BARRIERS TO LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP AMONGST HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN LIVING IN THE INANDA DISTRICT IN KWAZULU-NATAL

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Psychology

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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30 JANUARY 2020

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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D Padayachee

28/01/2020

SIGNATURE DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all women who have lived with or are currently living with abuse. You are often the forgotten heroines and the struggles that you face to survive on a daily basis are usually never acknowledged. Many people do not realise the strength and courage you have to go through all that you do and still persevere. You continue silently with your daily tasks despite the abuse, violence and pain you experience. To those that have lost their lives due to gender-based violence, the fight against women abuse will continue in your memory.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my late parents, Subbamah and Nadasen Padayachee and my beloved late sister, Asodhie Reddy. You have always supported and encouraged me to never accept defeat. Your unconditional love has always given me the strength and perseverance to endure this journey and to be triumphant despite all the hurdles I have had to overcome in life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I would especially like to thank the exceptional women for their significant contribution towards this study, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. You were willing to disclose your most painful experiences with me, a total stranger, and your contribution towards this research is invaluable.
- My sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Ms Errolyn Long, for her patient guidance, encouragement and advice. I have been extremely fortunate to have had such a diligent supervisor who responded to my work so promptly. Her attention to detail and valuable suggestions, comments and guidance have been imperative in improving my writing skills. I am indebted towards her for her constant support and refusal to accept anything but the best which has encouraged me to put forth my best work.
- I extend my sincere gratitude to my editor Vanessa-Lynn Neophytou for her amazing sense of respect when helping me with the editing of the thesis. The fine skills of Vanessa-Lynn Neophytou have made the technical work of editing a pleasure and have greatly helped the thesis. Thank you for your enthusiasm on the topic of gender-based violence.
- I am eternally grateful to all my friends and family who have been my constant motivators during this study. Thank you for your continuous support and confidence in my abilities. I have been incredibly blessed to have had you by my side during these past three years

ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DARVO	Deny, Attack and Reverse Victim and Offender
DOH	Department of Health
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DV	Domestic Violence
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Approach
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MRC	Medical Research Council
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NICRO	National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAPS	South African Police Services
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SOCA	Sexual Offences and Community Affairs
TCCs	Thuthuzela Care Centres
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

South Africa has been known to have the highest rate of gender-based violence globally. This qualitative study locates gender-based violence using the interpretive phenomenological paradigm and multicultural feminism as both allowed participants' to be given a voice. This study thus enabled women who have been abused to discuss their perception of their own experiences. The primary aim of the study is orientated towards an increased understanding of the possible barriers that prevent women from leaving their abusers. The main findings point out how victim manipulation, financial abuse, isolation and responses by social and legal services serve as barriers to the women leaving their abusive partners. The secondary aim contributes to an understanding of the risk factors influencing gender-based violence. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of prolonged abuse on the participants.

The criteria used for the selection were women with diverse backgrounds from the Inanda district, who have lived in abusive relationships for two years or longer. Eight participants completed the research process and were selected using the purposive sampling method. Significantly, this study provides an insight into the reality of how women process and give meanings to their experiences of abuse. Hence, the research sought to inform the literature and the greater community on the lived experiences of women in abusive relationships.

Keywords: Abuse, barriers, gender-based violence, violence against women, heterosexual, leaving, patriarchy, qualitative, feminism, phenomenology.

Opsomming

Suid-Afrika het wêreldwyd die hoogste persentasie van geslagsgebaseerde geweld. Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie plaas geslagsgebaseerde geweld met behulp van die interpretatiewe fenomenologiese paradigma en multikulturele feminisme, aangesien albei die deelnemers 'n stem laat kry. Hierdie studie het dus vroue wat mishandel is, in staat gestel om hul persepsie van hul eie ervarings te bespreek. Die primêre doel van die studie is gerig op 'n groter begrip van die moontlike hindernisse wat vroue verhoed om hul misbruik te verlaat. Die belangrikste bevindings wys daarop hoe manipulasie van slagoffer, finansiële mishandeling, isolasie en reaksies deur maatskaplike en regsdienste dien as hindernisse vir die verlaat van hul vrouens met hul maat. Die sekondêre doel dra by tot die begrip van die risikofaktore wat geslagsgebaseerde geweld beïnvloed. Verder ondersoek die studie die impak van langdurige mishandeling op die deelnemers.

Die kriteria wat gebruik is vir die keuring was vroue met verskillende agtergronde uit die distrik Inanda, wat al twee jaar of langer in beledigende verhoudings leef. Agt deelnemers het die navorsingsproses voltooi en is met behulp van die doelgerigte steekproefmetode gekies. Hierdie studie bied 'n insig in die werklikheid van hoe vroue hul ervarings van mishandeling verwerk en betekenisse gee. Daarom het die navorsing probeer om die literatuur en die groter gemeenskap in te lig oor die ervarings van vroue in beledigende verhoudings.

Sleutelwoorde: Mishandeling, hindernisse, geslagsgebaseerde geweld, geweld teen vroue, heteroseksuele, vertrek, patriargie, kwalitatief, feminisme, fenomenologie

Okungabonakali

INingizimu Afrika yaziwa ukuthi inesilinganiso esiphakeme kunazo zonke sodlame olususelwa ebulilini emhlabeni jikelele. Lolu cwaningo lwekhwalithi lubheka udlame olususelwa ebulilini kusetshenziswa ukuhumusha okuyi-phenographical paradigm kanye nobungqingili bezamasiko njengoba bobabili abahlanganyeli bavunyelwe ukuba banikezwe izwi. Lolu cwaningo lwenze ukuthi abesifazane abahlukunyeziwe bakhulume ngokubona kwabo ngokwenzeka kwabo. Inhloso yokuqala yocwaningo isekelwe ekuqondeni okwandayo kwemigoqo engahle ivimbele abesifazane ukuba bashiye abahlukumezi babo. Okutholakele okukhulu kuveza ukuthi ukuxhaphaza izisulu, ukuhlukunyezwa ngokwezimali, ukwahlukaniswa nezimpendulo ngezinsizakalo zezenhlalo nezomthetho kusebenza njengezithiyo kwabesifazane beshiya abalingani babo abahlukumezayo. Inhloso yesibili inomthelela ekuqondeni kwezimpawu zobungozi ezinomthelela udlame olususelwa ebulilini. Ngaphezu kwalokho, lolu cwaningo lubheka umthelela wokuhlukunyezwa isikhathi eside kwabahlanganyeli.

Abangu-8 ababambe iqhaza baphothula inqubo yokucwaninga futhi bakhethwa besebenzisa indlela enamasampula enenjongo.

Okusemqoka ukuthi lolu cwaningo luhlinzeka ngokuqonda kweqiniso lokuthi abesifazane basebenza kanjani futhi banikeze izincazelo kulokho kwabo okuhlukumezeka. Ngakho-ke, lolu cwaningo lufune ukwazisa izincwadi kanye nomphakathi omkhulu ngokuhlangenwe nakho kokuphila kwabesifazane ebudlelwaneni bokuhlukumeza.

Amagama asemqoka: Izithiyo, ukuhlukunyezwa, ngoko, udlame olubhekiswe kwabesifazane, ubulili, ukuhamba, abahlukumezewle, ubufazi, kufanelekile, inzalamizi

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Chapter One: Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity. It as an act of violence deeply rooted in gender inequality that is justified by using the gender of the victim and occurs due to the heterosexual normative understandings of gender. Both women and men can be victims of gender-based violence, however, women are disproportionately harmed by gender-based violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Over the years, men have slowly and steadily asserted superiority over women. A once mutually dependent relationship wherein each sex had its role to play degenerated into one in which women became subordinate to men. In hunter-gatherer societies the division of labour relegated men as the hunters, protectors and warriors with women bearing and raising children (Connell, 2000). This control and domination of women, therefore, is an ancient practice that has continued for decades. It should be noted that it is not the physical differences that separate men from women with regards to power. According to Lerner (1986), patriarchy is not created due to biological differences but is a phenomenon created by 'man' himself. In contrast, Thomas and Tiessen (2010) assert that when men were initially hunters and gatherers, women once enjoyed a degree of status and importance that far exceeded what they have today. Women's work, besides childbearing, was just as highly respected and strenuous as men's work.

However, as time passed, men laid claim to the powerful position as the ultimate patriarch of the family unit and this relationship became a norm in the family structure. This led to the ideology of patriarchy and is projected throughout our entire society, throughout every institution, such as the family unit, church and state. Patriarchy is the manifestation of the domination of men over women and evidence shows that patriarchy contributes to abusive and violent behaviour by men against women (Sultana, 2012). The ideology of patriarchy allows the husband to have complete control over his wife and is the extension of

men's dominance over women in society (O' Toole, Schiffman & Edwards, 2007; Seedat, Gass, Stein & Williams, 2011). Patriarchy has become so powerful that women sometimes actually consent to and accept the abuse by succumbing to their oppressors.

Religious institutions such as the church and the family unit justify and reinforce the control and domination of women by men. Patriarchy is thus characterised by power, dominance and hierarchy revealing a society of structures, values and practices wherein men are given license to dominate, control, oppress and exploit women (Sultana, 2010). Religions have at times presided over in supporting the discrimination against women and the patriarchal ideology enforcing the supremacy of men within societies, making victims of women who often accept their victimisation, justifying it in the name of religion (Werner, Esterline, Kang, & Raja, 2010).

In 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention added Article 18 to its Profession of Faith and Message that a wife is a servant to her husband and is to submit graciously to her husband, just as the church is a servant to the ruling and protection of Christ (Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Messages, 1998). She has a responsibility set down by God that she is to serve as his helper in maintaining the home and caring for their children (Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Messages, 1998). "A woman should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly" (Holy Bible, 2010, Timothy 2. pp. 11-12).

These messages have been part of Christian principles set down since the second century, and of Jewish dogma before that (Werner et al., 2010). Towards the end of the 20th Century, the Protestants openly accepted this narrow, inflexible view that women are the servants of men (Werner et al., 2010).

This study will highlight the voices of the participants affected by violence by using their own experiences and their own words and will encourage society to be proactive in the

endeavours to end the abuse of women. This study adds to the scholarship on the subject of gender-based violence which increases knowledge on the subject and in so doing assists in raising overall awareness of the subject. The interviews conducted with the participants created much-needed visibility and consideration of the obstacles encountered when attempting to leave their abusive relationships. The researcher deemed the study to be important because, through the research process, the participants gained an understanding of the situations within which they were entrapped. The current study added to the existing literature and explored the notion of the silence of gender-based violence qualitatively. From a theoretical approach the research emphasised an understanding of the participants' experiences through paying particular attention to the descriptions of their experiences and feelings expressed during the interviews. The study elaborates that it is imperative to listen to women recount their lived experiences of abuse and their thoughts and impressions on the life they are forced to endure. This allowed the researcher to interpret the participants' verbal responses and identify common themes. Furthermore, this process prevented the researcher from concentrating on merely achieving results but enabled an interaction as a two-way process between the researcher and participants. The issues that lead to gender-based violence as highlighted in the national and international contexts below will, therefore, assist the researcher in drawing similarities and comparisons in understanding women's stories regarding the obstacles that serve to prevent or delay them from exiting their lives of violence.

Gender-Based Violence as a Global Epidemic

This section provides a global insight into the extent of gender-based violence, emphasising that it is an epidemic of mammoth proportions on a global and local level. Following this, gender-based violence within local South African communities is discussed.

A multitude of studies highlight that gender-based violence is a public health and

human rights issue of enormous significance worldwide (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; García-Moreno et al. 2006; Rand, 2008; Reed, Raj, Miller & Silverman, 2010). Women, in particular, experience gender-based violence in nearly all countries and regions worldwide (Seedat et al., 2011). Since the second half of the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of studies seeking to measure the scope of violence against women (WHO, 2013).

A World Health Organization [WHO] (2013) study on the world-wide prevalence of gender-based violence concluded that violence against women is an epidemic of tremendous proportion. Gender-based violence is prevalent globally, endangering the health of women, limiting their contribution to society, and resulting in enormous human suffering (WHO, 2013). To give more clarity on the scope of this violence, table 1 reveals the percentages of the global prevalence of gender-based violence in 2013.

Table 1:

Global Data on the Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

Percentage	Global estimate
% women who have lived with gender-based violence or sexual violence from a non-partner (lifetime prevalence)	35%
% of women who have been in a relationship and who have experienced gender-based violence (lifetime prevalence)	30%
% of women who have experienced sexual violence from a non-partner (lifetime prevalence)	7.2%

Source. World Health Organization (WHO), 2013 p.18.

Table 1 presents an alarming estimate of 35% of women globally that have lived with either physical or sexual abuse or sometimes both from a non-partner (WHO, 2013). This figure alone represents an extremely large proportion of women worldwide that have been victims

to sexual and physical violence. Significantly, this figure does not cover the other forms of abuse that women also endure. Gender-based violence by an intimate partner is experienced by 30% of women worldwide (WHO, 2013). Women are, therefore, most exposed to violence and abuse from their own sexual partners. The percentage of women that have been sexually abused from a person unknown to them is 7.2% (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018b). On average, 87 000 women worldwide were killed intentionally in 2017 with this figure being equivalent to an average of 137 women being killed by intimate partners or by their own family members every day (UNODC, 2018b). Statistics reveal that more than 30 000 of the women killed in 2017 was due to intimate partner femicide, either by a current or former partner. (UNODC, 2018b).

A study by Sarkar (2013) revealed that 59% of men in Papua New Guinea revealed that they had forcibly demanded sex from their intimate partners. Another 40% of men disclosed that they had raped women unknown to them (Sarkar, 2013). According to a United Nations (UN) report, a study on domestic violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) revealed 15 654 women that have been sexually abused in 2012 alone (UNODC, 2018b). This high figure remains a concern since women in the DRC are noted to under-report cases of gender-based violence (Sarkar, 2013).

Further to this, Coll, Ewerling, García-Moreno, Hellwig and Barros (2020) conducted a study on gender-based violence amongst the most vulnerable groups of women in 46 low-income and middle-income countries. Data were obtained from 372 149 women in intimate relationships between the ages of 15–49 years (Coll et al., 2020). Countries that had higher rates of physical, psychological and sexual violence were Eastern Africa and South Africa with figures of 29.6% (Coll et al., 2020). In South Africa, the survey was conducted on women aged 18-49 years with the study establishing that poorer, younger, less empowered women living in rural areas were especially vulnerable to experience intimate partner

violence (Coll et al., 2020). Complementary to this study, Grose, Chen, Roof, Rachel and Yount (2020) confirmed that the health outcomes of women that are sexually abused in lower-income countries are proportionately higher than women and girls from higher income countries.

The above studies highlight a clear need to improve efforts across all sectors, both to prevent abuse of women from happening in the first place, as well as providing necessary services for victims of gender-based violence. These findings send a powerful message that violence against women is a prevailing problem that does not only occur in some areas of society but globally.

Women are known to remain silently in abusive marriages, despite the many problems and challenges they face every single day (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Almost without fail, all societies in the world, despite its high costs, have social institutions that approve, legitimise, hide and deny abuse against women. This can include legal and social services. Romito (2008) argued that state tactics or strategies are used for hiding violence against women by men worldwide and may be legitimised using laws and theories. This explains why women are vulnerable to abuse and violence when it comes to social, legal and health services. This vulnerability can result in serious emotional, psychological, physical, financial and social difficulties. Additionally, these difficulties result in women's loss of their right to govern themselves; it affects their decision-making capacity and their ability to develop resilience (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003; Karakurt & Silver, 2013). When violence is continuous and when women feel unable to report the violence, community services that are meant to help these women prove to be ineffective or inadequate (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Palermo, Bleck and Peterman (2014) published a survey with data obtained between 2004 and 2011 from 284 281 women in 24 countries. This study addressed the extent of reporting gender-based violence and revealed that 40 % of women experiencing gender-based

violence previously made informal reports to either family or friends but only 7% were known to have made formal reports (Palermo et al., 2014). Gender-based violence is largely underreported, and women who report their abuse differs from those who do not. The study of Palermo et al. (2014), revealed that women who do not report could possibly be inaccessible by support services or experience barriers to reporting due to social stigma, lack of finances, traditional or cultural beliefs, fear of losing or being unable to support their children, fear of getting their perpetrators in trouble or fear of their partners retaliating and becoming more violent, discrimination of victims by legal services, lack of trust in the health care system or may accept the violence they are subjected to as a normal occurrence.

In South Asia, women are mostly thought to be incapable of deciding for themselves, of making their own choices in life and hardly have any access to essential services to turn to for assistance. Their movements are mostly monitored and restricted and they live like prisoners in their own homes (Bishwajit, Sarker & Yaya, 2016). In these countries, sons are considered to have economic, social or religious rights while daughters' are mostly regarded to be an economic liability because of the dowry system (Kange, 2018). It has been reported that in Bangladesh, every week, more than 10 women have acid thrown on them; there are 22 women killed each day in India due to the culture of the dowry system (Kalantry & Kestenbaum, 2011). Women in Nepal are regarded as commodities that have to be disposed of and 77% of the episodes of violence against women are from their own family members; in Sri Lanka, an extremely high 78% of girls under the age of 16 are raped by either family members or non-family members; more than 450 Pakistani women and girls die every year due to the phenomenon of honour killings (Noroozi, Taleghani, Merghati-Khoei, Tavakoli & Gholami, 2014). The latter is the murder of women who are seen as having brought shame on their families by acting out in ways that are not viewed as appropriate of their gender. Marital infidelity, premarital sex, flirting, inappropriate attire or even failing to serve a meal on time,

are all acts that can be considered as disgracing the family honour (Noroozi et al., 2014). Thus, by killing the woman who has deviated or strayed from her gendered script, the family's honour is restored within the community.

