revealed that cases of gender based violence are also reported to social workers in conjunction with other social issues such as poverty, substance abuse, child abuse and unemployment (Danis, 2003). Given the above context of gender based violence and intervention by social workers, this study aims not only to find out what newly-qualified social workers know about gender based violence, but also how they perceive their ability to go out into the field and address gender based violence when confronted with it, as new social workers.

1.3. **Research statement and research questions**

According to Bak (2004), a research problem must explicitly capture the crucial focus of the study and this should be stated as one problem in the form of a sentence or a question. The research question for this study is:
What are social work students’ perceptions of gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for practice?

The focus of the study is specifically on student social workers who are exiting the programme to take employment in the following year, depending on the completion of their studies. In order to answer the above research question, the following are some of the sub-questions that were asked of the participants.

- What do student social workers know and understand about gender based violence?
- What do student social workers think are the causes of gender based violence?
- How do student social workers feel about practicing in the area of gender based violence with both victims and perpetrators?

1.4. Goals and objectives of the study

The goal of this study is to explore the perceptions of social work students regarding gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for intervention. In order to achieve this goal, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore what student social workers know and understand about gender based violence;
2. Ascertain what student social workers think are the causes of gender based violence and what implications this may have on their practice; and
3. Explore student social workers’ perceived preparedness for working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

1.5. Preliminary literature review

The prevalence of gender based violence in South Africa is five times higher than the global rate (Abrahams et al., 2013). Previous researchers (Jewkes, et al. 2003; Johnson, Frattaroli, Campbell, Wright, Pearson-Fields & Cheng, 2005) have indicated that social norms which tolerate and justify the abuse and oppression of women are some of the risk factors that contribute to the high prevalence rates of gender based violence in South Africa. Other risk factors include traditional and patriarchal norms that support gender inequality, lack of empowerment of women, limited education and the lack of
punishment of the violent behaviour of perpetrators (Jewkes et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2005). These risk factors and the myriad social issues that co-occur together with gender based violence are some of the issues that social workers need to deal with in their practice.

There is a dearth of information in the literature on whether social work students understand the complexity of gender based violence and whether they feel adequately prepared to intervene in this issue in order to develop appropriate and gender-sensitive interventions (Heffernan, Blythe & Nicolson, 2012). In previous research, social workers have reported to having little preparation on handling cases of gender based violence (Danis & Lockhart, 2003). In South Africa, the Department of Social Development has produced guidelines on how social workers can use the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 to respond to gender based violence (Sipamla, 2012). However, these guidelines do not indicate how the various social work methods should be utilised to address the issue of gender based violence; they only addresses the role of the Department of Social Development in providing social services to victims of domestic violence. There is therefore a gap in policy with regards to the role social workers in the various sectors need to play in addressing this issue.

There are many theories that can be used on gender based violence. Two of the most commonly used approaches are the Feminist and the Family violence perspectives (Rasool, 2012a). Whilst both of these are important, in this study, focus is placed on a theory that is most relevant to contextualising social work knowledge, namely, the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Student social workers are familiar with the levels of social ecology which are similar to the levels that social workers practice in, notably, the micro (individual), meso (situational) and macro (the community and sociocultural) level.

Ecological theory explains gender based violence as a multifaceted phenomenon occurring in the interplay of personal, situational and sociocultural factors (Heise, 1998; Saffitz, 2010). Heise’s (1998) research is one of the few studies that apply the ecological model to gender based violence as she identifies factors which contribute to violence at each level of the social ecology. Another study by Dawes, Kafaar, de Sas Kropiwnicki, Pather and Richter (2004) discusses the risk factors that increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence; however, these are treated as causal factors to the parental use of corporal punishment rather than as a focus on gender based violence. Heise (1998)’s
explanation of how the ecological approach conceptualises gender based violence as a multifaceted phenomenon is briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

At the individual level of the ecological model, some of the pertinent factors identified include personal history and biological factors that influence how individuals perceive gender based violence (Heise, 1998). Other factors at the individual level include being a victim of child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, substance abuse and a history of behaving aggressively, all of which also influences perceptions of gender based violence (Saffitz, 2010). At the situational level, personal relationships such as family, friends and peers may influence the risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence (Heise, 1998). Hawkins (2007) confirms that social relationships are important and suggests that having violent friends may influence whether a person engages in violent acts and what that individual may think of gender based violence. In the community context, Heise (1998) argues that the way people think and behave towards gender based violence in schools, churches and workplaces could influence how people deal with their personal experiences of gender based violence. Finally, societal factors can also influence whether gender based violence is encouraged or inhibited, since people’s perceptions are influenced by the societal norms around them (Saffitz, 2010). According to Heise (1998), the cultural norms that support male dominance over women constitute critical societal factors. This theory provides a useful tool for understanding both the views of social work students and their intervention strategies at the various levels in the ecological model.

1.6. **Overview of research methodology**

An exploratory, qualitative approach is utilised in this study. Qualitative research was selected since it provides more in-depth information and can elicit a greater understanding of a phenomenon (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011). If compared to a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach enables the researcher to provide more detailed findings of the study subject. Since student social workers have some knowledge of this issue, they are likely to provide ‘socially desirable’ responses in a questionnaire. Hence, interviews have been used to allow the researcher to explore the full range of the students’ knowledge of gender based violence and their capacity to apply this in a meaningful way to create change through the various social work approaches of intervention.
Population and sample: The population selected for this study consists of fourth year social work students at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) who are currently completing their internship placements and are in the final year of their social work studies. Ten students who were purposively selected, participated in the individual interviews and four participated in the focus group.

Data collection and instrument: Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were used as data collection methods. The data collection instrument used was semi-structured interviews. De Vos et al. (2011) indicates that semi-structured interviews are suitable when the research question is controversial or personal, which is the case in this context.

To explore students’ ability to intervene in gender based violence, a focus group was set up with the participants to look at how they would develop a programme to deal with this issue at the various levels of the ecological framework. In addition, the focus group was used to verify responses given in the interviews in the form of member checking. Member checks are an important technique that a researcher can use to confirm credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis method was used in this study. Grbich (2013) outlines three main processes for the thematic analysis of qualitative data including segmentation, categorising and relinking the aspects of the data before the final interpretation. In addition, Tesch’s (as cited in Creswell, 2014) eight steps of data coding were utilised. The data analyses process, together with a detailed methodology section, is discussed more in detail in Chapter 3.

Ethical Considerations: According to De Vos et l. (2011) research should consider ethics both in responsibility towards the participants and responsibility towards the discipline of science under which the research is conducted. This study complies with research ethical guidelines by ensuring that several processes were adhered to, namely:

- Informed consent was obtained from the participants;
- Participation in the research was voluntary;
- Participants were informed that the recordings would be stored in a safe place;
- Pseudonyms were used instead of the participants’ real names;
- Since gender based violence is a sensitive issue, the researcher used empathy, respect and social work probing skills when conducting the interviews; and
- The research was conducted under supervision and was not commenced until ethical clearance was granted from the University of Johannesburg.
Content and outline of chapters: The dissertation is structured into five chapters which are outlined below:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction: this chapter provides an overview of the dissertation. It discusses the purpose of the study and its objectives.
- Chapter 2 – Literature review: this chapter presents a review of previous studies on gender based violence, it describes the research topic and discusses the theoretical framework chosen to guide the study.
- Chapter 3 – Methodology: In this chapter, the research design and a description of the data collection methods that were used for the research are discussed and the data analysis process is explained.
- Chapter 4 – Results and discussion: This chapter focuses on presenting and discussing the findings of the study.
- Chapter 5 – Conclusion and recommendations: This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations on the perceptions of student social workers regarding gender based violence and their preparedness for practice.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has described the research problem, the motivation for the study, the goals and objectives, provided a preliminary literature review as well as an overview of the chapters in this dissertation. An introduction to the study as a whole was presented, providing a guideline on what to expect from the chapters to follow. This chapter has emphasised the importance of research on gender based violence due to it being a problem in South Africa. What student social workers know and don’t know and whether they feel prepared for intervention is an important aspect to be considered by educational institutions. The following chapter conceptualises and positions the study in terms of previous and current literature on the topic and outlines the theoretical framework adopted for the research.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The literature review and the theoretical framework of the study are discussed in this chapter. This chapter provides an orientation on gender based violence by taking into account the work of other authors on the topic as well as the gaps in previous research. This chapter also summarises local and international research on the understanding of and intervention by social workers in the area of gender based violence. A clear definition of gender based violence as well as its forms will be discussed in this chapter.

The ecological theory is chosen as the theoretical framework for this study, because it provides the framework to consider gender based violence within the three levels of social work practice. There are other theoretical frameworks relevant in understanding gender based violence, such as the feminist theory and the family violence perspective, however, the ecological theory has been adopted as it is the most appropriate framework in the context of understanding social work practice which is practiced on all three levels. It also allows one to account for the Feminist perspective within the analysis. The ecological framework will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter, as well as the risk factors of gender based violence that emerge at the various ecological levels.

2.2. Towards defining gender based violence

Gender based violence is a complex and multifaceted issue and there are numerous definitions used to refer to this phenomenon. The United Nations (UN) has played a prominent role in providing an internationally recognised definition after it adopted a declaration on the elimination of violence against women. The declaration defines such violence as “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN, 2015, para 2). The UN is an international renowned organisation involved in combating gender based violence. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is similarly an international organisation which aims at building a better, healthier future for people all over the world, including addressing gender based violence as a health issue affecting women and children (WHO, 2016). The WHO has adopted the same definition of gender based violence as violence against women.
In South Africa, a recent study on costing gender based violence was conducted by Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) referring to gender based violence as “violence that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender and as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender and the unequal power relationships between the two genders” (KPMG, 2015, p. 7). The above definition is broad and inclusive of gender on the occurrence of gender based violence, however it excludes the contexts where gender based violence can occur.

Other governmental and non-governmental organisations often refer to gender based violence interchangeably with violence against women and domestic violence, without giving a clear definition of the phenomenon. In order to reach a non-gender and context-biased definition of gender based violence, this study adopts the internationally recognised definition of violence against women by the UN (2015), but excludes the prescribed gender of victims by including the KMPG (2015) considerations that gender based violence can be perpetrated against either males or females.

In this study, gender based violence is referred to as any form of violence, be it physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse or economic abuse. It can also take the form of the deprivation of liberties and harm or suffering inflicted on another person due to their gender, whether occurring in public or in private life, and in the context of a relationship or not (UN, 2015; KPMG, 2015). Defining gender based violence in this way eliminates the exclusion of the less common forms of gender based violence such as female genital mutilation, the rape of men and violence between homosexual couples, amongst others. This definition also recognises that a person of any gender or sexual orientation can be either a victim or a perpetrator of gender based violence.

### 2.3. Forms of gender based violence

Following the definition of gender based violence, it is also important to discuss and categorise the different forms of gender based violence that can take place. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, produced a report which declared that gender based violence can take many forms and is likely to take place within the household, institutions and the state (UN, 1996). There are thus various forms of gender based violence, however, for the purposes of this study, focus is given to the forms that are most common in South Africa and are recognised by the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 116 of 1998.
2.3.1. Domestic violence

Within the context of South Africa, the DVA defines domestic violence as “physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, entry into the complainant’s residence without consent where the parties do not share the same residence, or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant” (Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, p. 2). Domestic violence can take the form of a single event of violent behaviour from a perpetrator directed at a victim or it can be a series or combination of events that take place (DVA 1998; Vetten, 2014). Domestic violence is therefore a broad term that is used to encompass violence within the family, intimate partner violence, child and elder abuse and sibling abuse (Vetten, 2014).

The Act specifies that domestic violence is that which takes place within the household, and is therefore referred to as being ‘domestic’. Domestic violence is often interchangeably used with gender based violence, especially in South Africa. This may be influenced by the DVA which covers most forms of gender based violence and the fact that there is no specific legislature for gender based violence, hence the interchangeable use of these two terms. In this study, however, these concepts are used separately and not interchangeably, with domestic violence referred to as a specific form of gender based violence.

Intimate partner violence is also a common form of domestic violence, The Centre for Disease Control (CDC), an international organisation, has defined Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as any form of physical, sexual or psychological harm suffered by a person in a partnered relationship inflicted by their current or former partner in a heterosexual or same sex couple (CDC, 2015a). What the definition excludes is other forms of relationships outside the formal partnership (couple), for example, regular sexual partners or people in extramarital relationships may also be prone to intimate partner violence. A definition by Lau (2009) simply refers to IPV as violence that takes place between people in an intimate relationship. This definition is not restricted to the type of intimate relationship that the individuals who are either victims or perpetrators find themselves in, however this study recognises all forms of intimate relationships, whether formal or informal.
2.3.2. Physical violence

Physical violence is a form of gender based violence that may include “spitting, scratching, biting, grabbing, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, throwing, twisting, slapping (with open or closed hands), punching, choking, burning and/or the use of weapons (e.g. household objects, knives, guns) against the survivor” (Ganley, 1998, p. 34). Irrespective of whether or not the physical violence resulted in physical injuries, it is still considered as physical violence according to the DVA. It suffices that the violence endangered the physical health of the victim.

Physical violence is the most common form of gender based violence, or rather, the most reported form of gender based violence according to the KPMG (2015) costing report. Physical violence may be considered the most common since it also co-occurs with other forms of gender based violence as reported in international studies and in South Africa. In an international gender based violence costing study, it was reported that women experience multiple forms of gender based violence and physical violence constitutes part of that violence (Duvvury, Carney & Huu Minh, 2012). However, physical violence is more often reported since it is tangible and the scars left provide proof of the gender based violence.

2.3.3. Economic abuse

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) in the United States (US) has defined economic abuse as the type of abuse whereby the perpetrator controls the victim’s finances or stops them from working or being financially independent in order to control the victim (NCADV, 2015). Furthermore, perpetrators of economic abuse often control victims by restricting their access to other family resources such as time, transportation, food, clothing, shelter and money (Ganley, 1998). This form of gender based violence also includes the “unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property in which the complainant has an interest” (Domestic Violence Act 116, of 1998, p.3). By employing such means, the perpetrator is able to gain full control of the victim and the victim consequently experiences a loss of independence.

The NCADV (2015) reports that victims of economic abuse often feel trapped in relationships where they are economically abused as they do not feel economically empowered to leave the relationship. As a result, victims of economic abuse, especially women with children, are more likely to remain in such a relationship. Rasool (2015)
indicates that women who are economically vulnerable often are forced to stay in abusive relationships due to the best interests of the child, since they cannot support children independently and abusers often withdraw financial support when they leave. Economic abuse is a multifaceted form of gender based violence – it is a form of abuse in its own right but can also be used as a weapon to retain victims in abusive relationships.

2.3.4. Sexual violence

Since the early 70s, sexual violence has been considered a social issue, and not just one that affects the victim and their family (Levine, 2015). However, prior to the feminist movement highlighting this issue, sexual violence was considered a personal issue and this still remains the case in many countries due to the nature of the violence and the stigma that surrounds violence of a sexual nature. Sexual violence does not only occur between two people in a private space; a person can be sexually violated by several people, referred to as gang rape and it can also occur in or outside an intimate relationship (Ganley, 1998).

Sexual violence is defined as any sexual act that is committed against a person’s will or freely given consent (CDC, 2015b). The South African Sexual Offences and Related Matters amendment Act 32 of 2007 refers to sexual violence as sexual assault and defines it as “A person (‘A’) who unlawfully and intentionally sexually violates a complainant (‘B’), without the consent of B” (p.8). Considering the two local and international definitions, it is clear that sexual violence is very broad and occurs without the freely given consent of the victim (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act, 2007).

The CDC (2015b) further categories types of sexual violence as forced sexual penetration, drugs-facilitated sexual penetration, a victim being forced to penetrate the perpetrator or someone else, a victim being intimidated or pressured to penetrate the perpetrator or someone else and unwanted sexual contact. These categories identified by the CDC are also recognised by the South African Sexual Offences Act.

