

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS DEALING WITH DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE MATTERS IN MANKWENG, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

**By**

**RONNY MKHONTO**

**DISSERTATION**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

**IN THE**

**FUCULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**(SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES)**

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**

**SUPERVISOR: Dr MR MANGANYI**

**JANUARY 2022**

**DECLARATION**

I, Ronny Mkhonto of student number: 201500331, declare that “LIVED EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MATTERS IN MANKWENG, LIMPOPO PROVINCE” is my work and that this study has not been submitted before for any other degree at any institution. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged and fully referenced.

.....

**Signature**

.....

**Date**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank the almighty God for protecting me and granting me the strength to complete this study. I would also like to thank the following people and institutions for their respective contributions to this dissertation:

- My mother, Nikky Thembi Masite, for her unconditional love, support, motivation, and encouragement.
- My siblings, Emmanuel, Wisly and Dimpho Mkhonto, for their support and believing in me.
- I thank my supervisor, Dr Manganyi MR, for his support, guidance, encouragement and for developing me.
- Police officers in the Mankweng Police Station, for taking the time out of their busy schedules to participate in this study.
- The South African Police Services for permitting me to conduct the study.
- The University of Limpopo Department of Social Work, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, and the Turfloop Research Ethical Committee (TREC) committees for their guidance.
- Prof. Kubayi SJ, for editing my work.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my late father, Moses Mahashi Mkhonto, whose memorable hard work motivated me during my studies. I also dedicate it to my mother Nikky Thembi Masite and my siblings Emmanuel, Wisly and Dimphe Mkhonto who encouraged and supported me during hard times. A special dedication to members of the South African Police Services and all the helping professionals who intervene in domestic violence-related matters.

## **ABSTRACT**

Several studies show that domestic violence is a global problem that the police deal with daily. Police officers are mostly being called upon to intervene during domestic violence occurrences. The police are considered first responders to domestic violence and other emergencies because of their broader scope. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of police officers who are dealing with domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province, South Africa. This study was qualitative and employed an exploratory case study to get insight into the lived experiences of police officers who are assigned to handle domestic violence cases. Five police officers were sampled from Mankweng Police Station using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. To stay in line with Covid-19 national regulations, data was collected via individual telephone interviews. Data was collected until saturation was reached and analysed thematically. The study found that police officers require the necessary skills and resources to deal with victims and survivors of domestic violence, especially those who have experienced emotional abuse. Furthermore, the study revealed a need for inter-professional collaboration between the police and social service agencies. Dealing with domestic violence presents complications for police officers, especially when they have to make an informed decision. The study recommends that more social workers should be hired in the police stations to assist police officers in handling domestic violence cases.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

DV-Domestic Violence

DVA-Domestic Violence Act

FCS-Family Violence, Child Protection, and Sexual Offences

IPV-Intimate Partner Violence

SAPS-South African Police Service

SLT-Social Learning Theory

TREC-Turfloop Research Ethical Committee

VAWA-Violence Against Women Act

WHO-World Health Organisation

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	v
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION	1
1.2 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY	3
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM	3
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	4
1.4.1 Aim of the study	4
1.4.2 The objectives of the study	4
1.4.3 Research questions	4
1.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY	5
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	5
1.7.1 Social learning theory (SLT)	5
1.7.2 Culture of violence theory	7
1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS	8
1.8.1 Experience	8
1.8.2 Police officer	9
1.8.3 Domestic violence	9
1.8.4 Perpetrator	9
1.8.5 Victim	9
1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	9
1.10 Conclusion	10

## CHAPTER TWO: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES

2.1 Introduction	11
2.1.1 Definition of domestic violence	11
2.2 An overview of the South African Police Service	11
2.2.1 Roles of police officers	11
2.2.2 SAPS unit dealing with domestic violence matters	12
2.3 Government policies regulating domestic violence	13
2.3.1 South African government policies	13
2.3.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)	13
2.3.1.2 The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998)	13
2.3.2 International government policies	14
2.4 Factors determining the police response to domestic violence	15
2.4.1 Police officers' beliefs and attitudes	15
2.4.2 Severity of the reported incident	17
2.4.3 Victim's statements	17
2.5 The causes and nature of domestic violence reported to the police	18
2.5.1 Factors contributing to domestic violence	18
2.5.1.1 Social tolerance of violence	18
2.5.1.2 Alcohol use/abuse by intimate partner	19
2.5.1.3 Financial problems	19
2.5.1.4 The Covid-19 pandemic	19
2.5.2 The nature of domestic violence	20
2.5.2.1 Forms of domestic violence	21
2.6 Challenges with police interventions in domestic violence matters	22
2.6.1 Poor police-public communication	22
2.6.2 Violence against the police	23
2.6.3 Difficulties with risk assessment	24
2.6.4 The legitimacy of the police	24
2.7 POSSIBLE ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS IF HIRED BY SAPS TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	25
2.8 Conclusion	26

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction	27
3.2 Research Approach	27
3.3 Research design	27
3.4 Population and Sampling methods	28
3.4.1 Population	28
3.4.2 Sampling methods	28
3.4.2.1 Purposive sampling technique	28
3.4.2.2 Snowball sampling technique	28
3.4.3 Inclusion criteria	29
3.5 Data collection	29
3.5.1 Literature study	29
3.5.2 Individual telephone interviews	29
3.6 Data analysis	30
3.7 Quality criteria	31
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	32
3.8.1 Permission to conduct the study	32
3.8.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent	33
3.8.3 Anonymity and confidentiality	33
3.8.4 Debriefing of participants	33
3.8.5 Respect, dignity and standard of care	33
3.8.6 Benefits and risks/harm	34
3.9 Limitation of the study	34
3.10 Conclusion	34

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction	35
4.2 Demographic details of the participants	35
4.3 Presentation and interpretation of data	35
4.3.1 Theme 1: Police decision to arrest	37
4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Signs of visible injuries	37
4.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: Availability of witnesses	37
4.3.1.3 Subtheme 3: The use of police discretion	38
4.3.1.4 Subtheme 4: Perpetrator's behaviour towards the police	39
4.3.2 Theme 2: Police decision to consider non-arrest options	39
4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Victim's statement	39
4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2: Issuing of protection orders	40
4.3.2.3 Subtheme 3: Referral to other services	40
4.3.3 Theme 3: Nature of the reported abuse	41
4.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Abuse against women	41
4.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: Abuse perpetrated by women against men	43
4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3: Abuse against children	43
4.3.4 Theme 4: Factors contributing to the reported domestic violence incidents	44
4.3.4.1 Subtheme 1: Extra marital affairs among intimate partners	44
4.3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Ending of relationship by intimate partner	45
4.3.4.3 Subtheme 3: Financial difficulties	46
4.3.4.4 Subtheme 4: Covid-19 and lockdown regulations	46
4.3.5 Theme 5: Challenges frequently faced by the police when handling domestic violence case	47
4.3.5.1 Subtheme 1: Working with insufficient resources	47
4.3.5.2 Subtheme 2: Withdrawal of charges	48
4.3.5.3 Subtheme 3: Maintaining peace and order	49
4.3.5.4 Subtheme 4: Identifying the potential aggressor	50
4.3.5.5 Subtheme 5 Difficulties with proving emotional abuse/intimidation	50
4.4 Discussion of findings	51
4.4.1 Factors influencing police officers' arrest decisions	52
4.4.2 The nature and causes the reported of domestic violence incidents	53
4.4.3 Challenges faced by police officers responding to domestic violence	54

4.4.4 Measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations	54
4.5 Conclusion	55

## CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction	56
5.2 Restatement of the problem	56
5.3 Restatement of the objectives	57
5.4 Conclusion	58
5.5 Recommendation	59
5.5.1 The SAPS	59
5.5.2 The South African government	59
5.5.3 Future research	60

REFERENCES	61
------------	----

LIST OF APPENDICES	70
--------------------	----

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide	70
---	----

Appendix B: Informed consent	71
------------------------------	----

Appendix C: Request letter for permission to conduct research	74
---	----

Appendix D: Ethical clearance certificate	76
---	----

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: demographic details of participants	35
Table 2: Summary of identified themes and subthemes	36

## **CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

More often than not, police officers handle domestic violence cases that have significantly become a social problem in society (Russell, 2018). Research shows that a police station is the most convenient and safest place to go during a crisis (Messing, Campbell, Wilson, Brown & Patchell, 2017). As a result, the police are increasingly being recognised for their role in combating domestic violence (Russell, 2018). Even though not all victims come forward to the police, it is estimated that the police deal with over 260 000 domestic violence incidents annually, or more than 700 reported cases per day (Blumer, 2016).

The necessity of the police to handle domestic violence matters has been recognised by the South African government as early as 1998 due to the escalation of violence in families. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (Act 116 of 1998) was enacted to provide victims of domestic violence with the greatest possible protection against domestic violence (Vetten, 2017). In South Africa, the police are guided by this Act in their response to domestic violence. The Act imposes a set of legal obligations on the South African Police Service (SAPS) regarding the safety needs of victims of domestic violence and helps them to access appropriate shelter and medical treatment.

The SA government enacted the National Instruction (NI) 7/1999 in 1999, which provides clear instructions to members of the SAPS on how to respond to a domestic violence complaint to ensure compliance with the duties imposed on them by the Domestic Violence Act. In terms of National Instruction (NI) 7/1999(1), the police officer who receives the complaint must gather evidence correctly and open a docket. In terms of section 12(1) of NI 7/1999, the police officer who attends to the complaint must record the reported incident in the Domestic Violence Register. Section 4(3) (a) of NI 7/1999 mandates that when a domestic violence case is reported through the telephone, the police must “without unreasonable delay” go where the alleged victim is (SAPS, 1999, p. 4). The police are expected to use their discretion to determine whether an arrest is appropriate and possible.

In South Africa, the police reports on domestic violence are uninformative since there is no crime known as ‘domestic violence’ (Morei, 2014, p. 928), rather, its various types are captured among specific crime categories such as assault and murder (Peacock,

2014). Previous research found that every six days, a woman is killed by her intimate partner around the world (Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje & Brobbey, 2017). South Africa's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey shows that one in five women over the age of 18 has been subjected to physical abuse, and at least one in three of these women sought professional help from law enforcement agencies (Stats SA, 2017). In 2021 it was reported that the lifetime prevalence estimates of intimate partner violence range from 20% in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe, and 25% in the WHO Americas regions to 33% in the WHO South-East Asia and African regions. Intimate partners are responsible for 38% of all female murders worldwide (WHO, 2021).

Negative remarks regarding police response to gender-based violence (GBV) have been raised in previous studies (Enaifoghe, Dlelana, Abosede & Dlamini, 2021). A study by Boira, Carbajosa and Marcuello (2013) revealed that police officers' responses and attitudes towards domestic violence have an impact on the victim's willingness to call them for help. Lockwood and Prohaska (2015) argue that victims of domestic violence often withdraw charges because of negative attitudes from police officers. Correspondingly, findings of a study by Stefanovska (2018) show that most victims of domestic violence hesitate to contact the police because of their negative past experiences with officers.

Every day, social workers and police officers usually interact with members of the same community who are facing similar problems (Lamin and Teboh, 2016). The police are usually the first to respond to emergency calls and sometimes they respond to critical situations that require social work skills (Roberts, 2007). However, the police and social workers operate in isolation which makes it difficult for victims of domestic violence to find an effective solution. If social workers are not used during non-law enforcement interventions like those connected to behavioural and mental health disorders, police officers may struggle to apply case management skills (Warde, 2014). Barker (2014) contends that it is important for police to work together with social workers because many social workers deal with people's problems directly in the communities. They must possess the necessary expertise to collaborate successfully with their diverse clients. Patterson (2012) postulates that organizations like the police and social work may join together in finding solutions to confront issues that fall beyond the capacity of any single agency.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY**

The prevailing incidences of domestic violence in South Africa and the unfavourable judgement of the police necessitated a close exploration of police officers' experiences regarding their interventions in domestic violence matters. Police incompetence in previous studies revealed the need for reform in responding to domestic violence cases (Enaifoghe *et al.*, 2021). However, the allegations and beliefs that have been reported against the police may be true in some cases and incorrect in others since most of the studies describing police responses to domestic violence were conducted abroad. While few studies have examined the police response in South Africa, no study has directly assessed police officers' lived experiences in working with domestic violence cases. Another area of concern that received little attention is the need for social workers in police agencies to handle gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. In this regard, research that focuses primarily on the interpretation of domestic violence by police officers and their related working situations, and the need for social work services in police agencies were explored.

## **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The prevalence of domestic violence in South Africa is particularly high, with several studies indicating that every eight hours a woman dies at the hands of her intimate partner (Abrahams *et al.*, 2012; Sibanda-Moyo *et al.*, 2017). A study by Geldenhuys (2020) revealed that many households have become crime hotspots since the beginning of the national lockdown where incidences of abuse occur between intimate partners. It has been reported that at least 29 women died at the hands of their intimate partners from March 2020 to June 2020 (Geldenhuys, 2020). Despite policy changes and the SAPS's training efforts to respond to domestic violence, incidents of reported domestic abuse remain unacceptably high, and some victims who approach the police for assistance are reportedly dissatisfied with the attitudes of police officers (Sinclair, 2017).

The police have widely been criticised in the public and media reports for failing to arrest perpetrators, taking more time to respond, and putting a low priority on domestic violence calls (Sinclair, 2017). It is alleged that the police often dismiss victims of domestic violence without a proper follow-up on the reported allegations (Lockwood &

Prohaska, 2015). In fact, research shows that the police treat domestic violence as a private matter, and only launch a criminal investigation when serious injuries or deaths have occurred (Campbell, Gill & Ballucci, 2018; Spies, 2019). Yet, little is known about factors that influence police officers' decisions, the challenges they face in dealing with domestic violence cases, and the nature of incidents that they respond to. This study deals with lived experiences of police officers who handle domestic violence matters. It sought to identify and address intervention hindrances to prevent more family abuses and fatalities.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to explore police officers' lived experiences of dealing with domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province.

### **1.4.2 The objectives of the study were:**

- To ascertain factors that influence police officers' decisions when responding to domestic violence matters.
- To determine the nature and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police.
- To identify challenges that police officers face when dealing with domestic violence cases.
- To identify measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations.