The stigmatisation of victims of gender-based violence results in a low rate of formal reporting (Hart & Klein, 2013; Palermo et al., 2014). However, when women do report the violence and abuse, they are refused access to justice. Authorities such as policing services often view violence against women as a personal issue that must be dealt with by the family members. Some women may also struggle to access the justice system due to various circumstances such as living in rural areas that only have traditional courts, lack of finances to travel to a site where assistance could be provided, or they could be unaware of their legal rights in domestic violence matters. In most cases the justice system is not effective or insensitive to the needs of women (van Niekerk & Bonzaier, 2016). Information and data about violence against women in Africa is scarce (Coomaraswamy, 2003; Kaur & Garg, 2008). Since the publication of these studies, recent research by Muluneh, Stulz, Francis and Agho (2020), have confirmed that there have been very few studies to date that have explored the prevalence of gender-based violence in Africa, that is, besides small-scale studies. The small-scale studies that have been conducted cannot be applied to the wider population in Africa. Muluneh et al. (2020) obtained their data amongst women aged 15–49 years in African countries. Equally important, the research of Muluneh et al. (2020) have identified that many sub-Saharan African countries have yet to include the significance of gender-based violence as a serious violation against human rights in their countries policies and laws.

Victims are often hesitant to reveal their experiences of violence due to many barriers which include fear of stigma and shame, financial barriers, lack of awareness of available services, fear of revenge, lack of law enforcement action, and attitudes surrounding violence as a normal component of life. Subsequently, this results in low rates of formal reporting and

challenges in accurately measuring the prevalence of gender-based violence (Muluneh et al., 2020).

The norms that are entrenched within society set a pattern of discrimination against women that promote the power and control of men over women (Jewkes et al., 2015). Gender-based violence includes forms of violence that encourages the abuse and exploitation of women and everything associated with the concept of the feminine in order to assure the subordination and inferiority of women (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). The researcher acknowledges that gender-based violence is complex and also occurs in relationships between people of the same sex and heterosexual relationships. It is further noted by the researcher that there are cases of women abusing their partners. However, as stated by Catalano (2006) and McCarthy (2018), it must be acknowledged that a huge proportion of violent crimes are perpetrated against women by men. Therefore, even though men are proportionately more exposed to violence because of war, gang-related violence and suicide, women are mostly assaulted or killed by someone known to them (Heise & García-Moreno, 2002). A rapidly increasing amount of research studies focussing on gender-based violence both nationally and internationally identified a staggering proportion of gender-based violence figures. The following studies indicate that a huge proportion of women, as much as 70%, reveal that they are, at some point in their lives, physically violated by their own intimate partner (Heise, Ellsberg & Gottemoeller, 2009; Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Rakovec-Felser, 2014; WHO, 2013).

Women have the right to live a life free of violence and abuse (Sharma, 2015). However, millions of women worldwide are violently attacked either through domestic violence, forced prostitution, and rape by partners and non-partners. Furthermore, according to the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] (2016), approximately 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide have endured and suffered through the process of female genital

mutilation. Additionally, an alarming 80% of victims that are trafficked are women, and of this, at least 79% of them are for sex trafficking (UNODC, 2018a). These victims of violence are also at risk for many health issues, such as forced and unwanted pregnancies, illegal or unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted infections including HIV and some of these conditions can even be fatal (Hughes, Bolis, Fries & Finigan, 2015). Gender-based violence takes on many different forms and can be conducted by different perpetrators throughout the lifetime of women (WHO, 2013). These are just some of the forms of violence that women endure. Moreover, women are also forced to endure other forms of abuse such as emotional, psychological and economic abuse (Sharma, 2015).

According to the WHO (2013), even though violence against women is of global concern, Africa is the leading continent in gender-based violence compared to the world. Statistics show that 45.6% of women in Africa experience gender-based violence compared to women globally (WHO, 2013). However, violence against women in Africa is hardly ever reported and continues to remain hidden (Coomaraswamy, 2003; Kaur & Garg, 2008; Muluneh et al., 2020).

A study by Johns Hopkins revealed that a high percentage of women from 25 different countries in Africa believed that being abused and assaulted was justified. Women who condoned and accepted the violence that their partners subjected them to, varied from 18 years in Swaziland to 87 years in Papa New Guinea (Hart & Klein, 2013). The main reason for this belief is the existence of the patriarchal system, which supports the belief that men are superior to women and women are expected to remain subservient to men. Patriarchy is a cultural norm and an accepted system practised by many communities that is sometimes even endorsed by state leaders (Hart & Klein, 2013).

The inherited multiple legal codes from colonialism are still operational in Africa, and they reflect traditional, religious and imported common law values (Coomaraswamy, 2003;

Idang, 2015; Kaur & Garg, 2008). However, this reality raises questions about whose customary laws are recognised by the courts since custom and culture are dynamic. Idang (2015) further went on to elaborate that multiple legal codes are often applied in issues concerning family law such as marriage, inheritance, maintenance, custody of children and property ownership by women, which determines the social position or status of women. Women carry the status given to them within the family into the public arena. Conforming to a patriarchal traditionalist value system results in a dominant masculine environment that promotes gender inequality associated with multiple legal codes (Idang, 2015).

In another study, a United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2020) report stated that 243 million women and girls between the ages of 15–49 years have been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner in the past 12 months. The UNDP (2020) report revealed that gender-based violence figures were likely to increase as security, health, financial and living conditions deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases of domestic violence, in France for example, have increased by 30 % since their lockdown from March 17, 2020 (UNDP, 2020). In South Africa alone, over 2 000 complaints of domestic violence were made to the SAPS in the first seven days of the lockdown which commenced on the 27th March 2020 (UNDP, 2020). The incidence of violence against women in South Africa continues to escalate to alarming proportions. These figures are staggering and the UNDP (2020) report further highlights that prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the prevalence of GBV in South Africa was already amongst the highest in the world.

A discussion will now follow on gender-based violence in a South African context. Similarities that exist between the global and local context will be highlighted, and emphasis will be placed on context-specific issues related to gender-based violence.

Gender-Based Violence in South Africa

In comparison to the global rates of gender-based violence, the rate in South Africa is

proportionately higher, with the death of women by the hands of men from their intimate relationships being six times higher than the global average figures (Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2002; Kim et al., 2007; Seedat et al., 2011). Studies have identified that the average death of women by an intimate partner is every six days (Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, Lombard & Jewkes, 2013). According to the most recent data from Africa Check from 2017/18, a woman is murdered every 3 hours in South Africa (Wilkinson, 2019). Apart from formal research and official statistics, newspapers do report on gender-based violence but to increase media visibility they also select on what they report, focussing on sensationalist headlines (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). An example would be the Oscar Pistorius case (*The Guardian,* 24 November 2017). Oscar Pistorius, a double-amputee Olympic sprinter, was convicted of killing his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, in his home in February 2013 (Grierson, 2017). With the high rate of femicide in South Africa, it was easy to establish the link in this case to gender-based violence. The high profile of the perpetrator made it possible for many South African journalists to gain prominence and accolades in social media (Germaner, 2014). Cases such as the Pistorius matter received widespread national and international attention, yet in the four-year span, while this case continued, approximately 4 400 women were also murdered by their partners in South Africa, with these deaths being unacknowledged in the public discourse and media (Artz, Meer and Aschman, 2018). In the 2012–2013 financial year, out of 66 387 sexual offences cases reported, only 4 669 resulted in a conviction (Naidoo, 2013). This equates to only 7% of cases resulting in conviction (Naidoo, 2013). These highlight significant challenges facing the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa.

A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime South Africa [UNODCa], (2002) identified that sexual assault in the form of rape in South Africa is the highest in the world. Statistics on gender-based violence in South Africa remain underreported.

Organisations specialising in human rights crimes estimate that only one in nine cases of sexual violence are reported to South African Police Services (SAPS) (Naidoo, 2013). The National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation (NICRO) suggests that an alarming one in 20 rape cases are reported to the SAPS (Naidoo, 2013). Another study by the Medical Research Council and Gender Links identified that only one in 25 women reported the rape to the police and 0.3% reported domestic violen ce (Sikweyiya, Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). This suggests that SAPS statistics of sexual violence in South Africa are grossly underestimated and is of major concern. This problem of underreporting is exacerbated when the perpetrator is known to the victim and is likely to be an intimate partner, family member, friend or neighbour, teacher or a community leader (Naidoo, 2013).

In a cross-sectional study conducted in three districts in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, researchers found that 27.6% of all men interviewed, had raped a woman or girl (Jewkes et al., 2015). Of all the men who were interviewed, 42.4% admitted to physically abusing their intimate partners (Jewkes et al., 2015). Violence against women is maintained by practices of patriarchal masculinities. Violence is used as a means to keep women in their position of having limited access to economic, political and social power. Women are often violently attacked when they try to assert their claims in these arenas. To be a woman is to be often considered weaker, fragile and inferior to the masculine. This increases the vulnerability of women to male violence (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Furthermore, this indicates a causal link between power inequity in intimate relationships and gender-based violence (Jewkes et al., 2015). In comparison, a study in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal on the rates of female homicide and intimate partner violence between 1999 and 2009 showed that there had been a decrease from 24.7 to 12.9 homicides (Abrahams et al., 2013). Despite the decrease in the rate of femicide, gender-based violence is still considered to be five times the global average in South Africa which in turn means that intimate partner

femicide is of major concern (Abrahams et al., 2013).

Underreporting is also common among vulnerable groups of people such as illegal immigrants, orphans and other vulnerable children, refugees, sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex [LGBTI]) and people living with disabilities (Muthien & Combrinck, 2003). These are groups of people that require specific protection but are often discriminated against. Members of these groups, both men and women, are often subjected to increased levels of prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination. Women in these groups thus experience multiple layers of discrimination. For example, anyone who identifies as LGBTI faces discrimination because of their sexual orientation, but lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women often experience additional discrimination because of their gender (Muthien & Combrinck, 2003).

Barriers to reporting gender-based violence include a belief that the criminal justice system is unhelpful and ineffective. The justice system is mostly approached as a last resort for assistance, although they should be the first line of service when reporting violence (Lorenz, Kirkner & Ullman, 2019). Furthermore, secondary trauma is often experienced by the victims due to lack of knowledge on the DVA or insensitive behaviour of the SAPS and health service officials. In addition, the sensitive and stigmatised nature of sexual crimes and the interpretation of domestic violence as a private family matter, contributes towards the reluctance of reporting gender-based violence (Lorenz et al., 2019; Martinson & Gamache, 2016). According to Abrahams et al. (2013), the low conviction rates provide leeway for gender violent offenders, and this often discourages many survivors from reporting. Survivors of gender violence often feel that the sentencing of perpetrators is remarkably lenient given the gravity of the offences. Conviction of abusers often fails to take into account the impact of the offence on the quality of a survivor’s life on a long-term basis (Lorenz et al., 2019; Martinson & Gamache, 2016).

Similar to the global problem, gender-based violence in South Africa also has negative consequences on the well-being of women, especially in cases where women are completely dependent on their men partners. Women are at risk for HIV infection due to sexual violence. The risk is particularly increased when they are economically dependent on their abusers and have no or poor educational background. Poverty, sexual exploitation or coercion, rape, prostitution and commercial sex work all increase the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS. Additionally, once their HIV-positive status is revealed or disclosed, women become vulnerable to physical abuse, lose access to important economic resources, and risk being evacuated from their homes (Kim & Motsei, 2002).

Problem Statement

Several studies have explored the issue of gender-based violence (Garcia- Moreno et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2015; Jewkes et al., 2001; Muluneh et al., 2020, Rand, 2008). These studies highlight the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and the consequences it has on women's contribution to social and economic developments.

Research showed that the limitations of leaving can be both psychological and physical (Bell & Naugle, 2005). Researchers found that emotional abuse tends to occur together with physical abuse (Arias & Pape, 2003; Coker, Smith & Bethea, 2009). Studies have identified that women who do report matters of domestic violence to the relevant law enforcement authorities or leave their abusers are at high risk for eventually returning to that relationship and experiencing continued abuse, with the abuse often increasing in severity (Keeling, Smith & Fisher, 2016; Martin et al., 2000; Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Researchers argue that women living with abuse might be unaware of the detrimental risks involved in remaining in abusive relationships (Martin et al., 2000; Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Studies have also revealed that women who permanently leave an abusive relationship do so within a two year period after the onset of violence while other women may first go through a repetitive

cycle of leaving and returning before exiting the abusive relationship permanently (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007; Machisa, Christofides & Jewkes, 2018; Martin et al., 2000).

There are many factors highlighted as to a woman's decision to remain in abusive relationships. However, one of the predominant recurring themes is dependency. Women who are determined in saving the relationship or admit having an emotional attachment to the abuser may be more likely to remain in violent relationships (Fraser, 2005; Power, 2006, Saunders, 2018). Additional factors that may increase the risk of a victim remaining in the relationship include lack of financial resources and alternate living accommodation, lack of access to childcare facilities, limited availability of social support services, lack of employment or education, abusers' promises to change, fear of retaliation and increased violence from their abusers and social or family pressure to remain in the abusive relationship (Gelles, 2003; Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Saunders, 2018; Short et al., 2000).

Another characteristic of gender-based violence is that it occurs across all boundaries. Gender-based violence does not distinguish between social, racial, educational or economic status. This phenomenon is a reality that needs to be acknowledged in both developing and developed countries, affecting women of all backgrounds. Gender-based violence is not only prevalent among poor or uneducated victims of abuse. Studies indicate that there is also a high incidence of gender-based violence in the more prosperous communities (Gelles, 2003, Saunders, 2018). Hayes (2014) argued that gender-based violence is not taken seriously by the criminal justice system or police because of the assumption that women willingly stay in abusive and violent relationships. This is problematic because it fosters the notion that women who remain in abusive relationships are thought to be at fault for their abuse (Saunders, 2018). Victim blaming is a common belief among people who have never experienced abuse as they do not understand the complexities involved in living with an abuser (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). These dynamics represent a major reason as to why police,

judges or magistrates and other legal professionals do not understand the seriousness of gender-based violence, and the psychology behind the coercive, dominating and manipulative control of abusers.

Society is known to share certain beliefs about relationships, marriage and motherhood that typically associate women with acts of unfailing devotion and loyalty which needs them to be committed to their partners and work on remaining in their relationships even when their partners are abusive and violent (Fraser, 2005; Rhatigan, Street & Axsom, 2006). This combination of beliefs or perceptions set women up to feel ashamed, isolated and trapped, and as a result, they become dependent on and bound to their abusers.

On the contrary, there are studies that identify the possibility of women more likely to leave a violent relationship due to the increased frequency and severity of the abuse (Coker et al., 2009; Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Short et al., 2000). An important fact to note is that the increase in emotional rather than physical abuse appears to have a greater influence on a victim's attempt to leave (Koepsell et al., 2006; Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Subsequently, it has been revealed that women are more likely to seek assistance from social services, friends or family or end an abusive relationship when their children are in danger of being harmed either emotionally or physically (Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Short et al., 2000). Further research by Saunders (2018), have also identified that actual or perceived harm to one's child from the abuser is an important reason for a woman to exit an abusive relationship.

In attempting to understand a victim's decision to remain with or leave her abuser, relevant controlling variables, including precursors and consequences of a particular behaviour, need to be understood. There are also certain characteristics of a victim's behaviour that may be important to understand in terms of how they influence a woman's decision to remain or leave a violent relationship. Bell and Naugle (2005) have explored the nature to which basic and contemporary behavioural principles affect an individual's

stay/leave behaviour within an abusive relationship. This research will aim to include all the behavioural principles involved in decision making.

However, Bell and Naugle's (2005) study failed to identify the complete complexity of stay or leave decisions because, throughout their course of the study, individual behaviour was used as the only unit of analysis. Cultural and societal practices that impact individual stay/leave decisions need to be also considered. According to Hayes and Jeffries (2013), different values that now characterise social, theoretical, political, and clinical fields have emerged. These values promote an understanding towards cultural sensitivity or diversity, the beginning of an acceptance of different family structures, and recognition of oppressive societal practices. In general, these values are influenced by focusing on the socially constructed nature of human experience; life experiences and their meanings are qualitatively unique and interpretations will differ amongst individuals due to general and idiosyncratic patterns developed by the society in which they live.

Research conducted by Miller, Lund and Weatherly (2012) extended the research by Bell and Naugle's (2005) study on how an association is made between a behaviour and a consequence for that behaviour (operant learning principles) and how this association contributes to women's decisions to remain in or exit an abusive relationship. Miller et al. (2012) discussed the consequences of actions that could motivate women to leave abusive relationships. Miller et al. (2012) discussed a behavioural model with implications for intervening by changing the conditions that influence a victim's decision to stay or leave an abusive relationship. Behavioural principles that have an impact on women's stay/leave decisions are determined by the abuser's behaviour and the particular cycle of violence (Miller et al., 2012). Victims may thus be out of the reach of health or social services that work with victims of gender-based violence. Interventions can, therefore, focus more on changing the conditions influencing victims' decisions to stay or leave. An example could be

motivational talks that encourage women to leave the abusive relationship. This increases the appeal of reinforcers to leave. In other words, making changes to available resources encourages certain actions to leave (Nicholson & Lutz, 2017). It should be noted that both sets of studies discussed, Bell & Naugle, (2005) and Miller et al. (2012), were used in an American context and not a South African context

Against this background, the researcher would like to provide an understanding as to the barriers that serve as obstacles to women leaving abusive relationships in a South African context. Both professionals and society, in general, have difficulty understanding survivors who remain in abusive relationships. While many studies on gender-based violence, both in South Africa and internationally, tend to focus on the causes and consequences of violence that women are subjected to, this study will contribute to the topic by exploring how these participants attempt to make sense of their experiences of violence in the context of their relationship and the reasons that they remain with their abusive partners.

The study concentrates on the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal which consists of more rural areas than urban areas, with the majority of people being largely women. The people of KwaZulu-Natal belong to various ethnic groups. The population of the province consists mostly of people of black African descent, mostly Zulu, and make up more than four-fifths of the population. Indians account for about one-tenth and whites of less than one-tenth (Leburu & Phetlho-Thekisho, 2015). Women from the district of Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal were chosen for the research study. Participants that were chosen for the study belong to the black, Indian and white racial groups.

Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

The primary aim of the study is to explore and understand the possible barriers that prevent women from leaving their abusers. The secondary aim is the risk factors influencing gender-based violence. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of prolonged abuse and violence

on the participants.

