

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN STAYING IN PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE
RELATIONSHIPS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that lived experiences of women staying in physically abusive relationships is my own work, that it has not previously been submitted in an effort to obtain any degree or sitting for any examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have availed myself of or extracts quoted, thus all sources of referencing, have been disclosed and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

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ABSTRACT

Women are more at risk of experiencing violence involving people at home or close acquaintances, than from virtual strangers and outsiders. Domestic violence affects as many as one in two women in South Africa. Most women may keep secret abusive relationships and this might reside in a deep-seated fear of further abuse or as be frowned upon by a community that endorses social taboos which prohibit speaking about or even implying the reality of incidents of domestic violence. This phenomenological study investigates the actual experiences of women staying in physically abusive relationships. In this study a qualitative approach, involving thorough research, are presentation has been adopted in order to discuss, in a meaningful manner, the suffering of women who have experienced physically abusive relationships. The participants in the study include eight women who have been involved and suffered physically abusive relationship and these, living in Pretoria and suburbs, comprise an age category ranging from between twenty five to fifty. Data gathered and utilised has been accumulated by means of semi-structured open ended interviews. Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis was used to analyse and come to a conclusion regarding the data obtainable. The findings of the study have highlighted the role played by power and control, gender inequality and patriarchy experienced by women involved in these intimate relationships. The study further revealed the complexities surrounding the reasons and motives contributing to women staying in and suffering physically abusive relationships.

KEY WORDS: Abuse, Battery, Violence, Physical Abuse, Feminism

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is one of the common crimes that women and children are exposed to during their daily lives in South Africa (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). Fact remains that, especially in South Africa, women are subjected to abusive relationships and that these abusive relationships occur within an enclosed domestic area and tend to be underreported when compared to other forms of violence. Statistics on these crimes tend to be unreliable, due to underreporting, neglect, or misinterpretation of the cases (Seymour, 2002). Domestic violence takes place within a context that, ideally, views the family or household as a private domain within which conflict and dispute should be contained and settled without outside interference (Breines & Gordon, 1983). Adekeye (2009) argues that underreporting results from cultural norms and that the need is felt to preserve the practice of violence against women, this is because culturally women are seen to be followers not leaders and therefore largely dependent on their male partners so they may be fearful to report the providers in the household. The rate of domestic violence has continued to escalate, despite efforts by the government. According to the World Health Organization (2003), one in every three women is either sexually or physically assaulted during her lifetime. Statistics on battery are, if anything, most difficult to establish and curb.

Contrary to the view that violence against women occurs mainly among low-income families, it has been shown to be a phenomenon that cuts across social class, ethnic background and age (Mookodi, 2004). For that reason, the United Nations has referred to the abuse that these women suffer, as a global epidemic that knows no geographic, cultural or linguistic boundaries and affects all women, regardless of their level of income. As an issue that has great impact on those who suffer such abuse, on their families and on the immediate environment in which it occurs and even on future generations, abuse against women is a well-recognised problem that takes centre-stage in the political, social, and economic realms of various, if not all, countries (WHO, 2010).

Patriarchal structures are common phenomena in African countries and this gives lead to exposing a lot of women to partner violence as well as to diseases and physical injuries that could result from the abusive behaviour (WHO, 2010). Women's unequal status is persistent in patriarchal societies. The term patriarch is a derivative from the Greek word *patriarkhes*, with the word *patria* meaning family, *pater* meaning father and *arches* meaning ruler (Hughes, 1992). Therefore, a patriarchal system or society is one ruled by men. A patriarchal system is characterised by power, authority, dominance and hierarchy (Levinson, 1989; Haj-Yahia, 1998). Levinson (1989) continues by stating that in traditional patriarchal societies, males dominate and are considered authoritative figures, whereas women are considered to be the weaker sex, and as such inferior to male supremacy. Power imbalance, according to Vogelmann and Eagle (1991), is inherent within patriarchal relationships and is reflected in family relations too. Typically, violence against women is explained in terms of a power struggle. Feminists argue that in a patriarchal society, those with the power (and those are normally males), usually resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened. Many feminists are of the opinion that

domestic violence is a consequence of patriarchy and part of a methodical attempt at maintaining and progressively enhancing male dominance in the home and society (Knickmeyer, Levitt, Horne, 2003). Ruether (1989) stated in her work that domestic violence and women and wife battering, is rooted in and is the illogical presumption concluded from patriarchal assumptions about women's subordinate status.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ABUSE OF FEMALES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Research shows that women are more at risk from violence involving people they know at home than from passers-by and fleeting acquaintances (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). Every six hours, a woman is killed by an intimate partner (Sunday independent, 2006). According to Van der Hovan (2001), domestic violence affects as many as one in two women in South Africa.

Statistics generally underestimate the extent of domestic violence. Most women may not reveal being abused for fear of further abuse or as a result of social taboos which prohibit speaking about domestic violence (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Some women's fear of other people's reactions to them should they disclose being abused, may also silence them (Soul city, 1999).

There are other factors that prohibit women from disclosing issues of abuse such as lack of confidence in the police or the justice system, issues of shame, dependency on the abuser and even embarrassment (Matthews & Abrahams, 2001).

Over the last three decades, knowledge involving intimate partner violence or domestic violence has grown exponentially (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). According to Dobash and Dobash (2004), detailed statistics concerning the consequences of violent acts, reveal that women are much more inclined than men are to report physical injuries and psychological scarring as a result of men's

aggression towards them. Violence in South Africa is a serious and extensive crime, although it is often unrecognized and underreported (Lawrence, 1984). Preliminary studies reveal that 50% to 60% of marital relationships involve violence and abuse (Adams, 1987). According to Vogelman and Eagle (1991), in Cape Town, the Rape Crisis Centre estimated that one out of six women is regularly beaten by their partners. Vogelman and Eagle (1991), proceeds by stating that violence against women reflects the violent culture in general; one common to the South African society and this makes acceptable the incidence of violence and re-establishes its role as a device in resolving disagreement, which is cause for concern to all South Africans. This deduction is further supported by Abrahams, Jewkes and Laubscher (2004) through their assertion that, although reliable estimates and statistics of brutality against women are difficult to obtain, strong empirical evidence has suggested that violence against women exerted by intimate partners is of epidemic proportion in South Africa. In traditional African families, violence is considered by many to be a legitimate tool in conflict resolution and the primary means to gain control over women. Most men and even some misled, submissive women, see wife beating as a justified response to women's supposed transgression or lack of submissiveness and the resistance to traditional acceptance to so-called roles for a certain gender, and such transgressions imply disobedience, failing to perform household duties, and sexual infidelity (Kim & Motsei, 2002).

Approximately half of all South African women murdered in 1999 were killed by partners that they are intimate with (Matthews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Jewkes, 2004). According to Matthews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Jewkes (2004), this translates into a prevalence rate of 8.8 per 100000 women of 14 years and older. Alternatively could be stated that a woman is killed every six hours, the highest rate yet to be reported by media of research anywhere in the world

(Matthews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Jewkes, 2004). According to Abrahams, Jewkes and Vetten (2008), community based prevalence studies find that domestic violence in one way or the other, in some parts of South Africa, affects as many as one in every two women. A 1997 study conducted in three of South Africa's mine provinces found that 27% of women in the Eastern Cape, 28% of women in Mpumalanga and 19% of women in the Northern Province have been physically abused by a current or ex-partner (Jewkes et al, 1999).

Further research of 1394 men working for Cape Town municipalities, revealed that approximately 44% of these men were willing to admit to researchers to having physically abused their female partners (Abrahams, Jewkes and Laubscher, 1999). The South African Police Service, for the period of 1 April 2007- 31 March 2008, reported 182588 violent crimes committed against women. These included 91534 crimes of common assault, 62368 crimes of grievous bodily harm and 2606 acts of indecent assault. Although the relationship with the perpetrator is not specified, it is more than likely that most of these attacks were executed by intimate partners (SAPS 2008).

1.3 DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

According to Jewkes (2002), abuse is widely and lightly overlooked or tolerated in South Africa and has come to be perceived almost as the accepted norm and conduct not to be challenged. In many instances, women are blamed for staying in abusive relationships. Vogelmann (1991) continues to say that the abuse of women by men is viewed as being, to a large extent rooted in differences of a biological and sexual nature, including the power attributed to the masculine dominant male, his competitiveness, unbridled aggression and sexual appetite. The other factor

leading to this criminality is that of perceiving femininity as passivity, dependence, masochism vulnerability and modesty. Men are not held responsible for their actions, since such violent behaviour is a 'natural' masculine response and women are to a great extent held responsible for their provoking assault and victimisation (Jewkes& Abrahams, 2002; Vogelmann, 1991).

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to add to the growing body of theoretical and practical understanding of abuse against women currently prevalent in South Africa. The study also aims at understanding the behavioural models that are involved in an abusive relationship in a South African family and at exploring the factors that inhibit women from leaving such a relationship. The study additionally aims at capturing the life experiences of women in physically abusive relationships and aims at empowering these women to voice their experiences of abuse. I will mainly focus on physical abuse, due to the fact that psychological and emotional abuse tend to be underreported and are studied less frequently than physical abuse (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, 1994; Matthews, 2004).

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of South African women staying in physically abusive relationships?

1.5.1 Research Objective

The objective of the study is to explore the life experiences of women staying in physically abusive relationships.

1.6 THEORETICAL LENSE

The study applies a Phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a method of research that seeks to explore the state of affairs as we experience them and, as a result, it looks at our conclusions drawn by said experiences. Phenomenology is part and parcel of the interpretive paradigm of research; its philosophy aiming at understanding the complexity of the experiences undergone when viewed from the individual's vantage point. The ontology of this paradigm is that reality is based on people's definition and understanding of said paradigm. Cartell (2001) views the ontology of the interpretive paradigm as one having multiple realities and maintains that, due to those realities, there also exist various social outcomes stemming from the subjective experiences of the people. The epistemology of this paradigm involves the fact that findings are literally exposed as the investigation proceeds (De Gialdino, 2009). This approach was decided on due to the fact that the literature indicates that it is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual and it brings into special prominence the importance of personal perspective and individual interpretation. As such, it is a powerful instrument and applicable in the understanding of experience undergone and in gaining insight into people's motivations and actions, and cuts right through the clutter of token assumptions and conventional wisdom (Lester, 1999).

Phenomenology was deemed relevant for the study as I am interested in the participants' lived experiences and suffering through physical abuse. The women in the study were chosen as they have first-hand experience of suffering physical abuse. To ensure that the phenomenon is being investigated as it truly appears or is experienced, a necessary criterion is that the researcher must approach the phenomenon explored lacking any preconceived expectations. Husserl, as cited in Morse (1994) considered phenomenology to be a philosophy, a theory and a method of studying

the greater realities of life. In the same publication by Morse (1994), Husserl insisted that the essence of phenomenology is contained within the constraints, or that which holds in abeyance the preconceptions about the world in order to pinpoint and clarify the true meaning of the things themselves (Morse, 1994). Heidegger, as cited in Koch (1995), reinterpreted this basic belief to a definition of compartmentalising it broadly and acknowledging that our very existence is a part of human experience. Due to this outlook, the presuppositions are not to be eliminated, but they constitute the possibility of meaning. The phenomenological method chosen as an approach for this study is the hermeneutic (interpretive) approach. This method recognizes that all phenomenological research starts with a clear description of the experience under study. It requires that the researcher allows the experience to unfold, the way it is presented to the participant in an unbiased manner. While recognizing that the quality of descriptions may vary and that the more criteria identified, the better the final results available to the researcher, it is also true that, in so doing, helpful clarifications by the researcher are discouraged so that the resulting description is a true version of the facts as experienced by the participant (Omery, 1983).

This dissertation explores the scope of physical abuse on women from within feminist perspective. The proponents of feminism argue that a patriarchal social structure inevitably gives rise to the subordination of women and therefore contributes to a pattern of systematic violence towards women (Sanchez-Hucles & Dutton, 1999). According to Bowman (2003), almost every traditional African society is patriarchal and the women's place within the scheme is decidedly subordinate, for example, according to customary law, women are prohibited from inheriting from their husbands. Bowman (2003) continues to say that, unless this systemic inequality exerted between men and women is addressed, the crime of the abuse of females will historically

persist. Feminists have made violence and abuse of women a central issue in the women's movement around the world. They have organised shelters, promoted public educational programs, advocated new laws and policies, promoted change in the criminal justice and health care systems and fostered the development of a new data base to inform and reflect on the realities of diverse women's lives (Koss, Russo & Goodman, 1995; Marin & Russo, 1999).

Parenzee (2001) informs that, even though measures are taken to promote and assist the abused women, the fact of the matter is that most women are not getting support and assistance. Ideally, the clerks of the court should be available to assist women in completing the application forms. In practise, criminal justice personnel presume the legislations to be un-implementable due to limited resources (Vetten, 2005). Too few personnel in combination with lack of police vehicles, fax machines and photo copiers are considered to not only additionally burden law enforcement agents, but also to compromise complainants' safety (Artz, 2003).

Ofei-Aboagye (1994), conducted studies on the abuse of women in Ghana, attributes the incidence of female abuse to a greater extent to subordination by males, feminine passivity, and economic dependence of women on their partners. Ofei-Aboagye concludes that the struggle against the abuse of women unquestionably is integrated in a much broader context, namely the struggle for gender equality. Viewed from feminist perspective, the abusive, controlling attitude towards women partially comprises a patriarchal social structure, and is an intentional pattern of behaviour utilised in order to establish and maintain power and control over a female partner (Dobash & Dobash, 2004).