2.3.5. Emotional abuse

There is scant research on emotional abuse as a form of gender based violence and few recent publications exist on this type of abuse as an independent phenomenon, but it is often discussed in relation to other types of gender based violence. The concept of
emotional abuse is often interchangeably used with psychological abuse and is defined by Chang (as cited in Bennett, Goodman & Dutton, 2000) as “any nonphysical behaviour that controls through the use of fear, humiliation and verbal assault” (p. 1192). Emotional abuse is distinct from other forms of abuse due to its non-physical nature. Being violated and made to suffer in non-physical ways, yet in ways which affect one psychologically, are offered as an explanation of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse is also likened to emotional control that consists of a wide variety of tormenting, degrading and humiliating behaviour, including repeated verbal attacks against the victim’s self-worth as an individual or role as a parent, family member, friend, co-worker or community member (Ganley, 1998). Emotional blackmail can also be considered as a form of emotional abuse. The DVA recognises the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy that may cause an invasion of the victim’s privacy, security and integrity as a form of emotional abuse. Because emotional abuse cannot be seen by the naked eye, it is quite common that a practitioner assisting a client for other issues may fail to detect emotional abuse.

It is therefore important that social workers screen clients for all forms of abuse since clients may not necessarily identify these behaviours as abusive, but rather construct them as normal (Rasool, 2015). The forms of gender based violence discussed above, are defined in the context of South Africa, where most of the research participants will be working as social workers once they complete their studies.

2.4. The context and overview of gender based violence in South Africa

It is well-known that gender based violence in South Africa is one of the highest in the world (Abrahams et al. 2013; Jewkes, 2002; Moffett, 2006). The findings of a study by Gender Links (2012) has supported that women are more likely to be victims of gender based violence in South Africa, while men are the main perpetrators. The study was conducted in four provinces (Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape and Kwazulu Natal). The women who participated in that study reported to have been victims of gender based violence and men were the perpetrators and there are also studies in which men report their own perpetration of gender based violence (Gender Links, 2012; Abrahams, et al. (2013). On the other hand, children are also at most risk of witnessing gender based violence within their households as it was reflected in a South African study by Burton
(2006). It is reported that children are more likely to be victims of gender based violence due to their vulnerability (Burton, 2006). Both women and children are amongst populations at risk of gender based violence and they are the groups that social workers work with. It is likely that student social workers, who are going to practice in South Africa will come across women and children who are victims of gender based violence, and possibly men.

Although still ranking highest, it is likely that the rate of gender based violence can still be higher than anticipated in South Africa. This is confirmed by other researchers (Burton 2006; Vetten, Jewkes, Sigsworth, Christofides, Loots and Dunseith 2008) who indicate that gender based violence is underreported in South Africa. The reporting of gender based violence cases in South Africa is affected by weak administrative practices in the justice system and in some cases, victims may decide that reporting the case in not in their best interest (Vetten et al, 2008). All the factors that make victims not to report cases of gender based violence can have an impact on the reported statistics of gender based violence in South Africa.

Sexual violence has been reported as the most common form of gender based violence in South Africa (Moffett, 2006). This finding correlates with the report that women and children are the greatest victims of gender based violence, since they are more vulnerable to sexual violence. There are other forms of gender based violence that do occur in South Africa and are recognised by the DVA, these are discussed in detail on page 11 ( 2.3 Forms of gender based violence).

Given the high rates of gender based violence in South Africa, there are legislations that are enacted to prosecute various forms of gender based violence. Mpani and Nsibandbe (2015) indicates that South Africa's laws and policies on gender based violence are amongst the most progressive in the world but the challenge lies in the implementation. The challenge in implementing these policies lies in poor administration (Vetten et al, 2008). Mpani and Nsibandbe (2015) also assert that South Africa’s legislative framework is aligned to the international conventions and the country is a signatory to most of the conventions. Some of the legislatures that are implemented in South Africa include “The Domestic Violence Act No 116 of 1998 (DVA) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters Act No 32 of 2007 (SOA)) are two prominent laws relating to the Violence against women. While the National Gender Policy Framework, the Employment Equity Act (EEA), Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair
Discrimination Act (PEPUDA), concern gender equality” (Mpani & Nsibande, 2015, p. 31). The implementation of these legislations is central to the success in addressing gender based violence in South Africa. It is important for social workers to be aware of the legislative framework regarding gender based violence, so as to assist, advice and refer clients appropriately during intervention.

2.5. An integrated ecological framework for understanding gender based violence

There are various theoretical explanations that can be used to understand gender based violence, ranging from the individual to the contextual (Rasool, 2012a). Whilst most of these are important, this study focuses on a theory that is most relevant to contextualising social work knowledge and practice, which is the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The approach used to understand gender based violence that is adopted in this study is the integrated ecological framework which was first used by Heise (1998) to understand gender based violence within various contexts. Heise (1998) describes the ecological framework as an integrated and multifaceted way of understanding gender based violence, as it interplays within the levels of the social ecology. The ecological framework is viewed by organisations such as WHO (2015) as a holistic approach to addressing and understanding gender based violence.

The ecological framework has been in many cases used to conceptualise gender based violence risk factors such as social behaviour and social issues. According to Bott, Morrison and Ellsberg (2005), the ecological framework assists in exploring risk factors from the individual to the community level and how they relate to each other and ultimately influence individuals’ vulnerability to gender based violence. Practitioners need to understand what puts certain people more at risk of gender based violence at the various levels in order to understand its multi-faceted causes and plan interventions accordingly. Jewkes (2002) believes that studying causes of gender based violence is much more complex because they are the product of a social context. Thus to understand the causes of gender based violence, various social contexts need to be investigated. The ecological framework is therefore particularly well-suited to study and conceptualise the causes of gender based violence in various social contexts, since it covers all levels of society.

It is important to consider how the risk factors of gender based violence are interconnected at the various levels of the social ecology. The various levels in the
ecological framework include the individual, relationship, community and societal levels that may increase the risk of gender based violence occurring. The identified factors are drawn from the work of various authors including Heise (1998), Bott et al. (2005) and Jewkes (2002) and are represented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Risk factors of gender based violence according to the ecological framework, adapted from Heise (1998), Bott et al. (2005) and Jewkes (2002).

The structural representation of the ecological framework occurs at the same levels where social work interventions are implemented. Social work practice occurs in the micro, meso and macro practice, with micro representing the intervention at the individual level, meso representing intervention at the situational level and macro representing the
community and sociocultural levels (Keeling and Van Wormer, 2012). According to Cho, Hong, and Logan (2012) the ecological framework is useful in social work since it is based on evidence that one factor cannot be held responsible for putting an individual at risk of either being a victim or perpetrator of gender based violence. Hence the framework can be used by social workers to work with gender based violence clients holistically.

In order to maintain consistency and while at the same time upholding the essence of Heise’s (1998) integrated ecological framework, the framework is conceptualised according to the three levels of social work practice and in brackets, indicates what level of the ecology the different levels represent.

2.5.1. Micro (individual factors)

There are various risk factors associated with gender based violence at the micro level of the social ecology. These factors apply to both the victims and the perpetrators and are linked notably to an individual’s childhood. Heise (1998) reports that experiencing gender based violence as a child is likely to cause women to become victims of such violence from their male partners. This finding stems from research conducted on female victims of gender based violence by Hotaling and Sugarman (1990). Similarly, witnessing gender based violence as a child can lead to becoming a perpetrator. Various studies have identified a significant correlation between men who experienced their fathers abusing their mothers who later in their adult lives become perpetrators of such violence (Heise, 1998; Johnson, 1995). Jewkes (2002) also reports that men who were themselves victims of child abuse, including physical and sexual abuse, are also likely to abuse their partners. According to Bott et al (2005) personality disorders also places people at risk of being perpetrators of gender based violence. Another risk factor that plays a role in becoming a victim or perpetrator of gender based violence has been identified as growing up with a rejecting father or having no father (Heise, 1998). These studies have identified the correlation between how an individual was raised and their susceptibility to either being a victim or a perpetrator of gender based violence within the micro level. It cannot, however, be confirmed that every individual who is either a victim or perpetrator of gender based violence has been accustomed to these risk factors. It also indicates that a thorough assessment by a social worker is necessary to identify these risk factors at the individual level.
2.5.2. **Meso (situational and exo-system factors)**

Meso level factors are also referred to as situational factors. According to Bott et al. (2005) interactions that occur at the situational level involve a person directly interacting with others and the meanings associated with those interactions. This level has also been recognised as the most prominent site and context for gender based violence episodes (Heise, 1998). Generally, gender based violence occurs as a result of interaction between genders. The meso level is the common place where people are able to interact with each other and the common site where gender based violence is likely to occur, as illustrated by Heise (1998). There is a variety of situational and exo-system factors that have been associated with the risk of perpetrating or being a victim of gender based violence.

Most of the factors that perpetuate gender based violence are associated with families that are structured according to gender norms (Jewkes, 2002). This claim is also supported by Johnson’s (1995) research on battered women which suggested that most victims of gender based violence are terrorised by systematic male violence. Levinson (as cited in Heise, 1998) reports that families which are mostly headed by males are likely to be more at risk of gender based violence as compared to non-patriarchal families. It is a common African cultural practice that a man is the head of the household, a practice which is likely to promote patriarchy. Sultana (2011) indicates that in patriarchal homes girl children also suffer patriarchy as they are found to be discriminated against on issues of food distribution and given the burden of housework. It is therefore highly likely that social workers practicing in South Africa may be confronted with working with families that embrace patriarchal values.

2.5.3. **Macro (societal and macro system factors)**

Macro system factors refer to those factors which can be found within the broader context of society. Such factors operate through their influence from higher structures and permeate down through to the lower structures of the social ecology (Heise, 1998). The influence can also exist from the lower structures of the social ecology to the macro level. This is evident from an example by Heise that “male supremacy as a macro level factor would likely influence the organisation of power in community institutions as well as the distribution of decision-making authority in intimate relationships” (Heise, 1998 p. 277).

Male supremacy is just one example of many which illustrates the relationship between systems in the ecology when it comes to understanding gender based violence.
Feminist approaches have looked at how patriarchy promotes male dominance over larger structures of society, thereby promoting gender based violence (Johnson, 1995). Larger structures of society which are influenced by patriarchy usually dictate the distribution of power in organisations, male dominance in decision making positions and prescribed gender roles (Heise, 1998). This is evident in society where more men are in positions of power when compared to women. The recent South African employment equity report has revealed that males still dominate in higher positions even though South Africa has gender progressive policies (Department of Labour, 2015). This report further states that women continue to hold lower positions and only occupy 24% of senior management roles (Department of labour, 2015). Ending gender based violence includes the need for transformation in gender roles at macro level, as well as a focus on economic empowerment. If social workers are supposed to be agents for change in ending gender based violence, they need to understand how macro systems influence gender roles in society as a whole.

Cultural norms have also been identified as promoting gender based violence at the macro level (Heise, 1998). Societies with rigid cultural ethos have been reported as experiencing more prevalent cases of gender based violence (Jewkes, 2002). Since transformation and modernisation, many societies were able to promote the empowerment of women, however, in those cultures where gender stereotypes are still firmly supported, gender based violence is likely to occur (Gevers et al., 2013). Hence, some cultural practices still remain a risk factor for gender based violence.

An issue of major concern in South Africa is the improper policing of cases of gender based violence. Rape Crisis, an organisation supporting victims of rape seeking justice; released a report on rape in South Africa which revealed that in some reported cases of rape, the victims felt betrayed by the system which had failed to successfully convict the perpetrators (Rape Crisis, 2015). The improper policing of cases is a risk factor that may contribute to more cases of gender based violence and may cause victims to avoid reporting such cases.

Poverty is another risk factor for gender based violence and also a core social issue that social workers are involved in addressing. Although gender based violence occurs in various socio-economic contexts, Jewkes (2002) argues that it is more prominent in poor communities and households and suggests that poverty and the associated stress contribute to gender based violence. According to Holicka (2015) poverty often
exacerbates gender inequality, with male superiority embedded in the social norms of poor communities, women are often treated as second class citizens and with little access to resources they end up depending on men, gender based violence often thrives in these conditions. However, other commentators differ with these findings. According to Rape Crisis (2015) situational factors such as poverty on their own are insufficient to cause gender based violence; rather, these factors can only manifest in leading to gender based violence if they occur in a context with a history of violence, such as apartheid in South Africa. In its literal sense, therefore, being poor does not necessarily make people violent. However, it is possible that the frustrating conditions of living in poverty can ultimately contribute to violence due to conflict over scarce resources. Even in households where there is wealth, women may be poor as they do not have access to or control income, which sometimes they even earn. Although poverty is located in the macro level, it occurs in all the levels of the ecological framework.

The macro factors in gender based violence are not entirely predictive nor are they the only cause of gender based violence, however, they illustrate how gender based violence is embedded in the larger components of society. Student social workers can benefit from such information as it will assist them with assessments that can help to plan effective intervention strategies with their clients.

2.6. Social workers’ understanding of gender based violence

There is a dearth of information in literature on whether social work students understand the complexity of gender based violence and whether they feel adequately prepared to develop appropriate and gender sensitive interventions (Heffernan, Blythe & Nicolson, 2012). In international and local studies (Danis, 2003; Danis & Lockhart, 2003; Hawkins, 2007; Ntwampe, 2014) social workers reported having little knowledge about gender based violence interventions and often lacked the confidence to intervene in such instances. Danis and Lockhart (2003) report that social workers felt that they had “none to little” preparation to address gender based violence and they regarded gender based violence as a psychological problem that counselling could solve. This view is supported in an international study conducted by Eisikovits and Buchbinnder (1996) who note that social workers use impartiality as a way of avoiding taking a stand against gender based violence. In the absence of more recent studies on what social workers know about gender based violence, the above study provides an overview of how the situation had been in the
90s, where social workers had been regarded as having little information on the issue of gender-based violence and it provides insight into the work done by social workers.

The South African Council of Social Services Professions (SACSSP) currently does not have any specific standards or competencies of social work that are aimed at addressing gender-based violence. It cannot, however, be assumed that the situation has changed since the 90s, especially if one was to look at the standards which govern social work education, particularly since there is limited research on this area. This does not mean, however, that social work curriculum at universities or the curriculum for other professionals used by gender-based violence victims do not make a concerted effort to address this issue.

There is also scant research identifying whether social workers understand or are able to intervene appropriately in gender-based violence situations. Although the undergraduate education of social workers is intended to prepare students for intervention in various social issues at the three levels of social work practice (micro, meso and macro), these curricula are sometimes very generic and it is unclear as to whether they adequately prepare student social workers to deal with the dynamics of gender-based violence (Hawkins, 2007). In addition, previous research cited above has not identified whether student social workers or social workers are prepared to intervene in gender-based violence.

2.7. Social workers’ responses to gender-based violence

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) during the Social Work Summit on Violence Against Women (NASW, 2002) declared that Social workers should be considered first line service providers in response to gender-based violence. The Summit was held to reach consensus on priorities for the social work field in addressing violence against women, to build partnerships between social work organisations and to develop strategies to improve education, prevention and intervention around violence against women issues (NASW, 2002). Although the Summit was held in the United States, it was an international event and information was distributed through local NASW branches – including the one in South Africa. The goals achieved through this summit included creating forums to share information on gender-based violence, build partnerships and share strategies for intervention (NASW, 2002). These goals were adopted with the intention of affecting both local and international social work practice.
The declaration by the NASW (2002) is an indication that social workers have a prominent role to play in ending gender based violence, however, it remains to be confirmed whether these roles are being fulfilled adequately. Heffernan et al. (2012) support this view and go on to say that the role of social workers is complex and includes providing support in safeguarding vulnerable members of the community. The vulnerable members of society include victims of gender based violence, especially victims of violence against women.