Researchers who study gender-based violence have made attempts to understand the factors influencing the decisions of women living with abuse to either stay or leave. To many people, the decision to remain in or leave a violent relationship may seem an obvious one because of the negative physical and emotional consequences of the violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). However, according to the research of Krug et al. (2002); Pingley (2017) and Rakovec-Felser (2014), the decisions of women to remain in these violent relationships are complex ones that are influenced by situational, personal and environmental factors. Equally important, it is ultimately a woman's own decision to leave or stay. For some women, leaving seems to be the best option for ending the abuse and violence, while for others, staying may seem the safest option.

Conceptual Definitions

Gender

Gender is the term used to identify the social characteristics assigned to men and women. These social characteristics are constructed on the basis of age, religion, nationality, ethnic and social origin. They differ both within and between cultures and define identities, status, roles, responsibilities and power relations among the members of any culture or society.

Gender is learned through socialisation. It is dynamic and evolves to respond to changes in the social, political and cultural environments. People are born either female or male, and it is through socialisation that biological bodies become gendered. An example would be how girls and boys are taught how to behave according to their sex. Thus, gender refers to what it means to be a boy or a girl, woman or man, in a particular society or culture. Society teaches expected or favourable attitudes, behaviours, roles, responsibilities, constraints, available opportunities and privileges of men and the oppression of women

(Hayes & Jeffries, 2013).

The works of Sandra Bem and Judith Butler gives us a better understanding of the concept of gender. Sandra Bem devised the gender schema theory as a theory of process to explain gender development. The gender binary of man and woman influences children to develop gender schemas in line with what they observe. According to Bem (1981), children can through this gender schema theory develop an understanding of what behaviours they can adopt as a boy or girl. Bem's theory suggests that sex-typed individuals are those who identify with their gender and process information through the lens of that gender schema, resulting in the concept of the self being assimilated to the gender schema (Bem, 1981). One weakness of the theory is that it fails to account for the ways social behaviours influence gender development.

Judith Butler (1990), questions the belief that gendered behaviours are natural. Butler argues that one's learned and expected role of performing genders is an act. Hence, it is a performance that is imposed or thrust upon an individual due to the expected social norms of heterosexuality, thereby creating a gender that is socially constructed. According to Felluga (2015), Butler explains the social agent as an object rather than the subject of constitutive acts. Felluga (2015) explains that Butler is questioning the extent to which we can assume that an individual can be said to construct himself or herself; she wonders to what extent our acts are determined for us by our place within language and convention

Hence, gender denotes a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female. The term gender is important to the study as it highlights the gender dynamics that exist in exploring gender-based violence. This definition extends to all forms of violence that are firstly, social expectations and social positions based on gender and secondly, not conforming to a socially accepted gender role (McCarthy, 2018; Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2004).

Gender-Based Violence

The gender-based aspect of the concept highlights that violence against women is an expression of power inequalities between women and men (Kim & Motsei, 2002). Gender-based violence perpetuates the subordination and devaluation of the female as opposed to the male (Hayes, 2014). This does not mean that all acts against a woman are gender-based violence, or that all victims of gender-based violence are women. However, most violence that occurs is overwhelmingly against women (Omar, 2011). For the purpose of this research, the study will focus on women who experience abuse.

Gender-based violence can take many forms and, depending on the type of relationship that exists and the type of power being exerted, this violence which is a human rights issue, may fall into any of the following categories: rape, sexual harassment, sexual violence and abuse of women, trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and domestic violence (Hayes, 2014). However, only a small proportion of the acts of violence and abuse against women are reported (Mesatywa, 2014).

Domestic violence, which can also be termed as domestic abuse, battering or family violence, is a pattern of behaviour which involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation (Furusa & Limberg, 2015). The domestic violence Act, on the other hand, provides regulations for the maximum protection of victims of domestic violence (Vetten, 2010). Intimate partner violence refers to the violence enacted by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship (Omar, 2011). Gender-based violence can take place in heterosexual and same-sex family relationships and can also involve violence against children. Violence against women (VAW) is only one component of gender-based violence. Violence against women are violent acts carried out by individuals, communities or even the state. Men are the main perpetrators in violence and abuse of women which is committed primarily or exclusively against women or girls specifically

because they are associated with the feminine. Such violence is often seen as a means for the subjugation of women, whether in society or in an interpersonal relationship (Mudau & Obadire, 2017). This form of violence may arise from a sense of entitlement, superiority or similar attitudes of the perpetrator, or it could also be because of his violent nature against women (McCarthy, 2018). This study defines gender-based violence to include any act or threat by men that inflict physical, sexual, or psychological harm on a woman or girl because of their gender.

Abuse

Gender-based violence, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence all involve abuse. Abuse is most commonly understood as a pattern of behaviour intended to harm and establish control over individuals or groups (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). There are different forms of abuse. Physical abuse occurs when someone uses physical force by using a part of their body or an object to control another person's actions which results in pain, discomfort or injury. Physical violence may be conjugal violence, rape, or genital mutilation (Coker et al., 2009). Emotional abuse occurs when one wants to control a partner psychologically through eroding the person's self-esteem, sense of personal security, relationships with others, and/or their perception of reality. This often results in the victim feeling confused and results in her feeling somehow responsible for the abuse. She feels worthless because of corroded self-esteem constructed by the manipulative behaviours of the abuser (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Sexual abuse constitutes any behaviour that impacts a person's ability to have control over their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). This abuse includes rape and sexual exploitation by family members or strangers; forced pregnancy; sexual slavery and forced prostitution. Sex trafficking of women and girls for prostitution, forced marriage, sexual harassment at work are additional examples of sexual abuse (Hayes, 2014). According to Ellsberg et al. (2015), physical violence in intimate

relationships is almost always combined with psychological abuse and, in one-third to over 50% of cases, by sexual abuse.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be defined in simple terms as the oppression and objectification of women by men. The domination and control of women is always combined with violence, which can be physical or psychological. Jewkes et al. (2015) argued that there is a relationship between the inequity of relationship power and gender-based violence which lies in the patriarchal nature of society. The ideals of masculinity that are based on control of women, encourages male strength and toughness. Similarly, Heise and García-Moreno (2002) postulated that patriarchy is culturally formed and prevalent in societies with rigid gender roles in which male dominance is ingrained in masculine identity. Jewkes et al. (2015) further highlighted that patriarchal culture continues to be legitimised within and woven throughout our societal fibres.

The system of patriarchy ultimately works through a process to create a system that defines what it means to be men and women in society. Veneklasen and Miller (2002) referred to this as an invisible power. There are three dimensions of power, and it shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo, including their own feelings of insecurity or superiority. These elements created by the three processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, true and acceptable in society. While culture in its essence is meant to be an uplifting positive force in society, the reality is that culture and tradition can be responsible for the control and oppression of different people at different stages of their lives. Culturally, the status quo of the patriarchal ideology remains relatively unchanged and requires women to confront and challenge the oppressive patriarchal structures that serve to dominate and restrict them (Cornwall & Jolly, 2006).

Men's access to and control over resources and rewards within the private and public arenas is derived and made legitimate through the patriarchal ideology of male dominance (Mudau & Obadire, 2017). These processes help to make injustices like oppression, poverty and sexism invisible within society and target those that are vulnerable to systematic discrimination. This is evident in how the patriarchal structuring of the family unit, the institution of marriage and normativity of heterosexuality serve as effective obstacles or barriers for women, especially as the concepts are introduced at an early age to ensure unconditional acceptance by both men and women. As noted by Tamale (2008), the main reason why patriarchy attempts to regulate and control the sexuality and reproductive ability of women is to keep women's bodies in the domestic arena, where social norms necessitate decent wives and good mothers to remain dependent on the head of the household or the patriarchal breadwinner.

Overview of the Chapters

This dissertation is organised into six chapters.

Chapter one: Introduction is the first chapter of this dissertation. It briefly provides the introduction, background of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives of this study. The aim of the chapter is to highlight the research topic and the significance of the study.

Chapter two: Literature Review explores current and previous research conducted on gender-based violence. A descriptive outline is given on the experiences, views and attitudes concerning gender-based violence. The laws and policies addressing gender-based violence, both internationally and locally in South Africa, are reviewed. The factors influencing gender-based violence with silence and patriarchy as major contributors towards the cycle of violence, the role played by various support services as well as the barriers to leaving and the impact of gender-based violence are explored and discussed.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework offers an understanding of the theoretical

orientation that guides the current study, which is the interpretive phenomenological paradigm and multicultural feminism. In this chapter, the works of the theorists Judith Butler and Sandra Bem will be concentrated on. The discussion concentrates on the understanding of the theoretical framework which is to introduce, describe and offer an explanation that links the theory to the research phenomenon of gender-based violence and the overall findings of the research study.

Chapter four: Methodology will outline the research design as well as the population, purposive sampling, collection of data and data analysis. A detailed account is given on the qualitative phenomenological methodology. This methodology best described what the participants in this study experienced. The guiding ethical principles and measures of trustworthiness that were implemented in the study are also highlighted. This chapter thus highlights and provides a detailed description on the measures that were applied in the study.

Chapter five: Findings and discussion provide an exploration of the themes that were identified in the data analysis process. The descriptions of the participants and a summary of their interviews are provided. There were systematic ordering and rearranging of data.

Chapter six: Contributions, limitations and recommendations to the study are presented. Recommendations are provided for future progressive action and further research on gender-based violence. The overall strengths and conclusion complete the study.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research area and outlined the background and rationale for the present study. The aim and research questions of the study were presented. The conceptual definitions which are significant in this study have also been provided. A chapter by chapter overview of the dissertation is briefly outlined. Chapter two on the current and previous literature on gender-based violence follows.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Gender-based violence is violence that occurs as a result of the expected roles associated with each gender, as well as the imbalance of power between the male and female genders (McCarthy, 2018). The increased awareness of gender-based violence has resulted in the understanding that this violence exists in countries throughout the world, but the awareness and response to the problem vary widely (Asay, DeFrain, Metzger & Moyer, 2015). Women in South Africa are exposed to high levels of gender violence (Abrahams et al., 2013; Muluneh et al., 2020; Nduna & Nene, 2014). Furthermore, the abuse of women does not mainly occur amongst low-income families but has been revealed to be an issue that crosses socioeconomic status, ethnic backgrounds, race and age (Mookodi, 2004).

In South Africa, the violence and abuse of women by their partners tend to receive low conviction rates and is often unrecorded in comparison to other forms of violence (Mesatywa, 2014). This underreporting results from social and cultural norms that encourage and endorses the dominance and practice of gender-based violence. Culturally women are seen to be followers who are inferior and are largely dependent on their partners (Idang, 2015; Mesatywa, 2014). Men's attitudes towards women as being inferior; restrictive gender roles; and dominant patriarchal values may all perpetuate the occurrence of violence (WHO, 2010). The controlling male partner is positioned as being naturally superior to the other partner. Abusers often use control tactics to confine and control their partners, such as psychological abuse and explicit threats (Antai, 2011). Personal biases based on cultural norms around the inferior status of women also interfere negatively with justice (Bloom, 2008). Socialised values, beliefs, and roles enable the victimisation of women and diminish their ability for resistance. As a result, women who are largely dependent on their partners, due to lack of finances, no or limited access to resources or even a place to go to, remain the captives of violence that are sanctioned by gender norms and power inequality (Jewkes et

al.,2015; Saunders, 2018). Due to these factors, women may be fearful of reporting the violence for fear of retaliation from their abusive partners or due to the social stigma attached to gender-based violence (McCarthy, 2018; Mookodi, 2004). According to WHO (2013), abuse against women is identified as an established concern that has reached alarming proportions, particularly in South Africa.

The literature review will initially discuss the laws and policies addressing gender-based violence; the factors affecting gender-based violence; the cycle of violence that occurs within the relationship; coping mechanisms; support services and resources and finally, the consequences of gender-based violence will be outlined.

Laws and Policies Addressing Gender-Based Violence

International human rights laws and the South African human rights laws and policies that focus on addressing gender-based violence will be discussed in this subsection. Highlighting international human rights laws is important because the South African Constitution provides that when interpreting the Bill of Rights, a court must consider international law and foreign law. Furthermore, the courts, when interpreting any legislation, must prefer the interpretation that is consistent with international law. The Constitutional Court declares that the state is obliged by the constitution and international law to prohibit and to unequivocally condemn gender-based violence (Meyersfeld, 2010). Additionally, the various challenges of the South African Domestic Violent Act of 1998 will be highlighted.

International Human Rights Laws

A number of international human rights laws such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) have been put in place

as a means to respond to the abuse of women and children. The United Nation Commission on the Status of Women was also established by the General Assembly and simultaneously with the United Nation Human Rights Commission in 1946. The vital function of this law was to monitor and encourage the application of international law on women's rights as necessary human rights. Specifically, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was signed by the South African government in January 1993. CEDAW is inclusive of issues that affect women such as traditional attitudes, equality in employment and equal and necessary access to health services. This has assisted women in South Africa to be more informed and empowered about discriminatory and abusive practices that promote the pervasiveness of gender-based violence (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) [CSVR] (2016). The Beijing Declaration was launched at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China (The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995). The Declaration focussed on the prevalence of gender-based violence and called upon governments to accept and support the goals as expressed in CEDAW (Johnson, 2006).

South African Human Rights Laws and Policies

The response of the state is assessed in the laws, policies, programmes and services that government organisations provide and the manner in which they are implemented and prioritised. It has been recognised that the absence of laws and policies, delays and or neglect to enforce and implement the laws and policies, an insufficient supply of programmes and services by the state have a detrimental effect on victims of gender-based violence especially in obtaining justice (Johnson, 2006). Even though South Africa has some of the most progressive laws and policies in the world, the problem lies in the implementation of these laws and policies, to protect women and provide comprehensive services to victims (Krolikowski & Koyfman, 2012). The South African government undertook to adopt all parts

of the Beijing Platform of Action, ensuring that all future policies and actions are in accordance with the declaration. This was undertaken at the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. A Special Rapporteur on gender-based violence was appointed, whose mandate included investigating crimes associated with gender-based violence and also to urge the various South African provinces not to use traditions or customs as an excuse in their duties in the prevention of violence and abuse of women (Vetten et al., 2010). In March 2010, a report was produced, which was the 15+ Year Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [BPfA] (1995). The purpose of the report was to highlight the current reality of gender-based violence in South Africa and to demand greater accountability of the state in fulfilling its international human rights, constitutional commitments and obligations. The incidence of gender-based violence in South Africa continues to escalate to alarming proportions. Protection against such abuse is limited while perpetrators enjoy widespread impunity and freedom to act as they please (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). Researchers highlight the constant failure of state agents to condemn violence against women through legislation and policies. In some situations, they have solicited African custom and tradition to justify and encourage the discrimination of women and the violation of their rights (Idang, 2015; Kaur & Garg, 2008; McCarthy, 2018).

Chapter two of the Constitution of South Africa contains the Bill of Rights, which forms the basis of democracy and encapsulates the rights of all citizens. The equality clause guarantees the right to equality and equal protection of the law to every individual, especially to those groups that are vulnerable, such as women. Equality encompasses full and equal access to all rights and freedoms to all individuals (Bill of Rights, 1996. No. 108 of 1996).

Women abuse has received growing attention which is addressed by legislation and international human rights instruments. The Domestic Violence Act, however, is not equally

felt throughout South Africa, especially amongst women in remote rural areas (Kaur & Garg, 2008; Vetten, 2017).

Implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (1998)

The major transformation of the Domestic Violence Act (1998) is its broad definition of domestic violence which includes a range of behaviours within its scope. Domestic violence includes various forms of abuse that may occur separately or even at the same time. Physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuses are just some of the forms of abuse that can occur. In addition intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to property or any other abusive behaviour is known to occur with the intention to inflict harm or imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of the complainant or victim (Krolikowski & Koyfman, 2012).

However, one of the major challenges hindering the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act is that when it was developed, it was not budgeted (Krolikowski & Koyfman, 2012). There are either complainants that do not have access to or the financial means to appear in court. Women had to either go to High Court at a high monetary cost or the nearest Magistrate's Court to apply for a protection order. The Department of Justice had not considered how broadening the definition of relationships would increase the number of people applying for protection orders. Court personnel said they lacked training; they lacked the necessary skills to effectively assist victims of abuse, the necessary tools, vehicles and facilities (Govender, 2003; Vetten, 2017).

Another shortcoming is that the Act does not make it imperative that the Department of Social Development and the Department of Health (DOH) or National Prosecution Authority (NPA) be responsible for the additional care and support services. The DOH policies should provide for holistic healthcare which should include screening for domestic

violence and provision of appropriate services such as the provision of psychological and Mental Health Care Services where domestic violence is detected (Conference Report, 2008).

The NPA introduced the training of prosecutors by the Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (SOCA) Unit. Their role is to ensure the timeous prosecution of cases. By far, the most significant contribution of the NPA to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is the establishment of the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs). However, this poses a possible problem in that this diverts their attention and resources away from the NPA's primary role which is to implement successful convictions (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

Implementation of the Act is often poor due to the under-resourcing and inefficiency of the police and the justice system (Govender, 2003; Vetten, 2017). A Tshwaranang Study conducted in 2012 found that a substantial percentage of police officers had limited knowledge of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act more specifically relating to their responsibilities (Vetten et al., 2010). Most officers did not view domestic violence as a crime but more of a private family matter. Domestic violence matters are classified as social crimes in the SAPS and the lack of clarity on what social crimes are, added to the problem of not viewing social crimes as a serious matter (Vetten, 2017). Govender (2003) highlighted the fact that civil society organisations have called for standardisation and consistency for bail and sentencing in violent gender-based cases for many years. Survivors of gender-based violence struggle for justice as they face intimidation and interminable delays (Govender, 2003; Vetten, 2017).

Concerns have also been raised about whether this policy has made any difference for rural women and girls (Parenzee, Artz & Moult, 2001; Vetten, 2017). This relates to the usefulness of legislation in protecting rural women and women who live under the customary law from domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act can only be enforced in

Magistrate's Courts or Family Courts. There is no provision for traditional courts to issue protection orders. Yet there are currently approximately 1 500 customary courts operating in South Africa but with no authority to issue protection orders (Parenzee et al., 2001).