Feminists conclude that the struggle for women's liberation is primarily targeting men, resulting in a struggle against gender-related issues and patriarchy (Millet, 1969). The proponents of feminism additionally argue that a patriarchal social structure gives vent to the subordination and

oppression of women, and therefore contributes to the perpetuated historical pattern of ever-growing violence aimed at women in general (Sanchez-Hucles & Dutton, 1999).

Phenomenology seeks to explain the customary, conditioned way in which social agents form social reality through the meanings that come to life in the context of lived experiences (Butler, 1988), whereas feminism is concerned with standardised concepts of set norms referring to aspects such as liberation, revolution and equality (McKinnon, 1987). The goal of this study is to examine the way in which women are affected by and attribute meaning to experiencing physical abuse as predetermined by the proponents of feminist ideologies.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter two is a literature review, a chapter that take into consideration prior studies conducted on the phenomenon of the abuse of women in general. Additionally, it takes a closer look at the hypothetical motivation for women who have chosen to remain in physically abusive relationships and the implications of these phenomena. This chapter also investigates the traditions, views, perceptions and attitudes re-enforced with regards to this phenomenon, as well as Governmental policies implemented in order to combat the issue.

Chapter three focuses on the methodologies implemented in conducting the study. The chapter offers a report on the measures taken and interventions applied in conducting the study. It also provides justification for the use of qualitative research methods and for the use of semi-structured interviews as tools to collect data.

Chapter four and five will review the emerging results and themes. Furthermore, the efficacy of the applied theory and literature will be revised together with the analysis of the themes. The findings will be linked to and connected with the literature.

In chapter six the researcher draws a conclusion and provides recommendation for future research on the basis of the current study. The researcher's reflections on the study are also reported on in this chapter. The findings are briefly viewed in line with the literature and the limitations of and suggestions made during the study are looked at. Finally, some suggestions involving future research are made.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter gives an overview of the topic of the abuse of women, and research indicates that violence against women constitutes an astronomical problem and that this implicates not only South Africa, but also the rest of the world. Women have suffered dehumanising acts in a society where men have been conditioned to treat women as inferior. One is challenged by the fact that the abuse of women generally occurs within the private domain and tends to be underreported when compared to other forms of violence. The chapter also reviews the significance of the study and highlights the extent to which the outcomes will contribute to the body of existing knowledge on women abuse in South Africa. The theoretical groundwork for the study is also highlighted.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The increased volume of research, conferences and academic studies concerning the abuse of women, highlights the extent of the problem in South Africa (Soul City, 2010). In this chapter, I explore the literature pertaining to factors that contribute to women to stay in abusive relationships.

Intimate partner violence, constitutes a phenomenon that enters into relationships in all societies around the globe (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002) and is associated with a number of immediate and long term health issues. It restricts economic development, as it is associated with serious financial consequences. As an issue that greatly impact on the victims, their families, the immediate environment in which it is prevalent and even on future generations (WHO, 2010), intimate partner violence is a crime well-recognised, and has great bearing on the political, social and economic realms of different countries. This crime knows no racial boundaries; a fact which is pointed out by Barnett (2000) who asserts that domestic violence is liable to occur in any household irrespective of race, socio-economical, educational, occupational, ethnical, age-oriented and religious lines.

According to Idemudia (2009), the abuse of women has a serious and long term impact on the victim and, as a consequence can result in women being more dependent. Competence concerns

an individual's conviction that she is in control of her life. Violence directed at women cannot be divorced from the broader social context, and any truly effective strategy to combat such violence, will need to address associated forms of oppression (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991).

This chapter aims to explore the literature on the occurrence of the abuse of women both locally and internationally. It also ventures to explain the motivational issues that prompt women to stay in physically abusive relationships and considers the lack of information on said abuse.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms abuse, battery and violence are used interchangeably in different studies. According to Brown (1994), all these concepts (abuse, battery and violence), refer to harming another person by exerting physical aggression or cultivating fear of physical aggression; intimidation, subjugation and domination.

The term violence denotes any act of power that causes people pain or harm, or violates the rights of women in some way (Campbell, 1998). This indicates that violence appears to involve elements of power and control. Cahn and Lloyd (1996) are of the opinion that the definition of violence should include the ability to impose one's will on another person.

Battery is defined as a form of assault where the same person continuously assaults the same victim. The victim often cannot escape or prevent being hurt, because of ties to the attacker (Cahn & Lloyd, 1996). According to Weiner (1994), a battered woman is someone who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical behaviour by a man whose sole aim is to force her to do something he wishes her to do without acknowledging her rights.

Physical abuse is any deliberate physical, bodily assault on an individual that harms the recipient in any way. It may, or may not involve visible evidence of injury. This damage may include kicking, hitting, slapping, choking, burning, stabbing and shooting the victim. Hegarty, Shechan & Schonfeld (1999), suggest that any definition of physical abuse needs to take into account the type of injury, the severity of the attack and the frequency of assault and its motive. They also view it as a complex pattern of behavioural or moral aberration that includes emotional abuse, without excluding physical acts of violence. Physical abuse is most visible in physical injuries such as cuts, bruises, rips, and fractures, but battered women may also die as a result of injury (Idemudia, 2009).

One of the defining attributes of abuse is that it is a continual action; a process that takes place over a period of time involving people (Campbell, 1998). According to Campbell (1998), the abuse of women involve the repetition of acts of aggression that a man directs towards a woman which are intended, or perceived as intended, to physically or psychologically harm the woman.

2.3 DISCUSSION ON ABUSE OF WOMEN

Domestic abuse has always been a secretive act that has been kept quiet or gone unchallenged up until the past few decades. Once the matter has been brought to the attention of the public and/or media, awareness has been created and many people have started opening up and trying to seek help and counselling. Violence against women is a global problem affecting between 10% and 60% of women and cutting across social, economic, religious and racial lines (Heise, Ellsberg & Gottmoeller, 2002). According to WHO (2002), the most common form of violence inflicted on women has been that inflicted by an intimate male partner. The perpetrator may be a current or

former spouse, boyfriend or dating partner (Flinck, Paavilainen & Astedt-Kurki, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Recently it has been thrust into the limelight through media criticism on and outspokenness on the relationships of celebrities and coverage of said relationships; always in the public eye. Popular R&B couple Chris Brown and Rihanna first seems to portray a perfect, harmonious match, and this has continued to be so until early 2009, when Brown brutally attacked Rihanna, thereby drawing attention to the horrifying secret of aggression and abuse (MSNBC, 2009). Forty-eight population-based surveys from 34 different countries have ended up being scrutinized and of these, between 10% and 69% of women have reported being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner (WHO, 2002). The abuse inflicted on women, has since attracted a great deal of attention from the research parties, mostly in the developed world. This is due not only to the fact that it is a violation of human rights, but also as it entails serious short and long term injury inflicted on the victim and presents a financial burden on the economy, as many women have to be treated and given health care, while productivity deteriorates (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2003) . According to Tjaden, and Thoennes (2003), the annual cost inflicted by partner aggression, is in excess of \$5.8 billion, of which amount \$4.1 billion covers medical and mental health services. It is purported that victims of intimate partner aggression, lost 8 million days of paid work due to injury by current or ex-husbands, boyfriends and dates. This cost presents the equivalent of more than 32 000 full-time jobs. Dutton (1994) argues that, although intimate partner violence takes on different forms, all this depending on a number of factors, the violence is pervasive and present a grievous burden to many societies. According to Smith (1989), the extent of domestic violence is unknown and whatever conclusions are reached from the studies which have been done must remain tentative and incidents must be treated with caution. Despite the implementation of numerous crime surveys,

including the British crime survey, the extent of the problem can only truly be viewed as an estimate. By virtue of its secretive nature, domestic violence is an elusive topic of research: it is committed behind closed doors; is concealed from the public eye; and is often concealed from anyone outside the immediate family. Even though crime surveys can never be completely accurate due to the veil of secrecy surrounding this crime, these surveys can still give satisfactory indication as to the extent of the problem of domestic violence and present some insight into the problem. Surveys have suggested an increase in domestic violence in recent years (Women's Aid Federation, 2000). This could be due to the fact that a vast number of women are being subjected to domestic violence by their partners, but the increase in numbers could also be indicative of an increase in public awareness of the problem and the different ways in which to confront the problem. The increase could also be due to the fact that police officers and other professionals are increasingly pro-active in their response towards domestic violence (Women's Aid, Northern England, 2000). When considering statistics, it is important to consider these in close context to the manner in which they were obtained. For example, police action is restricted by the law, due to restricted powers of arrest available to the officer, the acquisition of irrefutable evidence and the co-operation of the victim in taking action against the offender who, in most cases, is the person whom the victim loves. Often action is only taken when the injuries that the victim sustains, are detectable to the police. Visible injuries can act as proof that an act of domestic violence has occurred and are often thought of as being the only valid evidence acceptable to prove domestic violence (Dobash & Dobash, 2000), but by researching domestic violence in this manner, the full extent of the problem will remain hidden. It is important therefore, to look at all the forms that domestic violence can take. Increasing amounts of research looking into domestic

violence, have given researchers fresh insight into the nature and form that domestic violence can take.

2.4 THE ABUSE OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Violence is wide spread; a common phenomenon and deeply entrenched in most societies and this is certainly the case in the South African context (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). According to Vogelmann & Eagle (1991), violence in South Africa is prevalent and has come to be widely tolerated. It has gradually come to be perceived as almost the norm and is, to a large extent, accepted rather than challenged. The authors continue by mentioning that it is impossible to offer a universally acceptable definition of violence against women in South Africa, without detailed recognition of the diversity of race, class, and region. However, preliminary studies reveal that 50% to 60% of marital relationships involve violence and abuse (Mathews et al. 2004; Heise et al. 2002; Adams, 1987). Though accurate statistics are difficult to obtain, results from various studies in South Africa reveal high rates of physical violence (Jewkes, 1998). For example, the South African demographic health survey found that 13% of women, at some stage, have been assaulted by an intimate partner (Department of Health, 1998), whereas a study of three South African provinces have found 19% to 27% of women reporting intimate partner violence (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 2001). Although studies of violence in South Africa have revealed a culture of violence as a factor generally contributing to the high rates of intimate partner violence, it is important to bear in mind the structural roots of violence in South Africa; high levels of inequality, unemployment and the legacy of a violent state (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2005). Since the political change in South Africa in 1994, the issue of

violence against women has begun to receive attention, along with transformative measures to address the problem (Vetten, 2000). The transition from apartheid to democracy has been associated with escalating violence (Masuku, 2001). According Masuku (2001), widespread interpersonal violence and crime have affected all members of South African society; and violence has become an accepted form of solving conflict. It is presented as one of the few ways available to township men in order to assert their masculinity (Leclerc-Madlala, 1997). Violent crime in post-apartheid South Africa has not simply suddenly presented itself. According to Simpson (1993), researchers at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation point out that, during a period of rebellion and resistance to apartheid under the excuse of ‘ungovernability’ and ‘people’s war’, violent means of resolving conflict and bringing about political change have been positively sanctioned. The endorsement of violent means also found its application in other social arenas. Displaced aggression has been vented on the most physically, socially, economically and politically vulnerable, victimising women as scapegoats (Simpson, 1998). Two population prevalence studies have documented high levels of violence against women and have disclosed one in four women having reported having been abused by a partner (South African Law Commission, 2002). During a survey, women in three Provinces being Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo who have contacted support agencies, physical abuse was found to be the most prevalent form of domestic violence experienced by women, with 90% of the statistical sample having experienced this abuse (Bollen, 1999). Furthermore, a 2003 antenatal survey in one city, have discovered that 38% of women have experienced abuse during pregnancy (Mbokota & Moodley, 2004).

Limpopo Province has reported a low rate of violence at 19.1% (Jewkes et al, 1999). Some of the reasons for low levels of reported cases in the three cities are that assaulted women have not been keen to report perpetrators as they were afraid. If victims report the situation to the magistrate, seeking refuge, they are either killed, or suffer rejection by others as well as experience lack of support by fellow women. Some women have been shot at the magistrate offices as a result of lack of protection from their partners and from South African Police Service (SAPS, 1998). The Limpopo province suffers from lack of resources such as crisis intervention centres; and shelters for the protection of abused women.

Issues of domestic violence are mostly paid serious attention to by women only, as they present the vast majority of the directly affected. Generally pressure groups from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are left to provide support to women who are exposed to domestic violence. Women often organise protest marches against domestic violence, but in some instances a few men get involved as well. Domestic violence is seen as a reflection of inequality of power distribution, starting with sexual and generational inequality in the home and the community. It thus reinforces the idea that women and children are the property of men (Adragna, 1991). Marano (1993) contends that abuse of women by their partners, has long been occurring behind closed doors and that it thrives on privacy and isolation as well as on patriarchal attitudes, rigid gender arrangements, acceptance of aggression in other contexts and economic hardship. In the South African context, cultural practices generally hold that the man is the head of the house and exerts the greatest control and decision making powers (Tshwaranang Update, 1999). On account of these views, culture plays a crucial role in maintaining male dominance and serves to reinforce notions of female inferiority and male superiority and supports and reinforces violence against women (Ramphela, 1989).