In as much as the role of social workers in gender based violence is important, it has also been criticised. Danis (2003) conducted a study on victims of gender based violence in which the victims reported that social workers were biased and blamed them for the occurrence of the violence. In cases where social workers blame the victim for the violence maybe due to the way a client was dressed during an incidence of rape, is an indication that the social worker does not have sufficient training to intervene appropriately. Another study conducted by Keeling and Van Wormer (2012) suggests that victims avoid informing social workers of gender based violence in the household for fear that their child may be removed. In some instances, clients just "seem unaware of the role social workers can play in assisting them in domestic violence situations". (Rasool, 2012b, p.103). These reports indicate that there are social workers who fail to understand and respond appropriately to gender based violence cases and clients seem to be confused about the role played by social workers in such cases.

2.8. Services available to victims and perpetrators of gender based violence

There are various governmental and non-governmental organisations that are dedicated to offering services to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. The growth in such organisations has been rapid given the number of cases of gender based violence in South Africa. Notably, the Department of Social Development is one of the South African government departments which responded with rigorous services towards gender based violence since 2013 among other services they introduced a 24-hour call centre dedicated to providing support and counselling to victims of gender based violence (Department of Social Development, 2014). According to Vetten (2014), services offered to those who have experienced gender based violence are not sufficient due to poor funding. With the economy strained in South Africa, many organisations working on gender based violence may be affected by limited funding. Although the government
(Department of Social Development) states that domestic violence is a priority area, it is not clear whether it is allocating priority funding necessary to support non-profit organisations that work to address gender based violence.

There are a number of well-known Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in South Africa that offer services to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. The same organisations may offer employment to social workers and other social service professional. The focus in this section will be to highlight well-known NGOs that offer services in South Africa.

2.8.1. Sonke Gender Justice

Sonke gender justice is a non-profit organisation that operates in South Africa. Its main function is to build capacity within the government and communities in bringing gender equality, preventing gender based violence and reducing the spread of HIV (Gender Justice, 2016). Sonke gender justice is prominent in the media because they run awareness campaigns such “Men against gender based violence” in the media, especially on popular soap operas like Generations which plays on national television. These awareness campaigns reach out to the majority of people who watch the television advertisements, those who are affected by gender based violence can get the information that help is available. The organisation employs social workers to run programmes that are aimed at intervention with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

2.8.2. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)

POWA is a non-profit organisation based in Johannesburg, but services are offered in other parts of Gauteng such as Katlehong, Vosloorus, Sebokeng, Thembisa and Soweto (Shukumisa, 2016). The organisation opposes gender based violence by supporting victims of violence. This is the first organisation established in Johannesburg to work specifically on the issue of gender based violence. POWA runs two shelters for abused women who come from disadvantaged communities or those with few resources (Shukumisa, 2016). The organisation gained prominence and has been advertised in the media for helping victims of gender based violence. Accommodating victims in a shelter provides a short term relieve to victims who are most likely to be estranged after experiencing gender based violence, especially if a woman has no other accommodation alternatives and is financially dependent on her partner (Rasool, 2011).
2.8.3. Gender Links

Gender links is a non-governmental organisation that focuses on research, education and training. Although it does not provide services directly to victims or perpetrators of gender based violence, Gender Links offers excellent resources in the field of gender based violence which include developing and sharing knowledge on gender diversity, publishing the work of students, scholars and practitioners on gender based violence, facilitating dialogue on gender and promoting excellence in new approaches to the issue of gender (Gender Links, 2016). This NGO assists social workers who wish to further their research on gender based violence and engage in more scholarly work on the subject. The work done by this organisation assists greatly in improving services that are offered to both victims and perpetrators, since they offer up to date research on how it can be improved.

2.8.4. National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO)

NICRO is one of South Africa’s largest social crime prevention and offender reintegration NGOs (NICRO, 2016). The organisation operates in all provinces of South Africa, employing social workers and offering internship opportunities for social work students. Services provided by NICRO include preventing imprisonment by offering effective alternatives to youth, working with offenders in prisons by providing performance development training and working with communities to support and re-integrate offenders (NICRO, 2016). Offering alternative programmes than imprisonment can be an effective tool to prevent future perpetration since the perpetrator will be engaged in a more empowering programme than receiving punishment. Although NICRO is more inclined to working with perpetrators, it also plays a critical role in preventing gender based violence.

There are other organisations that offer services to victims and perpetrators of gender based violence, however the ones discussed above have been selected since they are well known in the country, are based in Johannesburg and they provide internship placement opportunities to student social workers. The existence and the work done by these organisations is evidence that student social workers need to be prepared to intervene on cases of gender based violence as they will come across such cases both during their internships and in their future work as registered social workers.
2.9. Conclusion

This chapter highlights that gender based violence is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Various prominent organisations such as the UN (2015) and WHO (2016) have defined it as physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering inflicted on another person due to their gender. The violence could include the deprivation of liberties, whether occurring in public or in private life. It has also been confirmed by previous research that gender based violence is a significant social issue that occurs in conjunction with other social issues such as poverty, substance abuse, child abuse and unemployment (Danis, 2003). These social issues have been identified as risk factors of gender based violence (Heise, 1998; Bott et al., 2005; Jewkes, 2002).

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides possible reasons explaining why social workers may not be adequately prepared to intervene in gender based violence, notably, due to limitations in their training. There are various services for victims and perpetrators available in South Africa, though not nearly enough, and social workers are employed by most of these organisations. Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether the social work curriculum prepares students to intervene adequately in gender based violence if they work in generalist organisations and do not receive specialised in-service training when employed.

The ecological framework is adopted in this study to explain gender based violence as a multifaceted phenomenon, grounded in the interplay between personal, situational and sociocultural factors (Heise, 1998; Bott et al., 2005). This theoretical framework is used to present the findings of this dissertation and has informed the methodology of the study, which are outlined in the following chapter.
Chapter 3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted in this study and presents the research design, the research aims and objectives, sampling procedure, data analysis, rigour and trustworthiness, limitations of the study and ethical considerations of the study. This study uses a qualitative approach because qualitative research is more focused on understanding a phenomenon, rather than trying to explain it as is with quantitative research (De Vos et al., 2011). A qualitative approach was more suited to the purposes of this study than a quantitative approach as it enabled the researcher to extract detailed and rich information on the perceptions of student social workers regarding gender based violence and their preparedness for intervention. The researcher was also able to provide rich and in-depth data about the phenomenon being researched. Anderson (2010) indicates that interviews in qualitative research are not restricted by specific questions; rather the researcher can guide a participant and extract more details about a specific issue of interest on the research. This has been one of the strengths that motivated the researcher to select qualitative methods which offer the kind of flexibility that quantitative studies cannot. Since qualitative research usually involves a small sample, the data collection method allowed close contact between the researcher and the participants, which produced detailed and extensive data (Moriarty, 2011).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that a credible study needs to follow a well-established research method. This study has followed established qualitative methods and procedures that were appropriate to answer the research questions and are discussed in this chapter.

3.2. Research aim and objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of social work students regarding gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for intervention.

The research objectives were as follows:

1. To explore what student social workers know and understand about gender based violence.
2. To ascertain what student social workers think are the causes of gender based violence and what implications this may have on their practice.
3. To explore student social workers’ perceived preparedness for working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

3.3. Research design

A research design is defined as “a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 104). This was an exploratory study since it aimed to gain new insights about social work education on gender based violence, which is a topic that has barely been explored before (De Vos et al., 2011).

There are various research designs that a researcher can undertake, including narrative, biography, ethnography, case study, phenomenology, and grounded theory, these are common and valuable designs in applied human sciences (De Vos et al., 2011). This study has followed a phenomenological type of research design. According to De Vos et al. (2011) “a phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation” (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 305). A phenomenological design was used to explore the perceptions of social work students regarding gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for intervention. In using this design, a literature review on the topic of gender based violence was conducted, interviews and a focus group were conducted with the research participants and the data was analysed using real examples (quotes) from the interviews. According to Mutton and Babbie (2001) these are necessary methods in exploratory research. Following this qualitative design has enabled the researcher to obtain rich data on how students perceive the phenomenon of gender based violence, their feelings about working with perpetrators and victims and how they would go about doing so. Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava, Shongi, and Cheraghi (2014) also mention that in qualitative research designs, the researcher should apply the principle of no harm and not create any expectations that cannot be fulfilled while working with participants, because due to the nature of qualitative research designs it is most likely that a personal relationship may develop between the researcher and the participants. Hence, in this study the researcher clearly mentioned her role as a researcher and discussed ethical issues with the participants and also discussed it in the research proposal when applying for ethical clearance from the university of Johannesburg’s Humanities ethics committee.
3.4. Population

The population of this study consisted of fourth year social work students from the University of Johannesburg who were doing their internship placements and who were in the final year of their social work studies in 2014. Internship placement is a compulsory course for all social work students as it provides an opportunity for students to be exposed to their future work environment as a qualified social worker.

Fourth year social work students were approached because they were at the exit level of their studies and their training up to that stage should have provided them with an adequate grounding to develop interventions on any social issue, including gender based violence. Moreover, they were on the brink of obtaining their qualification to practice and would be confronted with both survivors and perpetrators of gender violence upon entering practice in the following year.

3.5. Sampling strategy and recruitment

The sampling strategy was purposive as the subjects were selected in such a way that they were representative of the population that best served the purpose of the study (De Vos et al., 2011). The purpose of using this sampling strategy was to get participants who have some knowledge about gender based violence; hence social work students were a relevant group to study.

Before the recruitment of participants could commence, a meeting was held with the social work department’s secretary to determine the class timetable of the envisaged participants to make appointments for recruitment and participation. Permission was obtained from one of the lecturers to make an announcement about the research and recruit students during a lecture. The research project was explained during the lecture and volunteers were asked to participate, as all students in the class were eligible. Hence, a volunteer sample was recruited. A form was circulated requesting potential participants’ names, contact details and preferred time to be contacted (see Appendix B). Interested students voluntarily completed the forms which were collected at the end of the lecture and appointments were made with those participants who showed interest in participating in the research. Ten students participated in the individual interviews, while four participated in the focus group, in total there were thirteen participants from the same year and same course. One student participated in both the individual interview and the focus group. The
sample consisted of nine females and four males. A description of the participants is provided, together with a table in chapter four.

3.6. Data collection and tools

Students' perceptions of gender based violence were acquired through individual, semi-structured interviews. According to De Vos et al. (2011), semi-structured, one-to-one interviews allow the researcher to gain detailed information about the participant's perceptions of a particular issue, while giving the researcher and the participant ample flexibility. De Vos et al. (2011) further state that semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable when the research question is controversial or personal.

Since gender based violence is a sensitive topic and social workers are aware of this fact, they may have tended to provide 'socially desirable' responses in a survey (Danis & Lockhart, 2003), hence this approach was not utilised. Rather, interviews were conducted as it provided the researcher with ample opportunity to explore the depth of the participant's knowledge and understanding of the issue. An interview guide with questions was used to assist the researcher not to move away from the topic, while maintaining flexibility and sensitivity.

A focus group was used as a second data collection method to determine the ability of the participants to develop meaningful social work interventions in dealing with gender based violence as well as for the triangulation of the individual interviews. The sample for the focus group was selected at the same time and during the same lecture, as the participants for individual interviews. In the individual interviews, seven participants were females while three were males. In the focus group, there were two males and two females. The interviews were conducted first in order to validate the findings through the focus group. The focus group was conducted one week after the interviews.

3.6.1. Interview guide and procedure

A range of semi-structured questions were drafted in an interview guide (see Appendix H) to assist in answering the main research question. The interview questions were informed by the research goal and information found from the literature review.

The questions asked sought to explore whether students had an understanding of the complexity of knowledge of the determinants of gender based violence, their perceptions
of the issue and some of the socio-cultural factors related to the phenomenon. An hour was scheduled for each interview. A voice recorder was used to help capture the responses.

### 3.6.2. Focus group guide and procedure

To explore students’ knowledge and ability to intervene in gender based violence, a focus group was conducted with the participants at a later date to look at how they would develop an intervention at the various levels of the ecological system. The focus group took place in the university campus and it lasted for 1 hour 30 minutes. A focus group guide (see Appendix I) was used to provide guidance during the session. In addition, the focus group was used to verify responses given in the interviews, which is also known as member checking, to enhance reliability and validity of the results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) report that member checks are the most crucial techniques that one can use to confirm credibility of the research. During the focus group, the findings were shared with the members and they were invited to provide input on the data from interviews so that they had an opportunity to engage with it before looking at how they can develop intervention strategies.

In addition, trustworthiness was established through providing thick descriptions of the responses given by individual participants (Krefting, 1991). Summaries of what the focus group members provided are presented in table format (see Appendix A). This was done to enable readers of the research to evaluate the legitimacy of the claims being made in the study based on the data presented.

### 3.7. Pilot Study

Conducting a pilot study is necessary for assessing the feasibility of the project and to test the research instrument (De Vos et al., 2011). A pilot study was conducted with one male and one female participant who were from the same class as the other participants. The interview guide was not changed after the pilot study. The interview schedule appropriately collected the relevant information. The only change that was made was the time it took to complete the interview. Instead of the allocated hour for the interview, thirty minutes to an hour was allocated for as interview. The data collected through the pilot study was also analysed with the other research participants’ responses for the study as there were no major changes made to the interview guide.
3.8. Data analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data since the research approach is qualitative in nature. De Vos et al. (2011, p. 399) state that “qualitative data analysis is a process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorizing which certainly is far removed from structured, mechanical and technical procedures to make inferences from empirical data of social life”. This type of data analysis offered flexibility when organising and describing the collected data into common themes that emerged, both from literature and the transcripts.

Grbich (2013) proposes three main processes for the thematic analysis of qualitative data: segmentation, categorising and relinking the aspects of the data before the final interpretation. The researcher personally transcribed most of the recordings and thoroughly read the transcripts to facilitate coding and the development of themes.

Tesch (as cited in Creswell, 2014) indicates eight steps which can be followed in the coding process. These steps include: 1- reading the transcripts carefully, 2- finding meaning in the transcripts, 3- clustering similar topics together, 4- abbreviating the topics as codes, 5- using topics to create categories, 6- using abbreviations for the categories and arranging into alphabetical order, 7- assembling data belonging to each category, 8- recoding the existing data (Creswell, 2014). The above steps were followed in the procedure of data analysis and all the data was analysed manually.

The biographical details of the participants (see Chapter 4, Table 2) constituted the first set of data to be organised. This information was obtained from the consent forms and are presented in chapter 4. Secondly, the individual interviews were coded, following which, the focus groups were coded. Thereafter, categories were developed. Finally, observations and session notes (both from the individual interviews and focus group) that were taken during the interviews and focus groups, were used in the analysis. This type of analysis is inductive since the researcher noted emergent themes and then interpreted the data.

Creswell (2014) reports that interpretation in qualitative research can take many forms and is flexible enough to convey personal, research-based and action meanings. This proved to be the case in this study, where the eight steps were followed in the coding process that led to themes, as presented in Chapter 4. Due to the flexibility in interpreting
qualitative data, it was possible to present the findings according to the ecological framework, which forms the theoretical lens guiding this study.

### 3.9. Rigour and trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) report that ensuring research credibility is one of the crucial factors in establishing trustworthiness of the research. The focus groups held as part of the study provided the opportunity to conduct member checks which, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), are among the most crucial techniques used to confirm the credibility of the research. Participants’ responses were thus shared with the focus group members who were invited to provide input before developing appropriate intervention strategies.

The following provisions proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were also made to ensure the research was conducted with credibility:

- Early familiarity with the participants’ organisation or environment: The researcher was familiar with the research environment, which is the same institution where she completed her junior degree.
- Triangulation: The study used various methods to collect the data, namely, individual interviews and a focus group.

In addition, the findings are presented in a very descriptive manner. This was done to enable the reader of the research to evaluate the legitimacy of the claims being made based on the thick data presented.