Rural areas continue to lack empowerment services such as domestic violence awareness campaigns, family courts, counselling services and shelters. The problem of domestic violence cannot be solved if women do not have information regarding the nature and purpose of the Domestic Violence Act (Parenzee et al., 2001; Vetten, 2017). The widespread gender violence facing young women in rural areas of South Africa calls for drastic policy intervention (Abrahams et al., 2013; Jewkes et al., 2002). The study explored the women's awareness regarding their rights which are in line with the Domestic Violence Act.

Factors Influencing Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence has, therefore, become a widespread phenomenon in South Africa despite the international conventions and local legislation enacted to prevent it.

Patterns of abuse by perpetrators are never constant. It may occur once or repeated several times at an increasing rate over a period of months or even years. Abusers are known to be charming during the courting stage in order to disarm their victims. Abusive and controlling partners will slowly start to choose unhealthy and abusive behaviours (Hayes & Jeffries, 2013; Rakovec-Felser, 2014). It is the combination of tactics of threats, intimidation, manipulation, and violence by abusers that serves to instil fear in and dominance over their partners. This establishes a pattern of desired subservience from their victims (Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Grose et al., 2020). In most cases, the consequences of the abuse tend to continue even after the relationship has ended (Antai, 2011).

Heise and García-Moreno (2002) observe that gender-based violence is a result of an interplay of individual, community, economic, cultural and religious factors interacting at

different levels of society that increase the risk of women experiencing violence. Gender organises women's roles at home and works in ways that place extraordinary burdens on women while at the same time limiting their access to resources (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Wood & Ridgeway, 2010). The factors that are highlighted in the current study are individual factors, cultural, religious and traditional factors, economic factors, the crisis of male identity, and alcohol abuse.

Individual Factors and Gender-based Violence

Bloom (2008), explains that individual factors can be biological, environmental, as well as personal history factors that can increase the risk of violence. For the purpose of this study, the biological aspect is not considered because, according to Bloom (2008), DNA does not define violent behaviour. People have the power and choice on their behaviour, whether to override violent behaviour or not. Behaviour takes place in an environment that has the ability to influence or change the behaviour in question. All humans have the biological potential to be violent unless the environment becomes gender-neutral and supportive, establishing the fact that environmental factors can be manipulated to appropriate behaviours (Bandura, 1999). Furthermore, the biological factors have allowed feminists to criticise how perceptions of biological difference between the sexes have only served to encourage and endorse male-dominant supremacy and female subservience (Bandura, 1999).

A low level of education or early marriage at a young age has been associated with risk factors for experiencing violence (Bloom, 2008). It also has been shown that there is a strong correlation between the harmful use of alcohol and the perpetration of gender-based violence (Fals-Stewart, 2003). The effect of alcohol on hypothetical willingness to commit gender-based violence is supported by the role of an individual’s attitudes and personality (Peralta, Tuttle & Steele, 2010). Alcohol-related violence can be the result of complex interactions between individual and environmental factors that either promote or inhibit

violence (Graham & West, 2001). In this study, personal history covered the environmental context that shapes individual behaviour and characteristics.

Violence is also a learned behaviour for both men and women (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003; Krug et al., 2002). Heise et al. (2009) argued that there are some factors which influence gender-based violence at an individual level. This includes growing up in a home characterised by violence. The above studies maintained that children who grow up in homes in which violence is the norm are more likely to normalise violence in their adult relationships. However, it is not always the case that children who observe their parents fighting will themselves inevitably become violent. Some children, once they are adults, are positively influenced never to repeat the violence to which they were exposed (Kitzmann et al., 2003). Sometimes there are mediating protective factors in the community, such as the positive influence of a school teacher or a pastor that results in these children not becoming violent or staying in violent relationships (Holmes, Yoon, Voith, Kobulsky & Steigerwald, 2015). Hence, a person's attitude plays an important role in his or her choice of behaviour; there is a strong correlation between women and men perceiving violence as acceptable behaviour. Due to this, their exposure to intimate partner and sexual violence has a negative influence on their own behaviours and attitudes (WHO, 2013).

Every woman's situation is unique, and a woman may be unable to leave a situation for a complex combination of different reasons. The study explored how the personal history of the participants placed them at risk for abuse and explored the individual challenges that served as deterrents to them leaving abusive relationships.

The Influences of Culture, Tradition and Religion on Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence can often be regarded as cultural or traditional, in the sense that it is grounded in and maintained by long-standing social and cultural norms and traditions (Flood & Pease, 2009). Culturally, men are often placed in a powerful position in

relation to women due to practices such as lobola, ukuthwala, dowry and Sharia law, where women are viewed as having a subordinate position to men and hence, are regarded as not having the capacity to make their own decisions (Flood & Pease, 2009). Many studies found that unequal power and control between the genders promotes discriminatory patriarchal practices against women and is thought to be the root causes of gender-based violence (Abrahams et al., 2013; Jewkes et al., 2002; Wood, 2019). These patriarchal attitudes often favour men over women. Men are socialised in their thinking and in addition, many are trained religiously from an early age into traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity (Wagner, 2010). Sexual violence is adopted as a strategy by boys and men to rectify girls and women's behaviour when they are no longer submissive towards men or if they become too independent and assertive. This often becomes normalised, with both men and women being socialised into conforming to these cultural and religious practices (Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje & Brobbey, 2017). Unfortunately, some of these practices implicitly or explicitly promote and tolerate gender-based violence (Flood & Pease, 2009).

While gender-based violence is sometimes dismissed as culturally sanctioned behaviour in some cultures, Kalra and Bhugra (2013) emphasised that culture should not be confused with patriarchy when explaining violent behaviour against women. As identified by the authors, there needs to be an examination of how patriarchy operates in different cultures in order to understand what places women at risk (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Religious and Spiritual Practices. There is some evidence that religious, spiritual practices and beliefs can influence individuals' attitudes toward gender-based violence (Flood & Pease, 2009; Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Some studies find no relationship between religion and the endorsement of domestic violence (Kaur & Garg, 2008; Mesatywa, 2014).

In the United States, Catholic priests and Protestant ministers with steadfast adherence to fundamentalist religious beliefs had narrower definitions of wife abuse and were prone to

adopt more victim-blaming responses to battered women (Flood & Pease, 2009). The study by Flood and Pease (2009) revealed that the research participants that were more sexist in their attitudes were more fervent in their religious beliefs. Such participants displayed unfavourable attitudes towards victims of abuse. Although there is little empirical assessment of potential impact, there is evidence of religion being used inappropriately to justify the abuse of women or to promote women's vulnerability to victimisation (Flood & Pease, 2009; WHO, 2013).

An example would be the interpretation of Christian evangelism emphasis on the idea that a woman must obey her husband and hierarchical gender relations which could encourage pastors to counsel women to stay with their abusers (Chisale, 2018). Conservative Christian women are especially vulnerable due to prevalent attitudes within their religious communities that support the submission of the wife to her partner as an ideal relationship. In such a marriage there are roles where the husband is the leader responsible for the spiritual welfare of his family and the wife is expected to be a submissive follower. Such relationships seem natural, morally just and sacred by the advocates of traditional conservative family structures. Power imbalances within such patriarchal family structures where no one can challenge the man as the head of the household, leaves the woman unprotected and vulnerable to abuse (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker & Ghachem, 2003; Flood & Pease, 2009; Hayes & Jeffries, 2013). In some Arab and Islamic countries, selective excerpts from the Koran may be used to prove that men who beat their wives are following God's commandments and are thus asserting their God-given right to beat their wives. Hence, Sharia (Islamic law) may be used to sanction men's authority over women and the legitimate use of physical violence (Douki et al., 2003). The messages women receive is problematic when they seek guidance in situations of domestic violence as they are often blamed for the abuse and are told that if they were good, men would treat them well instead of abusing them.

At the same time, religious and theological emphasis on compassion, justice, equality, and liberation in many other faiths are in opposition to gender-based violence. While culture, tradition and religious practices may contribute to or instigate gender-based violence, they may also be the support service that women depend on for the emotional strength and practical support they need to cope with the abuse or the support needed when they decide to be free from their abusers (Mesatywa, 2014). Spiritual leaders should also be educated on the cruel facts of gender-based violence, the harm it inflicts on victims of abuse, the dynamics of abusive relationships, and the needs of domestic violence survivors (Kaur & Garg, 2008). Flood and Pease (2009) states that religious leaders have the platform to influence social attitudes of people to change their behaviour positively. Religious and cultural influences have the potential to either reinforce or condemn violence (Flood & Pease, 2009). This study highlighted the influence of religion and culture on gender-based violence and whether it served as a barrier or comfort to women in violent relationships.

Practices such as lobola, ukuthwala and dowry are discussed as examples of cultural traditions that could influence gender-based violence. These practices are also sustained by patriarchal constructions of masculinity and unequal gender relations (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

The Practice of Lobola. Many cultures still expect or demand a lobola as a condition to accept a marriage proposal, mostly in areas in Africa (Northern and Southern). Lobola was initially practised as a symbol that a wife is guaranteed in good faith on the part of both the husband's and the wife's family. Additionally, it was viewed as a token of appreciation and served to unite, bind and cement the relationship between two families (Ansell, 2001).

According to (Chabata, 2010), lobola was also meant to cement ties between the children and their maternal ancestors. In essence, the process was meant to extend the family unit and give status to the bridal couple. Lobola was meant to celebrate the change from one

phase of life to another. It not only meant the discourse of community but also relied on beliefs pertaining to religion and spirituality (Chabata, 2010). Lobola is an ancient African custom and the thought of abandoning this custom could lead to the loss of everything African (Parker, 2015). Over time, the concept of lobola now has different meanings attached to it, one of them being used to purchase their wives resulting in women being seen as mere objects or property (Ansell, 2001). The practice of lobola has become commercialised in society, and the bride's family negotiate very high prices that result in lobola being a source of oppression for women as it perpetuates gender inequality (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Fathers of the brides are using lobola as an escape from poverty (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). The initial practice of giving cattle has been replaced by money as families living in cities often do not have the capacity to receive cattle. This change to money exchange for a bride has led to the perception that paying for the bride now makes her the property of the groom, which may make her vulnerable to abuse by both her husband and in-laws (Parker, 2015). Hence, the distortion of the practice of lobola has the implications for gender-based violence because women are positioned as being controlled and bought by their spouses.

The Practice of Ukuthwala. Ukuthwala is an old practice that is viewed as a cultural or traditional act of abducting young women in order to force them into marriage. It is still found in remote rural areas of South Africa. This cultural and traditional practice discriminates against women and girls by forcing them into marriage. Ukuthwala supports other offences like bride kidnapping, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Initially, ukuthwala was a strategy used by couples to secure marriage negotiations with the consent of the girl, parents or guardians (Maluleke, 2012). But over the years the practice has changed. It is now often used to sexually exploit girls and young women, particularly in the lower income or rural parts of the country. The practice of ukuthwala contributes to the practice of young girls being forced to marry older men (van der Watt & Ovens, 2012).

Ukuthwala violates the human rights of girls and young women and contributes to the prevalent problem of gender-based violence in South Africa. It deprives them of their right to human dignity, their right to live free of violence, a right to education and freedom. Thus, girls and young women are at risk for sexually transmitted infections or diseases (Monyane, 2013). Although forced marriages through ukuthwala have been criminalised and are included in the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, there are still contradictions in the law. Ukuthwala is illegal because it is statutory rape if the child is under the age of 16. However, there is also legislation stating that a minor can get married if their parents' consent. This means that parents can, for example, consent to their young children's marriage as a means to escape poverty (van der Watt & Ovens, 2012). Hence, Ukuthwala contributes to gender inequality and is another form of forced marriage.

The Practice of Dowry. Parents of the bride provide gifts such as jewellery and everyday household items to the bride. This practice has evolved over time to provide a sum of money to the groom's family (Mathur, Greene, & Malhotra, 2003, Chowdhury, 2014). According to Mathur et al. (2003), the parental giving of a dowry in exchange for their daughter's hand in marriage is an ancient custom that has been practised all over the world and still continues in some parts of the world. According to Sharma (2015), the dowry system can be viewed as leverage when arranging marriages. The more educated a groom is, the more money his family can demand as a dowry. This exploitive system of dowry is a symbol of daughters being given away by the bride's family to the groom, which creates ownership and an authoritative effect of the groom over the bride (Chowdhury, 2014).

However, Kishwar (2005) claims that the dowry, property, money and household items that a bride brings at the time of marriage, helps the newly married couple to establish their new home and helps the bride to feel confident when entering her in-law's house. In modern times this custom has taken magnified proportions and has emerged to devalue and

deconsecrate the union of two people to a common business transaction as a mere exchange of commodities. It has degraded the sacred institution of marriage (Sharma, 2015). Dowry has become a tremendous economic burden on middle and lower-class families. Women are ill-treated, disrespected, abused, tortured and subject to all sorts of cruelties in the name of dowry (Sharma, 2015). Hence, the interrelatedness of the practice of dowry, ukuthwala, lobola and gender-based violence places women in a submissive role toward their partners but by no means implies that women are weak but that they are rendered weak through these traditional practices.

According to Murray and Graves (2013), there are religious teachings and practices that promote men's power and women's submission and are often taken out of context as a means of justifying abuse against women. Murray and Graves (2013) further established that religious teachings about forgiveness also encourage abuse if women interpret them as a need to forgive the abuser and return to him.

Similarly, McCue (2008) states that some cultural practices and traditions, for example, the practices of dowry, ukuthwala and lobola, have the potential to increase the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and the responses to it as well. Most women remain silent with regards to their experiences of abuse out of fear of retaliation or revenge from their abusers. Women may also keep their abusive relationships secret due to the stigma of gender-based violence within communities. Certain communities endorse women abuse and violence and firmly discourage women from being vocal or to even make a reference to the abuse they endure. Consequently, cultural norms and traditions, as well as little support from the community, serve as an additional deterrent to leaving abusive relationships (Murray and Graves, 2013). In this study, the researcher explored what cultural norms and traditions the participants followed and whether their practices served as a deterrent or benefit to leaving their abusive relationships.

Socio-Cultural Norms and Practices. In many cases of gender-based violence, communities may justify and defend male abusers and oppressive, harmful traditional practices that reinforce men's authority and dominance over women and expectations of women's subservience (Kalra and Bhugra, 2013).

Researchers argue that some cultures that are patriarchal hold the beliefs that a woman should be subservient to her man, must be punished by him, men have ownership of women, are entitled to sex, and they interpret violence as a rightful act of the husband (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003; Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Women's acceptance of such acts of violence is a result of the deeply rooted socio-cultural norms and practice within society. According to Pingley (2017), these beliefs are socialised in children from a young age. The view is that boys are unable to control their sexual urges and that responsibility of control of sexual urges lies with girls. Sexual violence may, therefore, sometimes be justified as a strategy by men to control women when they display independence and assertiveness (Grose et al., 2020). Patriarchy can, therefore, be viewed as an overarching social construct which engenders abuse and is part of a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance in the home and in society. Men's dominance and control that expect women's subservience can, therefore, be seen as one of the reasons why women maintain silence when it relates to their abuse. Patriarchy and the resultant male dominance over women result in many women remaining in abusive relationships over many years. Gender-based violence is an event that repeats, endures over time and renders its victims dependant and bound to the abuser (Pingley, 2017).

Patriarchy perpetuates exclusion and inequality and may create an environment where violence is considered acceptable. These processes also help to make injustices like gender-based violence invisible to the society at large and make those who are discriminated against,

the object at fault. Clearly, the challenge of finding a balance between respect for cultural systems and the protection of women's rights remain elusive (Veneklasen & Miller, 2002).

As noted by Tamale (2008), the main reasons why patriarchal societies need to control women are to keep them domesticated and to be decent wives and good mothers' so that they remain dependent and subservient to their husbands as the head of the household. The ideal role of men, including their honour in patriarchal societies, is problematic. Patriarchal masculinities are, therefore, socially unacceptable traits of men that serve to foster domination and dehumanisation of women. According to Graaff and Heinecken (2017), masculinity is a social construct based on the contexts one is placed within. To elaborate, masculinity can be explained as a gendered identity that changes over time. This could be in response to social interactions or possible changes in the economy, cultural or social beliefs which contribute to being gendered. This contributes to the recognition of different masculinities (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). The ideology of hegemonic masculinity can be understood as patterns of practices that legitimise the subordination of women and allows for men's dominance over women. Hence, the struggle to perform and perpetuate characteristics of the ideal hegemonic masculinity identity shapes ideas about manhood and gender normativity (Jewkes, et al., 2015).

Patriarchy thus contributes to gender-based violence. This study explores how patriarchy normalises and contributes to the imbalance in power relations between men and women in society thus reinforcing the domination or subjugation of women.

Economic Factors Affecting Gender-Based Violence

The lack of economic independence among many women has been found to be a prominent factor in empowering gender-based violence (Antai, 2011; Jewkes et al., 2002). Hence, women who are economically dependent on men find difficulty in leaving an abusive relationship. An increase in the economic status of women may help to reduce gender-based

violence, but in some instances may increase it. Economically dependent women are at risk of facing more severe violence from their partners because the abusers are aware that the women have no alternative place to escape to (Antai, 2011). Women are often violently assaulted when there is an inadequate income to manage the household resulting in the abuser transferring his frustration onto his victim (Kaur & Garg, 2008).

Studies have identified that women with little or no education and who are economically dependent on their abusers are at a serious disadvantage because they are at an increased risk for violence and abuse by their partners (Kaur & Garg, 2008). A study conducted in South Africa found a combined economic and education intervention reduced gender-based violence prevalence rates by 55% over a period of two years (Muluneh et al., 2020). Therefore, the exposure of women to violence and abuse requires close monitoring from service providers. Women leaving their abusive partners require essential assistance from service providers (van Niekerk & Bonzaier, 2016).