2.5 GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES ON THE ABUSE OF WOMEN

According to Vetten (2005), violence against women has been one of the most prominent features of post-apartheid South Africa and the issue has dominated national public debates and has stimulated community based activism and non-governmental intervention. The extent of the problem was also recognised by the African National Congress government from relatively early on in its tenure. The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996 established crimes of violence against women and children as a national priority and a number of legislative reforms have been introduced in this area. These include mandatory light sentencing for certain rape cases (The Criminal Law Amendment Act, no 105 of 1997), tightening bail conditions for those charged with violence against women through the Criminal Procedure second Amendment Act, no 85 of 1997 and the passing in 1998 of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), no 118 of 1998. According to the Department of Social Development (2003), national policy guidelines for the handling of victims of abuse have also been finalized in 1998 and the policy framework and strategy for shelters of victims of domestic violence in 2003. There was a rise in specialist facilities such as family courts and specialist sexual offences courts. Thus the first 10 years post-1994, have been marked by increased state intervention into the problem of violence against women (Vetten, 2005).

2.5.1 The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (no 118 of 1998)

According to The Domestic Violence Act (no 118 of 1998), domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse as well as economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, and any other controlling or abusive behaviour where

such conduct harms or may cause imminent harm to safety, health and well-being of the complainant. The first piece of legislation to specifically address domestic violence in South Africa is the Prevention of Family Violence Act (PFVA) (no 133 of 1993). Soon after the PFVA has been introduced, aspects of its provisions have been questioned by attorneys who believe men's right to a fair hearing was being violated by the PFVA. After soliciting the opinion of both the Department of Justice, as well as that of the family Advocates, the South African Law Commission establishes (in February 1996), a project committee comprising a number of feminist lawyers and experts well versed in the area of domestic violence. This is done in order to review the legislation (Meintjes, 2003). The product of the committee, the DVA, is passed in 1998 and starts operating a year after on December 15 1999. According to Meintjes (2003), the fact that the more progressive version of the Act is adopted, is the outcome of the following conditions; that women's organisations addressing domestic violence mobilises around the Act; that key networks between female politicians and bureaucrats exist within the state; that the presence of a democratic discourse and framework that integrates gender is made felt and finally, that key individuals in leadership positions constantly remain committed to championing issues.

One of the key innovations of the DVA is its extensive definition of domestic violence which includes a range of behaviours within its domain. According to Parenzee, Artz and Moul (2001) the DVA is applicable to a range of familial and domestic relationships and covers both heterosexual and same sex relationships and under this Act, a victim of domestic violence may apply for a protection order to stop the abuse and to stop the abuser from entering the mutual home, the victim's residence or the victim's place of employment. The courts are allowed to add other conditions on the order, including the power of the police to seize any weapons, or the

freedom to assist the victim in retrieving property from her home. The court may also evict the abuser from the home and force him to pay rent for and/or emergency maintenance to the victim. The court also has the power to limit the abuser's rights of custody to children, and, if the court grants an interim or final protection order, it is obliged to issue a suspended warrant for the arrest of the abuser and this will become active if the abuser violates the order. The DVA contains many laudable elements such as its broad definition of domestic violence and its attempt to introduce statutory monitoring and oversight of police enforcement of the law, which could be held up as examples of good practice. It yet remains difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the Act when it has not been implemented effectively and thus cannot routinely meet its purpose to provide the maximum protection of the law to survivors of domestic violence (Vetten, 2005).

2.6 REASONS FOR STAYING IN PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Based on previous research conducted on abuse of women, there seems to be numerous reasons forcing abused women stay in abusive relationships; the most pressing of these reasons being safety. According to Turner (2002), a woman who has been abused may fear retaliation from her abuser should she leave the abusive environment or make an effort to escape. Turner continues to say that the abuser in the situation may have made specific threats, stating that, if the abused partner leaves, he will hurt or kill her, or may even threaten the safety of the children. This argument is supported by Matthews (2004), who claims that statistically the most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship, is just prior to leaving that relationship. In fact, women who are divorced or separated are fourteen times more likely to report being the victim of violence by a spouse or ex-spouse (McCue, 2008).

Women who can rely on limited support from friends, family or the community, may find it more difficult to leave an abusive relationship (Sullivan & Knutson, 1994). Close friends and family can provide emotional support in stressful times, which can help reduce the risk of falling ill due to great amounts of stress, and these friends and family can also provide a place of safety for a woman in rebuilding her life after having left an abuser (Bowker, 1983). Women, who cannot rely on that support, face even greater challenges than those with support.

Social isolation has been shown to be associated with abuse of women, as severely abused women tend to be extremely isolated, and have no one in their limited social network who can provide the type of support they need (Davidson, 2004). In most abusive relationships, the abuser will often slowly work to isolate the abused partner socially by not allowing her to work, not allowing her to leave the house, or even to meet with friends (Matthews, 2004).

Shame is another reason persuading women to stay in abusive relationships. The shame may flow from the fear that people will know her lifestyle and cause her to end up being ridiculed in the community and this may prevent her from seeking help and thus force her to stay in that abusive relationship. Some women may fear the shame of failing in their marriages and therefore stay to maintain the marriage, even an abusive one (Gordon, 1996).

A study by Martin (1981) found that women receiving welfare, or live in low income occupations, are significantly less likely than other women to terminate abusive relationships. Dependency can also be promoted and enhanced by the presence of children and access to financial resources over and above job income (Bornstein, 2006). Most women stay in abusive relationships, as their partners provide financial support (Matthews, 2004). A female lacking a stable income, is more likely to stay in an abusive relationship, as the partner is providing

financially and leaving such a relationship becomes difficult. A study by Martin (1981) found that, when an abused woman leaves her abuser, there is a 50% chance of her standard of living dropping to below the poverty line. This is due to the fact that she is financially dependent on the abuser and most likely solely depends on the abuser and do not have the necessary life skills to survive on her own and has not even acquired the necessary skills to apply for a job.

2.7 CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

Studies conducted in different Southern African countries by advocacy organisations indicate that marital practices such as lobola have come to perpetuate violence against married women (Mvududu & McFadden, 2001). The studies report that these practices legitimise gender divisions of labour, which in turn designate men as breadwinners and decision-makers and expect of women to be submissive and dependent. The cultural gift of lobola is negotiated by men around the women's value as asset to the family and may have proprietary implications as to how a husband perceives or treats his wife (Ramphela, 1989). According to Schapera (1994), women are on the whole regarded as socially inferior to men and in Tswana law, for example, are always treated as minors, as before marriage the woman must submit herself to the authority of her father or guardian, while, after marriage, she is controlled by her husband. The exchange has the effect of transferring guardianship or authority over the woman from her family to her husband. Schapera (1994) argues that the function of lobola among the Tswana, is to transfer the reproductive powers of a woman from her own family to that of her husband's and, when married, a woman comes under the authority of her husband and the husband's power over his wife is by no means absolute. He is allowed to beat her if she has misconducted herself, but for

the fortunate fact that her own family's power to which she can always appeal, is generally an effective counter check against the abuse of these rights and if he abuses his power to an extreme, he might be punished at the Kgotla (a place where community meetings are held) (Schapera, 1994). A study conducted by Tshweneagae and Seloilwe (2009) in Botswana, found that most participants believe that they are being isolated from their primary families because their spouses believe that they have bought them through payment of lobola. In contrast to the study by Tshweneagae and Seloilwe, a study conducted by Shope (2006), found that most rural women perceive lobola to be a very effective counteractive method that prevents for her own family from missing her, as it creates a great friendship and it is a way of forming a relationship or bond between two families. Through the negotiation of lobola, families are brought together and united and Ansell (2001) states that the transfer of goods through lobola creates a web of affiliations.

Van der Hoven (1989) has conducted a survey to investigate the attitudes of female members of a community in Pretoria. A stratified random sample of 123 white Afrikaans women of low and middle socio-economic strata reveals that more than half of these respondents have grown up treasuring a patriarchal attitude. They believe that the wife should be submissive and obey her husband and that she should never let him become aware of the fact that she excels at some things and can improve on any of his achievements. She should be quiet and subservient in order to limit her husband's aggression towards her as his underling.

One of the cultural practices exercised in order to lower the social status of the women in the family, is the custom of daughters being expected to be married into other families, and parents relying on male children and their offspring for material support, particularly during their old age (Rwezaura, 1996). In order for this culture to persist, children are, from an early age onwards,

brainwashed to adapt to their socially predetermined hierarchal positions. Boys are taught to be aggressive and dominant, whereas girls are expected to be submissive and to accept without question their inferior position in society as a natural order of things (Rwezaura, 1996).

2.8 THEORIES ON ABUSE OF WOMEN

Bowman (2003) points out that, although analysis of the problem of abusive conduct towards women is much more prevalent in Africa than in the United States, and notwithstanding the fact that most of the research and published material have been put into place by activists rather than by academics, several theories on domestic violence are reflected in this work. As Schneider (2000) points out, the theoretical grounding of research on domestic violence has important implications for the remedial strategies decided on with a view to address the problem. The various theories yield a large variety of prescriptions for social action, aimed at confronting the problem and these include psychotherapy on a one on one based family therapy, more stringent crime control measures, legal reforms and rehabilitation or far reaching social and economic transformation. The section describes a variety of theories on domestic violence, some of which are implicit to causative clarification and I note the feminist explanation, which the present study is grounded upon.

2.8.1 Psychodynamic Theories

The central focus of intra-psychic theories, mainly involves the personalities of either the abuser or the victim (Harway & Hansen, 1993). The abuser is viewed as being driven by his inherent aggressive nature, his psychological imbalance or mental disorders (Manard, 1993). These

theories also assume particular psychological attributes that cause women to be vulnerable to abuse. The concept of masochism is applied to explicate women's tendency to be submissive and vulnerable and accepting of suffering (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). These theories deflect our attention from the extensive social tolerance towards abuse. They totally overlook the realities of male domination and power and the prevalence of abusive behaviour by males, by perceiving men as being the victims to their alleged offensive or aggressive natures (Moore, 1997).

2.8.2 Psycho-social theories

The psycho-social framework endeavours to explain the incidence of abusive behaviour towards women, by examining interaction between individuals and their social environment (Bograd, 1999). Resultant theories claim that men became abusive towards women, in response to social and environmental stressors experienced in the form of things such as poverty, poor housing and living conditions, unemployment or exploitation in the workplace, racism, educational under-achievement and a sense of despair about the future (Mullender, 1996). The assumption that abuse occurs more frequently among lower class families, could be attributed to illiteracy as well as to poor education (Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Simons, Whitbeck, Huck & Melby, 1990). According to Conger, et al., (1990) research has found that economic distress controls the destinations of individuals and families, and this includes the predisposition to failed relationships, dissatisfaction and conflict in the family. Proponents of this theory argue that having fewer resources, poorer women are inclined to call for police assistance or more often utilise the services of social workers, and that middle or upper class women enjoy greater access to privatised support services (Moore, 1997). Moore (1997) continues by asserting that the

argument that men abuse women as a coping mechanism when confronted with stress-related factors such as unemployment, poor working conditions and inadequate income and health care, suggests individual pathology.

2.8.3 The social learning theories

These theories suggest that abusive behaviour is acquired by observing others who are in the act of being abusive. The basis of this theory stems from conduct referred to as modelling (Wiehe, 1998). The theory rests on the assumption that individuals tend to imitate or to fashion their own behaviour after that of others whom they regard as important, powerful or successful. Parents constitute important role models for children, based on their interaction with each other (Bjorkqvist & Ostrman, 1992).

2.8.4 Feminist theories

This study will focus more on this theory as it illustrates how societies foster patriarchal family structures in which men are expected to have power over women. The key elements that characterise feminism, are that of gender being central to the interpretation of social relationships and the fact that gender relationships are being complicated by the reality of being linked to dominance, inequality and conflict, and that gender relationships are seen as socially construed, since they result from socio-cultural and historical conditions and as such can be fashioned after human interaction (Moore & Ollenburger, 1992; Skoldberg & Alvesson, 2000). The feminist theory focuses on the affinity existing resulting from patriarchy, traditional beliefs and abusive

conduct towards women (Mullender, 1996). Several cultural reasons were mentioned as contributing to the growing incidence and social tolerance towards the abuse of women. The historical tradition of patriarchal supremacy over women authorised a permissible level of abuse against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Dobash and Dobash (1979) further expound that men are socialised to perceive their partners as their property and they continue expounding that the abuse of women is just one of a variety of forms of control that men try to exercise over women. In addition to this, Bart and Moran (1993) argue that men are of the opinion that they are justified in their abuse towards their intimate partners, as this conduct is viewed as the acceptable norm.

An imperative outcome of the war against feminism is the tolerant attitude towards the abuse of women and that of publicly recognising feminism as a major social problem. In an effort to intervene and prevent further abuse of women, researchers searched to determine the causes of the oppression of women. Feminists emphasise that maltreatment of women is just one of a variety of tools designed to control intimate partners that men employ in order to exercise dominance over women (Conway, 1997). The significance of male violence towards women cannot be addressed individually, but there is a need to focus on women's traditional and societal roles within their families and in the community, as women are to an ever growing extent subjected to control by men within a culture that is designed to benefit and meet the needs of men (Conway, 1997).