### **1.4.3 Research questions**

- What are the factors that influence police officers' decisions when responding to domestic violence matters?
- What are the types and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police?
- What are the challenges that police officers face when dealing with domestic violence cases?

- How can social work services be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations?

## **1.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Delimitations of this study include the small sample size and lack of depth when procedures were discussed and presented. Due to limited time and resources, the researcher decided to set limits on his work so that the study's aim and objectives do not become impossible to achieve. The study used a small sample and it was conducted in one police station. Only police officers that interact and deal directly with domestic violence matters were sampled. The police whose daily duties do not entail settling family disputes were excluded.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Due to higher rates of domestic violence in South Africa, this study is relevant to the South African Police Service (SAPS) as it forms part of institutions that intervene in cases where households are subjected to domestic violence. This study will bridge the knowledge gap in the police literature and identify challenges that police officers encounter in handling domestic violence cases. Moreover, the study will enhance the government and police officers' interventions in domestic violence matters. The findings of the study may contribute valuable information that could be used by professionals who are responsible for formulating measures to deal with domestic violence and monitor the reduction of domestic disputes. Most importantly, this study increased the researcher's knowledge about intervention in domestic violence matters and enable him to complete his master's degree.

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1.7.1 Social learning theory (SLT)**

This study seeks to use Akers' (1998) social learning theory (SLT) to understand criminal behaviour among intimate partners and is one of the criminal behaviour theories that have been effectively applied to explain a variety of deviant

and criminal activities (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Cochran, Maskaly, Jones & Sellers, 2017). The theory originates from the connection between components of the differential association theory of Sutherland and more general behavioural psychology concepts (Aker, 2015, p. 230). It provides a broad framework for understanding both deviant and conforming behaviour. The theory is made up of four learning concepts: differential association, definitions, imitation and differential reinforcement (Akers & Sellers, 2013). According to Akers (2015), the four factors serve to initiate and reinforce attitudes towards social behaviour. The balance of these factors affects whether a person is inclined to comply or deviate (Akers, 2015).

- Differential association

Differential association relates to learning from people with whom one often associates (Cochran *et al.*, 2017). This concept affirms the association between violence and peer pressure. Akers (2015) contends that individuals whose significant others support violence and engage in deviance are more likely to deviate. This means that if a person associates with people who abuse their partners, they are also likely to do the same.

- Definitions

Definitions comprise one's assessment, judgements, meanings and attitudes associated with a specific behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2009, p. 90). The definitions principle emphasises that people learn two sorts of definitions for a certain behaviour, either a favourable definition or an unfavourable definition. This concept shows that learning definitions that are favourable to breaking the law increases the likelihood of committing criminal or deviant conduct, whereas learning definitions that are unfavourable to breaking the law decrease the likelihood of committing a criminal or deviant act (Akers & Sellers, 2009).

- Imitating

Imitating relates to participating in conduct that one has witnessed another person undertaking (Akers, 2015). This type of observational learning is especially essential throughout childhood, and it is key to the intergenerational transmission of violence (Widom & Wilson, 2015). The SLT states that an individual watches a role model's conduct being reinforced, and imitates such behaviour in anticipation of obtaining comparable rewards (Cochran *et al.*, 2017). It can be argued that dysfunctional

parents set a negative impression on their children by utilising anger and aggressiveness to deal with disagreements while engaging with their intimate partners.

- **Differential reinforcement**

Differential reinforcement postulates that any behaviour that is repeated or suppressed is determined by the balance between past and current rewards and punishments (Cochran *et al.*, 2017). Modelled behaviour is strengthened when the individual feels that the use of aggressiveness and violence produces good results. Witnessing or experiencing violence in the family during childhood is predicted to have residual consequences, including incidences of marital and spousal violence that influence the use of physical attacks in adult interactions (Brown, Perera, Masho, Mezuk & Cohen, 2015).

The SLT applies to this study because it provides insights into how individuals learn criminal behaviours. This theory claims that human aggressiveness and violence are acquired behaviours through direct experiences, such as seeing and imitating the behaviours of others (Cochran *et al.*, 2017). The central argument underpinning the social learning theory is that a similar process of learning may generate conformity, deviation or criminality. Research reveals that witnessing domestic violence during childhood stages might result in a cycle of abuse across generations (Widom & Wilson, 2015). Individuals who grew up in households where they observed inter-parental violence or personally suffered child maltreatment are more likely to tolerate marital violence (Brown *et al.*, 2015). This theory asserts that violent behaviour is acquired through observation in the earliest stages of development and modelling of the same behaviour later in life (Widom & Wilson, 2015). It is reasonable to believe that nobody is born with violent behaviour, but that such behaviour is influenced by life events. It may be argued that those who grew up in violent homes are more prone to commit violence later in adulthood (Brown *et al.*, 2015).

### **1.7.2 Culture of violence theory**

This theory emphasises that society's overwhelming tolerance of violence set the tone for traditions of abuse of the elderly, children and intimate partners (Retief, 2013, p. 50). The culture of violence theory asserts that violence is passed on as an acceptable

way of tackling issues at all levels of society. In South Africa, violence has grown to be accepted as a way of settling societal, political, and even household problems (Mazibuko & Umejesi, 2015, p. 6586). As a result, some individuals use violence to address family problems and to resolve disagreements with their spouses (Retief, 2013, p. 50). According to the culture of violence theory, domestic violence is mostly used to enforce submission, exert control and instil fear (Retief, 2013). This theory postulates that violence is viewed as a normal way to address a problem, and therefore receives less punishment (Mazibuko & Umejesi, 2015, p. 6586). According to the literature on domestic violence, many incidents of domestic abuse are not reported to the police because a family dispute is viewed as a private matter (Spies, 2019).

The main issue of the culture of violence theory is that normalising violence in one sector creates a dangerous trend that compromises efforts to eliminate it in others (Bonino, 2018). There has been some speculation that male police officers are more likely to engage in domestic abuse. In most instances, they utilise their position in law enforcement to avoid prosecution (Zavala & Melander, 2019). According to Parry (2009), the use of violence may become routine if it is recognised as a good alternative problem-solving method and if the victim's suffering risks becoming completely meaningless to the law. This is seen in cases when domestic violence charges are withdrawn without a thorough investigation, and the victim is sometimes blamed for the abuse rather than the perpetrator (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). In summary, by employing the culture of violence theory in this study, it can be argued that abuse in households is often condoned by the silence and reaction of law enforcement.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

### **1.8.1 Experiences**

Experiences are defined as direct interaction with and observation of factual evidence or incidents (Stevenson, 2010). In this study, the term 'experience' was used to refer to knowledge gained through direct participation and observation in the handling of domestic violence matter.

### 1.8.2 Police Officer

Police officers are members of law enforcement agencies who are responsible for enforcing laws, apprehending offenders, and combating and investigating crime (Stevenson, 2010). In this study, a police officer refers to an official member of the South African Police Service who is responsible for handling domestic violence.

### 1.8.3 Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is defined in terms of section 1(viii) of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 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 a residence, or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant.”

In this study, the term ‘domestic violence’ was defined as a form of aggressive behaviour that occurs between intimate partners or ex-partners which results in physical, financial, sexual, emotional or psychological domination of a partner.

### 1.8.4 Perpetrator

A perpetrator is a person who deliberately hurts someone else or permits harm to be done to someone else (Stevenson, 2010). In this study, this term was used to refer to a person who has committed a harmful act of domestic violence.

### 1.8.5 Victim

A victim is a person who has been harmed physically or emotionally, or financially or suffered property damage because of a violent act (Stevenson, 2010). In this study, this term refers to a person who has been injured or subjected to any form of domestic violence.

## **1.9 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter One: General orientation of the study**

This chapter outlines the background, motivation, aim and objectives of the study. It provides the research problem and definition of concepts used in the study.

## **Chapter Two: Lived experiences of police officers dealing with domestic violence issues**

This chapter includes a review of past literature and sources on police responses to domestic violence. Its primary goal is to study data on what previous academics thought about the same subject before this study.

## **Chapter Three: Research methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodology employed by the researcher to address the research problem and to collect the data that is analysed and presented in chapters four and five. To validate the implication of the study, the following topics were discussed: research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis, quality criteria and ethical consideration.

## **Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis and interpretations**

This chapter outlines the findings of in-depth interviews with police officers stationed at the Mankweng Police Station, conducted via individual telephone interviews. The collected data were analysed using the thematic data analysis which generated themes and subthemes. Each of them was described in detail to enable the researcher to bring out relevant research findings.

## **Chapter Five: Recommendation and conclusion**

This chapter summarises and concludes the research findings based on the emerging themes from participants' responses. The chapter provides various recommendations for the South African Police Service, community members and the SA government to effectively improve their response to domestic violence.

### **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a background of the study regarding the intervention of the police in domestic violence cases involving partner assaults, harassment, the killing of a spouse, intimidation, or disagreement over parental rights and responsibilities. The motivation, aim and objectives of the study have been presented to describe the purpose of the research. The key concepts related to this research were also defined.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Research on domestic violence in South Africa has mostly focused on the victims. Little attention was paid to police officers' responses and experiences. The focus of this literature review was on police responses to domestic violence cases. The factors that influence police officers' decision-making, the causes and nature of domestic violence cases reported to them, and the challenges they encounter were reviewed.

#### **2.1.1 Definition of domestic violence**

Domestic violence (DV) is often referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). Berns (2010) defines domestic violence as “the systematic abuse by one person in an intimate relationship to control and dominate the partner” (p. 255). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2016) defines domestic violence as a form of aggressive behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner, which results in physical or psychological domination of the other partner. This nature of violence can occur in the form of physical, psychological, economic, emotional or sexual abuse between intimate partners. Domestic violence is defined in Section 1 (viii) of the SA Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (South Africa 1998) as any abusive or controlling behaviour directed toward a complainant that affects or threatens the complainant's safety, health, or well-being. Domestic violence is defined in Section 1 (viii) of the South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (South Africa 1998) as any abusive or controlling behaviour directed toward a complainant that affects or threatens the complainant's safety, health, or well-being.

### **2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE (SAPS)**

#### **2.2.1 Roles of police officers**

The South African Police Service was established in 1995 in accordance with Section 5 of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act No.68 of 1995). Section 205(3) of the new Constitution altered the description of the functions of the Police. Research shows that intervention in domestic violence is a very difficult process since many of

the victim's possible demands may fall beyond the scope of police duties. Domestic violence necessitates a variety of intervention strategies from society and social structures (Retief & Green, 2015). The police are part of societal institutions that deal with domestic violence issues, and they play an important role in assisting victims in seeking relief from the abuse. In terms of Section 205(3) of the South African Constitution, the police have an important role to play in combating crime, protecting citizens and maintaining public order. SAPS (2014) contends that the prime purpose of police officers is to respond to crime, investigate, arrest and assist in prosecuting criminals. In the case of domestic violence, the police are essential tools for protecting victims and preventing further occurrence of abuse. Police officers also play the role of administering risk assessment at the scene of a domestic violence incident and collaborating with other professionals to enhance victims' safety (Messing *et al.*, 2017).

### **2.2.2 SAPS unit dealing with domestic violence matters**

In terms of the Safety, Security, and Defence yearbook (2003), the SAPS underwent a process of severe changes to its specialized investigation units due to unsatisfactory competence in detective services (Redpath, 2002). The SAPS proceeded to restructure specialized units, and by the end of the year 2003, five hundred of them had been grouped into five specialized investigation units, namely: "Serious and Violent Crime, Organized Crime, Commercial Crime, Serious Economic Offence, Family Violence, Child Protection, and Sexual Offence Units" (p. 452).

In South Africa, when individuals report domestic violence incidents, their case is entrusted to the Family Violence, Child Protection, and Sexual Offences (FCS) unit, which has a proven track record of handling such matters. The FCS unit had been relaunched in 2010, and its capabilities have since been enhanced. It is involved in the investigation of sexual offences against children, as well as individual crimes involving families.

## **2.3 GOVERNMENT POLICIES REGULATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **2.3.1 South African government policies**

#### **2.3.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)**

The establishment of the South African Police Service is regulated by the South African Police Service Act (Act 68 of 1995). This Act highlights the functions of police and how they should carry out their duties. The SAPS's mandate is regulated by chapter 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) which emphasizes the need for safety and security for all people in the country. The Constitution of South Africa promotes human rights and bans all forms of discrimination based on gender orientation (Klug, 2010). In South Africa, every individual is entitled to have equal rights and be fairly treated as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996). Human Rights are also guaranteed to arrested or detained people by Section 35 of the Republic of South Africa's Constitution, 108 of 1996.

As stated in Section 205(3) of the Constitution, the police must execute their powers and authority within the limits of the service's objectives. As a result, the Constitution expressly states that the South African Police Service (SAPS) is responsible for combating and investigating domestic violence incidents. The Constitution also stipulates that the police must treat victims of domestic violence with the utmost care to protect them and their rights. It further states that if a perpetrator can be brought to court via summons, an arrest may not be warranted. However, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a suspect will flee or obstruct justice in some way, the law authorizes the SAPS to conduct an arrest without a warrant under sections 40 and 41 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

#### **2.3.1.2 The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998)**

The South African government amended the Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) to afford the victims and survivors of domestic violence protection and legal assistance. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) obliges police officers to address domestic violence/intimate partner violence (IPV). The DVA permits protection orders to be granted to a victim of domestic abuse against the perpetrator. It aims to protect victims from further occurrences of domestic violence. The Act regulates domestic violence and affords victims legal protection, which prevents further abuses in their

relationships. The Act also recognises domestic violence as a serious problem in South Africa (Vetten, 2017).

In terms of Section 2 of the Act, the SAPS member dealing with domestic violence must assess the safety needs of the complaint and take necessary measures to secure the crime scene and obtain statements about the incident. A police officer may arrest an alleged perpetrator without an arrest warrant under Section of the DVA. Protection orders can be issued under the Domestic Abuse Act No. 116 of 1998, which prohibits the perpetrator from attempting to commit any offence under this act and may also prevent the person from accessing the complainant's home. The Act empowers police officers in dealing with procedures that a victim must follow to obtain a protection order. When a protection order is issued, it also allows for the confiscation of firearms and the issuance of a warrant of arrest. The police are also empowered to obtain a warrant of arrest if the terms of the Act are not followed.