Studies by Abramsky et al. (2019) and Sibanda-Moyo et al. (2017) have found that educated, economically independent women are less likely to be abused. This is because their confidence levels are high, and they have high self-esteem. This serves to promote leaving behaviours and reporting of the abuse to relevant authorities in law enforcement (Adams, Tolman, Bybee, Sullivan and Kennedy, 2013; Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Petersson, Strand and Selenius, 2016). This is supported by the study carried out by Petersson (2016), which identified that there was a substantially greater tendency for educated and financially independent women to leave abusive marriages. Previous studies inform that abusers tend to withhold basic needs and resources as a means to prevent women from being economically independent (García-Moreno et al., 2006; Jewkes et al., 2002). Access to finances, transportation, food, clothing and medical care are examples of the basic needs and resources for women to achieve economic empowerment (Adams et al., 2013; Kaur & Garg, 2008).

When a woman chooses to leaves her abuser, there are increased chances of her living standards dropping below the poverty line (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Due to the woman's previous economic dependency on her partner, the woman is at an extreme disadvantage after leaving her abuser. In instances where the partner had total control of finances, the woman is ill-equipped to manage life outside of the abusive relationship (Adams et al., 2013; Kaur & Garg, 2008).

When a woman perceives herself to be strongly dependent on the marital relationship, there is a strong likelihood that it reinforces women's tolerance to physical abuse from their husbands as they have no other choice available to them (Kaur & Garg, 2008). Similarly, Jewkes et al. (2002), states that marital dependence may involve the abuser preventing his victim from acquiring or limiting her access to any resources. The abuser is also known to exploit any finances that may be available to the victim. According to Antai (2011), abusers have reasons for isolating their partners and preventing them from becoming financially independent. These attempts to limit the potential of women to be self-sufficient force them to be emotionally and financially dependent on their abusers. In this way, the perpetrator socially isolates his partner and prevents the victim from obtaining an education, meeting with friends or family, any possible access to resources, seeking employment or career advancement. Johnson (2006) also suggests that the abuser may also limit the victim's access to finances by closely monitoring her expenditure. Alternatively, the abuser is capable of spending the victim's money without her knowledge or consent, creating debts on behalf of the victim, or to completely spend the funds available to the victim in order to limit her access to any resources that could decrease her dependence on him.

Education and Employment

Since 1994, many South African women have become educated and have entered the labour market. For many men, this means a loss of power and authority. The current South

African social and economic conditions, including the impact of the financial crisis in our country, makes it difficult for many men to adhere to the prescribed notion of masculinity, such as securing jobs, marrying, fathering children or establishing and ruling over their own households (Showalter, 2016). Some men feel that women have usurped the roles that were previously allocated to men, resulting in uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety (Rakovec-Felser, 2014).

Comparative studies by Adams et al. (2013) and Showalter (2016) found that women in violent relationships who do work may have trouble concentrating or are harassed at work by an abusive partner. The abuse can affect work performance to the point where they may lose their jobs, thereby contributing to their economic dependency on their partners. It has also been suggested that women who are financially independent are known to be emotionally stronger and have more agency or power to negotiate their exit from an abusive relationship (Showalter, 2016).

Male Identity Crisis

In the crisis of male identity, violence is sometimes used as a tool to try to maintain patriarchal power. Some men become frustrated and angry when they can no longer live up to the required masculine prescribed behaviour, such as providing materially and financially, which often leads to them violently attacking their economically independent female partners (Connell, 2000). According to Barker and Ricardo (2005), sexual control and violence are seen as a way of resolving this crisis of male identity. It has been reported that victims who attempt resistance or escape from the situation are more likely to be brutalised by the offender, thereby giving an inflated sense of power and much-desired control to the abuser (Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

Jewkes et al. (2015) observed that the abuse of women is grounded in the social norms of dominance and superiority allocated to men, the supported desire of men to

compete and control, uncontrolled aggression and sexual urges of men. Another factor is the perception of femininity being passive, dependent, vulnerable and modest (Jewkes et al., 2015; Showalter, 2016). In this context, violence and abuse of women can be viewed as a mechanism to reinforce male power and authority.

Alcohol Abuse and Gender-Based Violence

Alcohol and substance abuse are often identified by many women as a serious precipitating, aggravating factor in the abuse of women (Fals-Stewart, 2003). Substance abuse, such as drugs, alcohol, prescription medication and tobacco, has been positively linked to gender-based violence in many studies (Gilchrist & Hegarty, 2017; Jewkes, 2002; Peralta et al. 2010). Graham and West (2001) found that 67% of men who consumed alcohol abused their partners. According to Peralta et al. (2010), society's strict gender norms encourage men to equate the use of violence with manhood and to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as drug abuse and heavy alcohol consumption. Alcohol use appeared to be used to demonstrate masculinity. The use of alcohol before and during abusive and violent behaviour symbolised dominance and control. This, in turn, results in men behaving violently towards their partners. It has been found by Harsey et al. (2017), that men would blame their abusive behaviour on alcohol, or women would attribute their partners' violence to alcohol abuse. Abusers are thus not being held accountable for their abusive behaviour, and this diminishes the man's responsibility for the violence. As a result, the cycle of violence continues.

Fals-Stewart (2003), argued that women who live with men who drink heavily are five times more likely to be assaulted by their partners than those who live with partners who do not drink. Alcohol abuse affects the user's ability to perceive and reason, and it can be argued that when intoxicated, an abusive partner is less likely to interpret the other's words or actions correctly. In relationships like these, men are more likely to accuse their partner of instigating the violence (García-Moreno et al., 2006). According to Graham and West (2001),

alcohol can also make the user feel a personal power over others which increases the need for control and can make a domestic abuser lash out. Conflict over alcohol use itself can make the abuser agitated, and the socioeconomic impact of alcohol abuse can create domestic unrest. Consequently, the constant need to purchase, obtain, and consume alcohol can lead to dispute and violence (Fals-Stewart, 2003). This strongly suggests that alcohol abuse is a risk factor for gender-based violence.

The Silence of Gender-Based Violence

Romito (2008), claims that silence has always been a contributing factor toward gender-based violence. Consequently, the cycle of violence continues unabated as women suffer the scars, shock, and shame of the repeated violence. Silencing the women's experiences of violence strengthens patriarchal structures and ensures their continuance.

A study by Coetzee (2001), found that silence is commonly attributed to fear of the perpetrator or unawareness of their human rights, legal avenues or social services available to them. Gender-based violence creates long-lasting fear and trauma, which reinforces the abuser's control over the abused person. The frequency and prolonged nature of the abuse, the psychological aspects of this control and the setting in which abuse and violence take place all help to explain the high levels of fear and trauma (Kaur & Garg, 2008). Many women are still unaware of their rights when reporting abuse and even informed women, severely traumatised by abuse and further traumatised by the legal processes, are unlikely to be assertive but more accepting of the abuse.

Domestic abuse often occurs continuously with force. Even though acts of abuse is more than just sexual threats and rape and are inclusive of physical, emotional and economic abuse, many women will only report incidents of sexual threats and rape to the police as they are of the opinion that only these forms of abuse are considered viable to be reported (Jewkes, 2002; Vetten, 2017). Additionally, Anderson and Saunders (2003), suggested that a

dominant barrier for women in getting help and leaving an abusive relationship is that women often do not recognise that they are being abused due to the frequency of abuse and because the abuser's actions are considered as normal behaviour to them.

A qualitative study by Cronin (2013) revealed that families and communities often condone gender-based violence by remaining silent in order to protect and maintain their image or status in society. Furthermore, the family is considered a sacred space, having the right to family privacy that must be protected at all costs.

The decision to leave an abusive relationship is incredibly complex. Of significance is the enormous attention to detail that planning requires, and for many of these women, such plans are put together in secrecy and under conditions of extreme fear and danger (Mesatywa, 2014). The window of opportunity for a victim to escape can end quickly and suddenly. There are many factors to consider, from timing to planning an escape, to locating a place to stay, finding a job or financial support, finding a crèche or a new school for the children may all seem daunting and impossible to achieve on her own (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Saunders, 2018). Thus, planning to leave can be emotionally and psychologically overwhelming and traumatising. This trauma contributes to the culture of silence surrounding gender-based violence as women are often paralysed by the terror of the violence they experience (Sabri & Granger, 2018). Women, therefore, internalise their experiences of abuse and remain silent, as they feel that their voices will not be heard (Lather, 2009).

Violence in the home is often literally and figuratively hidden from the community (Romito, 2008). Similarly, Barnett (2001), emphasises that the violence is seldom acknowledged by the community even when the women's lives are at risk as they are unwilling to report for fear of invading the family's privacy, of not wanting to get involved, and fear of retaliation from the abuser. There is a possible gap in the aspect of the silence on gender-based studies in South Africa. Most studies in South Africa are quantitative in nature

(Jewkes et al., 2002; Muluneh et al., 2020; Rashidah et al., 2013; Sikweyiya et al., 2010). Plus, few qualitative studies have been conducted regarding gender-based violence with emphasis on the silence aspect of the abuse. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and vulnerability of women living with abuse, very few qualitative studies have been conducted on the abuse and violence of women (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR], April 2016).

Socialised Gender Roles

A majority of women often claim that they deserve the abuse when they fail to meet the demands of their abusers (Kaur & Garg, 2008). This is corroborated by a research study by Rashidah et al. (2013) on 3 215 women in Malaysia. Fifteen per cent of women from this study claimed that their abusers were justified to beat them when they could not meet their husbands' requirements (Rashidah et al., 2013). These requirements included a failure to carry out household chores which gave their abusers a right to assault them for not complying with their husbands' demands.

Research conducted by Sahara (2006) in two communities in the Western Cape revealed acceptance of traditional gender roles. One community is for those historically defined African, while the other has a mixed population of both coloured and African communities. Women were expected to be submissive to their husbands, and the men were expected to be the decision-makers. The women were socialised into their gender roles and felt that the abusers were exercising a right to punish them with violence (Sahara, 2006).

Jewkes et al. (2001) conducted a study in three of South Africa's nine provinces and discovered that 27 % of women in the Eastern Cape, 28 % of women in Mpumalanga and 19 % of women in the Northern Province had been physically abused in their lifetimes by a current or ex-partner and had never reported the abuse as they considered the violence to be a component of their relationship.

Martin et al. (2000) suggested that women eventually begin to believe that their partners are correct in their criticisms of them, that they are at fault for the abuse, that the abusers were only looking out for their best interests. Abusers are not held accountable for the violence as the women take responsibility for the abuse and remain with their abusers. The women find it impossible to leave and do not want to attempt defeat by acknowledging that their relationships have failed,

To summarise, the studies mentioned above indicate that gender roles have created a dynamic within intimate relationships that maintain women as subservient and men as power holders and decision-makers, which ultimately encourages gender-based violence.

The Cycle of Violence

Abusive relationships tend to follow a cyclical pattern with the changes between the various stages being subtle and varied depending on the relationship and the nature of the abuse (Walker, 1999; Weiss, 2000). Many violent relationships follow a common pattern or cycle. This was identified by psychologist Lenore Walker in 1979. The cycle, however, varies in violent relationships, depending on the conditions and circumstances of abuse. The entire cycle may happen in one day or it may take weeks, months or even years. Gender-based violence may seem unpredictable; however, it does follow a typical pattern no matter when it occurs or who is involved. The pattern, or cycle, repeats and can happen many times during a relationship. Each phase may last a different length of time and over a period of time, the level of violence may increase. Not all violent relationships depict all stages of the cycle. The cycle of abuse in each woman's life is unique. It is important to note that not everyone's experiences are the same with regards to the patterns or cycles of violence in their relationships (Walker, 1999).

Tension Building Phase. Tension and verbal abuse build over common domestic disputes pertaining to money, children, household chores or jobs. In some cases, the abuser needs no reason to become aggressive (Showalter, 2016). The victim tries to deflate and control the situation by pleasing the abuser, giving in to the abuser's demands or avoiding the abuse. In the early stages of the relationship, many women report this stage as their partner's efforts to gain control over them (Weiss, 2000). The abusers are often successful in controlling the movements of their partners by isolating them from their family, friends, and careers. (Walker, 1999).

Acute Battering Episode. When the tension within the relationship is at its highest, the physical violence begins. This can be caused by all manner of incidents, either internal or external and may even be caused by the highly emotional state of the abuser. It is important to note that the victim is not responsible for the onset of physical violence. The violence is unpredictable, and the victim has no control over the violence (Jewkes et al., 2002).

The Honeymoon Phase. The abuser expresses remorse and pleads for forgiveness. He tries to placate the victim and downplay the abuse. Some abusers would even claim that the victim is responsible for the abuse. The victim becomes confused and unsure of herself; she is caught unawares by the abuser's loving behaviour with apologies and promises to change. The victim becomes vulnerable to the abuser's sudden generous and helpful behaviour. He is successful in manipulating the victim into believing that the abuse will never occur again and develops a false sense of security in the victim (Walker, 1979).

The bonding that occurs may explain why women are at risk of staying in these types of relationships. This occurrence is known as traumatic bonding which is a result of sporadic incidents of abuse counteracted by positive, loving behaviours of the abuser. This serves to strengthen the emotional bonds and attachment to abusive partners (Antai, 2011; Jewkes et al., 2002).

The Calm Phase. During this phase which is often considered an element of the honeymoon or reconciliation phase, the relationship is relatively calm and peaceful (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007). During this period, the abuser may agree to seek psychological help such as counselling, pleads for forgiveness, and attempts to create a normal atmosphere at home. In intimate partner relationships, the perpetrator is known to present the victim with unexpected gifts, or may use sex to pacify and placate the victim. Over time, the abuser's pleas for forgiveness and displays of remorse become less sincere. These actions by the abuser is usually expressed to prevent separation or divorce. Often, as time goes on, and the violence continues, the reconciliation and calm or normal stages disappear (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007; Martin et al., 2000).

Understanding the cyclical and behaviour patterns creates an understanding that domestic abuse can happen to anyone. Domestic violence is used for the purpose to gain and maintain total control over the abused. It should be noted that victims do not choose abusers as their partners, but abusive behaviour and violence are a deliberate intention of the abuser (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). To elaborate, the sole motive of abusers is to use violence and dominance as strategies for subjugating women (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Victims of domestic violence get caught up in a process of violence that happens to them over time. Their abuser does not introduce himself to the victim as a threat to their lives. What begins as a perfect relationship that would last forever becomes confusing, terrifying and sometimes fatal. Emotional abuse is used for power and control and many victims do not recognise the subtle controlling behaviours of the abuser (Johnson, 2006).

The Role of Various Support Services

Social support systems help the individual mobilise her physical and psychological resources as well as deal with her psychological and emotional burdens. The role of social support services, health care providers, police, justice and court procedures on gender-based

violence are explored. The impact of these services on the decisions of the women to remain in or leave their abusive relationships was identified (Barnett, 2001; Cohen & Walthall, 2003).

Social Support Services. Researchers have highlighted the association between gender-based violence and social support (Barnett, 2001; Heise & García-Moreno, 2002). According to Barnett (2001), women tend to remain in abusive relationships when there is a lack of social support from friends, peers or family.

The potential influence of social support can vary. When women experiencing violence are not provided assistance from friends or family, the suggestion is that the violence they experience is not important enough to warrant attention or is viewed as a private matter. Violence is a form of control that allows abusers to control victims' social activity and access to supportive others. Due to social isolation by perpetrators, women who experience severe forms of abuse are less likely to disclose abuse and hence, cannot receive social support from community-based support networks or from formal services (van Niekerk & Bonzaier, 2016).

Access to social support and other community resources available to women living with abuse and violence are lacking in terms of immediate assistance when victims require urgent help (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Family and friends often indicate what they think of the individual's romantic partner and whether they approve of the relationship. Differences exist between the support provided by parents and peers. Whereas parent-child relationships are hierarchical, friends are more understanding and supportive, which facilitates acceptance, intimate self- disclosure, and mutual trust. The support peers offer is often associated with heightened emotions and the apparent immediacy of the situation. However, as a result of social isolation associated with gender-based violence, the support networks women rely on may be insufficient and therefore have no effect on relationship termination (Barnett, 2001).

It is important to note that there are inconsistent findings among studies that have addressed social support. Some researchers report that there is no association between social support and the decision to leave an abusive relationship (Martin et al., 2000; Mesatywa, 2014). On the contrary, further research found that women were more likely to leave if they had access to social support from friends or family members (Machisa et al., 2018). Among some women, it was discovered that social support might serve a protective role against violence. However, social support may assist as a moderating tool in the relationship between violence and behaviours such as depression, suicidal thoughts and substance use which has not yet been identified as a mediating factor in stay or leave decisions (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Kaur and Garg (2008) proposed that women who have experienced violence are also more likely to have access to a support network comprised of others who have also experienced violence. However, such support network members may be poorly equipped to provide the support that is required for a decision to leave the relationship. Having a support network of women that have remained in their abusive relationships, may result in a negative effect on the decisions of the women seeking assistance and tends to normalise the abuse. Then again, a support network comprised of survivors of gender-based violence could motivate and encourage women who have experienced violence to make positive decisions to create safe lives for themselves.

The Role of Health Care Providers. Women are often frustrated by the inadequacy of health care providers. Health care officials prove to be insensitive, unhelpful, and unsupportive towards victims of abuse (Machisa et al., 2018). Health care workers are often guilty of victim-blaming (Black, 2011; Stevens, 2001).

In situations where abused women are pregnant, health care officials should know about the different forms of violence, and they should provide information about the possible health consequences of gender-based violence for the baby as well as for the women

(Machisa et al., 2018). Training midwives' skills in culturally sensitive communication might help to overcome cultural barriers to talk about violence. Health workers should be aware that pregnant women are more likely to have multiple sites of injury than non-pregnant women and are more likely to be struck in the abdomen (Rakovec-Felser, 2014).

Domestic violence presents a major challenge for healthcare providers. Lack of knowledge and training in domestic violence may contribute to the inability of providers to recognise and correctly interpret behaviours associated with gender-based violence. Health care providers should become involved through knowledge of legislation on gender-based violence and the education of communities and professional colleagues. They should be well aware of the Domestic Violence Act and the necessary action of a mandatory arrest by police if there is evidence that an assault has occurred. Although numerous medical associations, governmental agencies, and various advocacy groups recommend routinely inquiring about domestic violence, many healthcare providers do not follow these recommendations due to lack of knowledge, inadequate training, or fear of offending their patients (Heise et al., 2009).