### 3.10. Limitations of the study

This study was conducted with ten students who participated in individual interviews and four focus group members. Although this is an acceptable sample for a qualitative study, it is still a small group of students to make generalisations. Generalisations cannot be made to represent all social work students in this country. These findings can only account for the students who participated in the study who were enrolled for a Bachelor of social work in the specific institution where the study was conducted. If this study was to be conducted with a different group of students in another institution, or in the same institution the results could be different. This is due to the fact that the results are based on a specific group of student perceptions of gender based violence and whether they were
able to develop intervention strategies to address the issue. It is, however, believed that if the same study was to be conducted with another group in the same institution, the results may be similar, since similar issues emerged from member checks.

3.11. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are an important part in social sciences. De Vos et al. (2011) describes ethics as “a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students” (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 114). The researcher attempted to be aware of all the ethics of care in her conduct during the process of research. This was based on several ethical expectations as outlined by the institution where the research was carried out. Saranji et al. (2014) indicates that the most important ethical issues to consider in qualitative research are anonymity, informed consent and confidentiality. These have been adhered to, in addition to ethical guidelines expected from a researcher who is a social worker. This study complied with ethical guidelines by ensuring that several processes were adhered to:

. The research was conducted under supervision and did not commence until approval from the University of Johannesburg’s Higher Degrees Committee and ethical clearance from the University of Johannesburg Research Committee were granted (see appendix J).
. Respondents were provided with an information sheet and consent forms (one for participation and one for voice recording) before participating in the research. The research process was also explained to them.
. Respondents were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. They were informed that there were no financial rewards for participation or penalties if they chose not to participate.
. Participants were informed that the recordings would be stored in a safe place.
. Participants were made aware that the findings of the research may be published in an academic journal, however, their identities would be protected through the use of pseudonyms.
. Since gender based violence is a sensitive issue, the researcher used empathy, respect and social work probing skills when conducting the interviews.
The researcher did not provide counselling to the students, but was able to offer contacts of student counselling services should the need have arisen. No need for counselling arose during the research.

The researcher had been a stand-in lecturer at UJ in the year the research was conducted, however, she was not connected to the students on a full-time basis and was not involved with their assessments. To make the students comfortable in participating, they were informed that their decision to participate would not have any academic consequences.

The participants were informed that participating in the research would not affect their marks and their comments would not be held against them in any way.

3.12. Conclusion

The research methodology used in this study sought to answer the research goal of the study which is to explore the perceptions of social work students regarding gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for intervention. The processes and procedure of the methods used were qualitative and exploratory since the subject under investigation is an untapped area of research. All ethical requirements were complied with as per the ethical guidelines of the University of Johannesburg Humanities ethics committee. The students who participated in the research found the process to be beneficial as it inspired them to start thinking about the topic of gender based violence and to consider developing their knowledge in this area. This chapter has also outlined how the data was collected, of which the following chapter will discuss the results from the data that was collected.
Chapter 4. Results and discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of how student social workers perceive gender based violence and examines their preparedness for intervention in the issue. The presentation and discussion of the results is divided into two sections. The first section focus on the results of the individual interviews whereas the second section focuses on the results of the data collected through the focus group. Although the research participants come from the same year of study and qualification, they are from different age groups and grew up in different environments, which brings quite interesting findings. The demographics of the research participants are firstly presented in a table and followed by the analysis.

The first section of this chapter considers how student social workers understand gender based violence in relation to the definition of gender based violence by prominent organisations such as the UN. The second section discusses the results of the focus group. The focus group was used to both validate the findings of the individual interviews and to assess the understanding of the participants of the different kinds of interventions that could be applied in a real context. Lastly, the chapter demonstrates how the participants were able to develop interventions at the three levels of social work practice which aligns with the levels of the ecological framework. The ecological framework is the theoretical framework informing this research and is a core framework that guides social work intervention, hence the intervention strategies were discussed utilising the ecological theory.

4.2. Section 1: Individual interviews thematic data analysis results

This section focuses on the perceptions of student social workers regarding gender based violence and their preparedness to intervene in the issue. Table 1 below illustrates how the themes emerged from categorising the questions. The first column illustrates the questions that were asked, the second column categorises the responses (coding) and the third column puts the categories into themes that are to be analysed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Common responses (categories)</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic questions and questions of a personal nature.</td>
<td>Age, gender, marital status, race, geographical location, second majoring subjects taken, registered for internship.</td>
<td>Demographic and biographical information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think are the options available for a victim / survivor to get help to deal with gender based violence?</td>
<td>Victim empowerment, victim empowerment centres, SAPS, NGOs, social workers, points of service.</td>
<td>Services for victims / survivors of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think are the options available for perpetrators of gender based violence to get help if they choose?</td>
<td>Individual counselling, group counselling, NGOs, FBOs.</td>
<td>Services for perpetrators of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the role of social workers in gender</td>
<td>Advocacy, education, how social workers intervene in</td>
<td>Social workers’ role in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>based violence?</strong></td>
<td><strong>gender based violence.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you know about a protection order? How it is obtained and what are its functions.</strong></td>
<td>Protection order, restraining order, role of a social worker in a protection order.</td>
<td>Knowledge about a protection order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did any of your modules include gender based violence? If so, which module, which year? Tell me what you have learnt from the module? Do you think the module could have been improved in any way? What would you have liked to learn about gender based violence?</strong></td>
<td>Subjects taken, courses on gender based violence, CPD courses, recommendations for training on gender based violence.</td>
<td>Training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you feel your training has adequately prepared you to deal with gender based violence? If so, how, or if not, how could it have been improved?</strong></td>
<td>Categorised under training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
<td>Training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there anything about your training or the lack of training on gender based violence that you would like to share?</strong></td>
<td>Categorised under training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
<td>Training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would you do if you were confronted with a woman who reported abuse?</strong></td>
<td>Categorised under services for victims / survivors of gender based violence.</td>
<td>Services for victims / survivors of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would you do if</strong></td>
<td>Categorised under services</td>
<td>Feelings about working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone confessed to hitting their partner?</td>
<td>for perpetrators of gender based violence.</td>
<td>with perpetrators of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel about working with perpetrators of gender based violence?</td>
<td>Reaction to perpetrators, how social workers should help, social work ethics, judgemental, bias on gender based violence.</td>
<td>Feelings about working with perpetrators of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think social workers deal with gender based violence victims?</td>
<td>Categorised under the role of the social worker in gender based violence.</td>
<td>The role of the social worker in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think social workers deal with gender based violence perpetrators?</td>
<td>Categorised under the role of the social worker in gender based violence.</td>
<td>The role of the social worker in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think social workers understand this issue adequately?</td>
<td>Categorised under understanding of gender based violence.</td>
<td>Understanding of gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would help in the training of social workers to deal with gender based violence?</td>
<td>Subjects taken, courses on gender based violence, CPD courses, recommendations.</td>
<td>Training for interventions in gender based violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3. Demographic and biographical analysis of the participants

The participants consisted of a comprehensive sample to answer the research question. Representation of the population was not a goal of this study; hence the sample was not randomised. The biographical data is represented in Table 2 below.
Table 2: Demographic and biographical data of individual interviews participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Childhood Residence</th>
<th>Current Residence</th>
<th>Internship Completed</th>
<th>Second Subject Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben #1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noso #2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>On-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madu #3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, in a relationship</td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>On-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magi #4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyari #5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>On-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala #6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thema #7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahi #8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahla #9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refu #10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Developmental studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1. Participants

The participants were given a pseudonym, followed by the interview number. These pseudonyms are used when directly quoting the participants’ responses. All the participants were social work students in the final year of the social work qualification. They all volunteered to participate in the research by completing a contact information form and were selected randomly from the contact information forms.
4.3.2. Age

The participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 29. This correlates with the expected minimum age of graduation for a student enrolled in a four-year BA degree and the participants were in the age group considered as ‘youth’. In South Africa a youth is an individual aged between 14 and 35. A study conducted by Mosavel, Ahmed and Simon (2011) reports on the perceptions of gender based violence by South African youth who consider it to be pervasive. The age of the participants would also put them at risk of either being victims or perpetrators of gender based violence, this indicates that there is a possibility of the participants either being victims and/or perpetrators, or being aware of gender based violence, due to their age group.

4.3.3. Gender

Both males and females participated in the research, however, there were more females than males, with seven females and three males taking part. This can be attributed to the nature of the social work profession, where one finds more females than males (Myers, 2010). This is also confirmed by Earle (2008) who indicates that the social work profession is dominated by females, with a percentage of 86.9% as compared to males who only number 10.7%. Similarly in the social work class, which the research participants are coming from, there were more female students as compared to male students.

A study by Chamberland, Leveille and Baraldi (2006) on gender differences in the perception of domestic violence reports that men and women generally hold the same perceptions of gender based violence and only differ in their perceptions of psychological abuse. According to the study, men tend to perceive psychological abuse as less severe, when compared to females (Chamberland et al., 2006). This finding is also confirmed by the present study where male and female participants shared similar, general perceptions of gender based violence but differed on certain aspects related to psychological abuse. These findings are discussed further in this section under the interpretation of themes.

4.3.4. Marital status

None of the respondents in the study were married, however, six out of ten of the participants stated they were in intimate heterosexual relationships. Those who reported to have been in interpersonal relationships have indicated to be in heterosexual relationships.
The selection criteria were very open and marital status was not one of the determining factors for participation. There were thus more participants who were in relationships than those who were single. This can be attributed to the age of the participants as most people usually form meaningful relationships in their university years. Furthermore, sexual orientation was not a determining factor for participation. Of the previous studies reviewed, none was able to draw a comparison between perceptions of people in a relationship; single people; heterosexual and homosexual comparisons and differences regarding gender based violence were also not available.

4.3.5. Childhood residence

Participants were asked about their residential location during childhood. They had to indicate whether they grew up in urban areas, rural areas or semi-rural areas. The participants who grew up in rural areas and those who grew up in urban areas shared the same views about gender based violence. Hossen (2014) indicates that gender based violence is more prevalent in rural areas in research conducted in Bangladesh, however, in South Africa, Choe, Zimmerman and Devnarain (2012) reveal that gender based violence is more prevalent in townships, which falls under urban areas. The participants who grew up in rural areas still experienced urban life while living in the city to complete their four-year degree in social work.

4.3.6. Current residence

All but one of the participants were living on their own, away from their families. All the participants resided in the suburb near the university campus. It is the view of the researcher that where and with whom the participants are currently residing may influence their view of gender based violence. In urban areas people have more access to information and youth living on their own will not be restricted and may experience more freedom to explore relations with peers as compared to youths living with their parents. Hence in this study, those participants who are living with their parents may also have different perceptions regarding gender based violence if there is domestic violence in their own household.

4.3.7. Registered for internship

Social work students are required to complete an internship in their fourth year in order to graduate. Students have a choice of whether they want to split their fourth year
into two years, focusing on theory in the first year and internship the following year. Having completed an internship was not a prerequisite to participate in the research although completing an internship would expose students to real life clients, of which some may include cases of gender based violence. All the participants had completed their internship in the same year with theory courses. Some participants did indicate that they had come across cases of gender based violence, where victims were seeking assistance in the form of shelter and counselling. This is an indication that during internship, students are exposed to real life cases of what they may encounter when practicing as social workers. However, students are placed in different settings and this would determine the kinds of cases they are exposed to.

4.3.8. Second subject major

Students have the option to choose their second subject major while studying social work. Certain subjects such as sociology and psychology do include some aspects of gender based violence. The question of which second major participants chose was asked to determine their exposure to gender based violence theory as this would affect their preparedness for intervention. The majority of the participants chose psychology as their second major, while only one had sociology and another chose developmental studies as a major. The second major subjects such as psychology and sociology gave the participants some exposure to gender based violence. There was no difference identified in the perceptions of those who took psychology and those who took sociology or developmental studies as a second major. However, nothing conclusive can be said about this as most students who participated in the individual interviews took psychology as a major.

4.4. Understanding of gender based violence among student social workers

Gender based violence can take many forms and different definitions can be used to describe it. The student social workers who participated in the research gave their own individual understanding of gender based violence. The common responses of how students understood gender based violence were coded and sub-themes emerged from the main topic of understanding gender based violence. The sub-themes are discussed below.
4.4.1. Defining gender based violence

The majority of participants gave a multifaceted definition of gender based violence. Although there were various responses, most of the definitions were aligned to the UN definition of gender based violence as any act of violence towards women that is likely to result in sexual, physical or psychological harm (UN, 2015). This study, however, adopts a very broad, multifaceted definition of gender based violence as a phenomenon which affects both men and women (see Chapter 2). The participants were able to provide their own understanding of gender based violence. One of the female participants, Mahla, indicated that:

“Gender based violence to me talks about female or male abuse. It can be physical abuse, it can be emotional abuse, it can be your sexual harassment in the work place, it can be basically anything that violates your right as a person, and it does not make you feel comfortable.” (Mahla #9, p. 2)

Mahla was able to indicate that gender based violence cuts across genders. In her definition, she was clear and precise that gender based violence could be anything from physical to sexual violence and it could take place in any context. Mahla also emphasised that the core to identifying gender based violence lies in the victim being made to feel uncomfortable. Another participant, Magi, defined gender based violence as:

“I think it’s the violence that happens normally in families, between husband and wife, I mean affecting the children. It could be both ways. Husband abusing the wife. Maybe the wife abusing the husband.” (Magi #4, p. 9)

Magi was also able to define gender based violence as occurring between the two genders, however, she only limited it to family violence between married couples. Gender based violence does not only occur amongst couples, it can happen between people who are not interpersonally related and also out of the family context. In addition, Magi is normalising gender based violence by saying that it “normally happens in families”.

A male participant, Bala, defines gender based violence as:

“Gender based violence is actually a form of abuse targeted at a specific gender, more specifically what is happening
nowadays it’s like men abusing women. I think that’s the broad general knowledge that I have about gender based violence. It’s about men attacking women. When I think about it, I also think about domestic violence.” (Bala #6, p. 3)

The definition from Bala is a little different from what other participants have identified as gender based violence. Bala’s definition of gender based violence is gender-focused and he also relates it to domestic violence. Previous literature (Vetten, 2014; Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998) have identified domestic violence as a form of gender based violence, but it is also common that people may refer to domestic violence as gender based violence. Bala also mentions that women are more targets for gender based violence, while men are the perceived perpetrators.

Although the most common definition on gender based violence by the UN’s Conference on Women (1995) recognised gender based violence as violence against women, the majority of participants in this study indicated that gender based violence occurs in both genders. Considering gender based violence as occurring against both men and women is a positive and non-judgemental perception, but it can be a limitation because previous studies (Abrahams, et al. (2013); Moffett (2006); NASW (2002); Johnson (1995)) have identified women to being the primary victims of intimate partner violence, common couple violence and patriarchal terrorism. The majority of the participants were also able to identify that gender based violence was multifaceted.

4.4.2. **Forms of gender based violence**

The participants were able to identify different forms of gender based violence. This was not a direct question in the interview; the forms of gender based violence were asked as a probing question to elicit the participants’ understanding of gender based violence. One female participant Rahi, mentioned types of gender based violence as:

“Physical abuse is in hitting the woman. Also emotional abuse, oppression, I think bullying, also intimidation, and also undermining women”. (Rahi #8, p.4)

The participants mentioned physical violence, sexual violence, domestic violence, economic abuse and emotional abuse. These are the common forms of gender based violence which are also identified by the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998.
Other less common forms of gender based violence are often overlooked, less reported or there is little intervention in such issues, these include genital mutilation, human trafficking, forced pregnancy or abortion, spousal rape, homophobia, inequality, deprivation of liberty of a certain gender, and men-to-men or women-to-women abuse, amongst others (KPMG, 2015; Heise, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2003). The less common forms of gender based violence were not reported by the participants during the interviews. It is important for a social worker to be aware of the less common forms of gender based violence so as to help and educate their clients who may be victims or perpetrators of such types of gender based violence. The participants were, however, able to identify that the different forms of gender based violence are interconnected, within various levels of social work practice.

4.5. Causes of gender based violence: Perspectives of student social workers

There are various causes of gender based violence which were identified by the participants. These causes are discussed under the two sub-themes which are examined below.