The DVA outlines the duties of the SAPS in terms of combating and handling domestic violence. The DVA stipulates that each domestic violence incident must be recorded in detail on a Report of Domestic Violence form (SAPS 508(a)). According to the DVA, all domestic violence occurrences reported to the police must be entered into the Domestic Violence Register (SAPS 508 (b)). The member of the SAPS is expected to deliver a copy of the written notice to the complainant to sign the relevant in the Occurrence Book (OB) of the SAPS.

### **2.3.2 International government policies**

Domestic violence and other forms of abuse in the family are now deemed illegal in many countries. The United Nations (UN) implanted the political will to abolish domestic violence (DV), resulting in the collaboration of local and international countries, including South Africa. The South African government approved and signed international treaties to commit to preventing all forms of domestic abuse through the implementation of a set of national laws, strategic plans, and policies. Many African countries began to establish policies at the national and community levels to address social injustices. However, other African countries, such as Algeria, are struggling to demonstrate political commitment to stop domestic violence (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Strachan, 2018). This affects the quality of life for DV victims, particularly

women. Research shows that women in Algeria have little access to justice (Human Rights Watch, 2017). According to Human Rights Watch (2017), domestic violence legislation in Algeria does not address spousal or marital rape. Lack of independence and corruption in the judiciary have been cited as factors that undermine stability in Algeria (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Strachan, 2018).

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994, was enacted in response to governmental legal reforms. Its goal was to strengthen international criminal justice interventions and welfare services for victims (Sacco, 2019). The VAWA combines all the legal reforms that states have implemented in response to domestic abuse. It facilitates and reinforces state policies to prevent and intervene in gender-based violence and domestic violence. Research shows that the VAWA has considerably increased knowledge about domestic violence and victims' engagement with law enforcement agencies (Sacco, 2019).

Most of the legal precedents discussed above focused on the prevention of domestic violence. However, evaluation and monitoring of victim protection and punishment of offenders received little attention.

## **2.4 FACTORS DETERMINING POLICE RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **2.4.1 Police officers' beliefs and attitudes**

Research shows that police officers' decisions to arrest or invalidate are influenced by their beliefs and attitudes towards domestic violence (Russell, 2018). The police attitudes and actions towards domestic violence can be categorised into two conceptions: traditional and proactive.

- **Traditional attitudes and responses**

Traditional attitudes and responses concern the lack of support for police intervention, and support for reactive responses to domestic violence (Sun & Chu, 2010; Myhill, 2019). The number of domestic violence cases and police officers' safety have all been cited as factors impacting police decision-making. A study conducted in Taiwan by Sun and Chu (2010) revealed that police officers were more likely to hold traditional

views of gender roles. Similarly, a Chinese study by Sun, Wu, Wang and Xue (2022) found that police officer who advocated for gender equality and showed great levels of tolerance for violence were less likely to intervene. An Australian study by Dowling, Morgan, Boyde, and Voce (2018) shows that even when the police do not support a mandatory arrest, they are more likely to make an arrest when perpetrators are refusing to cooperate.

The police who hold traditional attitudes seem to be negative about the effects of police intervention. They perceive the overall involvement of police as ineffective in the resolution of family conflicts. Based on the evidence at hand, it is reasonable to conclude that police officer who condone violence and gender inequality are less likely to support any kind of intervention in domestic abuse.

- **Proactive attitudes and responses**

Police officers with proactive beliefs perceive domestic violence as an important aspect of their police duties, refer victims to relevant providers for assistance, and support pro-arrest or mandatory arrest policy even when victims do not want them to arrest perpetrators (Sun & Chu, 2010). Cuomo (2021) concurs that mandatory arrest regulations force the police to arrest in situations of domestic abuse where injuries are evident, regardless of the victim's permission. Mason and Petrie (2021) assert that police officers make arrest decisions primarily based on the presence of five factors: injuries, children, weapons, property damage, and the perpetrator's presence at the scene. Mason and Petrie (2021) claim that officers are reluctant to exercise their discretion and instead make decisions based on structured discretion provided by superintendents, which influences decision-making.

In terms of mandatory policies, the police are required to protect and help a complainant to find convenient shelter and to acquire medical treatment (Cuomo, 2021). Mandatory arrest polices have been demonstrated to uplift conviction rates dramatically, but not necessarily reduce domestic abuse (Sun & Chu, 2010). Birdsey and Snowball (2013) claim that the obstacle to reporting is that police officer are not proactive in handling DV cases. Moreover, they found that victims were more likely to come forward when they were physically assaulted more than once and when their children were in danger (Birdsey & Snowball, 2013)

Based on the reviewed studies, it can be concluded that police officers have varied attitudes about domestic violence and arrest regulations. In addition, police officers' attitudes and their preferred responses to domestic violence correlate. As a result, an investigation of how police officers perceive domestic violence is necessary.

#### **2.4.2 Severity of the reported incident**

Research shows that the police are also affected by legal elements such as opinions and preconceptions regarding individual victim and offender variables such as gender, age, behaviour, the severity of the injury, credibility of the reported matter, and the victim arrest preference. It has been discovered that victim injury has a substantial impact on arrest choices (Storey & Strand, 2017). According to a study by Myhill (2019), officers were more likely to arrest if there was proof of a major criminal offence and a continuing danger of harm to the victim. The findings suggest that official rules concerning presumptive arrests are increasingly more prominent, although officials continue to use their traditional attitudes in instances when the risk of future harm is perceived to be minor (Myhill, 2019). One may conclude that victims who do not want their partners to be arrested are helping them to avoid facing any consequences for their actions.

#### **2.4.3 Victim statements**

Dowling *et al.*, (2018) assert that the likelihood of making an arrest can be reduced by relying too much on victim statements as evidence when victims oppose the prosecution. Robinson and Cook (2007) revealed in their study that victims of less serious violence were more likely to retract their statements. Rutledge (2009) asserts that making false allegations of domestic violence has become a common practice for some victims. It is estimated that 40 to 90 per cent of domestic violence victims make false statements (Rutledge, 2009).

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be deduced that police officers attending to domestic violence complaints take longer to respond due to the complications involved within the environment of the victim-perpetrator relationship and having to believe statements made to them.

## **2.5 CAUSES AND NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTED TO THE POLICE**

Since abuse typically occurs behind closed doors, there is a void in the literature on the existence and causes of domestic violence. To bridge this gap, this study focused on the nature and causes of the abuse reported to the police. It is commonly acknowledged that domestic violence is rooted in the cultural and religious practices that promote the unequal distribution of power between men and women. Nonetheless, some studies revealed that the ongoing domestic violence incidents are linked to a lack of reporting, social tolerance of violence, and failure of the authorities to provide quality services (Elias, 2015; George & Harris, 2015).

### **2.5.1 Factors contributing to domestic violence**

#### **2.5.1.1 Social tolerance of violence**

Domestic violence is the most underreported crime as it is witnessed in the literature reviewed (Owen & Carrington, 2014). A recent study revealed that intervention in domestic violence matters is a difficult process as some of the incidents are not brought forward to the attention of the police (Hoppe, Zhang, Hayes & Bills, 2020). Research shows that domestic violence victims respond in a variety of ways because of differences in coping mechanisms and behavioural responses to abuse. Despite severe consequences to victims' wellbeing, society does not perceive domestic violence to be a serious crime. Rather, it is viewed as a personal matter that should be resolved privately within the family.

Research shows that fighting in relationships is so common men and women generally accept violence as normal. Consequently, this makes it receive less scrutiny (Hoppe *et al.*, 2020). This argument stresses that the irresistible tolerance of violence in society is a root cause of abuse and it is consistent with the Culture of Violence theory discussed (in paragraph 1.7.2) in chapter one. Based on the reviewed sources, it can be argued that some women choose to remain in their abusive relationships because they have been conditioned to accept physical punishment as normal and unavoidable.

### **2.5.1.2 Alcohol use/abuse by intimate partners**

Alcohol consumption is a widely acknowledged risk factor connected with domestic violence since it is thought to reduce self-control and increase the likelihood of violent altercations. Research demonstrates that alcohol problems and intimate partner violence are interrelated. Alcohol intake was shown to be a predictor of aggression among intimate partners in a study of men arrested for domestic abuse (Brem, Florimbio, Elmquist, Shorey & Stuart, 2018). Alcohol consumption has been linked to an increased chance of committing violence as well as becoming a victim of domestic abuse (Brem *et al.*, 2018).

While it is true that alcohol consumption increases the likelihood of a violent altercation, it does not necessarily mean that all individuals who consume alcohol are violent. One may argue that reports of domestic violence also occur in situations where alcohol is not involved. Yet, it can be deduced that drinking alcohol may worsen the situation by weakening self-control.

### **2.5.1.3 Financial problems**

Low family income is linked to an increase in domestic violence (Pepurah and Koomson, 2017). Pepurah and Koomson (2017) viewed the nature of family finances as the root cause of disputes between intimate partners. Research shows that vulnerable women are highly dependent on men's financial contributions, and are thus less likely to leave relationships (Terrell & Bailey, 2021). Kim and Gray (2009) perceive it to be risky to break their intimate relationship. According to the study by Jewkes *et al* (2003), situations whereby the woman is financially independent and working but her partner is unemployed often carries additional risk. Given this, one may conclude that a woman's vulnerability to violence is exacerbated by a lack of economic means, which makes it more difficult for her to leave an abusive relationship.

### **2.5.1.4 The covid-19 pandemic**

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed a gender inequality in many households and had an impact on various aspects of life around the world (Berniell & Facchini, 2021).

According to McCrary and Sanga (2021), there have been economic and societal pressures, as well as increased fear since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. A shocking global increase in domestic violence has been seen. Research shows that the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated and so brought to light global issues relating to gender inequality (Berniell & Facchini (2021). Women were shown to be one of the most vulnerable groups when a variety of criteria were considered (Malathesh, Das, & Chatterjee, 2020). Economic distress caused by the pandemic, as well as a lack of social support fuelled domestic violence. As a result, domestic violence has been reported in families with no history of abuse (Sharma & Borah, 2020).

It is evident in the literature that many victims could not report abuse to the police due to lockdown restrictions. One may conclude that some victims continued to suffer because they remained with the perpetrators in the same house.

### **2.5.2 The nature of domestic violence**

Research shows that there is a rapid growth of violence against women in domestic settings (Enaifoghe *et al.*, 2021). Research revealed that domestic violence can vary from hidden manipulative forms of spousal abuse to extreme physical assault. Nearly one-third (30%) of women around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual abuse by their intimate partner (Bacchus, Ranganathan, Watts, Devries, 2018). Domestic violence is most usually perpetrated against a female spouse, although it can also be perpetrated against a male partner (Enaifoghe *et al.*, 2021). Holder and Daly (2018) contend that women who abuse their partners seem to be capable of escaping arrest. Another study found that even though male victims reported the abuse to the police, law enforcement perceived female perpetrators of violence against men as victims (Zhao, Zhang, Jiang, & Yao, 2018).

Research shows that there have been high rates of child maltreatment recorded during the pandemic (Lawson, Piel, & Simon, 2020). The study found that the consequences of parental jobs contributed to the emotional and physical abuse of children (Lawson, Piel, & Simon, 2020). MacQueen and Norris (2016) pointed out that incidents with children present as witnesses were more likely to be reported to the police. Lawson, Piel, and Simon (2020) assert that domestic violence has a significant impact on children, regardless of whether they are witnesses or victims of such instances.

Studies revealed that both male and female victims or abusers share similar life experiences, which may include having been abused as children (Enaifoghe *et al.*, 2021; Lawson, Piel, & Simon, 2020).

### **2.5.2.1 Forms of domestic violence**

In terms of Section 1 (viii) of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (South Africa 1998), the forms of domestic abuse include physical abuse, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse. Other indicators of domestic violence include intimidation, stalking, harassment, damage to property, and entering the complainant's residence without their consent.

- Physical abuse

Physical abuse is a way of using excessive force in a way that negatively affects or leaves the victim at risk of harm. This includes punching, hitting, smashing, and choking. This form of abuse is used to cause pain to the victim. Studies have shown a correlation between reporting and the type of abuse. Physical abuse victims are reported to be more likely to call the police for help (Birdsey & Snowball, 2013).

- Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is a form of compelling one's intimate partner to engage in a sex act when he or she does not consent to it. This form of abuse includes sexual harassment and rape. Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, Lombard and Jewkes (2013) point out that most physical and sexual violence incidents are likely not to be reported when they occur in an environment whereby blackmail and threats are imposed on victims. According to Rapholo and Makhubele (2019), overwhelming sexual attacks on children occur in the household setting, with fathers typically harassing their children. Research conducted in Asia shows that marital rape is widespread among women who generally feel that marriage allows their husbands unrestricted access to their bodies (Bhandari & Diebold, 2010). A study on sexual violence in Bangladesh revealed that married women are likely to experience forced sex by their husbands (Naved, 2013).

- Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is described as putting a person in danger of emotional or behavioural disturbance to frighten them or undermine their sense of self-worth (Aihie, 2009). This includes verbally threatening a spouse as well as making unreasonable demands to dominate the relationship. Birdsey and Snowball (2013) assert that emotional abuse is the most common form of intimate partner violence and usually appears to result in physical abuse. This form of abuse is persistent, and it undermines the self-worth of victims.

- Economic abuse

Economic abuse is a way of restricting one's partner from economic freedom by controlling their finances or taking their money by force. Women were found to have experienced economic deprivation by their partners (Bhandari & Diebold, 2010). This includes withholding medical treatment and basic needs such as food.

- Harassment

This involves the behaviour that causes fear of harm in the victim's life (Bhandari & Diebold, 2010). In most cases, perpetrators repeatedly watch or call victims and sometimes use other people to make a phone call to the victim. Some perpetrators harass victims by continuously visiting the place where the victim resides, studies, or works. Birdsey and Snowball (2013) contend that harassment is different from stalking, although they have similar patterns of conduct.

- Intimidation and Stalking

These behaviour conducts that are used to scare the victim. (Birdsey & Snowball, 2013) argue that these forms of domestic violence are mostly used in an intimate relationship to force the victim to submit to the abuser. These patterns of conduct involve publicly or secretly following and tracing the victim's movement.

## **2.6 CHALLENGES WITH POLICE INTERVENTIONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MATTERS**

### **2.6.1 Poor police-public communication**

Research revealed that some police officers do not put forth greater effort in their work when they believe the victim would subsequently withdraw the case (Spies, 2019).