Services Provided by the Police. In some cases, a police officer may discriminate against victims of sexual assault or domestic violence because of the stigma and general bias against women living in abusive relationships (Martinson & Gamache, 2016). Often, acting on stereotypes about how a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault should look or behave, can create unlawful discrimination and profoundly undermine a positive and effective response to these crimes (Lopes, Massawe & Mangwiro, 2013). Even an officer's unconscious bias towards women when victims are assaulted by an acquaintance or if the women were intoxicated when the assault occurred, can undermine a required response to incidents of sexual assault and gender-based violence (Govender, 2003).

A study to explore the reasons for not reporting cases of abuse to the police in the United States discovered that 12% of the abused women had not reported the abuse to the

police because they lived in fear of their abusers' reaction. Fourteen % of the women wanted to protect the abuser, and 8% claimed that the police were unhelpful and ineffective in resolving their problems (Catalano, 2006).

Subsequent to Catalano's (2006) study, police officers in Toronto received mixed reviews on their services (Martinson & Gamache, 2016). In 56 cases, 46% identified Toronto police officers as helpful, while another 32 % described them as unhelpful (Martinson & Gamache, 2016). The study revealed that police did not take the report seriously, failed to provide the women with sufficient information, failed to take action towards the abuser, or failed to remove the abuser from the premises where the victim was staying (Martinson & Gamache, 2016). This showed how important it is that more effort should be put in by support services in order to meet the needs of women living with abuse.

Similarly, a study by Mogstad, Dryding and Fiorotto (2016), discovered an unwillingness by participants to involve police officers in cases of abuse due to their distrust of the SAPS. When asked what they believed would happen if they approached the police in their position as victims of abuse, most participants suggested that the police were unlikely to provide any meaningful assistance. In terms of the Domestic Violence Act in South Africa, the police need to play a role in supporting the victim by assisting the woman in seeking legal assistance; including obtaining a protection order and having it served on the perpetrator. It is also important for the police to refer the victim to counselling or a shelter for safety and accommodation (Govender, 2003). Although the Act is clear about the role of the police, studies have found that many police officers are unwilling to assist victims of gender-based violence as they see these cases as a private matter between the partners (Abrahams et al., 2013; Parenzee et al., 2001; Vetten, 2017). Police officers' passive and negative attitudes often result in secondary victimisation, and play a role in victims not reporting their cases to the police or withdrawing them once they have been reported (Abrahams et al., 2013;

Parenzee et al., 2001; Vetten, 2017). The studies concluded that even though the legislation and the Domestic Violence Act are good, negative attitudes among some police officers could discourage victims from seeking help.

It is important to address police officers' patriarchal attitudes and non-compliance towards the law. Naidoo (2013) reported that in South Africa the police do not report the correct statistics about the number of assaults that involve intimate partners. Police officers are required by law to record cases of domestic violence in a register at police stations and have victim-friendly rooms available. The Civilian Secretariat for Police found that between October 2013 and March 2014, only 1.4% of police stations inspected (two out of 145) were fully compliant with the Domestic Violence Act (SAPS Compliance to the Domestic Violence Act, 2014). There were 77% which were partially compliant and 21% which rated as non-compliant (SAPS Compliance to the Domestic Violence Act, 2014; Vetten, 2017). This means that the police are not adhering to their own policies in relation to recording domestic violence and therefore this does not present an accurate picture of the extent of the problem facing the country (Naidoo, 2013).

According to Mogstad et al. (2016), domestic violence incidents are difficult to enforce and that police officers often do not respond to such calls. Abrahams et al. (2013), found that a significant proportion of intimate partner violence perpetrators is employed in the police, army or private security industry where there is easy access to guns. According to Abrahams et al. (2013), jealousy and possessiveness are the two main drivers of intimate femicide.

The Role of the Justice System and Court Procedures. Martinson and Gamache (2016) conducted a qualitative study to examine the impact of the justice system responses to abused women. The findings of the study revealed two important themes that emerged from the study.

The themes were expected help from the justice system and ways to improve the justice system in order to increase reporting of abusive matters. Lopes et al. (2013) suggested that the criminal justice system should be fully capacitated to address gender-based violence at all times. Examples would be in increasing the number of magistrates which can avoid situations where victims are waiting to be assisted when one is not available; increase the administrative clerks in family courts to prevent women sitting for hours to receive assistance. Furthermore, Sexual Offences Courts should be increased to cater for gender-based violence.

The occurrence of communication problems is largely associated with the procedures the women need to follow when reporting incidents of abuse. Lopes et al. (2013) outline the following problems during attempts for assistance from the justice system: seeking assistance at SAPS and how to go through the reporting procedures, filing a case under the Domestic Violence Act, applying for an interim or protection order from the court and in getting much-needed help with limited shelters available, financial aid and custody of children.

Lopes et al. (2013) in the analysis of their research, found that women living with abuse were unfairly treated by poor law enforcement, the social services proved to be inadequate and ineffective; the victims were at risk for further harassment and intimidation from the abusers. On the whole, both state and private organisation support services are generally inadequate and poorly designed to assist victims of gender-based violence. Furthermore, there is nothing comparable to guide how policing and court services are to be improved in South Africa. Furthermore, failures or delays in SAPS members serving protection orders or interim orders on perpetrators, leave victims vulnerable to further abuse from perpetrators. It is also apparent that nurses need to have a greater role in the provision of health services to women who have experienced violence and abuse (Furusa & Limberg, 2015). Women living with abuse may think that if she seeks assistance, her partner will likely

become more abusive. Fear plays a major role in her decision to seek help, whether it be from friends, family or state services (Hart & Klein, 2013). Victims and perpetrators share living spaces which makes it difficult to follow through with threats, given the ongoing unguarded contact between the victim and perpetrator (Vetten, 2017).

While South Africa has 11 official languages, the application forms for the protection order are available in only two of these languages which are English and Afrikaans. Equally important, the application forms for protection orders might are filled with legal terms that may not be easily understood by the applicants for whom English or Afrikaans is a second language. This emphasises how language can be a tool of exclusion in gender-based violence. Over and above language, the written completion and reading of the application forms challenges women who have varying degrees of literacy.

Furusa and Limberg (2015) also identified in their study that women are sometimes not granted protection orders because they have provided insufficient evidence, and their situations are not urgent or dangerous enough to warrant a protection order. When a victim does report the incidence, she is told to isolate specific incidents from the broader history of violence, which can damage the credibility of her evidence. This failure can make an already traumatised victim's account of a particular incident incoherent and unpersuasive and reduces the explicitness of the detail. Due to this, protection orders are often not granted, which is further trauma and stress that women have to endure. Lopes et al. (2013) found that situations that are not deemed dangerous enough by the court to warrant protection orders may result in women returning to their violent relationships, placing their lives in further danger and hence continuing the ongoing cycle of violence.

Studies by Abrahams et al. (2013), Parenzee et al. (2001) and Vetten (2017) reported that many people are not familiar with how courts work. As a result, the thought of going to court evokes feelings of fear and anxiety. Some women withdraw their cases because they do

not encounter user-friendly court processes due to frustration with regards to long queues and inadequate staff to process their applications for protection orders.

Often the law itself is a barrier to sentencing because the evidence needed to be tried as an indictable offence is, in practice, very difficult to prove. An example would be the near impossibility of proving fear of violence from their intimate partner (Wood, 2001). The study by Wood (2001) further reveals that women are often bullied by their partners into withdrawing statements and even into reconciling by subtle or direct threats. Since the victims often do not attend court, this means the court relies on the offenders' statement, which will almost always minimise the offences. The offender would say that he had merely pushed the victim away but instead what he had really done was violently hurl her onto a wall. He will say he merely held her when in reality he had tried to suffocate the victim. A slap may refer to a close-fisted punch by the abuser. In these ways, the court becomes convinced that the violence was less than it really was (Brison, 2006; Wood, 2001).

The Medical Research Council's [MRC] (2005) study on sexual violence indicated that only one out of every nine rape survivors report the attack to the police. This statistic prompted the One in Nine Campaign which was established in February 2006. The reason for the campaign was to support the woman known as Khwezi during the rape trial of Jacob Zuma and to express support of other women who speak out about rape and sexual violence.

Therefore, it can be seen that access to justice for women who have experienced gender-based violence has three aspects. One aspect is the much-needed offering of protection to women from their abusers by improving laws and policies, increasing knowledge of women's rights, strengthening women's rights organisations and movements. The second aspect is the improvement of social and legal responses to gender-based violence. The third aspect is increasing criminal sentences of abusers (Morrison, Ellsberg & Bott, 2007).

Leaving Behaviours and Support Systems Available. Bell and Naugle (2005) provided behavioural perspectives on behaviours relating to remaining or leaving an abusive relationship. One view explained the behaviours as products of punishers and reinforcers. In the case where an individual does leave an abusive relationship, she may be punished by the lack of financial support, housing, friends, increased incidents of violence or possibly other behaviours such as stalking or harassment (Bell & Naugle, 2005). There are various factors that are involved in attempting to understand a woman's decision to remain in or leave an abusive relationship.

Bell and Naugle (2005) also declared that although there may be abuse in a relationship, it is not until the level of reinforcement is reduced (e.g., decreased affection) and punishment increases (e.g., more emotional abuse) that women may be ready to leave the relationship. An emotional attachment is formed during the beginning of the relationship, where there is little or irregular abuse and an overwhelming amount of affection by the abuser. Therefore, the replacement reinforcers, such as financial assistance, are lost upon leaving the relationship (Miller et al., 2012). Koepsell et al. (2006) also highlighted this issue in their research that women who permanently left their abusers were those who had access to either public or private resources. The current study will explore what resources women have access to once they leave their abusive relationships.

The current study sought to understand whether women readily sought the assistance of the justice system and the experiences they encountered. The study also explored what social services were available to the women when they experienced abuse and whether it influenced their decision to leave or remain. A further aspect to explore would be the participants' experiences with social services, the various processes to follow, and whether or not they deemed the entire process to be effective or not.

Coping Mechanisms Used in Dealing with Gender-Based Violence. Coping mechanisms are utilised by women living with abuse and are the means by which they keep themselves and their children safe until they feel ready and able to leave. Women use a variety of strategies to justify or deal with their partner's abusive behaviour, such as normalising, acceptance, denial, keeping the peace or blaming themselves (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). The coping strategies discussed in the study are learned helplessness and religion.

Learned Helplessness. A characteristic associated with abused women is that they suffer from learned helplessness, the feeling of having no control and the belief that she is unable to escape an unbearable situation (Ackerman, 2017; Walker, 1999). Furthermore, it results in a decrease in motivation as women fail to extricate themselves from the constant abuse and violence. Women may eventually begin to believe they are at fault and things will not change (Rhatigan et al., 2006). Hence, learned helplessness explains one of the reasons for staying in abusive relationships (Seligman, 1970). According to Seligman (1970), learned helplessness is linked with experiences of abuse which may have begun in childhood. Walker (1999) points out, though, that learned helplessness is not passive, but rather a sophisticated set of coping skills which can be minimising the incident, dissociation, and denial.

A woman living with abuse may fear more violence from her abuser if she leaves or makes efforts to improve her situation (McCue, 2008). The abuser may have made specific threats which could be that if she leaves, he will hurt or kill her or her family members. It has been proven that the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is just prior to leaving as she secretly plans her escape (Abrahams et al., 2013; McCue, 2008).

Religion as a Coping Mechanism. Werner et al. (2010) identified the value of religion for women living with abuse and violence. Werner et al. (2010) found that women expressed their desire to seek comfort from their faith communities even though some abused

women lacked this support. Werner et al. (2010) concluded in his research that the support of divine power was related to a decrease in depression.

Subsequently, they were more likely to disclose their experience of violence to members of their religious organisations. In addition, Wood (2019), asserted that religious beliefs and practices can give survivors of domestic violence, both hope and strength to cope with the abuse. Most survivors believe that their faith in God will help them in coping with the distress in their lives.

The Impact of Gender-Based Violence

According to Avdibegovic, Brkic and Sinanovic (2017), emotionally and physically abusive behaviours tend to increase in frequency and intensity over time. This contributes to the victim becoming numb to create an emotional distance from traumatic abuse. Trauma may be the result of a single occurrence of abuse or many different types of abusive, controlling methods over a long period of time. The resultant trauma, disorganised behaviour and thoughts, and the consequences of physical and sexual abuse are described below.

Resultant Trauma. Trauma is experienced differently by each person. For some women, a single act can be traumatic enough in intensity to set up a continuous feeling of fear that makes her feel intimidated and lost. This fear increases the abuser's power and control which escalates the woman's vulnerability and trauma (Bloom, 2008).

Stevens (2001), asserted that verbal abuse can be subtle or overt and can have a huge traumatic impact on the victim. Degrees of isolation, feelings of fear, feeling threatened all impact on the degree of reaction. The abuse could include threats of violence, obsessive control, insults, humiliation and eviction from the home. Many of the reactions seen in victims begin to make sense when their experiences, values and beliefs are shared (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007; Seedat et al., 2011).

Mental Health. Studies by Humphreys and Thiara (2003), revealed that victims of gender-based violence display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), intense fear, sadness, tiredness, feeling devoid of hope and feelings of losing one's mind. They often present with depressive, anxious, somatic stress-related symptoms and disorganised behaviour and thoughts.

A study by Karakurt (2013) in South Africa, identified that survivors of gender-based violence experience a range of emotional and psychological difficulties and present varying levels of distress and trauma alongside various levels of coping. Victims are often in need of support and care from family and friends, however, the poor integration of mental health means few victims receive effective mental care and health support. Inadequate provisions for mental health care, including the lack of or poor linkages to ongoing mental health care, mental health challenges caused by vicarious trauma and fatigue, were noted.

Consequences of Physical and Sexual Abuse

Victims of physical abuse experience the greatest health consequences visible to society. Victims of sexual abuse experience both emotional and physical consequences, which may not be noticed by other people, and consequently do not receive sufficient support and are the last to search for support (Swart, 2011).

In groups of sexual and emotional abuse victims, asking for help may be hindered by feelings of guilt and shame. Thus, it is important to introduce social programmes offering victims help in a discrete, non-threatening manner, and to increase women's awareness of their rights (Tamale, 2008).

It is impossible to discuss sexual abuse without the risk of the women being exposed to HIV/Aids in South Africa. Local research by Thomas and Tiessen (2010) highlighted that women with violent partners are at an increased risk of HIV infection. A study exploring the link between domestic violence and vulnerability to HIV/Aids in KwaZulu-Natal indicated

that exposure to HIV disempowers women which renders them passive and resigned (Miller et al., 2012).

The study explored the participants' experiences and reflected on the impact of gender-based violence on their lives. The impact the abuse had on their lives was taken into consideration and the meanings the participants' attached to their experiences were discussed in detail.

Conclusion

In this chapter, both international and South African human rights laws and policies that focus on addressing gender-based violence were discussed. The discussion revealed that while South Africa has one of the most inclusive and democratic constitutions in the world, the incidence of gender-based violence continues to escalate. The factors influencing gender-based violence were explored and revealed an interplay of factors that interact at different levels of society to increase the risk of the women abuse. These include cultural, religious and traditional factors, economic factors, the crisis of male identity, and alcohol abuse. Silence and socialised gender roles, which strengthens patriarchal structures, are also contributing factors.

The cycle of violence and behavioural patterns were documented in order to create an understanding of gender-based violence. A comprehensive study of the abused and their interactions with various support services were explored. The role of social support services, health care providers, police, justice and court procedures on gender-based violence were identified. Helplessness and religion as coping strategies used in managing living with abuse, were discussed. The study set out to explore the impact of gender-based violence such as the resultant trauma, disorganised behaviour and thoughts, and the consequences of physical and sexual abuse. In general, therefore, the literature review explored the barriers influencing the leaving behaviours of women living with abuse, the factors influencing gender-based

violence, and the impact that the violence and abuse have on women. The literature highlighted that issues of gender inequality are complex and deeply embedded within social understandings of gender.

The above literature notes that every woman who remains in a violent relationship will have her own reasons to do so. Her abuser could have made threats to her or her children, she could have no money to be able to live on her own, she may have been out of the workforce for years and lack the skills and experience necessary to obtain employment, she may be a rural woman with limited resources or have a language barrier. She may have previously reached out to police or the church and found them to be unhelpful. She may be agitated about surviving instead of focussing on escape. The abused woman could feel ashamed of what she has endured, or guilty for leaving her partner. There is no universal answer as to why women stay in abusive relationships; it may well be for many reasons which is much more complicated than just leaving.

In the following chapter, the theoretical models of domestic violence are discussed because they offer more explicit implications in each approach towards understanding the phenomenon of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence will be discussed through the feminist and phenomenological perspective in order to make sense of the abuse of women. Explicit implications are offered in each approach that can be useful for understanding, responding and undertaking interventions to overcome the problem of gender-based violence.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical orientation for the current study, which is an interpretive phenomenological paradigm, will be discussed. The phenomenological and multicultural feminist perspectives and their compatibility for this study will also be discussed as this is necessary to understand the research area of this thesis. The theoretical framework will concentrate on the works of the theorist Judith Butler as her work is located within feminist phenomenology. More specifically, Butler's (2004a; 2009) concepts of gender performativity and precarity will be discussed. As the barriers or obstacles to women leaving abusive relationships are being investigated, it is vital that multicultural feminism and phenomenology are discussed theoretically by exploring how different theories define the concept of gender and how this is related to the issue of gender violence.

Feminist theories, despite their different approaches, are all dedicated in attempting to identify and understand the root causes of the inequality which exists between men and women. In addition, they aim to identify why, in particular, it is often women who are subject to oppression and subordination. Thus, feminists argue that a significant distinction needs to be made between the sexes which refers to the biological differences between men and women and the term gender which refers to the social constructions of accepted values, behaviours, appearances and roles for men and women (Butler, 1999; 2004a; Cudd, 2006; Hess, 2000). Feminists argue that our understandings of gender will determine how we identify ourselves, how we identify with each other, what kind of social roles we perceive to be acceptable, the type of behaviour we assume to be acceptable, and what we see as our possibilities and limits (Mikkola, 2008). Feminism will be drawn on as it examines the women's lived experiences and takes into account the complexity of the prejudices they face. Hence, feminist research would reground discussions of violence in the lived experiences of women.