It is argued that South African society is extremely patriarchal in nature, and is still constrained within the limits of so-called male supremacy and the legacy of apartheid (Dangor, Hoof & Scott, 1998). Patriarchy defines the way in which the acceptance of male dominance within a society is a significant factor which contributes towards the continued acceptance of women

being abused. Thus, it could be safely assumed that this form of abuse is intrinsically rooted within the social context of South African society.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews literature on abusive male dominance and the reasons according to which women choose to stay in abusive relationships. It also explores and highlights the policies adopted in order to combat the issue of the abuse of females, the implication of culture, and theories on the phenomenon.

From the literature, it can be clearly deduced that curtailing the ill-treatment of women is a challenge faced by societies world-wide and has implications that affect not only the victims, but also the people involved with the abused, as well as the economy at large. The literature shows that South Africa is not isolated in an exclusive battle with the problem, but, as substantiated by statistics, abuse of women in intimate partner relationships universally presents an extensive problem. Even though the South African government has put policies in place to counteract this occurrence, such as introducing legislative measures, the problem does not seem to be repressed. The issue concerning the abuse of women is a multi-faceted predicament which necessitates more than legislation in order for it to be addressed. This reality can be attributed to the fact that factors involving culture fulfil a significant role in sustaining and sanctioning the predicament.

The literature further explicates that economic pressures is discovered as being the most pressing reason pin pointed by researchers attempting to deliberate why the women stay in abusive relationships and this, is in addition to other contributing factors such as lack of support from family, do not augment women's self-esteem. The lack of support results in isolation and

unemployment which, in turn, promotes dependence on the abuser. Several cultural reasons were also cited as being responsible for contributing to the persistence of and tolerance of the problem of abusive conduct towards women. The practice of lobola, which sustains the powers of the husband as being the commander of the household, increases tolerance towards husbands in the habit of beating their wives.

In studying the theories that try to illustrate the abuse of women, the literature expounds that according to psychodynamic theories abusers are seen as psychologically misguided as they are unable to restrain their own aggressive nature. Psycho-social theories expound the interaction taking place between the individual and the environment he lives in, blaming conditions such as poverty as causative for giving rise to the problem of the abuse of women. The theory of social learning informs us that people are versed in certain behavioural conduct by those they hold in high esteem, as children tend to imitate the behaviour of family or of society. On the other hand, the feministic perspective takes into consideration the influence of gender relations in the society and argues that patriarchal societies harbour the problem of abusive conduct towards women and that this frame of reference gives men excessive authority over women. If this warped and self-righteous sense of the supremacy and power of men over women persists, then the injustice of abusive treatment of females in intimate relationships will be of an ever-growing nature.

The aim of the study is to expand the knowledge at the root of violence against women in South Africa. The objective is to explore the impact of physical abuse against women and it is hoped that the findings will assist us in discovering the implications that experiencing physical abuse has on women on a daily basis. Understanding the reality of the impact of the abusive experiences, is critical to the treatment of all influenced by the abusive behaviour. The ability to create effective policies and to develop programmes on the prevention of violence and the

treatment of victims, survivors and perpetrators, is dependent on an understanding of the very origins of violence in a specific social context (Butchart & Brown, 1991).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter provides a discussion on the various stages of methodological research pursued in this study. We first contemplate the design of the study, resulting in a discussion on how the sample was selected finally yielding a brief review on the sampling technique utilised. The next section open for discussion, is the method of data collection utilised in order to accumulate the data. This is to be followed by an inspection of the method of data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Blaxter (1996) qualitative research is “concerned with the collection and analysis of information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as is possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as is possible, less frequent instances or examples which are seen as being of interest, and aims at achieving ‘depth’ rather than ‘breadth’ ”. One of its advantages is that this presents a more personal approach, which results in the researcher gaining some insight into the participant’s attitudes and perceptions. This approach is deemed applicable to the present study, as I intend to explore the personal experiences of the participants and the manner in which they draw meaningful conclusions from those experiences.

The study follows a phenomenological approach which assists me in obtaining an understanding of the participants’ perceptions and experiences of physical abuse and the conclusions drawn by

them. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual. According to Lester (1999), phenomenological approaches are rooted in original prototypes of personal experience and subjectively serve to emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such they are beneficial for understanding subjective experiences and gaining insight into people's motivations and actions. Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives (Stanley & Wise, 1993). The phenomenological approach is deemed relevant to the present study, as it scrutinises the expression of subjective experiences, rather than study what is generally known about the phenomenon presently studied. I draw from this approach, as I wish to explore the participants' real life experiences and discover the manner according to which they interpret these subjective experiences.

3.3 PARTICIPANT GROUP

Moon (1990) asserts that in applying the approach of qualitative research, the selection of participants is made with a view to enhance generalisation of the theory accepted by the population and therefore there is a tendency to look intensively at a few cases rather than broadly oversee numerous cases. The present study used purposive sampling as a type form of sampling that is based in its entirety on the judgment of the researcher, in that said sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population (De Vos, 2005). My decision to use purposive sampling stems from the fact that I am interested in a particular section of the population that has experienced a physically abusive relationship. Participants of the study have been recruited from local support groups in Pretoria and

surrounding areas. Letters requesting participation in the study have been sent out to different support groups dealing with women who have been abused. Only women who have experienced physical abuse have been requested to participate in the study. It has been anticipated that ten women would be recruited and included in the study, notwithstanding the fact that only eight women have been interviewed for the study, due to the fact that two of the participants chose to withdraw. Interested individuals having been contacted by the support group management and interview meetings have been scheduled, giving them an opportunity to ask questions or express concerns related to the study. The interviews have been held at the organisational offices in order to ensure the safety and comfort of each participant.

For the purpose of the study, only women who have previously experienced physically abusive relationships have been interviewed. The participants in the research are married women, currently not living with their husbands, divorcées, or women who are living with their partners but are not married, and are from mixed cultures and different ethnic backgrounds. Another criterion for selecting these women is that they are able to express themselves verbally in English and/or Sepedi or Setswana, seeing as I am fluent in these languages. This group of women have been selected as required by set literature requiring that women who are married or living with their partners, are more 'at risk' of domestic violence (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). The participants' ages vary between the ages of 25 to 50 years, as I am convinced that they are at a stage in their lives during which they may be able to fend for themselves and hence my decision to investigate why they would refrain from leaving abusive relationships. Three of the participants are currently residing in women's shelter for protection as they have escaped the

abuse at home. Two participants are currently going through the process of divorce, whereas the other three have finalised their divorce proceedings.

The biographical data of the participants are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Biographical data of the women who participated in the study

AGE	LANGUAGE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OCCUPATION
38 years	English	Grade 10	Unemployed
48 years	Sepedi	Grade 10	Unemployed
47 years	Sepedi	Grade 8	Unemployed
46 years	Sepedi	No formal schooling	Unemployed
45 years	Sepedi	Grade 12	Unemployed
40 years	Sepedi	Grade 9	Unemployed
42 years	Sepedi	Grade 12	Unemployed
38 years	English	University certificate in Journalism	Journalist

3.4 INFORMATION GATHERING

Data have been assembled using semi structured individual in-depth interviews. An interview is called personal when the interviewer interrogates the interviewee the questions individually. Personal interviews can take place in the home, at a shopping mall, on the street, outside a movie theatre or polling place, and in many more areas (Anderson, 2001). Interviews are particularly useful when wishing to get a detailed review and personal facts as to a participant's experiences.

The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews present a far more personal form of research than do questionnaires as they allow the interviewer the opportunity of probing or asking follow up questions (Huysamen, 1994). I have decided to conduct personal interviews, as they were very helpful in giving participants both opportunity and room to express themselves as well as the freedom to explore their emotions and experiences. The interviews were semi-structured as a way of accommodating interruptions by the researcher and to allow the interview to flow in a conversation-like fashion, which would assist the participants in expressing themselves freely. Interviews have been conducted in English and each lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour and have been recorded with prior permission (see appendix 1) from the participants for easier transcription and storage. The interview schedule was derived from questions which aimed at gaining the Biographical information and history of the participants, the description of the abuse experienced, the impact of the experiences and actions taken. An advantage of recording interviews is the fact that it allows the interviewer to capture so much more emotion and fact than when relying solely on memory. The motives of the study having been set out in detail, the participants have been given the option of participating or not without any obligations. The interview has been structured in such a way as to promote obtaining detailed information on the biographical information and history of the participant, descriptions of the form of abuse experienced, the impact of the experiences on the abused and reasons for behavioural patterns contributing to the pattern of abuse.

3.5 INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Following the interview, the data is transcribed. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis is employed to analyse the data after transcription. This method is employed as it assists in

searching for meaning in the text, seeing as the study focuses on more than just the data and repetitiveness of data. Hermeneutic analysis is most suitable, as it allows for interpretation of the data through coding during the process of analysis (Kafle, 2011). Hermeneutics are of the belief that interpretations are all we can rely on, and that description itself is an interpretive process (Kafle, 2011). This form of analysis supports the feminist perspective which accentuates the importance of looking beyond data being disclosed and also focuses on underlying significance that, in turn, influence the way in which we make interpretations and draw conclusions from information shared. Both hermeneutics and feminists acknowledge the significant role played by symbolic interaction, which is concerned with the manner in which meanings are constructed by individuals within both a social and a personal world (Denzin, 1995). For this reason, the two approaches converge; leading up to an interest in examining how people view their fates.

I have read and re-read the data in order to acquaint myself with detail and this has involved studying the field notes and the transcripts, reading attentively and re-reading, in order that, by the time I consider myself to be ready to engage in intensive analysis, I know the data well. Throughout this process, I have kept track of themes and any new points of significance emerging from the data. This has been a search for emerging themes and meaningful patterns. The data has been deductively coded, as I have been applying the feminist perspective of investigating. Feminist perspective meets the societal messages that sanction a male's abuse of power and aggression and indicates in a straightforward manner the prescribed gender roles dictating the roles of men and women during their intimate relationships (Pence & Paymar, 1993). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), decoding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking. Marshall and Rossman (1999) continue to add that coding represents the

ways in which data should be analysed, conceptualised and reassembled in new ways. After having been personally convinced that nothing more is to be found in the data, the data has been merged into themes for final interpretation and notation.

3.6 MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

3.6.1 Credibility

According to Merriam (2000), the qualitative investigator's equivalent concept to validity is credibility, which deals with how congruent the findings are to reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ascertaining credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. To confirm credibility in the present study, I have developed an early familiarity with the cultures of participating organisations before data collection, and have done so by making preliminary visits to the organisations themselves. I have paid at least two visits to the participating organisations in order to get a perception of how they run the organisations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants in order for the researcher to gain an adequate understanding of an organisation and to establish a relationship of trust.

One form of ensuring credibility entails honest participants. To ensure that the participants are honest, only those participants genuinely willing to take part in and prepared to offer data towards research freely, have been involved and encouraged to be honest and I have clearly indicated that no right or wrong answer to the questions exists. Each person, when approached, is given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. Credibility was ensured the continual interaction with the abused women as I spent some time with participants of the study. Also member checking was done to verify the findings.

3.6.2 Transferability

Since the findings of a qualitative study are specific to a small number of particular individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations (Merriam, 2000). A contrasting view is offered by Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) who suggest that although each case maybe unique, it is also an example within a broader group and as a result, the prospect of transferability should not be rejected. To ensure transferability I have selected three organisations based in Pretoria and eight women who have been in physically abusive relationships to take part in the study. Semi-structured interviews have been used in order to collect data with every session lasting between 30 minutes to an hour. The results of a qualitative study must be understood within the context of particular characteristics of the organisations (Cole & Gardner, 1979). Transferability was enhanced by purposive sampling of the participants who have been abused. Also detailed description of results and a literature control was done to support the findings.

Triangulation of data collection methods was done as field notes were also used to collect data.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any kind of research on violence against women fits within the realm of sensitive topic research. Lee and Renzetti (1990) define sensitive research as “focusing on topics that may pose a substantial threat to those involved in the research and that therefore make the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data problematic”. Lee and Renzetti (1990) further describe the “potential threat” as including “psychic costs, such as guilt, shame, or

embarrassment” as well as “unwelcome consequences” (p. 511). Finally, Lee and Renzetti (1990) describe four criteria that they believe make some studies on sensitive topics more threatening than others; where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experiences, where the study is concerned with deviance and social control, and where the study impinges on the vested interest of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion and domination.

When determining ethical guidelines for research, most experts agree that the cost of conducting research must be weighed against the potential benefits to society that the research may provide. Beneficence is the provision and balancing of the benefits against the risk run by the participants, and the researcher ought not to treat people as mere means to an end (Lee and Renzetti, 1990).

All ethical research must be conducted using willing participants. Study participants should not feel coerced, threatened, or bribed into participation. First permission to conduct this study was given by the University Ethics Board. The present study is a very sensitive study because it involves participant who are vulnerable as they have been under some form of abuse. Participants have to be guarded against any form of harm and to ensure this; arrangements with counselling service providers had to be made prior to conducting the interviews in case there was need for the participant to be sent for de-briefing sessions. Informed consent has been obtained from participants by having them fill out the consent form. The consent form stipulates that participation is voluntary and that anonymous meaning that the participants’ real names will not be used in the study and they cannot in any way be identified, and that participants can withdraw from the study at any time. It also highlights the potential risks and benefits, and sets out what is required from the individual to participate. To make sure that the researcher is not in any way influencing the participants to agree to take part in the study, an independent individual like an

officer from the support group has been asked to interview the women who have consented before their participation in order to make sure they understand the concept of giving consent.