According to Reeves and Meyer (2021), one of the common criticisms from the public regarding police officers is that their way of communicating is harsh and rude. Sinclair (2017) contends that victims are hesitant to notify the police about crimes because of distrust and lack of faith in law enforcement. Stefanovska (2018) argues that victims of domestic abuse frequently withdraw charges and return to their abusive spouses because of unfavourable attitudes from police officers.

The sources reviewed revealed that the public's mistrust of police does not inspire confidence in the police-citizen partnership and crime prevention. Across many countries, poor interaction between police and the public appears to be a serious challenge.

Reflecting on the implication of police-citizen trust and collaboration in South Africa, the high levels of public mistrust in police does not represent well for citizens' confidence in police officers and crime prevention. If the police receive a complaint, the public should be kept up to date on every action they take. For example, when they report a crime, they need to know whether the criminal has been arrested and how the investigation is progressing.

### **2.6.2 Violence against the police**

Gibbs, Lee, Moloney and Olson (2018) discovered several cases in which police officers were injured or attacked with guns while on duty. Nix, Richards, Pinchevsky and Wright (2019) investigated the likelihood of an officer being attacked, injured, or killed while responding to a domestic incident versus a non-domestic incident while adjusting for other possibly significant factors. The findings show that police who react to non-domestic situations are considerably more likely to be attacked or injured (Nix *et al.*, 2019). This research was conducted to determine if it is safe for police officers to interfere in domestic violence-related cases. However, it remains unclear whether the police provoke the perpetrator by using maximum force to effect an arrest. It can be argued that studies have neglected to take into account incidents that did not harm police officers. Such methods could lead wildly to false conclusions.

### **2.6.3 Difficulties with risk assessment**

Research shows that frontline police officers who respond to domestic violence calls face significant difficulties in assessing how much of a case's limited police resources should be invested in identifying potential risks and supervising the safety needs of victims (Spivak, McEwan, Luebbers & Ogloff, 2021). Assessing the likelihood of future family violence has been recommended as a method of determining which cases police should prioritise in terms of management (Ballucci, Gill & Campbell, 2017). Research shows that it is difficult to determine the primary aggressor in domestic violence cases, and risk assessment based only on police discretion is at times inappropriate (Spivak *et al.*, 2021). Police officers are reported to be failing to refer victims to a range of appropriate services such as shelters due to a lack of knowledge about domestic violence services (Ward-Lasher, Messing & Hart, 2017).

Based on the above sources, it can be argued that the police lack proper guidance in assessing the risk and the immediate needs of victims. It is, therefore, required for the police to be well informed of the appropriate services outside of their field that victims of domestic violence may need.

### **2.6.4 Legitimacy of the police**

The idea of police legitimacy refers to the distinctive worthiness and honour that communities accord to aspects of policing that they believe are deserving of public participation (Akinlabi, 2017). Community opinions about the police impact the question of whether the community accepts or rejects the local police. Marsh and Melville, 2019), argue that police criminality statistics instil fear in South African communities and undermine public trust in the police. Hundreds of police officers have been reported as having been charged with numerous crimes ranging from domestic violence, murder, robbery, rape, and corruption (Crush & Peberdy, 2018). It can be concluded that when police commit violent crimes, it confuses populations who depend on the police for their safety. As a result, greater figures on police criminality can quickly alter community perceptions of the police and potentially affect aspects of legitimacy.

## **2.7 POSSIBLE ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS IF HIRED BY SAPS TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A social worker's job is to make people's lives better, which may include becoming involved to resolve detrimental personal or relationship issues. However, outside of the social work field, their significance is generally underappreciated. A domestic violence social worker specializes in assisting those who have suffered various forms of abuse from their spouse or romantic partner. Social workers that specialize in domestic violence fight for the victim's financial, emotional, and physical well-being (Patterson, 2012). Lamin and Teboh (2016) contend that collaboration between police officers and social workers who have knowledge of intervening in non-criminal disciplines like mental health will help in reducing fatalities. Lamin and Teboh (2016) revealed in their study that police officers who respond to non-criminal cases such as emotional abuse and mental health are not properly trained for such interventions.

- Advocacy

Social workers have a critical role in promoting the rights of abuse victims and directing them to available community services. By doing so, they contribute to improving public health by reducing the terrible effects of cyclical abuse on victims and ensuring that people who require mental health services may access them.

- Educator

Raising awareness is another aspect of social workers' duties. The social work profession offers programs that are aimed at reaching out to the community to raise awareness of what constitutes abuse, how to recognize the warning signs, and the solutions available to those who are abused.

- Mediator

Mediation is commonly used to resolve disputes in the social work field and criminal justice system (Lamin & Teboh, 2016). Social workers assist victims in determining the severity of the abuse and taking the necessary measures toward recovery. Kara Kakis (2015) asserts that social workers play a vital role in helping victims of domestic violence to express their circumstances, identify their needs, and end abusive cycles.

The researcher noted that the need for collaboration between the police and social work departments received little attention. As a result, measures on how social work services might be implemented specifically for combating domestic violence in police stations were proposed in this study.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The chapter conducted a literature assessment on police reactions to domestic violence. Following a study of the conceptual framework of domestic violence, literature on the factors influencing police officers' decision-making, the nature and causes of domestic violence, and the problems encountered when resolving DV situations was reviewed. The methodology utilized to carry out this study is discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the research methodology used by the researcher in conducting the study. It outlines the research technique and how it was carried out. Research methodology is explained as the study of scientific procedures and processes that support the research's theoretical assumptions. The research design, population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures are all covered in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research approach**

This study followed the qualitative research approach. De Vos, Delpont, Fouche, and Strydom (2011) indicate that the qualitative approach is used for understanding and describing a phenomenon from the participant's point of view. According to Babbie, Mouton and Strydom (2011), exploratory studies are utilised when making fundamental investigations concerning moderately unknown areas of research. Qualitative exploratory research was carried out to better understand the context in which police officers respond to cases of domestic violence. This type of research shed light on participants' experiences and factors that inform their decisions (Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 316).

### **3.3 Research design**

The researcher employed an exploratory case study design to explore participants' lived experiences of handling domestic violence matters. A case study research design assisted the researcher to gather more information by carefully studying existing cases that have encountered a similar problem (De Vos, Delpont, Fouché & Strydom, 2011).

### **3.4 Population and Sampling Methods**

#### **3.4.1 Population**

According to Strydom (2011), a population is a total set of individuals chosen in the study (p. 223). The population of this study was selected from members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) who are assigned to deal with domestic violence cases. The researcher sent request letters to the Department of Police (SAPS) as a method to recruit participants and gain permission to conduct the study.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling methods**

Sampling is defined as “the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative of a population to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population” (Safaa, 2011, p. 5). This study employed the non-probability sampling method. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used to select research participants.

##### **3.4.2.1 Purposive sampling technique**

The purposive sampling technique was utilised to select and identify a specific population using the value judgments of the researcher (Sharma, 2017). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014), the researcher should explain why a specific sample of participants was chosen. In this study, the researcher purposefully selected police officers who are assigned to handle domestic violence (DV) matters because of their scope of practice and experiences in handling DV cases. The researcher first attempted to find participants who are members of the SAPS by sending request letters to possible participants. Nonetheless, limited responses were obtained from the proposed participants. The researcher, therefore, used snowball sampling by requesting details of police officers who are assigned to handle domestic violence matters.

##### **3.4.2.2 Snowball sampling technique**

The snowball sampling technique was used to allow identified participants to refer the researcher to other potential participants who would then be considered in the study (Strydom & Delport, 2011, p. 393). This sampling technique was motivated by the

unknown number of police officers who deal with cases of domestic violence in Mankweng. The study began with a few participants and progressed to the interviewing of other potential members of the SAPS due to their connections with identified participants. The researcher carried on selecting participants until data saturation has taken place.

### **3.4.3 Inclusion criteria**

- Inclusion criteria

This study was inclusive of all male and female police officers of the SAPS serving in Mankweng Police Station, who have experience in handling domestic violence matters.

- Exclusion criteria

Police officers whose work does not require direct contact with households undergoing domestic violence were excluded from the study.

## **3.5 Data collection methods**

### **3.5.1 Literature study**

According to Snyder (2019), a literature review enables the researcher to get a better understanding of the topic and area of concern, as well as how the final research findings will relate to them. To get a better understanding of the scope and experiences of police officers who deal with domestic violence matters, the researcher studied a variety of previous studies related to the topic, including official SAPS publications, case studies, legislation, media reports, and international policies and procedures.

### **3.5.2 Individual telephone interviews**

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) define an interview as “direct personal contact with the participant who is asked to answer questions relating to the research problem” (p. 116). The researcher proposed to conduct face-to-face interviews to collect data

from participants. However, face-to-face interviews were not practicable due to Covid-19 and the national lockdown restrictions. The Covid-19 health and safety protocols were observed during data collection. The researcher formally adjusted his data collection technique from face-to-face to telephone interviews to comply with the Covid-19 regulations. Individual telephone interviews with five police officers were conducted in a semi-structured approach. Semi-structured interviews containing open-ended questions were utilised to stimulate a conversation between the researcher and participants. The interview method of collecting data was deemed relevant in this study because it allowed the researcher to probe and seek clarity. The researcher used an interview guide to take notes and record responses from participants.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

This study used thematic data analysis to transcribe interviews and identify themes that address the research problem. According to Braun, Clarke, Hayfield and Terry (2019), thematic analysis is desired when data is gathered using qualitative research interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Thematic analysis steps that guided the research are as follows:

- Gaining familiarity with the data

The researcher thoroughly went through the entire data collected before starting with coding. The researcher read the notes taken during the interview to gain familiarity with its content and then transcribed it verbatim (Braun *et al.*, 2019).

- Generating initial codes

During this stage, the researcher produced the initial codes from the data collected by identifying meaningful information.

- Searching for themes

The researcher focused on browsing and analysing participants' ideas. The ideas were then sorted into potential themes. This stage allowed the researcher to gain a full

understanding of participants' responses by identifying themes that are relevant to the study (Braun *et al.*, 2019).

- Reviewing themes

The researcher refined the themes and broke them into clear and meaningful distinctions by comparing similarities and differences between meanings.

- Defining and naming themes

During this stage, the researcher named and specified the importance of each theme.

- Writing the report

This is the final stage where the researcher writes the final report (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The researcher presented the summarised and transcribed data in writing.

### **3.7 Quality criteria**

- **Credibility**

In this study, credibility was achieved by ensuring that there is correspondence between participants' views and the way the findings of the study were presented (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility was achieved by using the same interview schedule to gain information from all participants. The researcher ensured that the interview guide was constructed in understandable language. He also asked open-ended questions that corresponded with the research title to cover the objectives of the study. The participants' responses to the interview questions were noted down so that a suitable record could be made for analysis and transcribed verbatim.

- **Transferability**

The researcher generalised the findings of the study to allow discovered solutions to be utilised in other similar situations or contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher ensured that only professional police officers dealing with domestic violence matters participated in the study to allow transference and generalisation of the study to the whole population in other similar settings.

- **Dependability**

The researcher logically documented the research process to allow readers to form an idea about the dependability of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The reasons for selecting participants and data collection methods were documented to allow others to relate and verify the findings.

- **Confirmability**

The researcher ensured that the findings of the study are not based on biases (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This was done by continually reviewing the transcripts to check how they related to the research questions and objectives. The data gathered was completely compatible and the researcher ensured that the findings were not misinterpreted. The researcher avoided asking leading questions during interviews and ensured that the participants' responses were not manipulated in any manner.

### **3.8 Ethical consideration**

The term 'ethical' is defined by Babbie (2020) as adhering to the guidelines and regulations of a certain group or profession. The researcher adhered to the research ethics by preserving the privacy and confidentiality of the participant's responses, as well as obtaining informed consent. The researcher followed all copyright restrictions and the Turfloop Research and Ethical Committee (TREC) code of ethics to avoid plagiarism. The Turnitin website from the University of Limpopo was used to detect plagiarism. The researcher also acknowledged all sources utilised in this in the paragraphs and reference list.

#### **3.8.1 Permission to conduct the study**

The researcher requested permission to conduct the study from the TREC. Therefore, an ethical clearance letter with project number **TREC/278/2021:PG** was granted. The researcher also requested permission to conduct the study from the South African Police Services (SAPS) and participants through request letters.

### 3.8.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

The researcher made participants aware of the aim and objectives of the study and that participation is voluntary. The techniques and processes that would take place were explained to the participants, as well as the knowledge that the research was meant only for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the right not to answer questions that they are not comfortable with. The participants voluntarily participated without being coerced (Rubin & Babbie, 2016, p. 85). Therefore, participants consented to participate in the study after reading the informed consent (see Appendix B) that was sent to them electronically.

### 3.8.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

The researcher avoided violating participants' right to privacy by ensuring that the information was gained anonymously and that their identifying details are not published. Moreover, the researcher also ensured that interviews were conducted in a private space, and data collected was kept in a safe place (Rubin & Babbie, 2016, p. 87).

### 3.8.4 Debriefing of participants

After the study, there was an interactive debriefing session in which participants expressed their feelings. Participants who would experience or show signs of emotional distress because of their participation in the study would be referred to a local hospital, social worker or psychologist for counselling. No participant showed any signs of emotional distress in this study.

### 3.8.5 Respect, dignity, and standard of care

This principle implies that participants must be treated with dignity and given the right to freedom of expression. The researcher ensured that the safety, dignity, well-being, and best interest of all participants are prioritized. In order to honour cultural beliefs and respect human dignity, the researcher asked the participants how they would want to be identified and clarified how he wished to be addressed. The researcher also used the language that was understood by the participants to encourage them to speak

freely about their lived experiences. The participants were free to agree or disagree on whether to participate in the study without prejudice.

### 3.8.6 Benefits and risks/harm

This is an ethical obligation to maximize benefits while minimising risks. The findings of this study are to be presented to the South African Police Service (SAPS). The study's findings could be utilized by the SAPS as a guide for planning and improving strategies for dealing with domestic violence matters. The researcher made every effort to protect participants from physical, and personal embarrassment and emotional harm by ensuring that the study was carried out in a manner that does not undermine the participants' wellbeing and rights. Informed consent figures and an interview guide assessed by the TREC were utilised and strictly followed to reduce the risk of harm (Rubin & Babbie, 2016, p. 86).