The concern with interactions at the level of local realities makes multicultural feminism uniquely compatible with the second theoretical approach drawn on, that of phenomenology with its focus on the specific meaning interactions have at the individual level (Swart, 2011). Multicultural feminism recognises the need to include the diversity of women's voices. This theoretical approach understands and addresses the needs of all women across all barriers of race, age, economic status, education, physical ability, and other characteristics.

McCue (2008) asserted that theories are important in order to make sense of the phenomenon of gender-based violence because they offer more detailed methods to understand, respond to and intervene to overcome the problem of gender-based violence. It is imperative to be aware of the challenges of gender inequality, cultural conditions and religious notions that underpin the real problem of gender-based violence (Montesanti & Thurston, 2015). Therefore, in the current study, multicultural feminism and phenomenology will be used to provide insight into this issue. Phenomenology is an integral part of the interpretive paradigm. Specifically, it is the meaning that the women place on their experiences of violence and abuse that will expand the knowledge of the phenomenon and allow researchers to better comprehend the concept of gender-based violence (Gonzalez, 2010).

Feminist phenomenology has now become an active part of the phenomenological school of thought within the last two decades (Fisher & Embree, 2000). According to Madison (1981) and van Manen (2017), phenomenology can be practised and identified as a method or style of thinking. Feminist phenomenology is interdisciplinary as long as it ties theoretical study with practical relevance and intersects the methods and approaches of actual disciplines based on experience rather than theory. Feminism is thus the approach that offers a broader, structural analysis of the total situation in which the experience of gender-based

violence unfolds (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). According to Moran (2000), feminist phenomenology brings conceptual resources to bear on the empirical material understood as a phenomenon endowed with meaning that can be interpreted.

Using feminist phenomenology recognises the true version of the incidents of abuse experienced by the participants in the study.

Theoretical Orientation

In this particular study, the basis and justification for gender-based violence can best be understood through the theories from the feminist and phenomenological perspective. The potential significance of the relation and interaction between phenomenology and feminism had only begun to be explored about a decade ago (Fisher & Embree, 2000; Smith, 2008). The influence of feminism and phenomenology is important in the psychological study of women (Cosgrove, 2009). Wertz (2005) suggested the epistemological position on interpretive phenomenology as it continually focuses on the relations among different parts of the situation and of the psychological processes that underpin it while attempting to gain precise information of how each element contributes to the construction of the experience as a whole. The interpretivist paradigm thus captures the belief that reality is stable and external but experienced differently by individuals through the cognitive and personality structures (Cassidy, Reynolds, Naylor & De Souza, 2011). In short, we share a reality but have different experiences of this shared reality. This approach was utilised in this study because phenomenological research provides a clear description of the experience being studied where the experience is recognised from an individual perspective and interpretation. Feminist research examines women's lived experiences and takes into account the complexity of the prejudices they face (Gonzalez, 2010). Thus, both phenomenology and feminism are situated within an interpretivist paradigm as they both provide invaluable insight into the understanding of people's behaviour and sense of purpose. Phenomenology

and feminism and how these two perspectives will be utilised in the current study will now be discussed.

The Phenomenological Perspective

Phenomenology can be understood as a science that seeks to study phenomena as we view them in our consciousness. Science seeks to uncover meanings of the phenomena being studied (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). It seeks to derive meanings from the actual lived experiences of people. Phenomenology describes the meaning of lived experiences for individuals experiencing a particular phenomenon or concept such as the experiences of gender-based violence by the participants (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology can be described as getting back to the actual events, of describing the structures of lived experience by pushing past the assumptions we tend to bring to the experience. The phenomenological approach is appropriate for the present study, as it examines the subjective actual event instead of researching that which is already known about the phenomenon of gender-based violence. This approach was utilised as the researcher aimed to explore the participants' lived experiences and discover how they interpreted the subjective experiences of abuse and violence. Phenomenology is, therefore, all about the abundance of experiences felt differently amongst individuals who are understood through rich engagement with another person's life.

Interpretive Phenomenology. The study will adhere to the phenomenological requirement to understand and give voice to the concerns of participants, and the interpretative requirement to contextualise and make sense of these claims and concerns from a psychological perspective (Cassidy et al., 2011).

According to Smith and Eatough (2006), it may be more appropriate to understand interpretive phenomenology as a stance or perspective from which to approach the task of qualitative data analysis, rather than as a distinct method. The interpretive phenomenological stance has the potential to properly explore, understand and communicate the experiences and

viewpoints offered by its participants (Smith & Eatough, 2006). Phenomenology is particularly appropriate for this study because it is the meanings of participants' lived experiences that enhance the study of the phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2006). According to Reid et al. (2005), this perspective lies within a clearly declared phenomenological emphasis on the experiential claims and concerns of the persons taking part in the study, which in this case is the participants' experiences of violence and abuse at the hands of their partners. The interpretative component contextualises the participants' claims within their cultural and physical environments and then attempts to make sense of the mutually constitutive relationship between a person and the world from within a psychological framework (Larkin et al., 2006). It is therefore important to pay special attention to how the participants tell their stories regarding the abuse and how they make sense of their own lived experiences.

The Principle of Intentionality. Intentionality is the aspect of mental states that consists in their being of or about things (Kriegel, 2003). Human consciousness is intentional in the sense that it is always directed towards something. Becoming conscious of something external other than ourselves is regarded as the object that we position ourselves in order to derive meanings (Kriegel, 2003).

According to Pautz (2013), the subject is an objective intentional construct, but the experience of being a subject is phenomenological. People are subjects that have developed a purpose in life according to their values and principles they consider important (Kriegel, 2009). Therefore, we, as the subject and object are united in a mutual relationship with each other (Finlay, 2009). Likewise, according to Pautz (2013), intentionality can be seen as a characteristic of all acts of consciousness that are thus mental phenomena, by which they may be set apart from physical phenomena. According to Turner (2017), the principle of intentionality claims that consciousness is always aware of something. Consciousness in this instance points to something outside the mind which is conscious of the object. The

intentionality principle underlines the fact that our everyday experiences are directed towards objects, properties and states of affairs (Turner, 2017). Similarly, Finlay (2009) states that phenomenology does not speak to experiences, but rather it interprets or understands how experiences are presented to one's consciousness, and it clarifies these experiences by means of description. Thus, intentionality describes the experiences of women living with abuse and to how and where attention is paid. Phenomenal consciousness is the key ingredient influencing intentional states (Pautz, 2013). Kriegel (2003) stated that the source of intentionality is our consciousness, where consciousness projects intentionality into the world.

There is an intentional relationship between the abused and her interpretation of the phenomenon on which she is focussing or experiencing (Johnson, 2006). For example, women's lived experiences of abuse could be the participants' concern about the resultant loss of power and control she has over her life (Johnson, 2006). To elaborate, men use violence to maintain control over women. As Berns (2007) explained, violence is one of the many power and control tactics by which women are physically, emotionally, socially and financially restricted so that men may maintain a position of authority over them. Antai (2011) asserted that this power and control over women reveals the intentionality in relation to men's violence over women. The loss of power and control experienced by women due to the abuse and violence depicts the men's actions as having an intention to maintain control over women (Antai, 2011). The ability of women to articulate the intentionality of the violence they experienced may assist them in being more readily able to take back their power and control (Berns, 2007).

The Value of Using a Phenomenological Paradigm. A phenomenological paradigm was identified as the most appropriate for this type of study. From the beginning, the intention of this research was to gather data regarding the perspectives of research

participants about the phenomena of gender-based violence and the barriers that prevent them from exiting these relationships. Realities are treated as pure phenomena and thus the only data from where to begin.

As in the current study, phenomenology aims to return to the foundation of the experience where the human world comprises various phenomena and meanings (van Manen, 2017). Husserl did not accept the belief that objects in the external world exist independently and refused to believe that the information about objects is reliable (Groenewald, 2004). He further claimed that people can be certain about how objects appear in their consciousness (Embree, 2010). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1962) elaborated that "phenomenology can be identified as a manner of thinking discovered by Hegel and Kierkegaard to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, even though they have different paradigms" (p. viii). As described by Husserl in 1970, phenomenology has an interdisciplinary advantage and focuses attention on the richness of experience and events (Embree, 2010). Phenomenology reveals the depth and complexity of experiences such as gender-based violence which are usually overlooked in our daily lives. Instead of being judgemental of experiences, phenomenology encourages reflection and perception. Phenomenology thus encourages a perspective that is free from preconceived ideas (Embree, 2010).

Phenomenologists focus on phenomena and work on discovering the basic structures of our conscious beings that make up the phenomena of our lifeworld (Kriegel, 2009). This lifeworld consists of the world around us, as we interpret it, as well as our personal experiences. Husserl in 1970, described the lifeworld as pre-reflective, which is being conscious and aware, before becoming reflective on an object or experience (Gallagher, 2012). Phenomena are thus accounted for in terms of a pre-reflective self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is not something that comes about the moment one attentively inspects one's experiences or constructs a self-narrative. The term lifeworld is thus used to direct

attention to a person's lived experience in reality as it exists, rather than to their inner world of introspection (Finlay, 2009). Phenomenology allows the researcher to discover the significant meanings of experiences that lead to further questions. The theory attends to both what is being observed, the acknowledgement thereof, and the intentions of the one doing the observing (Koopman, 2015). Phenomenologists believe that researchers cannot be detached from their own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise (Hammersley, 2007).

The Feminist Perspective

According to Cosgrove (2009), feminist theories identify and criticise male domination in the family, economy or other spheres of the social and cultural world. Feminists have identified the magnitude and gravity of gender-based violence, which serves to focus on men's power and their domination over women (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Gendered power relations are important to the study as it highlights the issue of power and control that supports gender-based violence. All agencies related to policies and practices are argued to be gendered and are built into the structure of, for instance, government agencies and the policies they produce (Eveline & Bacchi, 2010). Feminist explanations go beyond simple analysis based on psychological or individual causes; they note the pervasiveness and prevalence of violence both within the home and within the structure of society itself (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005). Male domination and the marginalisation of women will now be discussed.

Male Domination. Feminist studies have made an enormous contribution to our understanding of women abuse, the oppressive conditions of women's lives and connecting these experiences to the pervasive sexism in society's norms, values and institutions (Allen, Swan & Raghavan, 2009; Fisher, 2000; Kaur & Garg, 2008).

The logic of gender-based violence is based on gender stereotypes, such as ideals linking masculinity to the provider role, macho behaviour and violence as well as ideals linking femininity to submission and victimhood (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Feminism asserts that when a man rapes his wife because he feels that he owns her and that it is a wife's duty to submit, this feeling of entitlement of the husband over the wife is profoundly gendered. The husband's perceived ownership has a strong influence on the lived experiences of the woman (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). When a man with a personality disorder abuses his wife, feminists point out that the abuse happens not just because of personality defects but because of men's so-called legitimate control and assertion of power over the wife (Antai, 2011).

According to Veneklasen (2002) and Peralta et al. (2010), the subjugation of women within families is part of a broader system of male power and control, which is neither natural nor necessary, and occurs at the detriment of women which disempower and diminish them through traditional or social practices and attitudes. This is also applicable to the current study. Feminists explore and articulate ways in which violence in the home is a critical part of the system of male power which ensures that women remain submissive within the home and outside it. According to Peralta et al. (2010), men and masculinity have been rendered invisible in much of the discourse around gender violence. Peralta et al. (2010) goes on to elaborate that dominant male groups often go unchallenged, and their power and privilege go unexamined. Thus, violence is part of everyday gender politics which governs the lived experiences of women (Veneklasen, 2002). Kalra and Bhugra (2013) highlighted that even though patriarchy contributes to a high percentage of gender-based violence, the analysis of gender-based violence is far too intricate to support just a single hypothesis. Another essential point is that while all forms of patriarchy can and do contribute to gender-based violence, it appears that the models of patriarchy which give husbands the most significant levels of power and authority are most likely to stimulate violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Feminism has been applied in the study to demonstrate the extent of men's power, control and domination that serves as an obstacle to women leaving abusive relationships. In this study, women's inferiority is displayed within intimate relationships where men assert their power over women who are often legally and financially dependent on them (Loseke, Gilles & Cavanaugh, 2005). Hence, feminists challenge the patriarchal foundations of society which is a key element in maintaining male power and control over women (Creswell, 2013). The feminist analysis reveals the perceived entitlement of men over women as deeply gendered with strong support amid society's regulations and assumptions. Feminism has thus been a powerful force exposing such negative portrayals as the cultural acceptance of abuse and violence (Kurst-Swanger & Petcosky, 2003).

The Marginalisation of Women. The notion of gender that aims towards a violent free society where men would not be violent to women because they are women encourages us to look at the existence of power and control through which men take up masculinities and women, femininities (van Schalkwyk & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2015). Furthermore, Sahara (2006), highlighted that emerging definitions of gender-based violence fail largely to reflect feminist theory; instead, definitions of gender-based violence tend to increasingly suggest that any violence related to gender identity or to maintaining or deviating from normative gender roles constitutes gender-based violence.

In understanding gender relations and the sources of women's oppression, women and men are described as inherently different, with biological differences taken as the starting point. Given how overwhelmingly gendered sexual violence is, it is easy to view all victims as women and all perpetrators as men. In South Africa, this gender system fosters power imbalances and shapes a particular phenomenon that facilitates women's risk of gender-based violence (Jewkes et al., 2001). The model of interpretative phenomenology combined with

feminism will assist the researcher in this study to obtain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences of abuse.

Feminism advocates for justice where inequality or oppressive systems exist (Brison, 2006). Supporters of feminism also acknowledge that women are known to be violent in their relationships with men (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Despite perpetration rates across both genders, women are still disproportionately victimised by gender-based violence and more frequently sustain serious injuries (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Feminism acknowledges female violence in order to give recognition that any abuse committed in the home is not a private domestic matter but a public one that manifests itself in relationship conflicts between the genders (Hess, 2000). This acknowledges that feminist theory is committed to openness and understanding.

Jewkes et al. (2015), stated that there should be a refocus on gender violence to more broadly incorporate gender roles and identities in both theories and practice away from the problems of male privilege and the oppression of women within the prevailing patriarchy toward a more politically neutral frame. This attempts to highlight attention on the rights and needs of women affected by gender-based violence and attempts to hamper efforts that give rise to this problem (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Wood (2010), highlighted that feminist concerns go beyond the mere classification of gender. Feminists have also argued that the use of terms like 'he' and 'man' contribute to making women invisible by obscuring women's importance, and distracting attention from their existence (Wood, 2010). Jewkes et al. (2015) identified that the invisibility of women is an important subject of feminist research that requires attention. There is evidence that those who encounter sentences using the terms 'he' and 'man' think more readily of men than of women and can be seen as contributing to the invisibility of women (Jewkes et al., 2015). The resultant invisibility of women contributes to the unchallenged manipulative power and

control that men exert over women. Johnson (2006) argued that the marginalisation of women results in a system that keeps them subordinated and can be seen in forms such as oppression and violence.

The Feminist Phenomenological Perspective. Phenomenology and feminism mutually inform and complement each other. Feminism encourages the situation of a phenomenological analysis of women's lived experiences within the social differences that exist in a society built upon inequalities. Phenomenology cautions against merely imposing feminist explanations of women's lived experiences (Fisher, 2000). There is a casual acceptance of individualistic explanations of gender-based violence while minimising the seriousness and complexity of women's experiences. Therefore, phenomenology, like feminism, also understands its aim to provide careful and close attention to the perspectival nature of women's experiences. Phenomenology seeks to uncover meanings from appearances and thus derives an essence of the experience through intuition and reflection on the actual experience of gender-based violence. The result is "the discovery of ideas, concepts, judgements and understandings of the actual experience of gender-based violence" (Olkowski & Weiss, 2006: pp. 73-91). Researchers indicate that women are commonly regarded as being more prone to being victims of violence and abuse in the field of psychology (Kaur & Garg, 2008; Olkowski & Weiss, 2006; White, 2002). This can be seen as simplistic because it positions women as victims of their gender instead of analysing the possible economic or social explanations for their abuse. This only serves to subtly maintain their weakened or vulnerable status (Eveline & Bacchi, 2010).

Significantly, phenomenology shares with feminist analysis a commitment to lived experiences thus revealing the way in which the world is produced through acts of subjective experience (Butler, 2004). A straightforward appeal to one's own experience may not be sufficiently mindful of its own background assumptions without simply being overthrown by

a more extensive, structural analysis of the total situation in which this experience unfolds. This is the approach to which feminist phenomenology contributes (Fisher, 2000). Both feminism and phenomenology are equally interested in a strong concept of how people make sense of their lived experiences. The feminist perspective acknowledges the power inequity between men and women (Lenton, 1995; Mikola, 2008). Phenomenology is sensitive to each person's unique lived experience (Oliveira, Viegas, Santos, Silveira & Elias, 2015). Together, feminist phenomenology concentrates on the women's lived experiences while offering applicable sensitive mechanisms for understanding the women's unique experiences. As such, feminist phenomenology is particularly well suited to the objectives of the current study as they mutually advance and support each other by providing an understanding of the barriers that make it difficult for the women to leave their abusive relationships.

Critiques of Using Phenomenology with Feminism. Phenomenology and feminism appear to be very different from each other, and it could appear as if the two perspectives oppose each other. There is often the assumption that phenomenology and feminism are radically different with profoundly different emphases and objectives. Subsequently, it is not feasible to argue their relation. The only argument that remains is the absence of each in the discourse of the other (Fisher & Embree, 2000).

Phenomenology was historically a model of male philosophical observation, whereas feminism was interested in changing a system of male domination instead of interpreting it (Reinharz, 1992; Smith & Eatough, 2006). According to Fisher (2000) the feminist theorists Simone de Beauvoir (1989), Judith Butler (1988), and Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) have all combined phenomenology with the feminist theory where their specific interest was to interrelate interpretive phenomenology and gender.