4.5.1. Unemployment and financial dependency

Unemployment and financial dependency have been identified by the participants as major drivers of gender based violence, especially between intimate couples. Most of the participants believed that unemployed females tended to be abused by their male spouses, on whom they are financially dependent. There was one participant, Magi, who attempted to explain the cause of this kind of gender based violence:

“If someone feels that, I am supporting you financially, I can control you, I can do anything that I want to you, including treating the person violently.” (Magi #10, p. 3)

The above participant identifies that finances are used to control and abuse the victim who is financially dependent on the perpetrator. Jewkes (2002) has also indicated that financial independence of women is a protective factor against abuse from their male spouses. The control of spouses, especially women who are financially dependent on the perpetrators, influences help-seeking (Rasool, 2012a). Payne and Wermeling (2009) report that another factor that prevents female victims from proceeding with legal prosecution of their perpetrators is the female victim’s financial reliance on the perpetrator.
Another participant, Noso, described a financially abused client she encountered during her internship:

“There was a conflict whereby she has no financial security so that’s an issue. She decided to not get him arrested in the end so that she does not have to suffer because she didn’t want to go and find work, she didn’t want to leave the house.” (Noso #2, p. 7)

Noso identified a situation where an abused woman did not leave an abusive relationship due to financial dependency. According to the scenario given by Noso, the woman was already being abused, but financial dependency was the cause of re-occurrence of the abuse and victimisation. In other studies (Rasool, 2015; Payne & Wermeling, 2009), survivors of abuse confirm that financial limitations are an important reason that deter help-seeking and leaving abusive relationships.

4.5.2. Cultural norms and values contribute to gender based violence

Other factors identified as causing gender based violence by participants are cultural norms and values. Participants outlined how they believed that values which an individual, group or community ascribe to have an influence on whether someone becomes a perpetrator of gender based violence. This is also confirmed by Heise (1998) who indicates that certain backgrounds predispose a person to either being a victim or a perpetrator of gender based violence. To illustrate how culture contributes to gender based violence, a male participant, Bala, mentioned that:

“As a Xhosa man, at times we are taught that a woman… for you to teach a woman a lesson you must beat her.” (Bala #6, p. 4)

Bala clearly states that in his culture men are taught to physically violate women as a way of resolving conflict among couples. This is an indication that student social workers are exposed to gender based violence-perpetuating environments and, in the case of this participant, it was through his culture. Bala mentions that battering a woman is something that he was taught, however, it was not ascertained whether he practiced it or not.

Another male participant, Ben also blamed culture for gender based violence when he said that:

“From an African perspective, where I grew up – I think it has to do with how we were socialised in terms of believing that men
Ben speaks of how patriarchy is inscribed in culture since he suggests that in an African context, men are given more power and the right to use abuse to keep women submissive. This is also confirmed by Rasool and Hochfeld (2005) who indicates that there is a widespread of social discourse on domestic violence that is patriarchal and it can deter help seeking by abused women. Other participants also mentioned that some of the cultural values and norms are rooted in power which comes from patriarchy and inequality. Madu, a female participant, also shares the same views as male participants, that cultural beliefs perpetuate gender based violence.

“I think the patriarchal thing, yes, because like when looking at the women. I will just talk about women because they are those people that are vulnerable to gender based violence. Because like the patriarchy in society, for example, where I come from, in the rural areas, we have to listen to our husbands. Even if the husband beats you, you don’t have to go and report him to the police or everything, you just have to kneel down and respect your husband.” (Madu #3, p. 2)

In her comment, Madu mentions that violence against women is accepted as a norm and the victims consider it as something that should not be reported to the police. This could be an important issue in women’s reluctance to report abuse to any authority when the cultural expectation is that women should submit to violence. In Madu’s comment, patriarchy has also masked gender based violence as respect. This is confirmed by Gevers et al. (2013) who indicate that there are widespread cultural beliefs that promote gender based violence. Rasool and Hochfeld (2005) also confirm that many cultures justify violence by affirming male authority and that condones gender based violence.

The discussion above describes the strong cultural norms and values that contribute to gender based violence and clearly indicates a gendered element since the norms seem to promote female subservience and male violence to ensure compliance. These quotes also highlight the patriarchal environments from which student social workers come and it is interesting to see the extent to which they influence their
interventions or not in gender based violence.

4.5.3. The use of alcohol as a cause of gender based violence

Participants identified alcohol use as a cause of gender based violence, especially among couples. A female participant, Nyari, mentions that:

“I would say alcohol. That is the main cause of gender based violence. Like in a relationship where there is a man and woman. The man will go and drink and then come back and beat the woman.” (Nyari #5, p. 2)

Nyari sees intoxication as the driving force of gender based violence among intimate couples, and goes so far as to solely blame alcohol for gender based violence. She states that a man who gets drunk can come home and abuse his partner. Research by Wechsberg, Parry and Jewkes (2008) confirms that high levels of drinking alcohol have had a noticeable impact on South Africa’s perpetration of gender based violence. Although the research by Wechsberg et al. (2008) recognises that alcohol has an influence on gender based violence, it cannot be confirmed that alcohol can cause someone to be abusive. Although alcohol abuse and gender based violence can co-occur, it does not mean that all people who drink alcohol inflict gender based violence.

Another participant Bala mentions that:

“I think one of the things that contribute to that, I think it’s alcohol.” (Bala #6, p. 4)

Participant Bala gives a more accurate comment about alcohol by stating that it contributes to gender based violence but may not necessarily be the cause. Bala also acknowledges that there can be other factors that contribute to gender based violence, but alcohol is usually one of them. The issue of alcohol being a contributor to gender based violence is also confirmed by Mosavel et al. (2011) who report that young people are of the opinion that alcohol contributes to people perpetrating gender based violence and to people becoming victims of gender based violence.
4.5.4. History of violence in South Africa

Another significant cause of gender based violence mentioned by the participants includes the history of violence in South Africa. A female participant Refu mentions that:

“I would say maybe apartheid as well contributed to that because in most cases during apartheid time we women did not do much but men were doing much. (Refu #10, p.2)

Participant Refu indicates that apartheid has contributed to gender based violence, especially men because they were more exposed to the violence during apartheid. There have been a number of claims in previous research (Stauffer, 2015; Wechnsberg et al., 2008) that apartheid has instilled a culture of violence in South Africa, hence the high rate of gender based violence. These studies confirm the comment made by participant Refu that apartheid has made South Africa to be more susceptible to violence. The minister of Social Development Ms Bathabile Dlamini said during a Round Table discussion at the 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, that "South Africa’s violent history of oppression and the struggle for liberation from apartheid had left the country with a “culture of violence”, in which violence was seen as a legitimate means of resolving social, political, community and even domestic conflicts" (Brand South Africa, 2013, p.1). This is another confirmation from high authority that South Africans have formed a maladaptive response to conflicts by the use of violence, which is a legacy of apartheid. In a case where a man and a woman have a conflict in the household, it is confirmed by previous research (Stauffer, 2015) that the use of violence is most likely to occur in a context where violence is often used as a means of resolving conflicts.

The use of violence and the high rates of gender based violence cannot be all blamed on apartheid. The authors cited above state that violence is used to resolve conflict. However, if one is to examine a type of gender based violence such as rape, the perpetrator is not always resolving a conflict between them and the victim, by raping the victim. Although in some cases rape can be used as a weapon of violence to inflict pain to the victim and not necessary for the pleasure of the perpetrator, such cases are rare in South Africa. Rape as a weapon of violence is common in countries at war (Brown, 2012). It is not all the types of gender based violence that can be blamed on the legacy of apartheid in South Africa, since some forms of gender based violence are more about power and control than racism, which manifests as a different form of oppression.
4.6. Services for victims/survivors of gender based violence

Within the South African context, there are various services and resources available to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence as described in the literature review. Qualified social workers should be able to offer services to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence or be able to refer them to appropriate services if their place of work is not able to assist. Participants were asked about their knowledge of services available to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. Discussed below are the main service groupings identified by the participants.

4.6.1. Empowerment of victims

The participants indicated that most social work services for victims of gender based violence promote empowerment. One of the female participants, Madu, mentioned that:

“I think the role of a social worker first thing is to protect the victims and also to empower the victim, let’s say the victim, the person is being abused, and the social worker can play a role of like empowering the person to be able to speak up about the gender based violence, like saying that I’m being abused.”
(Madu #13, p. 3)

Madu first emphasises that it is important for a victim to be protected from the perpetrator. Although the participant does not mention how the victim will be protected, she recognises the importance of ensuring the safety of the victim. Empowerment for Madu means being emancipated enough to be able to speak out about the abuse being suffered.

Another participant, Nyari, speaks of the importance of victim empowerment when she mentions:

“To empower women and also to highlight that the women have rights because some don’t know that they have rights. For example, some women didn’t go to school and then you get this husband and at the end of the day you want someone to look after you, provide things and then he beats you. You keep quiet because you want those things and that life. But the social
workers can actually point out that they have rights, they can report these things and get some help. Some women don't know that they have rights. (Nyari #5, p. 3)

Nyari identifies empowering victims as an important role that should be played by a service provider to victims of gender based violence. In her comment, she mentions that victims are usually disempowered, mostly without education and in most cases, unaware of their rights. Part of the role that can be played by the service provider, according to Nyari, includes educating the victim about their rights. Nyari also mentions the issue of education and that it plays a role in the empowerment of victims. Although Nyari did not mention this, a service provider may also empower the victim through education.

Another participant, Ben, also mentions empowerment as an important service for victims of gender based violence:

“I know that mostly it’s about empowering them. Because most of the people who present with abuse cases, they are dependent on their spouses - the ones who abuse them. So, it's empowering them to be able to stand up for themselves and to not go back to the abuser after the programme has been completed.” (Ben #1, p. 3)

Although Ben did not mention a type of dependency specifically, he does indicate that dependency – which could be emotional, economic or even social – is part of the reasons why women stay in abusive relationships. Ben emphasised an intervention programme on empowerment that should focus on helping the victim to be independent so they do not have to return to the abuser. Victim empowerment is a popular approach in social work practice since governmental departments such as Department of Social Development emphasises victim empowerment in its service offering (Department of Social Development, 2014). The importance of victim empowerment has been confirmed by the Department of Social Development since it has adopted it as a core approach to assisting victims of gender based violence through the toll-free line (Department of Social Development, 2014).
4.6.2. First point of getting help

The participants considered South African Police Services (SAPS) as the first point of contact for victims of crimes including gender based violence. The SAPS has victim empowerment programmes that are aimed at supporting victims of gender based violence (SAPS, 2015). These programmes are aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of victims of gender based violence and ensuring that they are not re-victimised by the criminal justice system (SAPS, 2015). All the participants identified SAPS as a critical service provider for victims of gender based violence. Some participants also identified SAPS as a path towards referral to a social worker. A participant, Madu, mentions how SAPS is the initial point of contact for victims of gender based violence:

“I think that the first thing will be to report that they are being abused to the nearest police… and the police will open a case.”

(Madu #3, p. 2)

Madu responded to the question of what services are available to victims of gender based violence by mentioning that a victim will first go the police. This may be true in some cases, especially where physical violence is involved. But in cases of other forms of gender based violence such as economic or psychological abuse, it may not be one's first thought to go to the police since in general, police services are associated with criminal cases.

Another participant who identified the police as the first point of service is Magi. She mentions that:

“Well I think most of the time, obviously, the first step in society that normally people do is go to a police station.” (Magi, #4, p. 3)

Madu and Magi identified the police as the first point of getting help. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), however, within its international body, indicates otherwise. The NASW (2002) indicates that social workers are the frontline service providers for victims of gender based violence. With the participants viewing SAPS as the first point of contact, it may cause a pitfall in service delivery, where a client may be referred back to the police by a social worker, if they consult them (social workers) first before going to the police. A social worker should be able to assist a victim whether they
have been to the police or not. Part of the service may be to help the victim report a case with the police should they chose to.

Although participants identified SAPS as a possible resource for victims of gender based violence, some identified shortcomings within the services offered by the SAPS. One participant mentions a limitation by the SAPS as a resource:

“They can go to the police, but most times when they go to the police to report, either they are not believed or they are encouraged that the case should be dropped because of lack of evidence or lack of resources.” (Mahla #9, p. 3)

This observation by participants has also been recorded in literature where services from the SAPS have been scrutinised by the public and users who have laid complaints of poor service (Matthews, 2013). This shows awareness among student social workers of the potential shortcomings of services available. This kind of awareness would prove useful in their practice as social workers.

4.6.3. Services from NGOs

There are various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) offering services to victims of gender based violence which were identified by the participants. A female participant Refu indicates that there are many services offered by NGOs:

“given so many organizations that help people with that. POWA it’s also helping, those shelters for abused women and children are helping so I think it’s been handled well”. (Refu #10, p.10)

The participants were able to identify both the NGOs and the services offered by the NGOs. Such services included counselling, accommodation in a shelter and legal services. In terms of identifying the NGOs that they knew, the participants only identified People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). POWA is a familiar organisation in the field of gender based violence since it is one of the first services opened in Johannesburg to specifically address this issue. However over the years many other organisations have developed to which social workers may refer clients in order to receive extended services. Some participants indicated that they were aware that there are NGOs that offer assistance to victims of gender based violence, but they are not aware of the names of these organisations. It is understandable that as a professional, one may not have names
of organisations at hand to refer clients to, hence it can be researched and a client referred later.

4.7. **Services available to perpetrators of gender based violence**

Participants were also asked to identify services that were available to perpetrators of gender based violence who chose to get help. The services identified are discussed below.

4.7.1. **Services from Faith Based Organisations**

There are various Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) that offer religious refuge to those who confess to losing their way, which in this case, would be to perpetrate gender based violence. Although faith based organisations offer help to both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence, perpetrators have been named by the participants as being more familiar with seeking help from such organisations. Thema indicates that:

“Yes, they can go for therapy you know or for counselling, try to find out what is it that makes them to behave that way like … Counsellors or church if they are religious people or if there is a certain family member in their families who is religious.” (Thema #7, p. 5)

Thema mentions the importance of people relying on religion. This is an important observation that social workers can identify during assessment, namely, that one can get support from one’s religious affiliation. A study by Rasool, Vermaak, Pharoah, Louw and Stavrou (2002) confirms that religious leaders are usually approached after serious cases of gender based violence. Another participant, Nyari, mentioned a church as a place where perpetrators can get help:

“He can get help and even the church when they go for counselling to a pastor, the pastor calls the husband. And if he goes, they can get help.” (Nyari #5, p. 3)

Here Nyari was speaking of a case where the husband was abusing his wife, mentioning that both of them can get help from the pastor. A study in the Congo has also confirmed that FBOs offer effective strategies in addressing gender based violence (Beasley,
Ochieng, Muyonga & Kavuo, 2010). The use of FBO services by perpetrators can be attributed to how churches are seen as upholding the moral fibre by society; hence, perpetrators may feel safer in approaching a church.

However, Churches may also be criticised for being patriarchal and more likely to support the perpetrator which may be the reason why perpetrators are more comfortable in using these services. On the other hand, Nyari mentions that the women consulting the Church may be considered a challenge to some perpetrators (husbands), who may get even more upset that the victim (wife) reported the case to the church and see it as a form of embarrassment, and hence perpetuate more violence. This is also confirmed by Rasool and Hochfeld (2005) that some religious beliefs promote gender based violence through patriarchal discourse that promotes marriage preservations over resolving the occurring gender based violence. Another study also indicates how churches pose a challenge in addressing cases of gender based violence. Beaman-Hall and Nason-Clark (1997) indicate that services by FBOs can be problematic, especially if pastors are unaware of the dynamics of abusive relationships or misinterpret Bible passages to victims, encouraging them to stay in abusive relationships and pray for women to be more submissive. Petersen (2009) also indicates that churches are faced with a challenge when it comes to handling cases of domestic violence and that can be blamed on their training which does not address patriarchal practices that promote gender based violence. This is an indication that although FBOs are available to assist perpetrators of gender based violence, they are not sufficient in resolving gender based violence holistically.