### 3.9 Limitation of the study

- The researcher was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews because of the pandemic and lockdown constraints. Most of the participants had hectic schedules and were not always available to be interviewed.
- The study was limited by the scarcity of recent South African literature on police response to domestic violence.
- Only one racial group was interviewed in this study, therefore, the researcher cannot conclude whether the attending police officer's race has an impact on a domestic violence scene.
- The study had a small sample size and the population from which data was collected was limited

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter covered the research methodology and all the methods applied in the study. It clarified the sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods, and the study's target population. The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data acquired are discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines qualitative data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The research was conducted at the Mankweng Policing area among police officers who are dealing with domestic violence matters. The researcher used non-probability sampling, particularly, purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select the participants. The heterogeneous method was considered whereby the participants were both males and females. The data was collected from five (5) participants using semi-structured interviews.

### 4.2 Demographic details of the participants

Table 1: demographic details of participants

Gender	Race	Age group	Rank/position	Work experience in Years
Male	Black	18-34	Constable	3
Male	Black	35-44	Sergeant	6
Male	Black	45-65	Warrant Officer	8
Female	Black	35-44	Constable	5
Female	Black	35-44	Constable	4

The above table shows that the total number of participants in this study was five (5). Three participants identified themselves as males. While the other two participants identified themselves as females. The table shows that only Blacks participated in the study. Three of the participants identified themselves as constables while one held a position of a Sergeant and the other one identified himself as a Warrant Officer.

### 4.3 Presentation and interpretation of the data

The findings of this study provide an insight into what influences decision-making in handling domestic violence, the challenges faced and the nature and causes of the

incidents reported. The findings also identified measures on how social work services can be established specifically for addressing domestic violence in police stations. The following five (5) themes and subthemes presented below were identified by participants during interviews.

Table 2: Summary of identified themes and subthemes

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Theme 1: Police decision to arrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign of visible injuries</li> <li>• Availability of witnesses</li> <li>• The use of police discretion</li> <li>• Perpetrator’s behaviour towards the police</li> </ul>
Theme 2: Police decision to consider non-arrest options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim's statement</li> <li>• Issuing of protection orders</li> <li>• Referral to external services</li> </ul>
Theme 3: Nature of reported domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse against women</li> <li>• Abuse perpetrated by women against men</li> <li>• Abuse against children</li> </ul>
Theme 4: Factors contributing to the reported domestic violence incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extramarital affairs among partners</li> <li>• Ending of a relationship by an intimate partner</li> <li>• Financial difficulties</li> <li>• Covid-19 and lockdown regulations</li> </ul>
Theme 5: Challenges frequently faced by the police when handling domestic violence cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with insufficient resources</li> <li>• Withdrawal of charges</li> <li>• Maintaining peace and order</li> <li>• Identifying the potential aggressor</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in proving emotional abuse and intimidation</li> </ul>
--	--

#### 4.3.1. Theme 1: Police decision to arrest

The first objective of this study asked the police to describe factors that influence their decision-making when handling domestic violence matters. The first theme that emerged from participants' responses was police officers' decision to arrest.

##### 4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Sign of visible injuries

The participants were asked a question that sought to examine factors that influence decision-making when dealing with domestic violence matters. Victim injury has been found to play a significant role in decisions to arrest. Some of the participants mentioned they rely on injuries to verify if physical abuse has taken place. This is supported by Storey and Strand (2017) who discovered in their study that victim injuries have a significant influence on arrest decisions. Based on the above-mentioned, it can be concluded that clear signs of harm are sufficient justification for making an arrest. It emerged during interviews that:

*“Domestic violence is something that happens behind closed doors, so it is visible injuries assist us to verify what might have happened in our absence.”* Participant 1

*“In most instances, we use injuries as evidence to prove that abuse has taken place.”*  
Participant 2

##### 4.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: Availability of witnesses

Domestic violence is reportedly said to be extended to children present in the household where family disputes arise. Some participants mentioned that domestic violence is more likely to be reported when it is witnessed by children and other family members. Some participants mentioned that there were some cases reported to them that include abuse of children. Some of the participants had this to say:

*“One domestic violence incident that I recall was reported telephonically by a family member of the victim. Upon our arrival on the scene, we located the victim and*

*obtained statements from the witnesses. Since there was sufficient evidence to believe that violent conduct had occurred, we arrested the perpetrator without a warrant.”*

Participant 1

*“There are some cases that were brought to my attention where some of the victims reported that their partners insult and even beat them in front of their children and they sometimes kick the children as well.”* Participant 4

The participants pointed out that the availability of witnesses increased the likelihood of arrest. The participants' views are in line with the findings of MacQueen and Norris (2016) who assert that child witnesses increase the chances of abuse reporting and arrest. MacQueen and Norris (2016) claim that victims call the police when abuse has gotten out of hand to the point that their children's wellness or safety is threatened.

#### **4.3.1.3 Subtheme 3: The use of police discretion**

Despite the victim's arrest preference, the police are expected to carry out their duties under the Domestic Violence Act and arrest the perpetrator if there is a reason to believe that abuse occurred. The majority of the participants interviewed tended to use their discretion to determine whether arrests were appropriate and possible. This is supported by SAPS (2014) which provides that police officers should use their discretion to determine the possibility and appropriateness of arrest. However, this was not always in the victim's favour because some of them did not want to lay charges against the perpetrators. The participants revealed that they rely on criminal elements before making an arrest. This is following a study by Mason and Petrie (2021) which identified five factors that influence arrest decisions. These factors include children, injuries, the offender's presence, weapons, and property damage. The above-mentioned are supported by the following:

*“I started by assessing the situation and then took the decision to arrest the abuser because the victim was in immediate danger.”* Participant 1

*“Every time before I make an arrest, I check the elements of crime and arrest the perpetrator if I'm convinced that domestic abused took place.”* Participant 2

#### **4.3.1.4 Subtheme 4: Perpetrator's behaviour towards the police**

The perpetrator's conduct has been cited as one of the determining factors leading to arrests. The participants indicated that perpetrators who did not comply with police officers' orders were most likely to be arrested. The participants stated that these were done to prevent abuse against victims. Participants noted the following:

*"We have many cases of people who failed to cooperate when we tried to calm the situation and most of them were under the influence of alcohol."* Participant 1

*"In some cases, we find ourselves pushed by the behaviour of the perpetrator more especially when he or she does not want to comply."* Participant 5

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Police decision to consider non-arrest options**

##### **4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Victim's statement**

Participants in this study stated that their decision to arrest the abuser in domestic violence incidents is determined by the victim's statement and perspective on the reported incident. Some participants had this to say:

*"Some people claim to be victims and they sometimes fabricate stories about their partners."* Participant 4

*"When someone is fighting with his/her partner they can do anything to destroy them. So, it is possible that some statements may not be correct."* Participant 2

The views of the participants are in line with Rutledge (2009) who asserts that it has become a common practice to hear contradictory and false claims made by victims of domestic violence. Whether on purpose or not, the victim who gives a false statement makes it difficult to find the truth and ultimately justice. This is consistent with the culture of violence theory, which holds that violence is seen as a common solution to problems (Mazibuko & Umejesi, 2015, p. 6586).

In support of the above, participant 1 added the following:

*"I decided not to make an arrest based on the victim's statement since she did not want to open a case against her intimate partner. However, I took further steps to*

*ensure that the victim was safe by assisting her to get a protection order against the abuser.” Participant 1*

It was reported that many victims who did not want their partners to be arrested have had protection orders issued against their abusers. The participants considered protection orders to minimise the risks of continuous harm to victims. It can be deduced that the police are not given much guidance on how to deal with the challenging situation where individuals make false statements in a domestic violence case.

#### **4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2: Issuing of protection orders**

Protection orders have been used as an option for handling domestic violence matters. The study discovered that in some of the reported incidents, the parties involved in domestic violence were left to address the situation on their own. Presumably, this could put the victim in great danger. As previously noted in the media, multiple DV incidents have made headlines in which alleged victims were murdered shortly after filing a protection order. This raises questions about police officers’ ability to protect victims of domestic violence. The following has been noted:

*“I prefer issuing protection order when complainants do not have injuries.” Participant 1*

Participants’ preference for issuing protection orders is in accordance with the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (South Africa 1998) which restricts perpetrators from interacting with victims or entering their premises.

#### **4.3.2.3 Subtheme 3: Referral to external services**

This study explored how police officers deal with cases of domestic violence where there are no signs of harm or threats. The study found that in some instances, shortcuts were used to help lessen the workload. The majority of the participants confirmed that some of the shortcuts would be to encourage complainants to go back home and sort out disagreements with their partners. Some participants referred victims to social workers, thus lightening the administrative burden of having to complete the required documentation. Some of the participants pointed out that they

advise victims to seek out protection orders when they are emotionally abused. Some participants expressed the following:

*“When people come to report cases that don’t have tangible evidence such as injuries, I would advise them to resolve the issue at home because such matters require a lot of talking to be resolved.”* Participant 5

*“Whenever I deal with domestic violence matters, I start by assessing the situation in order to determine the victim’s needs and how to assist him or her. Then if external services are required, I make a referral so that the victim can get further assistance.”*  
Participant 4

The study found that police officers prefer the mediation method of handling disagreements. Similarly, Wang *et al.* (2019) revealed in their study that Chinese police preferred mediation over arresting perpetrators. Some of the police officers interviewed seemed to have the perception that some abusers beat up their wives or girlfriends because of their mental problems. Many of them indicated that they are likely to refer domestic violence cases to a social worker in situations where there is no physical violence involved or visible injuries.

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Nature of reported domestic abuse**

Because the probable cause and type of abuse must be established before an arrest can be made, each participant in this study was asked about the nature and causes of domestic violence incidents based on the reported cases they have dealt with. In this regard, various responses were given by the participants.

#### **4.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Abuse against women**

Physical abuse was described as the most reported form of abuse against women. This supports the finding that there is a rapid growth of abused women by their intimate partners (Bacchus *et al.*, 2018). Physical abuse was stated to be the most reported form of abuse against women. Participants indicated that they received a lot of domestic violence complaints since the beginning of the national lockdown. One participant had this to say:

*“Many cases of domestic violence that I have attended were perpetrated by men against their female partners. Some were staying together while some just a boyfriend and girlfriend kind of relationship.”* Participant 2

Some of the participants confirmed that women are likely to be intimidated and stalked by either current or former intimate partners. The participants indicated that they have filed a lot of complaints and issued protection orders against men who were reported to be harassing and stalking their former partners.

In confirmation of the above, the following has been mentioned:

*“Some men are struggling to accept when a relationship has ended. Some continue to harass their former spouses and they sometimes follow their movement everywhere they go.”* Participant 4

Economic or financial abuse was stated as another form of abuse that women are subjected to. This includes depriving women of an opportunity to participate in economic activities. Participants mentioned that this is mostly done by men who follow traditions that women’s role is to stay at home and look after children.

The participants added that:

*“There are few women who reported that their spouses not supporting them and do not want them to work.”* Participant 3

*“A female complainant reported that her ex-husband does not contribute towards the maintenance of her kids. She further stated that the ex-husband was threatening her and told her that she should not come next to his house to ask for a child’s money.”*  
Participant 5

Based on the information discussed with the participants during interviews, it can be argued that police officers perceive female victims as incurring the most severe injury than males. The findings of the current research support the study by Storey and Strand (2017) which revealed that women are perceived by law enforcement to be more vulnerable in IPV incidents. This may reflect personal norms reflected in the police culture.

#### **4.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: Abuse perpetrated by women against men**

Several different responses were presented by the participants. It has been revealed in this study that men are also subjected to domestic abuse. However, participants indicated that men are not likely to report because of personal reasons. The participants argued that many men are suffering from emotional abuse that they do not speak about. One participant commented that:

*“My brother men go through a lot of stress in their houses and they just decide to be silent. The only time we realise that a man is going through emotional problems is when he commits a serious crime such as a murder of a spouse.”* Participant 1

Property damage was identified as the most form of violence against men. Participants reported that they handled several cases whereby properties belonging to men were intentionally destroyed by female intimate partners.

Another participant added that:

*“A man reported a case of damage to property against his girlfriend for damaging his car. It is alleged that the girlfriend found the boyfriend with another woman in the car and the argument started up until she broke the window of the vehicle with a stone.”*  
Participant 2

#### **4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3: Abuse against children**

This study found that domestic violence can also be extended to the children in the household which is perpetuated by either biological parents or stepparents. Parental violence can lead to battered child syndrome, a psychological disorder in which a child can experience low self-esteem and sometimes clinical depression associated with former or current abuse perpetrated by a biological or custodial parent. One of the most disturbing forms of physical abuse of children is sexual abuse.

Participants mentioned that there are several cases of physical and sexual abuse against girls who are mostly abused by their stepparents, especially in poverty-stricken households. Some of the participants said:

*“One of the cases that I handled included sexual abuse of a female child by her stepfather who threatened to kill her should she tell anyone about the matter. The secret came out after the girl fell pregnant.”* Participant 3

*“Children are always affected by the abusive behaviours of their parents. I attended a matter that was reported by teachers on behalf of a school child. During the investigation, I found out that the school child sustained minor injuries which were allegedly caused by his parents. The perpetrator was finally arrested because there were witnesses and physical injuries”* Participant 2

The above statement supports the findings of the study by Rapholo and Makhubele (2019) that many children suffer sexual abuse from their fathers. Based on the context in which domestic violence takes place, it can be argued that many children suffer abuse in silence because of the threats.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Factors contributing to the reported domestic violence incidents**

##### **4.3.4.1 Subtheme 1: Extramarital affairs among partners**

The majority of participants stated that mistrust plays a detrimental role in intimate relationships. It has been noted from this that family quarrels and physical fights reported to the police are a result of a breach of trust between intimate partners.