Women who have been victimized have reasons to fear further victimisation and participating in research may put them at risk if their anonymity were to be violated (Grauerholz, 2000). Researchers must maintain the confidentiality as to identities of the participants by guaranteeing privacy in terms of all personal information that is disclosed. This reassures the participant that no information will be disclosed without the individual's direct permission, as every individual is entitled to receive complete explanations with regards to why exactly they are interviewed as well as how the results of the interview will be used and what their results entail. To ensure that this happens, I have stored all files with participants' information in a safe that will be locked. Additionally participants have been given a confidentiality form to sign in order to ensure that whatever communication takes place between the participants and the researcher stay confidential. I have also established procedures to ensure that the women's names cannot be known and refer to pseudonyms in the study. I ensured that all collected information was stored and used in such a manner that confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of all participants were maintained at all costs, bearing in mind the sensitivity of the study. When these women talk about their lived experiences, it is therapeutic to them as it is also a way of relieving anger (Maselesele, Myburgh, Poggenpoel, 2010)

3.8 CONCLUSION

The chapter summarises the research methodology and design used in the present study. The chapter highlights how the data is captured, analysed and how the results are obtained. The chapter also takes into consideration the measures of trustworthiness and the ethical

considerations undertaken when conducting the study. The next chapter will focus on the results of the study and the analysis thereof.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will present the results of the research interviews. I will start by presenting the demographic information, succeeded by the family and marital background, relationships involved, pattern of abuse, reasons for staying in the relationship and roles that both family and society play in the abuse inflicted on all participants. In order to ensure anonymity, the term participant will replace actual names.

There will be five major themes that will be discussed and these themes emerge resulting from questions that I have set during the interview. I have decided to discuss the themes from each participant individually to give voice to the participants and their experiences of abuse in their lives. Even though I discuss the participants' experiences in researching communal themes, by discussing them individually, I want to highlight the individual experiences.

4.1.1 Participant 1

4.1.1.1 Demographic and Family Information

Participant 1 is thirty-eight years old and originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is unemployed and has achieved the equivalent of grade 10 formal education. She has not held any formal occupation and has survived doing temporary jobs.

Her parents have died during the war and other family members left for different areas as a result of which she hasn't seen any of her siblings since the age of thirteen. She met her husband when she was fourteen after having dropped out of school as a result of a lack of funding. She has been of the conviction that his intention was to marry her so that he could assist her, since there was no one to support her. She makes this plain by admitting: "*he wanted to marry me because of my situation*". She got married at age fourteen. They have had four children during their marriage.

4.1.1.2 Relationship

The participant presents the relationship with her partner as having been both abusive and immature. She meets her husband when she is fourteen and he becomes part of her life in order to take care of her and to relieve her hardship. During that same year she falls pregnant and when she is five months pregnant, her husband is called up for military service never to return home. According to participant 1, when the war has reached its peak, she flees, not realising that she would finally end up in South Africa. After having spent just over a week in South Africa, she meets a man she has known from back home who informs her that he has met her husband in Durban and he gives her his contact details. She then goes to Durban to reunite with him after having spent some time apart.

Everything then goes well for them, as is evidenced by her saying “*we stayed with him nicely without any problem and I fell pregnant the second time*”. But conditions soon changed after her discovery of her husband’s drug abuse. He makes a habit of smoking dagga in the house with his friends and does not want to listen to her and starts disrespecting her wishes. He gives her ultimatums and makes her feel unwanted by threats: “*If you want to leave you can go and I will get someone else*”. As the relationship deteriorates, he accuses her of not obeying him and wishes to punish her for disobedience. The participant reports that the relationship turns out to be an unhappy one.

4.1.1.3 Pattern of Abuse

An abusive relationship can be triggered by a variety of factors and in this study participant 1 reports that the abuse she has suffered has started with her husband’s drug-taking. He gets into the habit of starting an argument in order to then beat her and swear at her. According to participant 1, her husband has beaten her so regularly, sometimes on a daily basis. This continues for many years and she ends up getting a protection order against him. She is eventually relocated to Johannesburg from Durban, but after three months he follows her and continues to intimidate her. In Johannesburg the abused party provides for herself by selling fat cakes in the street, but her husband then follows her to her place of business and throws the fat cakes out and hits her. The participant reports that at time he has used a broom stick to beat her.

4.1.1.4 Reasons for Staying

People stay in relationships for various reasons and participant 1 has stayed in the relationship because she loved her husband and has had children with him. She says:

“it is not easy because I already have four children with him and the other thing is that I was not working and we needed love from him and the children still love him, you know the children do not understand like adults and I also needed to save my marriage, he is my husband, he married me.”

Participant 1 points to how she has depended on him financially. She further describes how he has once threatened to kill the children were she to leave him, as they are his children also. She has been convinced of him changing and this is accentuated by her assertion, *“I was thinking he is going to change.”*

4.1.1.5 Role of Family and Society

“I don’t have any parent, I don’t have any sister, I don’t know where they are, I don’t have any contact with them”. This tells us that the participant is totally dependent on her husband. The participant explains that her husband has extended family in South Africa and that they always hold her responsible for the entire marital problem they are experiencing. She continues to say, *“they only hear what their son says.”*

Continuing to stress the lack of support, she points out that her community has never approved of her marrying a man from a different culture. She explains that her husband is originally from Burundi and that whenever problems in the marriage arise, his family contacts him and this puts pressure on her to stay in the abusive relationship. The most recent reason for staying in the relationship was that she is keen to save her marriage as he is her husband and he has married her. The participant finds it difficult to seek help from the family and the community because they are from two different cultures and neither of these parties is willing to make allowances.

4.1.2 Participant 2

4.1.2.1 Demographic and Family Information

Participant 2 has been born in Tembisa and is a forty-eight year old woman. The participant is currently not employed, but has held various low profile jobs like cleaning. She has completed grade 10 of formal schooling. The participant has spent most of her life in her birth place Tembisa before moving to Pretoria.

Her parents have passed on when she was still young and she, together with her other siblings, have had to live with her older brother. She is a mother of three, and her children's ages vary between sixteen and twenty-seven. The participant's first born child is from the previous relationship. She and her husband have never been legally married as it is evident when she says, "he set a date and said on the 28th of December we were going to finish everything and put a ring."

4.1.2.2 Relationship

The participant portrays her relationship with her partner as extremely abusive and dangerous. According to participant two, the relationship initially flourishes, this is evident when she says, "*he used to be a very nice man, I never thought he would do what he did to me*". They are together for more than 21 years. She reports that there have been incidences of cheating in the relationship and he has not been making an effort to hide infidelity. The relationship has changed when they moved to Pretoria when he starts cheating openly and deliberately and openly has illegitimate affairs. When the second born, the husband's first born, is nineteen years old, the husband demands a DNA test claiming that he was not his child. This really puts a strain on the relationship which is already fragile. The participant also reports that there has been a time when he used to leave and return to the home, which illustrates that the relationship was not sound.

4.1.2.3 Pattern of Abuse

The participant has experienced physical abuse from an early age. She mentions that abuse has started at home when she was still young shortly after her parents have passed on and they have had to live with her older brother who has not treated them well. She says:

“In my life I have been so abused, I went through a lot growing up and I went into a marriage that really hurt me until now.”

The abuse started just after their move from Tembisa to Pretoria. She reports that her husband has started cheating on her openly, deliberately showing her his infidelity. She explains how he would disappear for weeks and when he comes back home, sometimes months later, he would want to have sex with her but because she did not know what he has been doing and with whom he has been, she would refuse but then he would beat her or would not give her money for food or for the children. The participant continues to say, *“I was being beaten for not sleeping with him.”* According to the participant, the abuse has taken place mostly at month end when he has made sure that he has received a salary and should contribute towards food. He then expects her to sleep with him before giving her household money. This is referred to in her statement:

“When he is around he doesn’t sleep with me but when it comes to month end when he knows that I am going to need money for food in the household so then I have to pay with my body or I get beaten.”

The participant explains how this continued for years. She goes on to explain how the beatings have been so severe that one day he has even thrown her from a second floor window, but she has survived until help came.

4.1.2.4 Reason for Staying

There are various reasons for staying in an abusive relationship. Participant 2 says,

“I was staying so that my children could live, I had no means to support them and I was just staying for my children to at least have bread to eat.”

She continues to say that the other issue has been that she didn't have a way of escape since her parents' deaths and that no one has been willing to take care of her children. She adds:

“He comes in with full force knowing well that you do not have power and that he would want sex knowing that there is no where you can run, he knew my background from home. That is what hurt, he would beat me if I don't sleep with him.”

According to the participant, the other reason for staying in the relationship has been that she has been dependent on his money because she has not been working.

4.1.2.5 Role of Family and Society

According to the participant, she has initially not requested help as she was shy and scared and her neighbours would witness that he beat her because she would sit outside crying. But she then starts talking about it at church where she is well received and supported. The participant reports that her congregation at church has given her encouragement and has told her to accept the situation, They also encourage her not to report him as, *“pastors don't like this thing of always going to court and the likes.”*

4.1.2.6 Summary

From the life story of participant two, we can gather that she is a woman who has endured abuse for quite a long time, starting from her own brother has raised her and has guided her into the ultimate relationship she endures. The abuse persists for a long time in the relationship, even though she is not happy about being in the relationship she finds herself entrapped in as she has at no point been able to leave the abusive relationship, has had nowhere to go as she has had no support from home. Participant two has had to stay in the abusive relationship for the sake of her children because she has not been earning which meant no means of taking care of them. The participant has found it difficult to reach out for help, saying she has been too shy, but when she finally plucks up the courage to do so, she receives little support from church due to their reluctance to interfere and discourages her from taking action.

4.1.3 Participant 3

4.1.3.1 Demographic and Family Information

The participant is a forty-seven year old woman from Limpopo. She completes grade 8 formal schooling only. The participant is not employed, but survives by selling vegetables and fruits at the market. She is a first born of five children and her siblings include a brother and three sisters. According to the participant, she has grown up in a very poor environment and the family has been unable to afford the bare necessities. She gets married at age eighteen years old and she is trapped in this marriage for ten years before getting divorced, as the husband maintains that he cannot stay with a woman who cannot give him children. She then marries the second husband in 1994, whom she divorces in 2013.

4.1.3.2 Relationship

The participant presents her relationship with her husband as one of abusive, humiliation and insecurity. *“Initially he was ok but he changed and started doing things. He started changing when he had relationships outside, he saw that I am no longer nothing,”* she says. This tells us that the marriage has never been stable and has lacked faithfulness. She explains how insecure her husband was and how he would insert his finger in her private parts to check whether she was cheating. She mentions allowing him do so, as she knew that she was not unfaithful outside of marriage, so if that is what made him happy, she was willing to let him check her. According to the participant, her husband’s behaviour changed two years into the marriage, as he would start having affairs outside of their marriage and he would even bring those other women to their house. She adds to this by saying, *“he wasn’t mine, I wanted someone who could change,”* and continues by saying, *“we always had to fight, it was really hurting.”*

4.1.3.3 Pattern of Abuse

Infidelity triggers abuse in the relationship. According to her, the abused, the physical abuse started three years after their marriage. Her husband goes and sleeps around and when he comes back, picks a fight with her and then beats her. The participant continues to say that he has always started a conflict due to the fact that she is infertile. He uses this as an excuse for infidelity and explains infidelity as a way of having children, since his partner can't help him. The participant adds, "*He beat me after he was the one who didn't sleep at home,*" and, "*when he hasn't slept at home, maybe when I just kept quiet he would say: 'you are ignoring me in my own home, you are not asking me where I come from, 'and then he beat me for that,'*". The participant says, "*He would start to beat me until people came to rescue me.*" She was abused over a period of thirteen years.

4.1.3.4 Reasons for staying

Due to several reasons, women may decide to remain in abusive relationships. Participant three stays, as she does not want to be perceived as a failure as this perception will cause her to lose her family. She also is of the opinion that she will not be welcome at her parents' home after having rejected her own home, as he is not an only child. The participant says she is convinced that her are going to give her a hard time about returning home. She tolerates the abusive relationship, because she is ashamed of being perceived as a failure. She says:

"I was telling myself that he will change because I wasn't depending on his money, I was selling for myself so I thought because I am not bothering him he will change and be a decent man."

4.1.3.5 Role of Family and Society

According to participant three, initially, after having reported the abuse to her mother, she has been advised to be strong, and has also been told by her mother that she, herself, has also suffered abuse and, really, there is no easy way out. As the physical abuse then grows more

intense, her siblings, aunt and mother encourage her to return to her parental home and leave the marriage.

She says, *“The community was also being hurt, but people wouldn’t say get out of your home, they let me to take the decision but they were very supportive.”* This clarifies that the participant has some form of support from both her family and society.

4.1.3.6 Summary

In summary, participant three endures thirteen years of abuse, as she cannot have children. She is in an abusive relationship that results in humiliation and degradation. The participant reports that she has never been happy in the relationship, but is honour-bound to stay as she is ashamed of being seen as a failure and she already sees herself as such as she is unable to conceive as this fact has resulted in her first failed marriage. Her culture also contributes to her accepting the abuse, as she states “from home I wasn’t taught to ask a man where he comes from” and the fact that her mother has initially told her to stay in the abusive relationship, as she herself has also suffered abuse. Ultimately the participant receives some form of support from her family and from society.