### 4.7.2. Group therapy

Group therapy is a form of counselling that takes place within a group setting and it is one of the social work methods that is used for intervention with clients at the meso level of practice. Participants outlined that a perpetrator who seeks help may be assisted by counselling either in the form of individual or group therapy. A participant reflected on the importance of group therapy as follows:

“Services like that whereby men empower each other and educate each other in trying to change this mentality that as a man you own your woman so you have the right to do as you please with them.” (Ben #1, p. 3)
Ben speaks of men who have been perpetrators, empowering each other in a group setting as an effective method against gender based violence. Maphosa (2015) also confirms in her research that support groups with a group of perpetrators yield positive results as an effective treatment programme if it has a feminist approach and is aligned with court oversight. USAID (2015) also emphasises that counselling within a group setting is an effective way of reducing inequality and preventing violence through questioning traditional norms and reinforcing positive behaviour.

The participants in this research project were very familiar with group counselling since it is addressed in theory and they practiced it in their internship classes. However, they were unable to ascertain what was needed to facilitate counselling, specifically with victims or perpetrators of gender based violence. The participants’ level of facilitating group counselling is at the generalist level, offered in both theory and internship courses of social work. It is important for a social worker facilitating a group of perpetrators to understand the dynamics of gender based violence in order to prevent the group members from re-enforcing gender based violence attitudes and behaviours.

4.7.3. Non-Governmental Organisations that assist perpetrators of gender based violence

Similarly to organisations that assist victims of gender based violence, there are organisations that are aimed at assisting perpetrators of gender based violence. A female participant Refu indicates the following:

“… perpetrators, what do we call it, Brothers for Life and all that maybe they can join those organizations so they can get advises” (Refu#10, p.3).

Another participant who is male, Madu indicates that Sonke Gender Justice also assists as follows:

“… So I think those kinds of programmes like this Sonke Justice, it can help, like the people to deal with their angers” (Madu#3, p.3).

In addition to Brothers for Life and Sonke Gender Justice, the other participants identified FAMSA as an NGO that offer services to perpetrators of gender based violence. Most of these organisations have recently been advertising their services on national television, hence the widespread knowledge. In addition, there has been a movement to
end gender based violence by providing specifically obtaining the support of men, the gender most likely to perpetrate gender based violence. Hence, it is not surprising that the participants were able to identify these groups. NICRO is another well-known organisation that works with perpetrators of gender based violence. However, participants did not mention it or recall the work that it does. The same could be said of other organisations that work with perpetrators of gender based violence, but which were not mentioned by student social workers.

### 4.8. The role of a social worker in working gender based violence

Participants were asked about their views on the role of a social worker in working with gender based violence. The semi-structured questions on this theme were based on how the participants think social workers deal with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence and whether they think social workers understand the issue of gender based violence. Participants identified different roles that are played by a social worker in gender based violence. These roles are similar to those played by a social worker in any circumstance or intervention with clients. The roles that were identified are discussed below.

#### 4.8.1. Advocate

Most of the participants identified advocacy as a major role played by social workers in gender based violence. A participant, Ben, indicated how social workers could advocate on behalf of a victim of gender based violence by mentioning that:

“They can advocate for their rights in terms of maybe going to court if need be and speak on their behalf and then have something done because sometimes perpetrators get away with gender based violence because no-one really stood up and supported the victim.” (Ben #1, p. 4)

What Ben is referring to is a well-known approach used by activist groups who often accompany a victim to court, offer assistance and support. Such actions, when done by social workers, can increase the morale of the victim, make them feel supported and assist them in expressing themselves in court. Ben also mentioned social workers speaking on behalf of the client. This is a basic form of an advocacy role that can be played by a social
worker. Sullivan (1991) confirms that advocacy is crucial in assisting victims of gender based violence by mentioning that advocacy has empowered victims of gender based violence to access resources, become financially independent of the abuser and sustain their own lives.

4.8.2. Educator

Almost all the participants spoke about a social worker playing the role of an educator in cases of gender based violence. One participant mentions:

“Offer them education as well, in terms of options available such as reporting the crime, getting the protection order.” (Ben #1, p. 3)

One of the participants, Ben, who was quoted above, reflects on the important role of a social worker in being an educator on issues of gender based violence. Another participant, Thema, emphasises the role of a social worker in offering educational programmes in an attempt to prevent gender based violence.

“And also in schools we need a lot of development so we should be educational in schools.” (Thema #7, p. 13)

According to Thema, a social worker can play an important role by offering educational programmes in schools. This is a good intervention strategy since school children will have an opportunity to be taught about gender based violence at an early age. Miley, O'Melia and DuBois (2012) identify the role of a social worker as an educator by indicating that the educator role in social work empowers clients with information to stimulate competent functioning. The participants were able to identify that it is important for a social worker to educate clients about gender based violence so as to aid prevention and to empower the client to function optimally.

4.8.3. Mediator

Participants mentioned another important role that is played by a social worker, that of mediator. Mahla indicated how unique cases of gender based violence may be, hence requiring the social worker to mediate rather than take drastic action such as removing children from a domestic violence, but rather to restore the family. The participant mentions:
“We can mediate, we can restore, we make sure that the family is not broken in the end of the intervention.” (Mahla #9, p. 4)

According to Mahla, the social worker may need to mediate between the two parties involved and apply restorative justice. Another participant, Rahi, speaks about the mediator role played by a social worker from her knowledge of one organisation that was assisting victims of gender based violence:

“They bring the offender and the victim of violence together and they try to talk to them. They’ll first talk to the victim then talk to the offender. If it’s safe they’ll put them in one room and so do a counselling too. Then there’s a restorative justice to restore the peace.” (Rahi, #8, p. 15)

The participant Rahi reports that restorative justice initiatives such as victim and offender mediation have been used to restore peace between the two parties. What Rahi also recognises is the importance of ensuring safety of the victim before bringing them close to a perpetrator. Rahi further states how social workers protect victims during the mediation process:

“They do intervene in protecting the victims, putting their safety first, making sure that the victims are safe and even removed to a place of safety.” (Rahi #4, p. 6)

Van Wormer (2003) considers restorative justice to be an effective means of meeting the needs of clients which is consistent with social work values. Not all authors agree, however, and in some cases restorative justice in domestic violence situations has been criticised. Proietti-Scifoni (2008) outlines the drawbacks of restorative justice, mentioning re-victimisation, compromising safety, power dynamics and symbolic implications. Although restorative justice may work in some areas of conflict, it should be assessed if it is appropriate in gender based violence since there are chances that it may not work in some instances and the honours of applying it should be given to the victim.

The participants were able to identify three major roles played by a social worker in cases of gender based violence, which indicates positive levels of awareness of the different roles social workers play in issues of gender based violence.
Over and above the roles mentioned by the participants, the respondents elaborated on the role of a social worker in supporting and ensuring the safety of the victim. Although the participants did mention some interventions with perpetrators, their view of a social worker’s role in gender-based violence intervention is more inclined towards working with victims. Research done by Hwenha (2014) has also identified that the majority of services linked to gender-based violence are targeted more at victims than at perpetrators. However, they were more aware of services for perpetrators than victims. Student social workers may need to work with both groups to be adequately address the scourge of gender-based violence.

4.9. Feelings about working with perpetrators of gender-based violence

Most of the participants considered that gender-based violence services were more inclined towards supporting victims, which leaves a gap for work with perpetrators. Their feelings on working with perpetrators are outlined in the following quotes from two participants:

“I would refer because I personally do not want to work with people who abuse other people.” (Bala #6, p. 11)

“I think it would be weird because I would be angry myself and say why are you abusing other people? Why can’t you just control yourself?” (Nosu #2 p. 8)

These participants, one male and one female expressed their discomfort at working with perpetrators of gender-based violence. The feeling of discomfort expressed by the participants is in disagreement with the social work value of being non-judgemental. When probing further to understand how the student social workers would react if someone confessed to battering their partner, there was still reluctance and ambivalence on how they would react. Some of the participants indicated that they would applaud the perpetrator for seeking help, however, they struggled to remove their own bias from the situation. Only a few of the participants were able to indicate that they would remain professional and not judge the perpetrator. Nonetheless, the majority expressed discomfort at working with perpetrators which may reflect limited training of working with gender-based violence. Expressing discomfort at working with perpetrators can also be an
indication of self-awareness, in which case as a professional they may refer a client if they are aware of their bias.

4.10. Knowledge about a protection order

A protection order is an essential tool to protect victims of gender based violence by restraining the alleged perpetrator from coming into close contact with the complainant. The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 provides for the issuing a protection order. The researcher believes that social workers can play a major role in informing clients about their rights to such an order.

Participants were asked about their knowledge of a protection order, its terms and how it is issued. Most of the participants likened a protection order to a restraining order. They indicated that they knew about a protection order on the basis of general knowledge, however, not as something they came across in their professional training. None of the participants could recall any formal training on protection orders or on the Domestic Violence Act. The participants’ knowledge of a protection order is that of a document that can be obtained from the police station. A social worker would play a very minimal role in the matter. One participant indicates:

“It’s obviously opened at the police station... it’s a document that actually states that the perpetrator should not, should stay away from you, maybe they give a certain kind of area that they shouldn’t come near you…” (Magi #4, p.4)

Magi mentioned that a protection order is obtained at a police station, which is incorrect since it can be obtained from the magistrate’s court. This indicates that participants were aware of what a protection order is, however, they did not have in-depth knowledge of its use, purpose or how it is obtained. Their understanding of a social worker’s role in a protection order is to offer advice to clients about its availability. They felt that it is a sufficient role for a social worker to advise clients about a protection order. Danis (2003) concurs when he states that “not all social workers need to know how to obtain protective orders, they should know that the option exists and where their clients can get specialized services in this field” (p. 187). Furthermore, a social worker may facilitate the process of obtaining one by making a formal referral for the client and assist the client in the process of obtaining one.
4.11. Training for intervention on gender based violence

Participants were asked about their training on gender based violence based on the subjects they took and their recommendations on the training of student social workers on gender based violence. The participants reported they had not had any specific course that focused on gender based violence, but on a social work course on social issues, gender based violence was amongst some of the social issues that a student had an option to write an assignment on. Among the courses that student social workers took that are a prerequisite such as psychology and sociology, there were case studies that included gender based violence.

However, it was a common response among participants that they did not receive training specifically on gender based violence even though, in some way, gender based violence was covered in some courses. One participant indicated:

“There wasn’t a module exactly on that actually, you know, a semester module, that gave a lot of information in terms of gender based violence because, most of the time obviously here... we are doing a generalist practice module so they will give you maybe approaches that you can adapt to every situation and then maybe you read more on gender based violence.” (Magi #4, p. 5)

Although participants did not receive training specifically on gender based violence, they felt that they were trained adequately enough to deal with social issues in general through their generalist social work training. This is supported by Miley et al. (2012) who report that generalist social work provides an integrated and multileveled approach to meeting clients' needs.

Participants emphasised the importance of training in gender based violence. In as much as generalist social work practice prepares social workers for work in diverse fields, gender based violence is a pressing issue in South Africa that needs specific intervention by social workers. The suggestions put forward by the participants on how training on gender based violence could be improved include the following:

- Incorporating gender based violence case studies in theory and practical courses;
Having a course (module) that focuses on gender based violence;
Offering CPD courses to already qualified social workers on gender based violence; and
Making gender based violence a speciality, where social workers can specialise in the field in the same way that some social workers specialise in probation work or work with children.

These were some of the suggestions of the participants on how social workers’ knowledge and understanding of gender based violence could be improved. The participants were aware of gender based violence and have some information on the issue, however, they do feel that more specific training is needed to improve their interventions in the issue.

4.12. Section 2: Focus group thematic data analysis

This section focuses on the responses of the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to verify the responses from the individual interviews and to explore how student social workers would intervene in cases of gender based violence. The focus group members were a separate group from the individual participants. The demographic and biographical information of the focus group participants is represented in the following table.

Table 3: Demographic and biographical data of focus group participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Childhood Residence</th>
<th>Current Residence</th>
<th>Internship Completed</th>
<th>Second Subject Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nowa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>On-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thums</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, not in a relationship</td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nono</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single, in a relationship</td>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>Off-campus student res</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.12.1. Validation of results from individual interviews

Focus group members were presented with the same questions that were asked during the individual interviews to validate whether these represented their own perceptions about gender based violence. The focus group members were not part of the individual interviews, but they were able to confirm that the responses represented their own views. In cases where they had different views, the data was analysed with the individual interview responses. The overall responses from focus group members are recorded on a table in appendix A.

4.12.2. Social workers’ interventions in gender based violence - focus group discussion

The focus group participants were divided into two teams in order to develop an intervention strategy. Each team consisted of two members, a male and a female. One team focused on intervention with perpetrators and the other team focused on intervention with victims. The intervention strategies were designed within the three levels of social work practice; the micro, meso and macro levels. The three levels of social work practice are also referred to as levels of the social ecology, which in turn can be translated to the levels of the ecological framework: individual, relationship, community and societal.

The focus group members responded to the question of intervention within the levels of the ecological framework. Although the ecological framework has four levels and social work practice is divided into three levels, the macro level of the social work practice represents both the community and societal levels of the ecological framework, as discussed in the literature chapter.

In their teams, the focus group members were advised to integrate their interventions in response to the causes of gender based violence that were mentioned during the individual interviews. Both teams were instructed to look at interventions within the three levels of social work practice. They were not, however, advised on how these three levels were integrated according to the ecological theory. This was done to allow the participants to explore and use their own knowledge. The focus group members, within their teams were able to come up with interventions at the different levels of the social ecology through levels of social work practice, which is demonstrated in Figure 2 below and discussed according to the levels of social work practice.
4.12.3. Micro practice

At the micro, or individual, level the team that looked at interventions with perpetrators reported that they would suggest individual counselling in the form of behaviour modification with individual clients. They indicated that it would also include anger management skills. When comparing this intervention strategy with the causes of gender based violence within the individual level, it corresponds and confirms what Heise (1998) refers to as the predicting factors amongst violent males. These factors include witnessing violent behaviour at an early age and trouble in handling anger. Having counselling sessions with a perpetrator of physical violence as the participants suggest, may assist in helping them to deal with the perpetuating factors of violence towards the other gender, however, this strategy does not address other forms of gender based violence. It should be noted that this intervention strategy at the individual level which was devised by this team was aimed at addressing primarily physical violence and disregarded other forms of gender based violence.

Previous research indicates that men’s violence towards women stems from patriarchal traditions of controlling women, not only through physical violence but also through other means such as economic subordination, threats and isolation (Johnson,
1995). This observation is linked to the participants’ definition of gender based violence as being primarily physical in nature.

The team that was tasked with defining an intervention strategy for victims suggested an integrated model which would consider “…looking at the person’s support system, their family, friends and then assessing the problem”. This team was able to apply the basic intervention strategy in social work, which starts with assessment. The team also identified that they needed to assess what the problem was before suggesting any possible solution to the client’s problem. Although assessment is a basic skill necessary in social work, gender based violence is a complex social issue which also needs an assessment of risk. Dannis (2003) reports that what social workers do not know about gender based violence risks may hurt their clients. Social workers would need to know what the gender based violence risks were so as to identify these during assessment and intervene accordingly with victims. Knowing the risks would also assist in eliminating the re-victimisation of clients. However the student social workers did not consider risks and how they will prepare victims for safety in their interventions.

Miley et al. (2012) emphasise that working with clients at the micro level requires creating change with the individual and in their interpersonal functioning. However, efforts should also be directed and integrated at other levels of practice. The focus group participants from both teams also recognised that the clients they would work with within the individual level would also need to be involved at the other levels of practice.