The majority of the reported cases of physical abuse are believed to have been caused by partners' jealousy, mistrust and insecurities. Participants show that fights between intimate partners start when the other party is unfaithful. Most couples are reported to be fighting over phone calls and wanting to control and monitor who their partner communicates. Participants indicated that such cases happen to both genders. The participants noted the following:

*“One of the physical abuse incidents I dealt with involved a couple that was reported to have fought because of phone calls. The husband allegedly hit his wife after suspecting that his wife was cheating on him with the person who called.”* Participant

2

*“Nowadays relationships are not stable, and this leads to emotional breakdown when the spouse is an affair outside the marriage. We arrested many men who assaulted their wives because they allegedly had an affair with another man.”* Participant 1

*“A female victim reported a case against her husband for assaulting her. She alleged that her husband was no longer sleeping at home and when questioned him, he started fighting her.”* Participant 4

*“We arrested a man who attempted to kill his wife and children with food poisoning after allegedly finding out that the children he has been supporting are not his.”* Participant 1

As it is often published in the media reports, this study also revealed that most men who have been arrested by the participants for abusing or killing their spouses are the ones who reportedly suspected that their wives are cheating on them. The researcher noted that cheating in an intimate relationship contributes a lot to emotional and physical abuse.

#### **4.3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Ending of relationship by an intimate partner**

From the interview with the police, it has been noted that many women who have tried to end relationships with their partners suffered a lot of abuse. The majority of cases that involve stalking are usually happening between partners who broke up. The participants indicated that they issued several protection orders against men who abused and threatened their former spouses. The findings are in line with the culture of violence theory which postulates that perpetrators use violence to enforce submission and control victims (Retief, 2013).

Some of the participants had this to say:

*“There are several cases where women reported being harassed by former spouses who refuse to accept that the relationship has ended.”* Participant 4

*“In another case, it happened that a woman was stalked by her ex-husband, and she notified the police about the incident.”* Participant 5

#### **4.3.4.3 Subtheme 3: Financial difficulties**

Financial problems have been noted as the root cause of family disputes. The majority of the participants indicated that fights between intimate partners mostly resulted from financial crises. Financial abuse among intimate partners was reportedly caused by the economic status of spouses. Evidence in the literature shows that men who are unemployed or do not have stable incomes are more likely to suffer both emotional and financial abuse by their intimate partners. However, it was noted in this study that some of the reported abuses were caused by a lack of transparency on how the money is spent between partners. Participants' opinions concur with those of Pephrah and Koomson (2017), who acknowledged in their study that a lot of family conflicts were caused by financial crises. The following has been mentioned:

*“There are several cases where women reported that their husbands are not contributing towards their maintenance. Even though we often refer such cases to social workers, I believe that such problems by financial difficulties.”* Participant 3

Given that men are supposed to be breadwinners, participants stated that individuals who fail or struggle to meet this hegemonic masculinity requirement by failing to provide for their families are more likely to be abused by their intimate partners.

Another participant added that:

*“Some men do not have a say in their homes because of being unable to bring food on the table.”* Participant 2

#### **4.3.4.4 Subtheme 4: Covid-19 and lockdown regulations**

The Covid-19 regulations have been reported as contributing to disputes in many households. Lockdown restrictions deteriorated the state of victims who are vulnerable or subject to violence by reducing access to emergency services. The participants asserted that many victims of domestic violence have been trapped in their homes with the abusers and due to travelling restrictions they were unable to seek help. This is backed up by Sharma and Borah (2020), who found that many victims were trapped in abusive relationships and unable to seek help because of government-imposed travel restrictions. The participants shared the following:

*“I think lockdown brought too much pressure in many households because there has been a lot of reported incidences that happened in many families since the beginning of the national lockdown.”* Participant 2

*“The lockdown restriction played a role in perpetuating violence in families since many people lost their which led to family problems.”* Participant 4

*“Many people were stuck in their abusive homes, and some were unable to because of the Covid-19 rules that instructed people to stay at home.”* Participant 1

The participants' views that family the pandemic led to family problems are supported by McCrary and Sanga (2021) who assert that the Covid19 pandemic increased social and economic pressures in many people's lives. The participants indicated that some of the domestic violence occurrences were not usually recorded but were handled informally. The participants revealed that the pandemic changed ways of doing things and this also affected their responses to domestic violence. For instance, police programs that aim to engage communities through awareness campaigns have been limited.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Challenges frequently faced by the police when handling domestic violence cases**

##### **4.3.5.1 Subtheme 1: Working with insufficient resources**

A lack of resources was perceived as a barrier to an efficient and productive police response to domestic violence. The police have stated that a lack of resources is a major concern because it prevents them from enforcing the Domestic Violence Act. They stated that in some cases, they lack the necessary resources to transport a victim to a shelter for safety reasons or a hospital when there is a sign of injury.

The following has been noted:

*“I have attended a case where the fighting couple had to be separated from each other. Due to limited vehicles, I had to wait for a van to come back so I can attend to the matter. So, this means that when many emergency calls are made at the same time it will be difficult to respond immediately because some matters need urgent response and it becomes a problem when there are no available vehicles”* Participant 1

*“We do not have an innovative system that can help us quickly check the offender’s criminal history.”* Participant 2

It has emerged that the police lack resources to keep records for tracking perpetrators of domestic violence who are repeating. It can be argued that a shortage of resources prevents police officers from carrying out their duties and responsibilities of protecting the public.

#### **4.3.5.2 Subtheme 2: Withdrawal of charges**

The dropping of charges against the abuser was cited as a significant obstacle that hampered the police response to domestic violence. The participants stated that some of the victims who reported domestic abuse incidents failed to cooperate with the court proceedings by dropping the charges and returning to their abusive partners. However, the participants appeared to have differing views about victims withdrawing charges against abusers. Some participants realised, however, that some women who reported cases of domestic violence did not want the perpetrators persecuted but rather wanted the police to warn abusers so that they would stop abusing their partners. Some of the participants had this to say:

*“Some of the victims who come to report their abusive partners, lay charges but fail to comply with the prosecution. You will be surprised that the abuser can be arrested today and before the matter could be taken to court, he is already released. Some victims are likely to withdraw charges after reconciling with abusers and this is a waste of time and state resources.”* Participant 3

*“I understand the reason why some women drop charges against the perpetrator, this is because some of them depend on their abusive partners for survival, so they are afraid that might suffer when the abuser is arrested. However, this is more like discrediting our hard work and it is useless to put more effort into cases that will later be withdrawn.”* Participant 4

The current study revealed that police officers face different challenges when dealing with domestic violence calls. Another source of dissatisfaction for police officers dealing with domestic violence is the low percentage of cases filed and the significant number of complaints that are completely dismissed. The majority of the participants

indicated that they were left with the impression that their efforts and responses are ineffective due to unreliable follow-ups made by courts. Although, Lockwood and Prohaska (2015) contend that withdrawal of charges is mainly caused by police officers' attitude towards victims. It can be argued, however, that the withdrawal of charges presents a challenge to the police who attend to domestic violence matters. Spies (2019) argues that this may cause the police to become discouraged and make them hesitant to deal with domestic violence in the future.

#### **4.3.5.3 Subtheme 3: Maintaining peace and order**

Another issue that police officers responding to domestic violence matters are concerned about is facilitating peace and order in a domestic setting. The participants indicated that the consumption of alcohol by the parties who were involved in the domestic violence incident added difficulties for them to calm the situation. Some participants also revealed that courts are closed over weekends and during holidays which impedes the administration of cases of domestic violence. Consequently, the victims return to the same place where they suffered abuse. One of the participants had this to say:

*“Sometimes maintaining peace and order in a domestic violence scene is beyond our control. Some we receive reports after serving perpetrator with protection orders. Therefore, it is difficult to maintain peace if both the victim and perpetrator are living in the same house.”* Participant 2

Two female participants stated that the most difficult part about responding to domestic abuse calls is violence at the scene. They outlined the domestic violence scene as being highly unpredictable because it is often fuelled by emotions. The study revealed that police who attend to domestic violence calls are prone to risks of victimisation by perpetrators who are failing to cooperate.

All participants confirmed that calming down the parties is difficult because most people are emotionally charged to the point of attacking police officers who are responding to the matter. This supports the study by Gibbs, Lee, Moloney and Olson (2018) that found that several police officers have been attacked while responding to crime.

The participants confirmed that:

*“I nearly fell after having been pushed by a drunk person while trying to make arrest an arrest.”* Participant 5

*“As a woman, I find responding to a physical fight in progress as a challenging task because some parties become violent towards us.”* Participant 4

#### **4.3.5.4 Subtheme 4: Identifying the potential aggressor**

The police officer’s capacity to figure out the truth of what genuinely transpired when they get to the site of a call is the most prevalent theme that emerged from the interviews. The participants in this study expressed deep concern about ascertaining the truth when attending to physical abuse cases. This is in accordance with Spivak *et al.* (2021) who revealed in their study that the police are having difficulties in identifying potential aggressors and fulfilling the safety needs of the victims. The participants mentioned the following:

*“Sometimes perpetrators claim to be victims, so I have to listen attentively to the statements made and investigate properly.”* Participant 4

*“It is not easy to identify the aggressor especially when both parties suffered severe injuries. A responding officer needs to be extra careful all the time.”* Participant 1

The participants mentioned that believing both partners to speak the truth is difficult and that they must detect false statements that both victims and perpetrators may create. This is supported by Rutledge (2009) who believes that making a false statement in a domestic violence incident has become a norm.

#### **4.3.5.5 Subtheme 5: Difficulties in proving emotional abuse and intimidation**

A follow-up question was raised by the researcher to better understand the types of domestic abuse that police officers have trouble dealing with. According to the data collected, the majority of participants noted emotional abuse as extremely difficult to deal with due to the absence of visible evidence or injuries. The participants argued that the abuser’s psychological manipulation of the victim makes it difficult to prove

emotional abuse and intimidation. It has also been reported referrals were mostly preferred by the participant. Some participants seemed to perceive emotional abuse to be less dangerous when compared to other forms of abuse. As a result, the majority of the reported cases of domestic abuse resulted in non-arrest decisions. One of the participants had this to say:

*“In my experience, I have always faced challenges in responding to cases where there is no sign of injury. I think the best way is to assist with issuing of protection orders.”*

Participant 1

The findings show that responding to emotional abuse is a challenge as police officers try to discover together the evidence of each occurrence. This study found that many police officers are more interested in determining the evidence than in the expression of emotions.

#### **4.4 Discussion of findings**

The influence of police officers' profiles such as gender, age group, rank and experience has been explored. However, the impact of such characteristics remained inconclusive since it produced mixed outcomes. This study shows that three participants were males and the other two were females. All five individuals interviewed worked shifts and handled all the community issues. Of the 5 participants, three were constables whilst one participant held the rank of sergeant and the other one identified as a warrant officer. Many participants in the study were identified as constables, accounting for the majority of the number of all other ranks represented in the study. This is because all frontline police officers with the rank of constable generally perform duties such as attending to all complaints received in the charge office as well as at crime scenes. Regardless of level or years on the job, the variety of experience among participants in dealing with domestic violence occurrences was different.

The study found that there is a connection between the culture of violence theory the manner in which the police and victims respond to domestic violence. The findings show that in most cases, victims have an opportunity to escape the abusive relationships. It is noted in the culture of violence theory that violence is accepted as

a normal way of tackling issues (Retief, 2013). Consequently, the police fail to understand the impact of abuse on victims. It has been revealed in the study the victim's vulnerability is also worsened by police officers who often dismiss cases by negotiating for peace-making between the victim and perpetrator. This conduct is in line with Bonino (2018) who believes that normalising violence compromises the efforts to eliminate it. The withdrawal of cases by victims shows that they consider their suffering as meaningless. The culture of violence theory postulates that perpetrators often receive less punishment because violence is condoned by the law enforcement officers and the victim's silence (Mazibuko & Umejese, 2015, p. 6586).

In view of the causes of the reported abuse cases, the researcher contends that the Akers' (1998) social learning theory (SLT) supports the findings of the study. The social learning theory provided a broader framework for understanding criminal behaviour between intimate partners. The SLT postulates that violent behaviours such as domestic violence are learned through direct experiences (Cochran *et al.*, 2017). The central argument underpinning the social learning theory is that a similar process of learning may generate conformity, deviation or criminality. Widom and Wilson (2015) argue that experiencing violence as a child might later result in cycle of abuse during adulthood. The researcher supports the SLT that abuse is a learned behaviour. The participants mentioned that some of the cases they handled included violence against children. Given that some of the reported incidents took place in the presence of children, it can be deduced that the child who witnessed the abuse will be more likely to reproduce the behaviour and adopt the lifestyle in adulthood.

#### **4.4.1 Factors influencing police officers' arrest decisions**

The first objective of this study looked at the factors that impact police officers' decisions to arrest. It has been found that arrest is almost certain in situations where perpetrators are arrogant and unwilling to cooperate with police officers. This study revealed that hostile behaviours by perpetrators have an impact on police officers' arrest decisions. The perceived severity of the reported incident, symptoms of visible injuries, and availability of witnesses have all been confirmed to increase the chance of arrest. The current study found that the police are always under immense pressure to bring concrete proof rather than victim-driven allegations when dealing with

domestic violence matters. This makes the severity of injuries and the form of domestic abuse to be considered in the choice to arrest regardless of the victim's wishes. All the participants interviewed asserted that they used their discretion in determining whether an arrest was urgently needed. The study revealed the perceived severity of the reported abuse, relationship type, and genders of the victim and perpetrator all produced different outcomes. For instance, married couples were most likely to be advised to resolve their matter through family mediation and referred to external services. The availability of witnesses appears to relate to a high possibility of prosecution, especially in situations where children are present. The participants in this study indicated that family and friends have the greatest impact on the victim's readiness and willingness to report the abuse. Consequently, seeking the help of either of those who witnessed the abuse has been noted as the best method used by the police to get reliable information about the reported incident. The study revealed that the substantial dependence on victims' statements as evidence can be severely compromised when victims do not support the arrest.

#### **4.4.2 The nature and cause of domestic violence reported**

When analysing domestic violence, it is common to focus solely on physical types of violence against women and ignore other forms of abuse that may be present. This study examined the form of domestic violence incidents that are reported to the police. The findings of this study show that domestic violence was recorded among intimate partners, divorcees, and unmarried couples who had broken up. The police officers interviewed, a significant number of reported violent incidents occurred in cohabitating relationships. This study found that there were a few reported incidents that occurred in both dating and marriage relationships.