4.1.4 Participant four

4.1.4.1 Demographics and Information on the family unit

Participant four is a forty-six year old woman who has been born in the Free State Province. The participant has no formal school education and is unemployed. After her marriage, she is relocated in Pretoria and becomes a mother of three, the first born being a child she has conceived during the previous relationship. She reports being married in 1997, which is the year he pays lobola, and they separate in 2012.

4.1.4.2 Relationship

The participant presents her relationship as being abusive and very hurtful. She mentions how they always have had to fight during the relationship because *“he likes women a lot.”* She continues to say that her husband would sleep around and was always cheating on her. The other strain in the relationship, involves the fact that he always chooses to discriminate against her children; he buys things for his own children, and never does anything to please the first born child as he refuses to recognise him as his own. This causes a lot of friction in the relationship. Another contributing factor is that her husband has been awarded custody of the children as she is unemployed and cannot support them. This really upsets her. The participant also reports that, after some tests, she has been identified as HIV positive, but she says she has never cheated on her husband, so she concludes that she has been infected by her husband, as he has been the one who has been cheating on her. The participant says that she has, on several occasions, reported her husband to the police. She says, *“last year March he almost killed me, I woke up in hospital.”*

4.1.4.3 Pattern of Abuse

The nature of the abuse the participant has been subjected to, has been so inhumane that she has been hospitalised. *“This man has been abusing me, beating me and doing all sorts of things to me”*, she says. She mentions how her husband has once tied her to a tree in the bush, beaten her and raped her. Reporting the case has served little purpose, as he has been released after a few days. The participant reports that her husband would leave and return home late and when she asks about it, he would beat her. She adds, *“We always fought because he likes women a lot, so we would fight for that and he would beat me and there was nothing I could do.”* According to her, the pattern of abuse has started three years after they got married as he has kept her from socialising with anyone because he thought that she has been telling them that he has been beating her at home. She adds, *“He didn’t want anyone in our yard, only me and the children.”* The participant says the beating would take place maybe twice a week after he hasn’t slept at home. She explains:

“When he didn’t sleep at home when I ask where he comes from he beats me”... “When you check my head I have a very scary scar that is why I can’t even cut my hair”.

4.1.4.4 Reasons for staying

Despite the pain of an abusive relationship, there are reasons why some women may choose to stay in said abusive relationship. According to the participant, her reasons for enduring the abusive relationship is that she has a child and *“I have two more with him, no man will ever stay with me, no man will ever accept me with three children.”*

She mentions how she is always hopeful that the situation will improve. She also says that she cannot leave, as she has nowhere to seek refuge as home is a long distance into the Free State and she can’t go there, and that the plot they are living on is in her name so she doesn’t want to lose it. The husband is also a provider in the household and as the participant wasn’t working the plot, it made it difficult to leave.

4.1.4.5 Role of Family and Society

According to her she has no support, *“I have no family in Pretoria. I have nowhere to run.”* She says that when she reports him to her father, he tells her that a woman cries behind a closed door, as long as she is married and has food and a roof over her head. The abused partner says the abuser’s family is not even talking to her, as they accuse her of having reported their son. At the time he has been arrested and they have even been providing him with women during the relationship, telling him he should have married a Zulu woman because he is a Zulu man. His family has never approved of their marriage, so it was hard for them to seek help from them.

The society that the participant lives in has never been seriously involved and this is evidenced when she says: *“They do not care because it was things that were happening in private,”* but she has received assistance when a woman from the support group took her for counselling.

4.1.4.6 Summary

Participant four is a forty- six year old woman who has been in an abusive relationship for thirteen years of her sixteen years of marriage. She is a mother of three and has been in an unhappy relationship because she has always feared that no other man will accept her again, especially since she has had three children. She has also suffered the abusive relationship, to prevent losing her plot but when they separate her husband gets custody of the children as she isn't well enough to take care of them, and as she is unemployed.

The participant has no form of support as her husband has isolated her from friends, neighbours and family. Her family has never been supportive, as they have always been encouraging her to stay in the abusive relationship. They maintain that, provided that she has food and a roof over her head, little else is of any consequence.

4.1.5 Participant five

4.1.5.1 Demographics and Family Information

Participant five is a forty-five year old woman who has been born in Brits. She has completed grade 12 and has worked as a caretaker in an old age home. She is currently unemployed. She is a divorced mother of five, the first child being 26 years old and the youngest 9 years old. Her second husband has found her with four children from her previous relationships. She reports that she met her husband while he was still married and she then became part of his concubine. She says they met in 2004 and got married in 2012. She reports that she has been raised by her mother and has never met her father.

4.1.5.2 Relationship

The participant presents the relationship with her partner as being abusive and one of infidelity. The participant has met her husband while he has still been married and therefore it all started while she was just a partner of little consequence. Her husband has sometimes cheated on his legal wife with her and sometimes he would go back to his wife while they were together and she

has eventually reported to be HIV positive. She says that their relationship has changed during her last pregnancy and loss of her job, then adds: “*once there is pregnancy, things change, and life changes,*” and continues to say that her relationship wasn’t satisfactory. She says she has eventually told the social workers of her desire to divorce, as she couldn’t take the abuse any longer.

4.1.5.3 Pattern of Abuse

The participant sees infidelity and insecurities as triggers for abuse in her relationship. According to the participant, her husband would go and would not come back for days and when asked about it, he would start beating her up. “*He would beat me almost every week*”, she says. She continues to say that her husband has beaten her even during pregnancy.

4.1.5.4 Reasons for Staying

There are various reasons for women to stay in abusive relationships and for participant five it concerned her property: “*It wasn’t nice but because there wasn’t anywhere I could go, I had to be strong,*” she says. She continues by saying, “*I wanted to be strong because I was married in community of property; if I get out of the house I am going to lose everything in the house and most of these things belong to me*”. Participant five adds: “*I didn’t even see that I was being abused.*”

4.1.5.5 Role of Family and Society

According to the participant her family hasn’t been that supportive, as she didn’t share her problems with them. Her mother has once told her that “*a man is like axe, he is shared and as long as he buys food, I shouldn’t worry*”. Having been indoctrinated in this manner, she didn’t want to tell her mother about what was going on in her marriage. She says his family has contributed to some extent, as his grandmother would at times call him and discuss matters with him when they had problems to address. She says she has relied on help from the social workers’

support group for abused women and this has changed her life, she says she has started feeling like she had a lot in common with other women.

4.1.5.6 Summary

From the interview with participant five, we deduce that she has been in a physically abusive relationship but has not had the courage to leave as she feared losing her property since she was married in community of property. She reports that she hasn't enjoyed the relationship, as her partner has been cheating on her during the relationship and she has always been beaten by her husband. The participant has had no support from home as her mother has told her to be patient in marriage no matter what. She has told her that anything the husband does is permissible. Her community have helped a bit as they got her to join a support group for abused women.

4.1.6 Participant six

4.1.6.1 Demographics and Family Information

The participant is a forty year old female born in QwaQwa in the Free State Province. She has grade 9 and has never held any formal job other than working as a cleaner.

She is a mother of four and the second born in a family of five children with three brothers and one sister. The participant reports that she has never seen her father and grew up under the supervision of her uncle who hasn't been treating them well since her mother has left for Pretoria to look for work. She reports that when she was doing standard 6, she and her siblings have moved to Pretoria to be close to their mother, who has been working as a house maid in Pretoria. She says that when they came to Pretoria her mother has been forced to rent a room for them because she hasn't been allowed to stay with them at the home she was working at and so she has never had close contact with her mother, as they have never stayed together in the same place from a young age.

4.1.6.2 Relationship

The participant presents her relationship with her partner as very abusive, rife with infidelity and very controlling. According to the participant, she got married when she was twenty years old and by then she has already had two children. She has met her partner when she was still doing grade 9 and from this results her pregnancy and dropping out of school. She mentions that her husband used to cheat on her and would take other girls to stay with him during her pregnancy. The relationship has always been one of discord and they have always had to consult a third party to restore peace in the relationship. She continues by saying that at times he would chase her out of the house naked and she would have to run to her mother's yard stark naked in the street. She emphasises to how she has had to get protection against her husband on so many occasions. She says, *"It was bad, I was not free"* and continues by saying, *"he is the kind of person who doesn't want me to live with other people, when I go out I have to tell him everything, even when my friends visit me it is a problem, even when at work I have to tell him what we are talking about"*.

4.1.6.3 Pattern of Abuse

The abuse in the relationship was triggered by alcohol abuse and a need to control. *"He used to beat me so bad"*, she says. According to the participant, her partner would go out to drink alcohol and when he comes back home he would beat her for no apparent reason. She says she once ran away and went back home to her mother because it was getting too difficult for her but he would come and apologise to her mother and she would take him back. Before long he would start beating her again and he would apologise again. She further mentioned how he would even beat her while she was pregnant. The participant says the abuse started after only months into the relationship and has been going on ever since; it has gone on for about twenty years and it started with him cheating on her. He would even stop her from working whenever she got a job. She continues by saying that when she has reported him to the police and laid a charge, he would ask for forgiveness and persuade her to drop the charges and she would do it thinking that he is the father of her children and not long after he would beat her again. She says one day he beat her to a pulp, she could not even see, her eyes were shut.

4.1.6.4 Reasons for Staying

Women have various reasons for staying in abusive relationships, participant six reports hers. “*I was there because of my children,*” she says. According to participant six, sometimes when she has left, her children would beg her to come back home and then she agrees to because she doesn’t want to hurt them. The participant continues to say that she has been ashamed and has kept thinking of what her children would say and what people would say about her failed marriage. She says she thinks that her husband has paid lobola so that she may not run away as she would have run away back home after he has beaten her. The other thing that has kept the participant in the relationship was that she thought they had spent too much of life together and she can’t just leave like that, it would be a waste of her time.

4.1.6.5 Role of Family and Society

According to participant six, her family has not been happy about their constant fights and they didn’t want her staying with him even though her mother would help reconcile them. His family has not liked the way he was treating her but friends and relatives have said they cannot tell her leave him as it is her decision to make. She says they have ended up not getting involved in their relationship. She adds, “*my society helped me a lot, the women’s support group was by my side all the time.*” Even though they have helped, she says they have contributed in her staying in the abusive relationship by telling her to stay and refusing to let her family down, they have encouraged her to fight for her marriage.

4.1.6.6 Summary

The participant was in an abusive relationship for twenty years and was married at the early age of twenty. She has four children in this relationship. The abuse started very early on in the relationship as a result of alcohol abuse and cheating. The participant stays in the relationship because she does not want to disappoint her children and is ashamed of what the people would say about her failed marriage. She is also in the abusive relationship because she feels that she

has spent a lot of time in that relationship and getting out would be a waste of time. Nevertheless, her society helps her get out of the abusive relationship.

4.1.7 Participant seven

4.1.7.1 Demographics and Family Information

The participant is a forty-two year old female who was born in Limpopo but is currently residing in Pretoria as her husband has just got transferred and she has moved with him. She has completed high school and is currently unemployed.

She is the mother of two daughters, and reports that she has met her husband when she has finished grade 12. They get married when she is twenty-five years old. After she has got married she has to go and live with her in-laws and by then her husband is unemployed but soon gets a job and after some time he is transferred to Pretoria after which she moves to stay with him.

4.1.7.2 Relationship

The participant presents her relationship with her husband as very abusive and controlling. She also reports that their relationship has been fine until they moved to Pretoria. She says he started cheating on her once he got to Pretoria, and one day he has even told her that he has always wanted a second wife. The participant adds that her husband would go his own way for the whole weekend, and only come back on Monday, knowing that he has to work. She says he wouldn't even buy food in the house but he wouldn't want her to work. She continues by saying, *"he has a problem when I have a job, always when I have a job he beat me."* She adds, *"It was bad, I wasn't even free to get my own job, it was hard"*. She says her husband once beat her and she has been hospitalised for three months and the injuries were so severe that she had to be operated on.

4.1.7.3 Pattern of Abuse

Arguments over money and alcohol abuse are the triggers for physical abuse in the relationship. *“He would beat me every time when he is drunk, at the end of the month,”* she says. The participant says that her husband beats her for money because at the end of the month she needs money for the household but he gets upset and beats her. He doesn’t want to give her money and always tells her to go and look for work but when she gets a job, he is dissatisfied about her working. She says, *“When I get a job and start working and buying my own things without asking him for money, he beats me saying I am having an affair, which is the problem.”* The participant says that the abuse has started after him having been transferred to Pretoria after some years in the marriage; the abuse started in 1998.

4.1.7.4 Reasons for staying

Participant seven stayed because of her children. *“I did it for my kids because they liked their father,”* she says. The participant reports fears of never meeting a man who likes her kids and, most importantly, she doesn’t want her kids to suffer because she is not working. Because the participant is now in a shelter for women who have experienced abuse, she says that at times she wants to go back to her husband because she feels that her daughters miss him. She says, *“I want to comfort them, my daughters loved their father and he loved them a lot, he can beat me but he takes care of his daughters.”*

4.1.7.5 Role of Family and Society

The participant says that her family has been very supportive as they have always encouraged her to leave before she dies and they would give her some money to buy necessities, whereas his family has never been involved even though they knew about the abuse. She adds, *“He also grew up in an abusive family and that is, I think, why he is behaving like this”*. The society that the participant lives in has been supportive in the sense that they have encouraged her not to go back to him but to look for a job instead, so that she can take care of the children. She says that initially her community encouraged her not to give up on her marriage, even during periods

when he has beaten her, they would tell her to go back home to work out her differences and she feels that they have played a role in her staying in the abusive relationship for such a long time.