4.12.4. Meso practice

This section focuses on the intervention strategies that the focus group members devised at the meso level of social work practice. At meso level, the teams looked at how they would devise interventions with groups. The team working with perpetrators indicated that they would implement therapeutic groups with perpetrators as well as educational groups on gender based violence with perpetrators. This team also included having household discussions with families that were affected by gender based violence. This is creative and symbolises a creative approach in social work. This type of intervention addresses what Heise (1998) indicates to be the cause of gender based violence that takes place within the meso level, namely, social factors that affect the family, the isolation of females within the family and peer group pressure perpetrators. Intervention with groups may potentially bring sensitisation among peers who have negative gender attitudes. In addition, working with a group of family members may bring sensitisation to the household,
however, it cannot guarantee the total elimination of gender based violence within a group of perpetrators.

A study conducted by Edleson (2012) on men who beat women found that the most predominant model for barterer intervention programmes includes a combination of educational and psychosocial processing amongst the group members and such interventions have yielded positive results in ending gender based violence. This is also confirmed by a USAID guide, *Working with men and boys to end violence against women and girls*. The guide suggests that working with boys and men on educational and peer support groups may contribute towards ending gender based violence (USAID, 2015). It is clear that a combination of group and other methods needs to be implemented with perpetrators in order to achieve positive results.

The team working on an intervention strategy with victims suggested that having two types of groups to help victims of gender based violence would be beneficial. On the two types of groups, one group would look at educating the victims on their rights on gender based violence and the other group would look at emotional support and therapy. This strategy is similar to what the team looking at work with perpetrators covered – addressing exo-system factors. Exo-system factors are those immediate social settings, within the meso level, that influence and determine why certain people are at greater risk of gender based violence than others (Heise, 1998). Since exo-system factors put people at risk of either being victims or perpetrators of gender based violence, educational or support groups can be efficient, as the team suggested. This view is supported by Miley et al. (2012) who add that effecting change within the meso level requires an understanding of group dynamics and facilitation skills. The focus group members reported on their understanding of group work processes and group work as an intervention strategy. This is similar to what the participants in the individual interviews expressed, being comfortable with group work. However, neither the individual nor the group participants were able to state the complexities or their understanding of the complexities in working with a group of perpetrators. Neither did they have knowledge on the literature on the lack of effectiveness of these interventions as stand-alone practices.

4.12.5. Macro practice

At the macro level of intervention, both teams looked at how they would devise intervention at the community and societal levels respectively. The team focusing on perpetrators indicated that they would work with perpetrators to raise awareness of gender
based violence within their communities. The team reported that a perpetrator can become aware of their own wrongdoing by:

“…going back to their communities to address them about what they did and how wrong it was, so that other people can come to realise that it is wrong, because like if it’s something that comes from someone who did it then they will also have the ability to change.”

This strategy is an example that systems within an ecology do co-exist, as the ecological theory suggests. This is also confirmed by Bronfenbrenner (1994) who indicates that the processes which take place at the macro level ultimately affect systems at lower levels such as the micro level. The team was able to identify that a community could learn from the mistakes and behaviour of one person, who was a perpetrator of gender based violence. Although this strategy is more applicable to the meso level, it is still relevant at the macro level. The team emphasised that they would implement their intervention through community awareness programmes such as the one mentioned above. The team could not, however, conceive of how working with perpetrators could influence policy and societal change, which exists at the societal level of the ecological framework. This constitutes a significant gap, since social workers are also expected to influence policy that can bring about societal change and solutions to social problems.

The team looking at interventions with victims at the macro level suggested running awareness programmes within the victims’ communities. This, according to the team, would alert other community members as to what to do should they witness gender based violence or if someone discloses to them situation. There was a correlation between the approaches of the two teams, namely, the reliance on awareness programmes as an intervention method in macro practice. This could mean that this is the type of community intervention that the participants are aware of, based on the training they received. However, there are various intervention methods that were not covered by the participants, notably, those on work with either the victims or the perpetrators. Working at the macro level may also include community development planning, social action, policy formulation and public action (Miley et al., 2012). These strategies that the focus group was unable to identify could also be applied to work with victims and perpetrators.

The focus group members were able to construct intervention strategies with both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. This was done within the three levels of
social work practice. Although the group was not told to consider the ecological framework in their planning for intervention, they were still able to incorporate their ideas within the boundaries of the framework by showing integration among these levels. The integration of the ecological framework into an intervention strategy by the participants is an indication that knowledge of gender based violence intervention can be derived from social work practice, however their thinking was limited to certain types of interventions that do not seem to challenge the underlying social structures that perpetuate gender based violence. They focussed more on therapeutic approaches that heal and deal with the effect of violence, as well as basic awareness programmes which have not proven to be effective. This may indicate a gap in their curriculum even though it is clear that the profession has an important contribution to make in terms of dealing with gender based violence.

4.13. Conclusion

The participants showed understanding of gender based violence by giving various forms and contexts where it takes place. It also emerged that participants felt comfortable working with victims of gender based violence but reluctant to work with perpetrators. Participants stated that their training on gender based violence had been limited since they received only generalist training. Some of the suggestions on how gender based violence training could be improved included having CPD courses, including gender based violence case studies into the curriculum and making gender based violence a speciality in social work.

Focus group members were asked to engage in developing intervention strategies on gender based violence to ascertain the depth of their preparedness for intervention on the issue. What stood out overall in the intervention strategy by the focus group members was how they were able to identify that gender based violence cuts across levels of the social ecology. The teams were able to come up with an integrated intervention strategy which confirms the claim made by the ecological framework that gender based violence is an integrated social issue and needs an integrated approach to intervention. Knowledge about an integrated approach already sets student social workers apart from other professionals in being capable to adequately intervene in gender based violence. However the interventions focussed on healing and educational aspects and ignored challenging the structures in society that sustain gender based violence. On the following chapter, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed based on the findings from the study and with reference to theory.
Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions based on the findings of the study and makes recommendations. The study is concerned with understanding the perceptions of social work students regarding gender based violence and their perceived preparedness for practice using the ecological framework. The framework assists in looking at the interplay among systems of the social ecology. The research results were measured against the research aim which was to explore the understanding of social work students regarding gender based violence, including its causes, and to explore the students’ preparedness for practice through developing an intervention strategy using the ecological framework.

The conclusions are organised according to the three levels of social work practice, which were translated into the different levels of the social ecology in Chapter 4. Summaries of the findings are firstly given, followed by a discussion that leads to the conclusions. The following steps, based on the research objectives, are followed in presenting this chapter. Firstly, conclusions on the major findings are drawn according to the levels of social work practice, secondly, the causes of gender based violence and implication for social workers’ practice are summarised, thirdly, conclusions are drawn as to how student social workers would intervene for each level of social work practice, and fourthly, recommendations are made based on the findings of the study. The chapter concludes with contributions of the study and recommendations for further research.

5.2. Student social workers’ understanding of gender based violence

Unpacking the understanding of student social workers regarding gender based violence was one of the objectives of this research. Various sub-questions were asked in order to determine the understanding of student social workers about gender based violence, especially within the micro, meso and macro levels of social work practice. It can be concluded that students’ understanding of this phenomenon is multifaceted. Student social workers understand gender based violence as violence inflicted on either a male or a female based on their gender. However, their definition of gender based violence was
limited to people in a relationship. The participants also showed understanding on some forms of violence that takes place within the three levels of social work practice. The conclusions on their understanding of gender based violence is organised into the three levels of social work practice.

5.2.1. **What student social workers understand about gender based violence at the micro level?**

The participants identified various forms of gender based violence which exist at the micro level of social work practice. These include physical violence, sexual abuse, economic abuse and any other forms of violence by a man or a woman towards their spouse. This is an indication that student social workers are aware and do understand gender based violence within the micro level of social work practice. This knowledge can assist them in their practice, should they come across individual cases of gender based violence, and they will be able to assess them accordingly.

5.2.2. **What student social workers understand about gender based violence at the meso level?**

The forms of gender based violence that student social workers know and those they identified to take place at the meso level of social work practice are similar to those that take place at the micro level. They did not mention any new forms of gender based violence, domestic violence was the only form that was mentioned as being more prominent at the meso level. Since the meso level of practice involves work with a group of individuals, it makes sense that the same forms of gender based violence can cut across the two levels (micro and meso) of social work practice. It can be concluded that student social workers have some understanding of factors that contribute to gender based violence at the meso level since they were able to identify the interconnectedness of the micro and meso level. To emphasise the interconnectedness represented by the ecological framework, research (Heise, 1998; Jewkes, 2002) indicates that many forms of gender based violence are inter-related and cut across levels of the social ecology. The many interconnections between factors can mean that a change in one factor in what seems to be the right direction, for example, a small increase in women’s education, might reduce the degree of interpersonal violence. Student social workers showed understanding of how the micro level is interconnected to the meso level.
5.2.3. What student social workers understand about gender based violence at the macro level?

In identifying factors that contribute to gender based violence, the participants failed to identify those that occur within the macro level of social work practice. Forms of gender based violence such as policies that promote inequality, genital mutilation, the deprivation of liberties and other societal oppressions towards a certain gender that were discussed in Chapter 2, were not identified by the participants. However they were able to identify some causes of gender based violence that can be located at the society, such a patriarchy and culture. It can be concluded that student social workers understand and are able to identify gender based violence that occurs at the micro and meso levels of social work practice, however, they have limited knowledge and understanding of the forms of gender based violence that occurs at the macro level of social work practice. Hence, it explains why their interventions were largely located at the micro and meso level, with little knowledge of macro level intervention strategies.

5.3. The causes of gender based violence according to student social workers

Since student social workers, especially those that participated in this research, are on the brink of completing their studies, this objective was focused on finding out what they thought were the causes of gender based violence and the potential implications of these perceptions on their practice once they are employed as social workers. The following conclusions are drawn from varying responses given by the students, which were discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

5.3.1. Unemployment and financial dependency causes gender based violence

Student social workers identified unemployment and financial dependency as causes of gender based violence. The participants based their premises on the view that a spouse, who is supporting their partner, may be abusive to that partner since they are financially dependent on them. Payne and Wermeling (2009) have also confirmed that unemployed spouses who are financially dependent on their partners are usually taken advantage of and abused by their partner. But, unemployment and financial dependency in its essence cannot cause gender based violence, it can make it difficult for people to deal...
with it. This is also the case where the victims end up staying in the abusive relationship because of fear of losing the financial support. The financial dependence of the victims on the perpetrators also influences them not to seek help (Rasool, 2012a). It is a problematic assumption by student social workers that being unemployed and financially dependent makes a person to be susceptible to gender based violence. Such can only be factors that influence re-victimization and help-seeking among victims of gender based violence.

### 5.3.2. Cultural norms and values

Student social workers identified cultural norms and values as a cause of gender based violence, especially those of a patriarchal nature. Values which perpetuate the notion that a man is the head of the household and a woman should accept whatever he says are part of gender based violence perpetuating factors identified by the participants. Understanding this kind of information will prepare students when they start to practice and will enable them to educate their clients about such cultural norms and values. Gevers et al. (2013) confirm that culture has promoted harmful constructions of masculinities, which usually make men abusive to their partners. This makes gender based violence appear acceptable among many communities which ascribe to that culture. Rasool and Suleman (2016) have also confirmed that cultural barriers prevent women from dealing effectively with gender based violence in their marriages. Hence, it can be concluded that student social workers correctly understand that certain cultural beliefs do promote and impede intervention in gender based violence. Furthermore, it emerged that the student social workers themselves are exposed to cultural beliefs and values that perpetuate gender based violence such as believing that a man is the head of the household hence everything he says goes. However, it was not ascertained whether they adhered to such values.

### 5.3.3. The use of alcohol causes gender based violence

Some of the participants reported that the use of alcohol causes gender based violence. In their understanding, student social workers seem to suggest that a perpetrator inflicts violence after they have drunk alcohol. This is not entirely the case, as the students appear to be suggesting that every person who drinks alcohol will perpetrate gender based violence and that most perpetrators of gender based violence only perpetrate violence after being drunk. Although alcohol may influence and affect a person’s judgement, as previous research by Wechnsberg et al. (2008) suggests, alcohol alone cannot be labelled
as the cause of gender based violence. On contrary, it can be noted that heavy alcohol consumption may reduce inhibitions, cloud judgment and impair ability to interpret social cues (Jewkes, 2002).

Student social workers do have some knowledge of what can trigger gender based violence, but their understanding of its dynamics is limited to the three factors above. One participant mentioned the history of violence in South Africa due to apartheid as a cause of gender based violence. This is significant as it was also confirmed by other studies, but only one student spoke about it briefly.

5.4. **Student social workers’ perceived preparedness for working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence**

This objective focused on understanding how student social workers were prepared to work with both victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. The conclusions are discussed according to the three levels of social work practice at the micro, meso and macro levels.

5.4.1. **Preparedness to work with victims and perpetrators at the micro level**

The participants indicated that they would intervene with individual victims and perpetrators through counselling sessions. This is at the basic level of social work intervention but is still a very effective method of intervention with victims to alleviate trauma, but not necessarily empowering. Its effectiveness with changing the behaviour of perpetrators is unclear. This is an indication that student social workers are prepared to intervene with individual clients of gender based violence based on their training at the micro level. However, since gender based violence is a complex field, numerous considerations need to be taken into account such as not re-victimising clients and assisting them to be safe. Not many considered safety planning with victims in their micro or meso work. What is interesting is that some participants felt reluctant to work with perpetrators, stemming from the fear of being unable to maintain impartiality. This is an indication that although student social workers are trained on intervention with clients and they are prepared to intervene with victims, they are not keen to work with perpetrators,
but self-aware enough to refer them. It is clear that more needs to be done in the social work curriculum to look at obstacles social work students face in working with perpetrators.

### 5.4.2. Preparedness to work with victims and perpetrators at the meso level

Student social workers who participated in this research indicated that they would implement educational and support groups with victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence. However, interventions with groups of perpetrators have received substantial criticism, as they have the potential of reinforcing abusive behaviour amongst perpetrators (Maphosa, 2015). A support group needs to be facilitated by an experienced social worker who can identify and address negative behaviour in the group, such as blaming the victim and actions supporting the perpetrator’s patriarchal behaviour. The research participants did not identify the complicated dynamics of facilitating gender-based violence educational, therapeutic or support groups with both victims and perpetrators. Although support groups are effective with victims, it is hard to get them to come consistently because of the control exerted by perpetrators which impacts on their mobility. This is an indication of an educational gap in their understanding of working effectively with gender-based violence at the meso level.

### 5.4.3. Preparedness to work with victims and perpetrators at the macro level

At the macro level of intervention, the participants identified community awareness campaigns as a way of addressing gender-based violence. The participants could not identify other intervention methods at this level of practice. It can therefore be suggested that student social workers have limited information of interventions at the macro level since awareness campaigns were the only method they were able to identify from a range of macro and societal level approaches. Other methods that were ignored by participants that are critical in gender-based violence work include community development planning, social action, policy formulation and public action (Miley et al., 2012). This is an indication of a gap in the knowledge and preparedness of student social workers to intervene at the macro level of social work practice in the field of gender-based violence. The implications of this limitation will be lack of influence by social workers on policies regarding gender-based violence, as well as in the critical areas of advocacy and lobbying. If social workers cannot use policies for development to eradicate poverty and gender-based violence, then
women will never break free from abusive relationships. Economic empowerment and empowerment from patriarchal context is critical for addressing gender based violence holistically.

5.5. Contributions of the study

In this study, the ecological framework has been incorporated into the three levels of social work practice. Social workers in the field should be intervening with skill and dexterity at all the levels of social work practice, however it seems their knowledge and application is limited. This dissertation has contributed to the knowledge of how student social workers think about intervening at the various levels of social work practice in cases of gender based violence, as well as highlighted their gaps in their knowledge. Hence this study will be useful to the improvement of the social work curriculum at universities and/or to inform the development of appropriate CPD modules to improve social work intervention in cases of gender based violence.

This study begins to inform institutions of higher learning what is necessary in the training for student social workers to intervene competently in gender based violence situations.