Even though there have been countless occurrences of domestic violence perpetrated by women against men, the participants mentioned that in their observation, it is women who mostly file domestic violence complaints against men. The current study found that it is difficult to ascertain how many occurrences of domestic violence involve male victims. The study, however, discovered that domestic violence is not solely a female issue. Domestic violence against men is said to be on the rise Mankweng and South Africa in particular, but statistical data is lacking because many male victims do

not come forward to report. This study found that the likelihood of domestic violence against women is comparatively high than that against men. This study discovered that women are frequently exposed to severe types of abuse and are more likely to be harmed by an abusive spouse.

The participants indicated that most of the incidences reported were caused by the pandemic, financial issues, ending of relationships, alcohol consumption and extramarital affairs among intimate partners. In this study, physical abuse was recorded as the most reported form of domestic violence. This included physical fights between intimate partners that resulted in severe injuries. This study revealed that emotional abuse, economic abuse and stalking are just a few instances of activities that make up domestic violence yet are not classified as crimes.

#### **4.4.3 Challenges faced by police officers responding to domestic violence**

A lack of resources, withdrawal of charges, an overwhelming workload, victimization of police officers, and communication issues were cited as the main factors impacting police officers' effectiveness in dealing with domestic violence cases. Police officers who often attend the scene where both parties were involved in a physical fight appear to be having difficulty determining the truth since parties may exaggerate their side of stories. Most interviewees expressed anxiety about determining the primary aggressor when both parties are fighting one another. While most police officers are focused on finding the truth and acquiring information when responding to requests for service, dealing with the emotions of victims and suspects presents an additional challenge. Some participants mentioned maintaining peace and order in a domestic setting is a big challenge especially in situations victims return to their abusive partners after laying a charge or applying for a protection order. Four participants voiced concern about the prospect of parties under the influence of alcohol being an additional barrier to peace-making.

#### **4.4.4 Measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations**

Based on the findings of this study, there are unutilised opportunities for early intervention with victims of domestic violence. The assessment and treatment of victims who come to contact with law enforcement ought to be expanded to include social workers. The need for social workers in police agencies has been informed by

the challenges that participants encountered when dealing with domestic violence cases. The challenges that police officers face when providing services to victims revealed the need for collaboration between the police and social workers to address GBV. The study found that the police are struggling to ensure the safety of victims. For instance, in cases where there were no signs of physical injuries, the police would advise victims to return home to handle the matter as a family. This latter option, however, may hinder victims' ability to protect themselves. In this case, more social workers are required in police stations to assist the police in addressing GBV and developing safety strategies for victims of abuse.

Victims of emotional or verbal abuse may go unnoticed since there are no visible signs such as scars or marks. In this case, a social worker can assist the police in identifying the cycles of toxic behaviour and providing mental health services to help victims overcome emotional abuse. Furthermore, social workers are equipped with resources to take victims of physical and sexual abuse to a place of safety and guide them during the healing process. The findings of this study revealed that the police are having difficulties in handling financial abuse cases. Given this, social workers can come on board to offer legal resources that victims may need to secure their independence and safety.

The findings show that the police are also dealing with abuse that is directed at a child. Social workers can also be a crucial component in preventing abuse against children. A social worker might spot warning signs of child abuse if they visit a family where emotional abuse is prevalent. In this regard, the social worker might be able to stop the abuse before it gets worse by arranging mental health care and requesting immediate legal intervention.

#### **4.4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the study's objectives and findings. The data was analysed by the researcher by finding several themes from the interviews. The summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the study's findings, recommendations, and conclusions regarding the experiences of police officers who deal with domestic violence matters. The recommendations are based on the preceding chapter's findings.

### **5.2 Restatement of the problem statement**

The prevalence of domestic violence in South Africa is particularly high, with several studies indicating that every eight hours a woman dies at the hands of her intimate partner (Abrahams *et al.*, 2012; Sibanda-Moyo *et al.*, 2017). However, only a few abusers are convicted or held accountable for their conduct. Since the beginning of the national lockdown, there have been several reported incidences of intimate partner violence (IPV). It has been reported that at least 29 women died at the hands of their intimate partners from March 2020 to June 2020 (Geldenhuys, 2020). Despite policy changes and the SAPS's training efforts to respond to domestic violence, incidents of reported IPV remain unacceptably high, and some victims who approach the police for assistance are reportedly dissatisfied with the attitudes of police officers (Sinclair, 2017).

The police have widely been criticised in the public and media reports for failing to arrest perpetrators, taking more time to respond, and putting a low priority on domestic violence calls (Sinclair, 2017). It is alleged that the police often dismiss victims of domestic violence without a proper follow-up on the reported allegations (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). In fact, research shows that the police treat domestic violence as a private matter, and only launch a criminal investigation when serious injuries or deaths have occurred (Campbell, Gill & Ballucci, 2018; Spies, 2019). Yet, little is known about factors that influence police officers' decisions, the challenges they face in dealing with domestic violence cases, and the nature of incidents that they respond to. This study deals with lived experiences of police officers who handle domestic violence matters. It sought to identify and address intervention hindrances to prevent more family abuses and fatalities.

### **5.3 Restatement of the objectives**

- **To ascertain factors that influence police officers' decisions when responding to domestic violence matters**

This objective bridged the gap in the literature and answered the research problem. The study examined the factors that influence police officers' decision to arrest or avoid arrest. Many factors have been presented through subthemes that emerged from the interviews with police officers. The study found that the police officers' attitudes toward the nature of the reported abuse are a barrier to the proper implementation of the Domestic Violence Act.

- **To identify the nature and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police**

This objective was achieved by exploring the experiences of the police in responding to the reported domestic violence incidents. Because sufficient evidence must be established before arrests can be made, each participant was questioned about the causes of domestic violence based on the reported incidents they had dealt with. When the data was collected, it became evident that the domestic abuse described by the participants can take different forms. This study found that domestic violence incidents that have been reported to the police took the form of physical, emotional, sexual, and financial/economic abuse.

According to the participants, most of the reported domestic violence incidents happened between individuals who are intimately connected in either cohabiting or marriage relationships. Although previous studies have shown that men are less likely to report when they are abused by their partners, this study found that many male victims sought help from the police. The participants also stated that, in their experience, women were more likely to lay domestic violence charges against their intimate partners. The study found that physical abuse is the most reported form of domestic violence.

- **To identify challenges that police officers face when dealing with domestic violence cases**

This objective was achieved by identifying challenges that are frequently faced by police officers when handling domestic violence matters. This study noted that the police response to domestic violence is impacted by working with limited resources, excessive workload, withdrawal of charges by victims and lack of capacity to deal with some forms of domestic violence.

- **To identify measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations.**

This objective has been achieved through discussions of the findings. The researcher identified initiatives for establishing social work services in police agencies to specifically address domestic violence.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The study examined the factors that influenced police responses to domestic violence, the nature and causes of the reported abuse, as well as the challenges they encountered. The literature consulted demonstrated that police officers place a low priority on domestic violence cases. Yet, differences have been identified between the literature and the findings of this study. It is crucial to emphasise, however, that while the police may appear to be unwilling to assist during a crisis, it is also necessary to recognise the presence of significant factors that operate as roadblocks to identifying and addressing the problem. Studies have shown that victims have a role in protecting abusers by failing to report them or withdrawing charges. The common perception that domestic abuse incidents are not taken seriously by the police cannot always be correct. This study found that when the victim fails to cooperate with the prosecution or withdraw charges, the abuser is likely to be discharged.

Domestic violence does not always constitute a criminal offence that can be prosecuted in a criminal court. Some types of domestic violence such as emotional abuse are frequently dismissed by the police. Based on the data gathered, it can be

argued that the police lack sufficient capacity to handle cases of emotional abuse. It is hard to speculate about how police officers should react positively to domestic violence calls. Without a doubt, police officers are confronted with challenging and confusing situations. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the prevention of domestic violence in South Africa. This study concludes that all frontline police officers require some training about social problems and the detection of the elements of domestic abuse. Several recommendations have been provided to help police officers in enhancing their effectiveness in the detection and prosecution of domestic abuse charges. The researcher believes that improvement in identification and successful conviction in DV cases can restore community trust in the SAPS and discourage people from committing similar crimes.

## **5.5 Recommendation**

### **5.5.1 The SAPS**

- This study recommends that the South African Police Service should establish strategies and procedures that allow reliable reporting of domestic violence and immediate action.
- The study recommends that certain duties and responsibilities should be delegated to specific individuals within the unit that deals with domestic violence matters.
- The SAPS need to work cooperatively with community members and other stakeholders to improve referral channels and increase victims' access to available resources.
- The SAPS should train more police officers to deal specifically with domestic violence and to remove any administrative limitations to effective police response.
- The SAPS should consider hiring more social workers to deal with GBV.

### **5.5.2 The South African government**

- The South African government should provide the required funds for the police to accomplish their duties, and improve training and other necessary resources.

- This study established the need for more Employee Health and Wellness experts to be stationed in police stations to provide emotional and psychological support to police officers and prepare them to cope with the challenges of handling domestic violence cases.
- The study also found that there is a demand for social workers to assist police officers in dealing with situations involving mental illness and where victims seek counselling.

### 5.5.3 Future research

- Further research on domestic violence victims' experiences of police intervention should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of policing DV cases.

## REFERENCES

- Abrahams, N., Mathews, S., Jewkes, R., Martin, L. J., & Lombard, C. (2012). Every eight hours: Intimate femicide in South Africa 10 years later. *South African Medical Research Council Research Brief*, 2012, 1-4.
- Abrahams, N., Mathews, S., Martin, L. J., Lombard, C., & Jewkes, R. (2013). Intimate partner femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009. *PLoS Medicine*, 10(4).
- Akers, R. L. (1998). *Social learning and social structure: A general theory of crime and deviance*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Akers, R. L., & Jennings, W. G. (2015). Social learning theory. *The handbook of criminological theory*, 4, 230-240.
- Akers, R. L., & Sellers, C. S. (2009). *Criminological theories: Introduction, evaluation, and application* (5th ed). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Babbie, E. R. *The practice of social research*. Cengage learning.
- Babbie, E., Mouton, J., & Strydom, H. (2011). The research process with reference to the research method section Social work theories and methodologies: Dubrovnik. *Croatia: North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa Herman*.
- Bacchus, L. J., Ranganathan, M., Watts, C., & Devries, K. (2018). Recent intimate partner violence against women and health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies. *BMJ open*, 8(7), e019995.
- Barker, R. L. (2014). *The social work dictionary* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Berniell, I., & Facchini, G. (2021). COVID-19 Lockdown and Domestic Violence: Evidence from Internet-Search Behavior in 11 Countries. *European Economic Review*, 103775.
- Berns, R. M. (2010). *Child, Family, School, Community: Socialization and Support* (8<sup>th</sup> Ed.) London: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Birdsey, E., & Snowball, L. (2013). Reporting violence to police: A survey of victims attending domestic violence services. *Crime and Justice Statistics* 91, 1-9.

Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Kagee, A (2006) *Fundamentals of Social Research Methods: An African Perspective*, 4th ed. Cape Town: Juta.

Blumer, C. (2016). Australian police deal with domestic violence every two minutes. ABC News, 21 Apr.

Boira, S., Carbajosa, P., & Marcuello, C. (2013). Partner violence from three perspectives: Victims, abusers, and professionals. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 22, 125-133.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G. (2019). Thematic analysis. *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, 843-860.

Brem, M. J., Florimbio, A. R., Elmquist, J., Shorey, R. C., & Stuart, G. L. (2018). Antisocial traits, distress tolerance, and alcohol problems as predictors of intimate partner violence in men arrested for domestic violence. *Psychology of violence*, 8(1), 132.

Brown, M. J., Perera, R. A., Masho, S. W., Mezuk, B., & Cohen, S. A. (2015). Adverse childhood experiences and intimate partner aggression in the US: Sex differences and similarities in psychosocial mediation. *Social science & medicine*, 131, 48-57.

Campbell, M. A., Gill, C., & Ballucci S. (2018). Informing police response to intimate partner violence: predictors of perceived usefulness of risk assessment screening. *Journal of Police & Criminal Psychology* 33(2): 175–187

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.

Cochran, J. K., Maskaly, J., Jones, S., & Sellers, C. S. (2017). Using structural equations to model Akers' social learning theory with data on intimate partner violence. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(1), 39-60.

Cuomo, D. (2021). Geographies of policing: Domestic violence, mandatory arrest, and police liability. *Antipode*, 53(1), 138-157.

De Vos, A. S., Strydom, H. F., & Fouché, C. B., & Delport, C. S. L. (2011). *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. (4th ed). Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Dowling, C., Morgan, A., Boyd, C., & Voce, I. (2018). Policing domestic violence: A review of the evidence.

Elias, R. A. (2015). Restorative justice in domestic violence cases. *DePaul J. Social Justice*, 9, 67.

Enaifoghe, A., Dlelana, M., Abosedo, D. A., & Dlamini, N. P. (2021). The Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence against Women in South Africa: A Call for Action. *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development (formerly Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa)*, 10(1), 117-146.

Fouché, C.B. & Schurink, W. (2011). Qualitative research designs. *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*, 4, pp.307-327.

Geldenhuys, K. (2020). Crime statistics: will lockdown be our solution?. *Servamus Community-based Safety and Security Magazine*, 113(9), 36-39.

George, A., & Harris, B. (2015). *Landscapes of violence: Women surviving family violence in regional and rural Victoria*. Geelong: Centre for Rural and Regional Law and Justice, Deakin University.

Gibbs, J. C., Lee, J., Moloney, J., & Olson, S. (2018). Exploring the neighbourhood context of serious assaults on police. *Policing and society*, 28(8), 898-914.

Hilton, N. Z., Popham, S., Lang, C., & Harris, G. T. (2014). Preliminary validation of the ODARA for female intimate partner violence offenders. *Partner Abuse*, 5 (2), 189-203.

Holder, R. L., & Daly, K. (2018). Sequencing justice: A longitudinal study of justice goals of domestic violence victims. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 58(4), 787-804.

Hoppe, S. J., Zhang, Y., Hayes, B. E., & Bills, M. A. (2020). Mandatory arrest for domestic violence and repeat offending: A meta-analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 101430.

Human Rights Watch. (2017). *'Your destiny is to stay with him'-State response to domestic violence in Algeria*. Washington D.C.: Human Rights Watch.