4.1.7.6 Summary

Participant seven is a woman who has been in a physically abusive relationship for a long time due to the fact that she has felt unable to protect herself, feeling trapped in the relationship. The participant is unemployed, therefore she has always felt incapable of leaving the abusive relationship as she had no means of supporting her children and she allowed her children to control her in the fact that she says she couldn't get out of the relationship because she felt that her children would miss their father and her goal has always been not to let them down. Fortunately the participant has a very supportive family who has always advised her to leave the abusive relationship. The participant is still not sufficiently empowered, as she says she sometimes feels the need to go back to her abuser.

4.1.8 Participant 8

4.1.8.1 Demographics and Family Information

The participant is a thirty-eight year old female born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but is currently residing in Pretoria. She has obtained a certificate in journalism from a university in the DRC. She has also been employed as a television reporter, but is currently unemployed.

The participant has been raised in a family of eight children with both mother and father. She says she has attended a very good school and things were very good when she grew up, as her father was able to take care of them. She points out that she is divorced and has separated with her husband because she was infertile. She says, "*In our culture, when a woman can't have children, it is a problem. I had problem with my in-laws and then the man as well because I couldn't conceive.*" She says that the man has left her for another woman and has had a baby

with her. She has been twenty-four when she got married and the marriage has lasted for four years but they have never been legally divorced, he just left her.

The participant says she then met a man whom she started dating and surprisingly fell pregnant with twins but they never married, as she was still legally married. He has since moved to South Africa and she has followed suit after two years. She is now a mother of three.

4.1.8.2 Relationship

The participant experiences her relationship with her partner as abusive and very degrading. The participant says she met her partner while still legally married, so they have eventually rented separate flats. Her partner has then moved to South Africa with her following after a period of two years, but the outcome has not been as good as she has anticipated. She says that her partner would go and never tell where he was going and come back late at night. The participant says he would even go and meet other women and sometimes he would have the audacity to bring them to their house to sleep with them and introduce her as his sister to them. She adds, "*I was not happy, in fact I was sad every day, every day I was crying.*" The participant says at times she has considered running away but has had no options available. She continues by stating that at times her partner would accuse her of having been with other women and would then force her to keep quiet or start beating her.

4.1.8.3 Pattern of Abuse

Infidelity is the main trigger for abuse in the relationship. "*I was beaten every time and at times for nothing. He would go out and meet some other girls and when I try to ask a question, he will beat me up,*" the participant says. She continues by saying that whenever she asked him about his whereabouts, his reactions would be beating her and she reports that the physical abuse has started when coming to South Africa to stay with him and in order to avoid questioning, he would beat her regularly. She adds, "*It was like I was not the kind of lady who had a right in the house.*" The participant also reveals that her partner has never liked her to have friends or even to attend church and sometimes he would chase her out of the house to let her sleep out in the

cold. The physical abuse has lasted from the time she got to South Africa in 2009, until her leaving him in 2013.

4.1.8.4 Reason for Staying

Participant eight mentions that she has only been in the relationship because she has had no other solution and nowhere to run, since she has been a stranger still to South Africa and has had no friends. She says, *“I didn’t know what to do, if he chased me what would I do, who would welcome me in their home?”* She adds that she also was depending on him as she was not working, so he was taking care of her and the children. Lastly she says, *“I didn’t know that there are places that I could go to, like a shelter like this one where I can go and they can welcome me.”*

4.1.8.5 Role of Family and Society

The participant says her family has never liked her partner even before she decided to move with him to South Africa and after they have heard that she was being abused, they asked her to leave him, but she thought he would change. The participant adds that she ended up hiding their problem from her family because she knew that they did not approve of the relationship. As for his family, they never did much about the abuse, even though they knew about it and suspects him of giving them money, hence they have kept quiet. The participant says that, when she has had a chance to talk to other people about her problems, they would tell that everything would be fine and that she just had to be patient and others have told her to leave and find a place to live. The participant feels that somehow her society has always been putting pressure on her to stay in the abusive relationship, as they have been telling her to go back to him and to take care of the children.

4.1.8.6 Summary

Participant eight is a thirty-eight year old female who has been in a very abusive relationship for five years because she says she doesn't know what to do. Her partner has isolated her from friends and the participant feels trapped in the relationship because she has no support. The participant is not employed and this has made it even harder for her to leave, as she has no means of survival. Because her society has kept on telling her to work on her relationship, she feels that it has played a role in her staying for five years in an abusive relationship. When she finally leaves the relationship, she is very happy and feels like she is now starting to rebuild her life.

4.2 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, results from the interviews are discussed. The next chapter will focus on the analysis of the results and compare them to other studies.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, results from the individual interviews were presented. In the present chapter, factors that contribute to women staying in physically abusive relationships will be discussed. Using a feminist perspective outlook, a number of themes are extracted from the data and these are: power and control, gender inequality, and patriarchy. These will be discussed individually below.

5.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN STAYING IN PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

5.2.1 POWER AND CONTROL

Intimidation

All the women in the study report that their partners are always using intimidating tactics such as shouting angrily and grabbing, to threaten them. Intimidation is a way for the partners to gain an upper hand over the women. This gives the male partners some form of power over the women. The abusers in this situation use threats, like stating that if the abused partner leaves, he will hurt or kill her. The highest risk scenario of violence in such a relationship is when they make known to their partners the decision to leave the relationship and assaults may increase on severity after leaving (Anderson & Saunders, 2003). The findings of the present study are in line with a study by Matthews (2004) which shows that a woman in such a situation may fear to leave the abusive relationship because she doesn't want to be hurt. According to Turner (2002), the most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship is just prior to leaving that relationship. Research shows that women are at higher risk of partner violence following separation and

separation is a significant risk factor for femicide. Just over one-third of murdered women (36.8%) have been divorced or separated at the time of murder (Dobash & Dobash, 2009). This shows that the male partners use violence to gain control over their female partner and through the use of this violence and threats they establish dominance in the relationship and decrease their partner's independence.

Isolation

Women who have limited support from friends, family or their communities may find it more difficult to leave abusive relationships (Sullivan, 1994). Most of the women in this study (7 out of 8) reported that they had no form of support because their partners did not want them to socialise for fear that they will tell the community or authorities about the abuse in the household. Women who have received help and support from family and friends report this as being crucial in allowing them to leave their abusers (Bowker, 1983). Bowker (1983) continues by saying this is because these friends and family members can provide safe havens for women and children who make themselves available to assist abused women in rebuilding their lives after having left an abuser. Maltreated women, who cannot rely on that support, face even greater obstacles than those who do. According to Levendosky, Bogat, Theran, Trotter and Davidson (2004), severely abused women tend to be completely socially isolated and have no one in their limited social network that can provide support. Matthews (2004), says that in abusive relationships, the abuser will often slowly work to isolate the abused partner socially by not allowing her to work, or not allowing her to leave the home. This is evident in this study as most participants report that their partners are preventing them from maintaining relationships with friends and family and use this isolation as a way of maintaining control in the relationship. This may explain part of the link between lack of social support and abuse. This also limits the woman's access to resources of assistance, which makes her less likely to eventually leave the abusive partner. For the two immigrant participants, the component of social isolation was intensified. The abused immigrant women did not know their legal options or rights. A lack of awareness of services has been noted as a structural barrier to leaving an abusive relationship for immigrants. Other barriers include experiences of discrimination and language barriers.

Blaming

One of the issues that came up in the study is that of ‘blaming’. The women highlight how their partners blame them for numerous challenges in their relationships and this blame leads to constant abuse. In the study, all the 8 women who participate, report that their partners would blame them for either cheating or not respecting them enough, which then causes the men to be angry and beat their spouses. Due to their partners always blaming them for making them angry, the women feel that it has been their fault that they are being abused and thus may indirectly influence their inability to leave abusers. This finding is consistent with reports by Matthews (2004) and Turner (2002), who argue that the guilt may be coming from a lack of public awareness about the causes and effects of domestic violence. Even though there is a lot of information being put out to the public on issues surrounding domestic violence, most women still take the blame. According to Angless and Maconachie (1996), many of the abused women internalised the norm that as women they are responsible for the success and failure of their relationship.

The women also hold churches responsible as a space that offers support but, also encourages women to stay in the relationship and not seek divorce. Some of the women in the study mention how they approach their churches for help, but church leaders may be committed to saving a marriage, even an abusive one, and advise the women against leaving their abusive partner. For these women it becomes very difficult to leave the abusive relationship, as they already feel that they are at fault for the relationship going the way it is going. This may support male partners in having authority over the women and power and control over how the relationship develops. The role of the church and church leaders is highlighted by Gordon (1996) in his statement that many abused women seek help from religious leaders.

Using Children

Abusive partners may also use a woman’s children to coerce her into staying in the relationship. The abused partner may threaten to harm the children, take them away from her protection, or physically hurt the children in front of their mother in order to maintain control over her (Salber & Taliaferro, 1995). During the course of this study, two participants report that their partners

have threatened to harm the children if they broke up the relationship. Because the abused women are concerned for the safety of their children and other loved ones, they choose to stay in the abusive relationship. In Humphreys and Thiara's (2003) study of post-separation violence, 18% of women report threats to other family members. Using the threat of withdrawing support or of letting the children come to harm to dominate the woman, this aids the abuser in maintaining control in the relationship and makes it increasingly difficult for the abused woman to free herself from the abusive relationship, as she fears that her loved ones may be harmed in the process.

5.2.2 GENDER INEQUALITY

Economic

Only two of the participants in this study have successfully completed grade 12. One participant continues her studies for a certificate at a tertiary institution and the rest do not achieve grade 12 certificates. Given the data on employment and occupation of the participants, these results fit the trend identified in the literature. Mills (1998) find that 58% of her sample stays with their abusers, because they feel they cannot support themselves and their children. Mills (1998) continues by saying that when the women have official employment, education or the possibility of personal housing, childcare, transportation and social support, they are more likely to seek help than choose to remain in an abusive relationship. From the study, all participants were unemployed and financially relied on their partners solely. Bornstein (2006) describes economic dependency as the degree to which one person relies on another for financial support, and is used to describe situations in which one member of a dyad has exclusive control over financial resources. According to Matthews (2004), economic reasons are most often reported as the cause for women staying in abusive relationships. If a woman is socially alienated from others and is unemployed, her partner may be her only means of financial support. Economic dependency is likely to develop if one person is the sole provider in the family and denies his partner access to resources, but also when one person uses threat or intimidation to take control of finances. Bornstein (2006) points out that a growing rate of economic dependency may lead to some women tolerating physical abuse. Due to the fact that the male partners in this study have been

employed and the women are not meant to ever have this security, the men are seen as the providers and are in charge. This means that there can never be equality in the relationship and the men abuse a privileged position through dominating women. Asserting economic and financial power over women, is another form of abuse that renders women in violent relationships defenceless (Sev'er, 1997).

Political

While there are policies in place that support those women who stay in the family home and obtain a court order to force the violent partner to leave, women often lack sufficient incoming financial resources to stay in possession of their homes in the long term. To complicate matters, women may be unaware that they can request a restraining or eviction order in order to have the abusive partner removed from the home (Braaf & Meyering, 2011). This is the case with the participants in the study, because they are unemployed and are not in a position to keep up payments on housing loans, repairs, etc. One participant in the study loses her children to her partner in a custody battle, because she lacks the means to support them. Another barrier to women leaving abusive relationships is the long waiting list for public housing and the high cost of rental and this presents very few options for women earning lower income and who wish to leave their home to escape violence and unfortunately, more often than not, those with children fall into this category (Braaf & Meyering, 2011). A shortage of crisis and longer term accommodation means that women may not be able to access housing support or obtain loans if they leave the family home in order to escape violence. This leaves the women with no choice, but to stay in the abusive relationship. Research also identifies previous negative interaction and misdemeanours regarding the criminal justice system as a structural barrier to leaving (Wolf, 2003). According to McCue (2008), responses to domestic violence by law enforcement and medical services can be dissatisfying and unhelpful and in most cases they would criticise the woman for staying in the relationship.

5.2.3 PATRIARCHY

Social norms

According to Chinkanda (1992), women are socialised into succumbing to sexual, physical and mental abuse without uttering a single complaint. Running away from an abusive relationship is seen as a sign of weakness, not only in the bride, but also in her family of origin. Chinkanda (1992) goes on to argue that a woman's parents and siblings will take it upon themselves to return her to the abusive husband, because her running away reflects negatively on her mother. Shame or guilt about the abuse they suffer, as well as low self-esteem, may represent another reason causing abused women to lack adequate social support and this may indirectly impact on their ability to leave their abusers (Levendosky, 2004). This is the case with participant three and five, who feel that returning to the parental home is the last resort to be taken, as they will be seen as having failed to support their own families. They are too inhibited to share their problems and for this reason they are left all alone to deal with the abuse. Some women are raised to believe that their husbands or male partners are in charge and are therefore hesitant to report abuse (Matthews, 2004). According to Conway (1997), males are socialised to be prepared to use violence to defend and assert their power, authority and position. Males are socialised to draw on diminished emotional resources and are therefore quicker to use violence as a means of resolving conflicts. Vetten (1996), reports that language is used to emphasise socialisation in the South African context, for example names like 'sissies', 'girls' or 'women', are used to refer to men who show signs of feminine tendencies or vulnerability and those men are not aggressive. Therefore women are socialized to be weak and men to be aggressive, and hence they tend to react in this way in relationships.