5.6. Recommendations

There are two key recommendations that stem from this study. The first is to address the perceptions of student social workers regarding gender based violence and the second is to improve the education of student social workers on gender based violence.

5.6.1. The perceptions of social work students on gender based violence

With gender based violence being a major social issue in South Africa, social work intervention becomes a core service. It is recommended that students’ perceptions of the issue should be examined and discussed during their studies. The most important factors to be considered are maintaining impartiality when dealing with both perpetrators and victims, and the ability to offer holistic and professional services. Secondly, it is important that student social workers understand the complexities of gender based violence and
mitigate their own bias and cultural beliefs in order to effectively assist perpetrators and victims.

5.6.2. **Social work education on gender based violence**

It is recommended that institutions of higher learning prioritise educating social work students on gender based violence. The education should be offered as a compulsory module in a generic degree. It should be addressed specifically within modules on case, group and community work to build students understanding on appropriate intervention for each level of practice. An element on working with perpetrators is essential since student social workers are uncomfortable working with perpetrators of gender based violence. They also need workshops on creative interventions at the various levels of the ecological system. Consequently, part of the education should include learning to work with perpetrators without bias, but through practicing and maintaining a non-judgemental attitude which is a core social work value. The education should also include looking at various options for intervening at the macro level of social work practice. If change is to be brought about on the issue of gender based violence, influence by social workers should be brought to bear at the level of policy making, community development, research and lobbying at the macro level.

In addition to having an undergraduate module, it would be useful to offer a postgraduate specialisation in social work that focuses on gender based violence. The same with child and youth care work being a speciality in social work; it would help to have gender based violence as a speciality. This will assist in having a system of referral to professionals that specifically work on gender based violence. For the continuous improvement of social work intervention on gender based violence, it is recommended that short courses and CPD courses be offered to social workers, to give them an opportunity to continually improve their knowledge on the issue.

5.7. **Further research**

It is recommended that further, in-depth research be conducted on the perceptions of social work students and their preparedness for practice in various institutions in order to broaden social work education and intervention on gender based violence.

Student social workers discomfort at working with perpetrators of gender based violence needs to be explored further with students from various institutions.
There are certain cultural beliefs and values that perpetuate gender based violence to which student social workers themselves are exposed. Further research is recommended to investigate whether student social workers ascribe to such values.

Research is also needed on how institutions prepare students to handle cases of gender based violence. Another area of study could be the investigation of how social workers already in the field intervene in cases of gender based violence, and finally, research on what institutions of higher learning offer to prepare students to intervene in gender based violence is needed.
References


### Appendixes

**Appendix A: Validations of individual responses by focus group members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Confirmations by focus group members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Tell me what is your understanding of gender based violence?          | - violence against women  
|                                                                          | - violence due to gender  
|                                                                          | - men abusing women                                                             |
| 2. What do you think contributes to gender based violence in society?    | - Patriarchy  
|                                                                          | - Inequality  
|                                                                          | - Alcohol and substance abuse  
|                                                                          | - History of gender based violence  
|                                                                          | - Unemployment  
|                                                                          | - Peer pressure  
|                                                                          | - Cultural norms and values                                                      |
| 3. What do you think are the options for a victim/survivor to get help to deal with gender based violence? | - There are services available, especially from NGOs  
|                                                                          | - They can get protection through shelters  
|                                                                          | - They can get help from social workers                                                   |
| 4. What options are available for perpetrators of GENDER BASED VIOLENCE to get help if they choose? | - There are NGOs that can assist; Brothers For Life, Sonke Gender Justice.  
<p>|                                                                          | Social workers can also help them. Most of them are in prison, where they can get       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you think is the role of social workers in gender based violence?</td>
<td>They help the victims. They also refer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you know about a protection order? How it is obtained and what are its functions?</td>
<td>Yes. To restrain a person from getting near another person, due to the fear of harm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7. Did any of your modules include gender based violence? If so, which module, which year? Tell me what you have learnt from the module? Do you think the module could have been improved in any way? | Yes and no  
- Populations at risk (third year), learned that women and children are at risk  
- Statutory work, learned about Children’s Act  
- No specific course on gender based violence.  
- Courses would have been improved if they had included what causes gender based violence and what can be done about it. |
| 8. If not, tell me what you would have liked to have learned about gender based violence? | What gender based violence is  
- What causes it  
- How social workers can intervene in the social issue |
| 9. Do you feel your training has adequately prepared you to deal with gender based violence? If so how? If not, how could it have? | Not adequately prepared  
- Would deal with gender based violence like any other case |
<p>| 10. What would you do if you were confronted with a woman who reports | Would do counselling |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abuse?</td>
<td>- Would assess need for safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Advise about opening a case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Educate about rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What would you do if someone confessed to hitting their partner?</td>
<td>- I would do counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I would not report to the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I would report if it happens again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I would invite partner (victim) to counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How do you feel about working with perpetrators of gender based</td>
<td>- Not entirely confident, but can work with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence?</td>
<td>- Uncomfortable to work with perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will try not to judge them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not confident, prefer working with victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Would refer to a senior social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How do you think social workers help gender based violence victims?</td>
<td>- They empower them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- They educate about rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- They refer them to psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- They assist with shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How do you think social workers help gender based violence</td>
<td>- Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perpetrators?</td>
<td>- Most perpetrators are in jail, they get to be rehabilitated there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Maybe refer to psychologists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Do you think social workers understand gender based violence adequately?

- Not all, but most do
- They do get in-service training

16. What would help in the training of social workers to deal with gender based violence?

- I think in service training seminars can be organised
- Recovered victims and perpetrators can have talks about their experiences
- Training can be arranged with CPD points
Appendix B: Research Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear Student,

My name is Fiona Mahlori. I am studying for a Masters in Clinical Social Work at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I have also completed my undergraduate degree at UJ. I am doing research on the perceptions of final year social work students regarding gender based violence. It has been reported that gender based violence is a serious social issue in South Africa and social workers are seen as “frontline” service providers. As a result, I have decided to do research on this topic. I would like to understand what you think about gender based violence and how you feel about working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study; however I will truly appreciate your participation. The time and date for the interview will be arranged according to what is suitable to you. The interview will only take an hour. The place for the interview will most likely be at UJ. I would like to assure you that everything you share with me will be kept confidential. Under no circumstances will your names, or any identifying information, appear in any publications that result from this research, unless you so desire.

If you are interested in participating, please provide your details on the form below. You may also call me on 0735474840 or email me on fionamahlori@yahoo.com. Your participation will be valued and your information will be treated with the greatest respect.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Fiona Mahlori

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred time to be contacted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Research Information Sheet

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for making yourself available to participate in this research. The research aims to establish what you think about gender based violence and how you feel about working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. I am a Master’s student at the University of Johannesburg; I am doing this research for qualification purposes and I am under supervision. This research project has been approved by the University of Johannesburg’s ethics committee.

PARTICIPANTS’ RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you (as appropriate, “and without penalty”).

The findings from the research may be published in an academic journal; however your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. Participating in the research will not impact on your marks as a student at the University of Johannesburg and the comments you make will not be held against you.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study. However; since gender based violence is a sensitive issue which may unveil psychological tension and discomfort, I have included the contact details of the student counselling service which are available to you free of charge from the University of Johannesburg’s Pyscad centre. You may contact them on +27 (0) 11 559 3324 or email psycadinfo@uj.ac.za; to make an appointment.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There will not be any financial compensation for participation and there will not be any costs incurred to you for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data that I will collect do not contain any personal information about you except for the name of the University. No one will link the data you provided to the identifying information you supplied.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information you may contact me directly on: 0735474840
Appendix D: Consent Form to Participate in the Interview


By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Participant’s Name (Printed)*

Participant’s signature*          Date

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)     Signature of person obtaining consent
Appendix E: Consent Form to Participate In the Focus Group


By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

_________________________________
Participant’s Name (Printed)*

_________________________________   _____________________
Participant’s signature*           Date

_______________________________   _________________________________
Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)      Signature of person obtaining consent
Appendix F: Consent Form for the Audio Recording of the Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Your information is very valuable to me, hence to make sure that I capture everything; I will be using a voice recorder.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you give permission for me to record the interview, (2) the recordings and transcripts will not have your name, (3) the recordings will be destroyed once the writing up has been completed, and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

_________________________________       _________________________________
Participant’s Name (Printed)*           Date

_________________________________       _________________________________
Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)   Signature of person obtaining consent
Appendix G: Consent Form for the Audio Recording of the Focus Group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Your information is very valuable to me, hence to make sure that I capture everything; I will be using a voice recorder.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you give permission for me to record the focus group discussion, (2) the recordings and transcripts will not have your names, (3) the recordings will be destroyed once the writing up has been completed, and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

_________________________________
Participant’s Name (Printed)*

_________________________________  _________________________________
Participant’s signature*           Date

_______________________________   _________________________________
Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)      Signature of person obtaining consent
Appendix H: Interview Guide

Study Title: Social Work Student's Perceptions of Gender based Violence and their Perceived Preparedness for Practice.

Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands]. My name is Fiona, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your perceptions on gender based violence. This is for the purpose of my Master’s research project, as indicated on your invitation letter.

C. (Recording) Please note that I am using a tape recorder, this is just to help me remember the things that we discussed and to make sure that I do not miss anything when writing up.

D. (Motivation) It has been reported that gender based violence is a serious social issue in South Africa and social workers are seen as “frontline” service providers. As a result, I have decided to do research on this topic. I would like to understand what you think about gender based violence and how you feel about working with victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

E. (Confidentiality) I would like to assure you that everything you share with me will be kept confidential. Under no circumstances will your names, or any identifying information, appear in any publications that result from this research, unless you so desire.

F. (Time line) The interview should take about an hour. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

Demographic and personal details:

1. Name:
2. Interview number:
3. What is your age in years?
4. What is your gender? Male/Female
5. What is your marital status? Single / Never married / Married / Separated / Divorced / Widowed / Partnered
6. What is your race?
7. What was your second major? Psychology or Sociology
8. What was your geographic location during your childhood? Rural / Urban / Suburban?
9. Where are you currently living?
10. Have you completed your internship this year?
11. Have you completed your theory modules this year?

Questions to be asked:

1. Tell me what is your understanding of gender based violence?
2. What do you think contributes to gender based violence in society?
3. What do you think are the options for a victim or survivor to get help to deal with gender based violence?
4. What options are available for perpetrators of gender based violence to get help if they choose?
5. What do you think is the role of social workers in gender based violence?
6. Do you know about a protection order? How it is obtained and what are its functions?
7. Did any of your modules include gender based violence? If so, which module, which year? Tell me what you have learnt from the module? Do you think the module could have been improved in any way?
8. If not, tell me what you would have liked to have learned about gender based violence?
9. Do you feel your training has adequately prepared you to deal with gender based violence? If so, how? If not, how could it have?
10. Is there anything about your training or lack thereof on gender based violence that you would like to share?
11. What would you do if you were confronted with a woman who reports abuse?
12. What would you do if someone confessed to hitting their partner?
13. How do you feel about working with perpetrators of gender based violence?
14. How do you think social workers deal with gender based violence victims?
15. How do you think social workers deal with gender based violence perpetrators?
16. Do you think social workers understand this issue adequately?
17. What would help in the training of social workers to deal with gender based violence?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time and participation. If there is a need to have another interview, would you be available to participate?
Appendix I: Focus Group Guide


Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) [Introduce self]. My name is Fiona, thank you for making yourself available to participate in this research. Please note that I am using a tape recorder, this is just to help me remember the things that we discussed and to make sure that I do not miss anything when writing up.

Logistics

. The focus group will run for approximately 3 hours
. We will have 2 sections
   o Section 1: feedback from interviews (member checking)
   o Section 2: Intervention strategies
. Please make sure that you sign the two consent forms: 1. for participation in the focus group and 2. for audio recording of the focus group.

Member checking from individual interviews

Let members know that this is a preliminary report from the data collected with individual interviews. The responses are grouped according to questions asked and summarised as follows:

18. Tell me what is your understanding of gender based violence?
   . violence against women
   . violence due to gender
   . men abusing women

19. What do you think contributes to gender based violence in society?
   . Patriarchy
   . Inequality
   . Alcohol
   . History of gender based violence
Unemployment
Peer pressure
Cultural norms and values

20. What do you think are the options for a victim/survivor to get help to deal with gender based violence?
   - There are services available, especially from NGOs
   - They can get protection through shelters
   - They can get help from social workers

21. What options are available for perpetrators of gender based violence to get help if they choose?
   - There are NGOs that can assist; Brothers For Life, Sonke Gender Justice. Social workers can also help them. Most of them are in prison, where they can get rehabilitated.

22. What do you think is the role of social workers in gender based violence?
   - They help the victims. They also refer.

23. Do you know about a protection order? How it is obtained and what are its functions?
   - Yes. To restrain a person from getting near another person, due to the fear of harm.

24. Did any of your modules include gender based violence? If so, which module, which year? Tell me what you have learnt from the module? Do you think the module could have been improved in any way?
   - Yes and no
   - Populations at risk (third year), learned that women and children are at risk
   - Statutory work, learned about Children’s Act and Domestic Violence Act
   - No specific module on gender based violence
   - Module could have been improved if it had included what causes gender based violence and what can be done about it.
25. If not, tell me what you would have liked to learn about gender based violence?
   . What is gender based violence?
   . What causes it?
   . How can social workers can intervene in this social issue?

26. Do you feel your training has adequately prepared you to deal with gender based violence? If so, how? If not, how could it have?
   . Not adequately prepared
   . Would deal with it like any other case

27. What would you do if you were confronted with a woman who reports abuse?
   . I would do counselling
   . I would assess need for safety
   . I would advise about opening a case
   . I would educate about rights

28. What would you do if someone confessed to hitting their partner?
   . I would do counselling
   . I would not report to the people
   . I would report if it happens again
   . I would invite partner to counselling

12. How do you feel about working with perpetrators of gender based violence?
   . Not entirely confident, but can work with them
   . Uncomfortable to work with perpetrator
   . Will try not to judge them
   . Not confident, prefer working with victims
   . Would refer to a senior social worker

13. How do you think social workers help gender based violence victims?
   . They empower them
   . They educate about rights
   . They refer them to psychologist
   . They assist with shelters
14. How do you think social workers help gender based violence perpetrators?
   . Not sure
   . Most perpetrators are in jail, they get to be rehabilitated there
   . Maybe refer to psychologists

15. Do you think social workers understand this issue adequately?
   . Not all, but most do
   . They do get in-service training

16. What would help in the training of social workers to deal with gender based violence?
   . I think in-service training seminars can be organised
   . Recovered victims and perpetrators can have talks on their experiences
   . Training can be arranged with CPD points

Section 2:

. Please divide into two groups
. First group, look at intervention with victims of gender based violence at micro, meso and macro level
. Second group, look into intervention with perpetrators at three levels of practice
. 15 minutes of discussions and 5 minutes for presentation

Evaluation

After presentations: Now that you have constructed an intervention plan, how do you feel about working in the field of gender based violence? With victims and with perpetrators.
* Allow members to share and reflect.

Closing

Thank you so much for your time and participation.
Appendix J: Research Ethical Clearance

The Faculty of Humanities

Academic Ethics Committee

University of Johannesburg

8th Sept 2014

Dr. S. Rasool (Supervisor)

Department of Psychology

Faculty of Humanities

University of Johannesburg

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Title of research: Social Work Student’s Perceptions of Gender Based Violence and their Perceived Preparedness for Practice

Student name: Ms F Mahlori

Student No. 200608988

Dear Dr Rasool and Ms Mahlori

It is the judgement of the “Faculty of Humanities Academic Ethics Committee” that the research proposal, and the relevant documents submitted to us in support of a request for Ethical Clearance, has clearly indicated that the standard practice of ethical professionalism will be upheld in the research.
From a research ethics point of view, the Faculty of Humanities Academic Ethics Committee therefore endorses the proposed research.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor Zelda G Knight

Chair: Faculty Ethics Committee

CC: Chair of HDC, Professor A Van Breda
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