Jewkes, R. K., Levin, J. B., & Penn-Kekana, L. A (2003). Gender inequalities, intimate partner violence and HIV preventive practices: findings of a South African cross-sectional study. *Social science & medicine*, 56(1), 125-134.

Johnsen, P. & Robertson, E. (2016). Protecting, restoring, improving: incorporating therapeutic jurisprudence and restorative justice concepts into civil domestic violence cases. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 164, 1 557.

Kara Kakis, G. (2015). *Social work and police partnership: Creating a partnership between law enforcement and social services*. Retrieved from [www.hcrs.org](http://www.hcrs.org)

Kim, J., & Gray, K. A. (2008). Leave or stay? Battered women's decision after intimate partner violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 23(10), 1465-1482.

Klug, H. (2010). *The constitution of South Africa: a contextual analysis*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.

Lab, S.P. (2010). *Crime Prevention: approaches, practices and evaluation*. 7th ed. Anderson: USA.

Lamin, S. A., & Teboh, C. (2016). Police social work and community policing. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1212636.

Lawson, M., Piel, M. H., & Simon, M. (2020). Child maltreatment during the COVID-19 pandemic: Consequences of parental job loss psychological and physical abuse towards children. *Child abuse & neglect*, 110, 104709.

Lockwood, D. & Prohaska, A. (2015). Police officer gender and attitudes toward intimate partner violence: how policy can eliminate stereotypes. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 10(1): 77–89.

MacQueen, S., & Norris, P. A. (2016). Police awareness and involvement in cases of domestic and partner abuse. *Policing and society* 26(1), 55-76.

- Malathesh, B. C., Das, S., & Chatterjee, S. S. (2020). COVID-19 and domestic violence against women. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 53, 102227.
- Mason, P. B., & Petrie, M. A. (2021). Exploring officer arrest discretion following state policy changes in intimate partner violence. *Violence against women*, 27(12-13), 2491-2505.
- Mazibuko, N. C., & Umejesi, I. (2015). Domestic violence as a 'class thing': perspectives from a South African township. *Gender and behaviour*, 13(1), 6584-6593.
- McCrary, J. & Sarath, S. (2021). "The impact of the coronavirus lockdown on domestic violence." *American Law and Economics Review* 23.1 (2021): 137-163.
- Messing, J. T., Campbell, J., Sullivan, W. J., Brown, S., & Patchell, B. (2017). The lethality screen: the predictive validity of an intimate partner violence risk assessment for use by first responders. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 32(2), 205-226.
- Morei, N. (2014). "Domestic violence in South Africa: women and children under siege?". *Mediterranean journal of social sciences*, 5(20), 928-928.
- Myhill, A. (2019). Renegotiating domestic violence: Police attitudes and decisions concerning arrest. *Policing and society*, 29(1), 52-68.
- Nix, J., Richards, T. N., Pinchevsky, G. M., & Wright, E. M. (2019). Are domestic incidents really more dangerous to police? Findings from the 2016 National Incident Based Reporting System. *Justice Quarterly*, 1-23.
- Nwanna, C. R., & Kunnuji, M. O. (2016). Domestic violence by women against their intimate partners in Nigeria. *African Population Studies*, 30(2), 2640-2652.
- Ogbe, E., Harmon, S., Van den Bergh, R., & Degomme, O. (2020). A systematic review of intimate partner violence interventions focused on improving social support and/mental health outcomes of survivors. *PLoS one*, 15(6), e0235177.
- Owen, S., & Carrington, K. (2014). Domestic violence service provision and the architecture of rural life: An Australian case study. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 39, 229–238.
- Patterson, G. T. (2012). *Social Work practice in the criminal justice system*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Peacock, R. (2014). *Victimology in South Africa*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Peprah, J. A., & Koomson, I. (2017). Economic drivers of domestic among women: A case study of Ghana. *Violence and Society: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice*, 222-240.
- Rapholo, S. F., & Makhubele, J. C. (2019). Forensic interviewing techniques in child sexual abuse allegations: Implications for the South African context. *Global Journal of Health Science*, 11(6), 53-63.
- Reeves, E., & Meyer, S. (2021). Marginalized women, domestic and family violence reforms and their unintended consequences. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.
- Renzetti, C. M., Edleson, J. L., & Kennedy, B. R. (Eds.). (2018). *Sourcebook on violence against women* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Republic of South Africa. (1998). Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998. *Government Notice No. R. 1311, Government Gazette 20601*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Retief, R. T. (2013). *Police officers' experiences of policing domestic violence in the Western Cape Province* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Roberts, A. R. (2007). Police social work: Bridging the past to the present. In A. R. Roberts & D. W. Springer (Eds.), *Social work in juvenile and criminal justice settings* (pp. 126–129).
- Robinson, A., & Cook, D. (2007). Understanding victim retraction in cases of domestic violence: Specialist courts, government policy, and victim-centred justice. *Contemporary justice review*.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2016). *Empowerment series: Research methods for social work*. Cengage Learning.
- Russell, B. (2018). Police perceptions in intimate partner violence cases: The influence of gender and sexual orientation. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 41(2), 193-205.
- Rutledge, N. M. (2009). Turning a Blind Eye: Perjury in Domestic Violence Cases. *NML Rev.*, 39, 149.

- Safaa, R. A. (2011). *Introduction to Sampling for Non-Statisticians*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Sacco, L. N. (2019). The violence against women Act (VAWA): historical overview, funding, and reauthorization. *The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA): historical overview, funding, and reauthorization*.
- Sharma, G. (2017). Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International journal of applied research*, 3(7), 749-752.
- Sharma, A., & Borah, S. B. (2020). Covid-19 and domestic violence: an indirect path to social and economic crisis. *Journal of family violence*, 1-7.
- Sibanda-Moyo, N., Khonje, E., & Brobbey, M. K. (2017). Violence against women in South Africa: A country in crisis 2017.
- Sinclair, I. M. (2017). Gendered discourse in the South African Police Service talk and text of domestic violence. *Families, relationships and societies*, 6(2), 257-272.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of business research*, 104, 333-339.
- South African Police Service (SAPS). (1999). National Instruction 7/1999 – Domestic Violence. Government Gazette No 207, 3 March 2006. Pretoria: SAPS.
- South African Police Service. (2014). *Crime research and statistics*. Internal document. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Spies, A. (2019). Continued State Liability for Police Inaction in Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence: A Reflection on the Implementation of South Africa's Domestic Violence Legislation. *Journal of African Law*, 63(1), 53-77.
- Spivak, B., McEwan, T., Luebbers, S., & Ogloff, J. (2021). Implementing evidence-based practice in policing family violence: The reliability, validity and feasibility of a risk assessment instrument for prioritising police response. *Policing and society*, 31(4), 483-502.
- Stats, S. A. (2017). South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016: Key Indicators Report. Pretoria: Stats SA.
- Stefanovska, V. (2018). Use of restorative justice in the context of intimate partners violence. *Knowledge International Journal*, 28(6), 1931-1938.

Stevenson, A. (Ed.). (2010). *Oxford dictionary of English*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Storey, J. E., & Strand, S. (2017). The influence of victim vulnerability and gender on police officers' assessment of intimate partner violence risk. *Journal of family violence*, 32(1), 125-134.

Strachan, A. (2018). The criminal justice system and stability in Algeria.

Sun, I. Y., & Chu, D. C. (2010). Who is better for handling domestic violence? A comparison between Taiwanese female and male officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(4), 453-459.

Sun, I. Y., Wu, Y., Wang, X. & Xue, J., (2022). Officer and organizational correlates with police interventions in domestic violence in China. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(11-12), pp.NP8325-NP8349.

Terrell, C., & Bailey, R. K. (2021). Intimate Partner Violence Transcending Socioeconomic Class. In *Intimate Partner Violence* (pp. 69-73). Springer, Cham.

Victor-Zietsman, M. (2007). Women as victims of crime in South Africa. *Polsa Bulletin*, 1:3-18.

Vetten, L. (2017). Aluta continua: Accountability and the Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998. *South African Crime Quarterly*, (59).

Warde, B. (2014). Infusing criminal justice content into the graduate social work curriculum. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work.*, 34, 413–426.

Ward-Lasher, A., Messing, J. T., & Hart, B. (2017). Policing intimate partner violence: attitudes toward risk assessment and collaboration with social workers. *Social Work* 62(3):211-218.

Widom, C. S., & Wilson, H. W. (2015). Intergenerational transmission of violence. *Violence and mental health*, 27-45.

World Health Organization. (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.

World Health Organization. (2016). Violence against women: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women. *Fact sheet*, 239.

Zavala, E., & Melander, L. A. (2019). Intimate partner violence perpetrated by police officers: Is it self-control or the desire-to-be-in-control that matters more?. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 28(2), 166-185.

Zhao, R. L., Zhang, H., Jiang, Y., & Yao, X. (2018). The tendency to make arrests in domestic violence: Perceptions from police officers in China. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 62(16), 4923-4941.

## **Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

### **Title of the Study: Lived experiences of police officers dealing with domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province**

My name is Ronny Mkhonto, a Master of Social Work student at the University of Limpopo. I am researching about police officers' experiences in attending to domestic violence matters. The research aims to explore police officers' lived experiences of handling domestic violence matters. This interview guide aims to understand your views concerning the handling of domestic violence matters. Your views will only be used for academic purposes and confidentiality will be maintained.

#### **Section A: Demographic information of the participant**

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Others

2. What is your race?

- Black
- White
- Coloured
- Indian
- Others

3. What is your age group?

- 18-34
- 35-44
- 45-65

4. What is your rank/position in the SAPS?

5. How long have you been dealing with domestic violence matters?

## **Section B: Factors that influence police officers' decisions in cases of domestic violence**

1. Without mentioning the personal details of victims or perpetrators, please tell me about the reported domestic violence cases you handled that resulted either in arrest or invalidation of the arrest. What informed the decision to arrest or avoid arrest?
2. How do you deal with reported incidents where there are no signs of a disturbance or visible injuries?
3. How do you deal with contradictions between criminal law and customary law when handling a domestic violence case?

## **Section C: The nature and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police**

4. How did the complainants you assisted experience domestic violence?
5. In your opinion and based on your investigations, what drives the violence that intimate partners experience in domestic settings?

## **Section D: Challenges faced by police officers in responding to domestic violence matters**

6. What challenges/barriers are you encountering when responding to domestic violence matters?
7. What form or type of domestic violence is the most challenging to handle? Please motivate your response.

## **Section E: Recommendations**

8. In your opinion, what practical interventions do you think the SAPS and South African government could put in place to improve the handling of domestic violence?

## **Appendix B: Informed consent**

### **Title of the Study: Lived experiences of police officers dealing with domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province**

Dear Participant

My name is Ronny Mkhonto, a Master of Social Work student at the University of Limpopo under the supervision of Dr. MR Manganyi which is by research. I am required to conduct a research project. You have been selected to participate in this study. I know how busy your schedule is. However, I request you to take part in a face-to-face interview that will take approximately 15-20 minutes. This study aims to explore police officers' lived experiences of handling domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To ascertain factors that influence police officers' decisions when responding to domestic violence matters.
- To determine the nature and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police.
- To identify challenges that police officers face when dealing with domestic violence cases.
- To identify measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time, and it will not be held against you in any way.
- You have the right to not answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. You have the right to decline being recorded and notes will be taken instead.
- There are no risks involved in participating in this study. Your privacy is assured, and confidentiality will be maintained.
- Your name will not be published in any document of my study. In a case whereby you feel uncomfortable with using your name, a pseudonym (fake name) will be used.
- There are no benefits or compensation in return for taking part in this study.

**Declaration by the participant:**

I ..... voluntarily consent to participate in this study and agree that the aim and objectives of the study are clear to me.

I understand that:

- Recordings or notes will be used to collect data
- Data collected will be used only for academic purposes.
- Participation in this study is voluntary
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- This study is about my lived experience of working with cases of domestic violence.

Participant's signature: ..... Date: .....

**Declaration by the researcher:**

I ..... the researcher, hereby declare that I provided the participant with verbal and written information regarding this study and I will abide by the research ethics.

Researcher's signature: ..... Date.....

Should there be any questions regarding this study, you can contact me via email: [ronnymkhonto@gmail.com](mailto:ronnymkhonto@gmail.com) or call 0782290424 or contact my supervisor Dr. MR Manganyi through email: [masenyani.manganyi@ul.ac.za](mailto:masenyani.manganyi@ul.ac.za).

Thank you for participating in this study. Your input is highly appreciated.

## Appendix C: Request letter for permission to conduct research

University of Limpopo  
Department of Social Work  
Private Bag X1106  
Sovenga  
0727

South African Police Services  
Private Bag X9428  
Polokwane  
0700

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MANKWENG SAPS**

I, Ronny Mkhonto of student number 201500331, am writing to request permission to conduct research at your institution. I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Limpopo which is by research. My research project is supervised by Dr. MR Manganyi of the University of Limpopo, Department of Social Work. The study is entitled: **“Lived experiences of police officers dealing with domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province”**. This study aims to explore police officers’ lived experiences of handling domestic violence matters in Mankweng, Limpopo Province. The proposed study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To ascertain factors that influence police officers’ decisions when responding to domestic violence matters.
- To determine the nature and causes of domestic violence incidents reported to the police.

- To identify challenges that police officers face when dealing with domestic violence cases.
- To identify measures on how social work services can be established specifically for domestic violence in police stations.

With the experience of serving over two years as a student social worker in family preservation services at the Department of Social Development, I greatly value police officers' roles. I know how police officers' schedule is and I respect that. I am inviting police officers to participate in my study which is about their lived experiences in attending to domestic violence cases. Due to the nature of the proposed study, I hope to recruit all male and female police officers who intervene in cases where families are experiencing or experienced domestic violence. Each participant will be requested to take part in a face-to-face interview that will take approximately 15-20 minutes. I will use the collected information for academic purposes only and the findings of the study will be forwarded to you. Any inquiries concerning this study, you can contact me via email: [ronnymkhonto@gmail.com](mailto:ronnymkhonto@gmail.com) or call 0782290424/ 0818475766 or contact my supervisor Dr. MR Manganyi through email: [masenyani.manganyi@ul.ac.za](mailto:masenyani.manganyi@ul.ac.za) or call 015 268 2605.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ronny Mkhonto (Mr)

0782290424/0818475766

**Appendix D: Ethics clearance certificate from TREC**