Cultural beliefs

Although culture is an important tool for survival, it may be used negatively to destroy the determination and strength of many women. Maimela (1996) is of the opinion that too often culture tends to be used by African males in the family context to try to safeguard and perpetuate their dominant positions at the expense of females. For example, in the study, participant six reports that, after her partner has beaten her and when she flees, the partner approaches her

mother to persuade her to return home and in most cases she is blamed for having been disrespectful to him and they would send her back without even hearing her side of the story and knowing the true facts. According to Martin and Russo (1999), some males are taught to expect entitlement and privilege, together with respect and other subservience that go along with those characteristics. Batterers already have been found to accuse their partners of 'unwifely behaviour' or of being insubordinate as an excuse for their violent actions (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). For example, in a 'traditional African community,' when a woman disagrees with and tries to defend herself against accusations by answering the husband, she is seen as being disrespectful. According to participants two and five, it is a denial of African cultural beliefs to question a man on his whereabouts. As a consequence, their female partners would be forced to spend entire nights in the open and they would not dare question these men who insist on maintaining their dominant positions. The male partners are not held accountable for sleeping with other women or for disappearing over long periods without telling their partners.

Coupled with this culture of inequality, is the notion of religion, which may also influence the traditional gender roles in families and the integrity of the family (Brown, 1994). Warped interpretations of religious beliefs are sometimes valued more than is the pain of enduring abuse, and is evident with participant two and eight. According to the participants, church leaders would, without fail, advise them to go home and solve the differences.

During the past few decades, due to the endeavours of the feminist movement, the issue of domestic violence has been pointed out in order to raise public consciousness and make it aware on the great societal problem. The abuse of women is more common than has been originally assumed and only a small percentage of abused women seek refuge (Olson, 1997). Results from previous research done, suggest that woman abuse is more common in households where power is wielded by the male partner (Coleman & Straus, 1990). At the societal level, cultural norms supporting inequality and abuse of power structures and traditional gender roles may help explain some variations in rates of frequency of domestic violence (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

5.3.1 CONCLUSION

Every woman who stays in a violent relationship provides her set of reasons to do so. Her abuser may present a threat to herself or to her children, she may be facing poverty if she left, she may have been out of work over a period of time and lack skills and experience necessary to obtain employment, she may lack resources and skills enabling her to survive without the assistance of her partner, she may be lacking support, she may feel ashamed of what she has been forced to endure or feel guilty for leaving her partner. Whatever reasons presented, there is no specific answer to the question of why women tolerate abusive relationships. There are many contributing factors to female abuse, and although these differ from case to case, the feminist perspective of a patriarchal social structure is used to establish and maintain power and control over a female partner. The focus is on social conditions and these support gender inequality and male domination. According to Ofei-Aboagye's (1994) analysis of the women's comments in her study, domestic violence was perceived as the main contributor to women's submissive attitudes, passivity and economic and financial dependence of women, and she concludes that changing the social order which gives cause to a woman to believe that she is incapable of making even insignificant decisions and which confines her to waiting on her partner to lead the way in all she does is the primary cause. The struggle against domestic violence is clearly viewed as just one part of a much broader context, the struggle for gender equality. Like the ones in the study, women find themselves having to battle complicated ethical, moral and practical dilemmas and despite their desire to obey social rules, they are unable to meet with competing and sometimes contradictory demands of social life. The next chapter will focus on the recommendations and conclusions drawn from the present study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a summary of the research findings is provided. The findings are discussed in the order in which they have been reported. The strengths and limitations of the study are also mentioned, as well as the researcher's deductions on the outcomes of the study. The chapter concludes with the recommendations for future research.

6.2 POWER AND CONTROL

The findings reveal that women stay in physically abusive relationships for multiple reasons, one of the reasons being lack of power and control in the relationship. According to the literature, women may fear to leave an abusive relationship, as they are being intimidated and threatened into staying. This theme of intimidation is highlighted in the current study and is in line with findings from previous studies. Some of the threats that are used are that when then the woman leaves, she will be hurt or killed. Male partners use violence to gain control over their female partners and through the use of this violence and threats, they establish dominance in the relationship. One of the tactics used by men to maintain power and control in the relationship is isolation. According to a study by Levendosky et al. (2004), abused women tend to be socially isolated and have no one in their limited social network that can provide support and this is supported by the findings of the present study, as the women in the study report that they have no form of support available to them as their partners do not want them to socialise with others. Being isolated also limits the woman's access to resources and this makes her less likely to eventually leave the abusive partner. The women also highlight how their partners accuse them of cheating and lacking respect for them, which then causes the men to become abusive. Consequentially, the women always carry the blame for the state of the relationship and this finding is consistent with other studies by Turner (2002) and Matthews (2004), which conclude that most women stay in abusive relationships to prevent feelings of guilt. Salber and

Taliaferro's (1995) study conclude that abusive partners may use the women's children to coerce her into staying in the relationship and achieve this by threatening to harm the children, which is supported by the findings of the present study.

6.3 GENDER INEQUALITY

Most women stay in abusive relationships because they feel that they cannot support themselves and their children and this is the outcome of the present study, which supports Mills' (1998) study. Only one participant in the present study is in possession of a tertiary education, and the rest of the participants have passed grade 12 or lower school grades and most of them have no permanent employment as they are only casual workers and most are unemployed. The unemployed women in the study, having no employment, no education, and no social support, are more likely to remain in an abusive relationship over a longer period of time, which again supports a study by Matthews (2004) which specifies that economic reasons are those most often reported as reasons for women staying in abusive relationships. The study expands by stating that, if a woman is cut off socially and is unemployed her partner may be her only means of financial support, which is the case in the present study. Due to the fact that the male partners in this study are employed and the women are not, the males are the providers and are in-charge and this caused inequality in the relationship and the men maintained a privileged position through their domination of women. Enforcing economic and financial power over women is another form of abuse that obliges women to stay in violent relationships (Sev'er, 1997). Even though there are policies in place to empower women, most women stay in abusive relationships as they have no medical support or protection, as this is highlighted in the Braaf and Meyering's (2011) study as well as in the present study. A shortage of crisis- and long term accommodation means that women may not be able to access housing support if they leave the family home to escape violence. This leaves the women with no choice but to stay in the abusive relationship.

6.4 PATRIARCHY

The abuse of women is linked to women's inferior status within the family, discrimination within the workplace, wage inequality, lack of educational opportunities and the absence of social support (Schneider, 2000). Male domination within the relationship is regarded as a right to abuse. Schneider (2000), further adds that women are socialised to be in inferior position within the family, and the society undervalues the strength of women (Schneider, 2000). Women are brought up to feel shame and guilt about being abused, and this therefore may influence their inability to leave and speak out about their abuse (Levendosky, 2004). This is also a finding in the present study, as some women perceive going back to the parental home as a last resort as this would cause them to be failures and an embarrassment to their families. Another outcome of the present study is that some women are raised to believe that men are superior to women and should be in charge and thus these women are hesitant to report the abuse, as is found in Matthews' (2004) study. It is difficult for an abused woman to leave an abusive partner when the community perceives it as a norm for women to be beaten by their partners. Males are socialised to have limited emotional resources and they are therefore quicker to use violence as an effective means of resolving conflict. This appears to have been what is happening to women in the present study as they are fearful of being beaten up for any conduct that can be seen as insubordination. The women in the study highlight that religion coupled with culture, influence the role of gender in the family and that family integrity is to be valued more than the suffering of enduring abuse as they are advised to always go home and work out the differences. The abuse of women is more common in households where power in the relationship is limited to the male partner as is the case with the women in the present study.

6.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

- Employing a qualitative approach assists in yielding meaningful and in-depth exploration of the women's experiences of abuse. In addition, conducting the study in a language that is useful to the participants contributing towards making the women feel at ease when narrating their personal suffering; more meaningful and yielding much more than questionnaires because of the meaningful data obtained.

- All the women in the study are voluntary participants and therefore the study is of importance and of relevance to them.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Due to limited time frame, the study conducted is of a small scale and therefore only eight participants are interviewed.
- The sample in the present study is not representative of all women in the Pretoria area.
- The partners to the women are not included in the study.
- The participants in the study have been recruited from shelters for abused women and this limitation results in exclusion of the group of women who are not in shelters.

6.7 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS

I am a young passionate black man. The motivation for undertaking this study is that I have just lost a sister who has been killed by her boyfriend. Initially, the study has just been a personal matter. After a research on the phenomena, I have come to realise that abuse of women is a global problem that poses multiple challenges and deserves undivided attention.

Undertaking this study is not only a challenge to myself, a male researcher doing research on abuse of women; it is also a challenge to who I am and what I stand for. Before undertaking the study, issues around women abuse did not matter; it was part of life and at some point in time I would have been proud to hear that one of my friends has hit a lady. I have grown up in a society where woman abuse has been tolerated and has never been frowned upon. It has been an everyday occurrence in the neighbourhood and like many men I didn't think it was wrong.

During the entire process and the course of the study I have learned so much about women abuse and its effects on not only women, but also on the loved ones. After learning about these effects, I find myself losing friends because I no longer tolerate conversations around how my friends abuse their girlfriends. I now disassociate myself from men who abuse their female partners and I am very sensitive towards issues of women abuse.

As a male researcher conducting research on woman abuse, the main challenge has been that some women are not comfortable enough to open up to a man to the extent of two of the participants withdrawing from the study after realising that the researcher is male. Conducting this research has meant building trust with the participant before conducting the interviews so that they do not see me as an enemy. It is very easy for women who are abused to lose trust in men and as a man I have had to work extra hard to gain the women's trust.

The process of undertaking this study is a very humbling and enriching process which will benefit me and not only me, but also the people around me and those I cross paths with. I personally feel that the fight against women abuse can be won if only many more men are educated about it. Studies such as this one are needed to impart information on issues of women abuse.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- For future research it would be beneficial for the researcher to include all members of the family (partner and children) in the study as this would assist in understanding the phenomena much better. Abuse affects the whole family.
- Future researchers need to look into the phenomena of woman abuse holistically because types of abuse, in the majority of cases, intertwined.
- Research on woman abuse need to be conducted regularly to keep up with changing trends of the phenomena so that proper interventions can be tailored to curb the issue.

- When conducting research on woman abuse, certain factors like issues of transference and projection should be taken into consideration so that process can follow without obstruction.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study has explored the experiences of women staying in physically abusive relationships and their reasons for staying in those relationships. The findings of this study have highlighted issues of power and control, gender inequality, and patriarchy. It can be concluded that many abused women choose to stay in abusive relationships for many different reasons, most of which are stated in the study. It is my hope that what this study will make a contribution to the body of research on the phenomena.

Finally I hope that the findings will assist in educating the public on issues of equality because, as long as women are treated as second-class citizens, the fight against women abuse will be lost. Woman abuse reflects differentiating between sexes in our society accepted by the family. It also reflects the privilege to power and authority to maintain control by means deemed acceptable by the society and the acceptable means is violence (Pressman, 1989).

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APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

My name is Kopano Jack and I am (*a student*) in the Psychology Masters in Research Consultation Programme at The University of South Africa, and Principal researcher of this project, entitled “The lived experiences of women who were in physically abusive relationships.” This is a research study of physical abuse of women. The study is expected to look into the experiences of women who have been in physically abusive relationships. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences.

This interview will take approximately one hour to complete. With your permission, I would like to audio-tape this interview so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my supervisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my supervisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risk involved in this study, is that you may be reminded of the traumatic past which can affect you emotionally. The benefits of your participation is that more understanding will be gained on why women choose to stay in physically abusive relationships and this will also help those women who find it difficult to leave such relationships. There will be approximately 10 participants in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 0797436578 or kaymacjay@gmail.com, or my supervisor Dr Puleng Segalo at [+27 12 4298292](tel:+27124298292) or Segalpj@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-recorded please [circle one]:

Yes No

Participant’s signature

Date

Researcher’s signature

Date

APPENDIX II

The interview schedule

- Would you kindly tell me a bit about yourself, who you are, and where you grew up?
- Please tell me about your relationship with your partner/husband
- Can you tell me about the abuse; at what stage in your relationship did it start? What happened/triggered it?
- How often was he physically abusive to you?
- How long did the physical abuse go on for?
- How did it feel like to be in that relationship?
- What made you stay in that relationship?
- When did you make the decision that you cannot stay in this relationship anymore? Was it an easy decision for you? How did you come to this decision?
- How has your life been since taking the decision to leave?
- In which way does society play a role in relationships?

APPENDIX III

CONTACT LIST

- Women And Beyond.....Tel:0833122568
- The Potter's house.....Tel:0123200192
- Youth for Survival.....Tel:0123261236
- Mercy house.....Tel:0123296682
- People against human Abuse Shelter.....Tel:0128057416
- Leamogetswe Safety Home.....Tel:0123758845
- Beth Shan.....Tel:0123273005
- People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA).....Tel:0116424345/6
- National Network on Violence Against Women.....Tel:0123481233/2
- South African Women's Empowerment Foundation....Tel:0123617313