It is mostly feminists that have taken the initiative to explore a possible relationship between phenomenology and feminism. Such relationships can be viewed with caution due to

the stereotypical notion that phenomenology is associated with philosophical concepts that result in feminism and phenomenology being incompatible (Finlay, 2009; Spiegelberg & Biemel, 2017; Zahavi, 2003). Much of the early work in feminist philosophy reflected the issues and approaches more characteristic of mainstream analytic philosophy and not phenomenology (Fisher, 2000). The idea that phenomenology belongs to the field of feminism and flourishes from a relationship with other disciplines depends on developing a broad understanding of what phenomenology is. While each method has its own identity, both phenomenology and feminism can be combined in order to strengthen the overall foundation to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of living with violence and abuse (Fisher, 2000).

Moran (2000) highlighted several reasons why phenomenology and feminism are methodologically compatible, especially with the relevant values and principles that characterise feminist theory. Exploring and understanding the everyday world of women's lived experiences is of significant importance to both feminist and phenomenological studies. Both feminism and phenomenology are committed to transparency, description of meanings and understanding. According to Spiegelberg and Biemel (2017), experience belongs to us all, and both feminism and phenomenology reject the assumption that total objectivity is possible, or that a true subject-object split can exist. Phenomenological descriptions of lived experience thus open up different ways of understanding phenomena that structure our lives. The study will highlight the phenomenon of gender-based violence that structure the lives of so many women. Due to this phenomenon, women and girls are more likely to be killed by male partners than any other class of individuals. Women and girls are more likely to be injured than men and boys due to violence from a partner. Another finding across many studies is the far higher prevalence of sexual violence from intimate partners. Large numbers of women and girls seek care in emergency rooms for injuries due to violence from a male

partner (Allen et al., 2009; Kurst-Swanger, 2003; Mookodi, 2004; Rand, 2008). These high numbers illustrate the gender-specific differences in the rate of violence against women compared to men.

The prevalence of the abuse of women and girls emphasises the gender values that discriminate against women and girls to foster the subservience of women in homes. Feminist phenomenological perspectives will inform the current study as these perspectives give credibility and meaning to women's experiences, including an understanding of their own lives within their specific cultural, social and political contexts. By focussing on how women make sense of and give meaning to their own lived experiences, new perspectives and explanations can emerge, which may, in turn, lead to new theories and possibilities for corrective and preventative strategies. The study is phenomenological and feminist because it is focussed on the gendered lived experiences of women who have experienced abuse. To this end, the researcher endeavours to illustrate that this research study will empower its participants by documenting and presentin g their views while at the same time contributing to a process of social change relating to the phenomenon of gender-based violence.

Theoretical Framework

As previously stated, the works of the theorist Judith Butler is emphasised as it is grounded in phenomenology and feminism. Butler and Spivak (2007) use phenomenology and feminism to illustrate how human embodiment serves to distinguish between the various physiological and biological elements that structure bodily existence and the meanings that embodied existence assumes in the context of lived experience. According to Judith Butler (1999), gender is not passively scripted on the body, nor is it determined by nature, language, symbols, or the history of patriarchy. Gender is a continuous act through performances of various kinds. To elaborate, Fisher (2000) stated that feminist phenomenology claims that

existing in the world is not an abstract condition without sex or gender. Additionally, sex and gender influence one's experiences and understanding of the world (Fisher, 2000).

Butler (2007), further elaborates that women and minorities, including sexual minorities, are subjected to violence or exposed to the possibility of violence. Butler (2004) says each of us is in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies, a site of desire and physical vulnerability. This means that we are physically and socially vulnerable to abuse and violence. We form attachments and thus become physically dependent and vulnerable to one another. Butler (2007) also stressed the theme of co-implication of violence and non-violence, where neither can quite escape the other. Non-violence is considered to be a moral point that applies to all individuals and groups and as a political option that reveals a refusal to be coerced.

According to Butler (2004), these are very different discourses since most moral convictions tend to eliminate all reference to power, and the political ones tend to profess non-violence as a mode of resistance but also suggest that it might have to be exchanged for a more aggressive one. The greatest power of non-violence stems from its design where it is meant to achieve justice for the oppressed. The appeal of non-violence as an alternative to violence is in the ability to reduce violence on the side of the abused and the abuser who, if violence were used, would mutually suffer. A key feature of non-violence is its demand for resisting oppressive and unjust practices, policies, behaviours and laws (Fleming, 2015). This may manifest through a variety of actions such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 with the purpose of affording women protection from domestic violence by creating obligations on law enforcement agents, such as the SAPS, to protect victims as far as possible. The aim of policies and laws is to understand the experiences of the women living in abusive relationships; the possibilities and limitations of policies and laws such as the Domestic

Violence Act and whether it is one of the barriers that prevent women from exiting their lives of violence and abuse (Furusa & Limberg, 2015).

Butler (2007) maintained that both the concepts of gender performativity and precarity are essential to understanding the vulnerability of women. Butler's concepts of gender performativity and precarity explain how the right to appear provides a basis for a coalitional framework because gender performativity is an account of action while precarity focusses on conditions that threaten life in ways that appear to be outside one's control. For Butler (1999), gender performance is a certain kind of enactment where its appearance is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth. She argued that "gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler, 1988, p. 520). Gender is thus prompted by obligatory norms to be one gender or the other. Thus, gender is a negotiation of power. Therefore, there is a possibility of a remaking of gendered reality along with new lines. The two concepts of gender performativity and precarity and their applicability to the current study will now be discussed.

Gender Performativity

Butler (1988) asserted that gender performativity is rooted in dominant forms of masculinity and femininity. Butler was interested in this idea of a performative experience and used it to explain how gender works. Felluga (2015) emphasised that Butler's concept of gender is not that it is a performance or something false, but something that is made by doing. Butler's idea is that gender comes to exist as it exists because it is done in a certain way, and this doing gender in a certain way makes it so. The solid categories of masculine and feminine are not categories which never overlap one another. These categories are always being expanded by the way in which people perform, or do their gender (Butler, 1988). This means that the way we perceive male and female, and the expectations put onto people because of this, are created by our society, and as such, they have not always have been this

way and are not necessarily this way everywhere. There is a massive expectation of fulfilling certain gender roles (Felluga, 2015). This leads to performative gender, which is the idea that a person takes on traits or interests to design their appearance a certain way in an attempt to fit into these narrow gender constraints. Therefore, they are performing their gender in order to be accepted by society (Butler, 1988). Understanding this is relevant because the ways in which women performed their gender in their lives of violence, are examined in this study.

As explained by Jewkes et al. (2015), masculinity has been traditionally associated with aggressive, assertive, and authoritarian beliefs. In addition, socially constructed gender roles define men as powerful, strong, and aggressive (Jewkes et al., 2015). Also, violent behaviour is acknowledged as symbolic of masculinity and male authority (Jewkes et al., 2015). Within a patriarchal culture, men are socialised into keeping women subordinate through the use of violence; thus, male violence is a reflection of men's authority and domination over women (Jewkes et al., 2015). The use of violence by men is seen as intentional and functional and as a way of maintaining men's control and authority (Jackson, 2001). Culturally defined feminine roles are passive, caring, and submissive, thereby making it more socially acceptable for men to exert power and authority over women (Butler, 2007).

Similarly, Montesanti and Thurston (2015) stated that gender is understood as a constitutive element of social relations based upon perceived differences between women and men, and as a primary way of emphasising relationships of power and hierarchy. All social interactions and the social institutions in which these relationships occur are gendered in some manner. To say that a social institution is gendered means that constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily life of human experiences. Gender relations are reproduced and reinforced through daily social interaction. Gender as a social institution organises social life in hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, which maintains subordinate positions, whether material or ideological, among people within

families, households or communities. The term ‘gender-based’ is used in international policy statements to highlight that the abuse of women is shaped by gendered arrangements of power in society.

The United Nations Declaration was the first international statement that defined violence and abuse of women within a gendered framework and identified the family, the community and the state as major sites of gender-based violence (UN General Assembly, 1993). The term gender-based violence recognises that all forms of abuse of women and girls are gendered, whether it is perpetrated through sexual violence, physical or psychological abuse. Gender-based violence refers to violence that is concerned with maintaining the power of men over women and is responsible for the oppression of women (Montesanti & Thurston, 2015).

Based on the findings of Jewkes et al. (2015), it can be argued that gender stereotyping creates the concept of male entitlement that is also associated with domestic violence. Men have been taught to model social roles that suggest that they are entitled to the attention and services of women. The role of women is to listen, be supportive, enhance their partners’ status, fulfil the sexual needs and urges of men, and to be a caregiver for their children. Feminist theorists have disputed that causal sex dictates certain social meanings for women’s experiences (Butler, 2004). Traditional gender roles require women to cook, clean and maintain the household. Scripted gender roles maintain women as subservient, and men as control and power holders that make the decisions in a relationship and are regarded as the head of the household. This power and control of women is detrimental to the survival of women. Often in an abusive relationship, if a woman does not live up to society’s unrealistic and strict expectations, it is an invitation for the abuser to be violent (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). These beliefs work against women who are controlled and trapped by violent men. When

women, according to society's expectations, stand by their man and take care of their children; they are then unfairly blamed for staying (Jewkes et al., 2015).

People engage in behaviours that are consistent with gender-appropriate behaviour. For example, a child that lives in a very traditional culture might learn that a woman's role is in the caring and raising of children while a man's role is to work and provide for his family. A girl raised in this traditional culture might believe that the only path open to her as a woman is to get married and raise children (Bem, 1983). For instance, one is a woman to the extent that one portrays the image of one within the dominant heterosexual frame and to call this frame into question is perhaps to lose something of one's sense of suggested place in gender. According to Butler (1988), a woman might be considered a 'real woman' only through the performativity of heterosexuality. Consequently, performance is the totality of acts and behaviour of a person's life according to their genders in society.

To elaborate, Butler (2016) suggested that gender performativity could mean conforming or resisting gender stereotyping. The latter opens up new forms of doing gender. As Butler (2009) noted,

> If what I want is only produced in relation to what is wanted from me, then the idea of 'my own' desire turns out to be something of a misnomer. I am in my desire, negotiating what has been wanted of me (p. xi).

There is performative bodily resistance at work when bodies are being acted on by violence. These bodies are resisting the power and control over them by enacting a form of resistance against their vulnerability to violence (Butler, 2016). Everybody has a right to perform one's gender in a life without violence (Butler, 2015). The body is bound up in a network of relations, wherein the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that make its own life and action possible (Butler, 1999). We cannot understand bodily resistance outside of this conception of

relations (Butler, 1988). Feminism is a crucial part of these networks of resistance precisely because feminist critique destabilises those bodies that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice, and it criticises those practices that inflict violence on women (Butler, 2015). The vulnerability of women is a deliberate exposure to power and is part of the very meaning of resistance as an embodied enactment. Once women are marked as vulnerable, they become fixed in a position of powerlessness and lack of agency. All the power belongs to their partners that were supposed to offer them protection and advocacy. Such moves tend to underestimate the mode of resistance to fulfil prescribed gender roles that emerge within so-called vulnerable women (Butler & Berbec, 2017). The resistance to gender stereotyping and violence wishes that it were never the case that power is imposed upon the women in ways that they never chose, and so seeks to create a notion of individual sovereignty against the shaping forces of violence on their embodied lives (Butler, 2016).

Butler (2004) called for a shift in thinking in a way that views the body as a transformation process that transcends and reconstructs the norm and shows the current situation is not permanent. This reflects on the fact that if the world exists and is conceived in a certain way, it can be created and reconceived in another. There needs to be a change in the belief that people fall into distinct and complementary gender roles of men or women. The assumption is that heterosexuality is the norm and is the only sexual orientation. Sexual and marital relations are considered the most appropriate orientation between people of the opposite sex (Koenig, 2018). Sexual stereotyping reveals the expectations, demands, gender bias and limitations produced when heterosexuality normativity is supported within society by attitudes that promote discrimination, inequality and violence between men and women (Koenig, 2018).

Precarity. Precarity focuses on conditions that threaten life in ways that appear to be outside of one's control and become exposed to injury, violence, and death (Butler, 2009). In addition, those who are exposed to precarity are also at risk of not qualifying as subjects of recognition (Butler, 2009). Butler's idea of precarity is linked to gender norms where those who do not perform their genders as expected are at risk for violence and harassment and are not protected by law.

Gender norms are, therefore, instances of power that in this instance operates in a vertical one-directional manner where men are in the position of power and control over their submissive women partners (Butler. 2009). The role of power in the construction of gender is acknowledged. Gender and power have been a major theoretical force in understanding the dynamics of violence and abuse of women in the study. Traditional ideas regard women's roles emphasising marriage, family and gender roles that support patriarchy and domination by men. The focus, therefore, shifts from the individual to the social and the role of power in its construction of relationships is examined (Butler, 2004).

At the interpersonal level, gender affects how we relate to others, either men or women. In the current study, the abuse and violence result in the participants becoming helpless and passive. Subservience appears to be complete docility on women which is in effect a survival strategy that includes denial, attentiveness to the batterer's wants, fondness mixed with fear for the abuser and fear of interference by law enforcement authorities, family members and friends (Wood & Ridgeway, 2010).

Social and political institutions are designed to decrease conditions of precarity, especially within the nation-state. However, precarity causes conditions for populations to suffer, wherein social and economic needs are not met. Such populations are then exposed to injury, violence, and even death. The current study will explore the conditions of precarity that prevents women from leaving their abusive relationships. In the current study, the

concepts of gender performativity and precarity are applied to understand the reality of women who are exposed to violence and who cannot leave their abusers due to a gendered obligation. In this sense, the study encouraged a reflection on the phenomenon of domestic violence and the perception of the participants within a phenomenological view of their existence in the dignified condition of a survivor.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to locate the central ideas that informed the current study within a theoretical framework and to explain the theories in that framework. The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, which aims at highlighting and understanding the complex lived experiences of abuse when viewed from an individual's perspective. Feminism and phenomenology complement and mutually enhance each other, and it is at these points that the study is theoretically situated. These theories give credibility to the reality of women's experiences and meanings to their own specific encounters. By attempting to make sense of their own lived experiences during the abuse, new perspectives emerge, which may lead to preventative strategies for future possible prevention of such experiences.

In the current study, works of Judith Butler (1988; 1997; 1999; 2004; 2009; 2015) are drawn on and her concepts of gender performativity and precarity applied to consider how the right to appear provides a basis for a coalitional framework. Precarity is important for how women perform their gender (in society) within the context of this study as "precarity guides performativity, not only because of social censure but also because of the constant threat of violence" (Butler, 2009, p.1743).

Performativity explains what one does and not what one is. Butler (2009) argued that it is more valid to perceive gender as a performance in which an individual agent acts. Performativity is about a differential and differentiating process of materialising and mattering, which remains susceptible to the forces of events such as gender-based violence

(Butler, 2009). Precarity designates the condition in which certain populations suffer from failing networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death (Butler, 2015). These concepts will assist in understanding the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship.

The next chapter will outline the qualitative methodology used in this study detailing the procedures, techniques of research and data collection.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The primary aim of the study is to examine and highlight the barriers that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. The phenomenological focus of prolonged abuse on the women and the factors that contribute to gender-based violence are additional focal points of the study. The objective of this study is to explore and understand these barriers or obstacles to women leaving their abusive partners. In order for the aims and objective to be achieved, the qualitative phenomenological method was adopted. Qualitative research was the most appropriate method to highlight the exploratory and descriptive research questions in the current study. The research approach adopted allowed the researcher to methodically collect and understand the pattern of behaviour and the meanings the participants gave to their experiences of violence.

Details on the procedures used in the current study such as the research design, population and sample, data collection and analysis will be provided. The rationale behind this research strategy is in line with the argument by Myers (2009), who states that methodology is an inquiry which moves from the fundamental research question to research design and data collection. Similarly, Neuman (2000) defined methodology as a research plan of action with objectives for exploring areas of interest. Neuman (2000) suggested that research methodology gives details regarding the procedures to be used in conducting a study and identified significant issues such as research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data type and a description of tools to be used to collect relevant data as well as data analysis. To illustrate this, the research design used in this study was considered relevant to the significant set of objectives the study set out to explore and achieve.

Research Design

The research design in this study utilised a phenomenological method which is qualitative in nature. This approach is applicable for this study because qualitative research

emphasises the subjectivity, individual perspective and context of the meanings and insight that people give to experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Koopman, 2015; Mruck & Breuer, 2003). The qualitative study involves detailed descriptions of the participants' behaviour in their natural environment (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). Researchers, as they are continuously interacting with the participants, inevitably influence and structure research processes and their outcome through their personal and professional characteristics. This is mainly, but not exclusively, true for qualitative research, because qualitative methods do not focus on structure, and interact for the most part very closely with research participants in their respective research fields (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). Qualitative research methods are most appropriate as the researcher in this study wanted to become more familiar with the phenomenon of interest, to achieve a deep understanding of how people think about a topic and to describe in great detail the perspectives of the research participants. Qualitative research is also concerned with the role of the researcher as an interpreter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Given this, the researcher drew on Willig's (2001) position that there is no objective truth to be discovered as there are many interwoven truths that need to be critically analysed and re-examined continuously.

Phenomenology is embedded within qualitative research because it acknowledges that there are multiple truths and that a person's interpretation of their experience is dependent on the social context in which they are located (Goldman & Du Mont, 2001). The present research was based upon an interpretive approach because the researcher was trying to see the social world from the participants' perspective and considered the participants' perception of the world (Lather, 2009). The current study acknowledges that meaning and behaviour occur within particular social and historical contexts. Qualitative research was ideal for the present study since the intention was to explore the personal experiences of the participants and how they drew meaningful conclusions from the phenomenon of gender-based violence. The

qualitative approach is more contextual in orientation in the sense that it endeavours to give an in-depth description of a phenomenon, or group in the context of its unique sphere of existence and meaning (Neuman, 2006; Padgett, 2008; Rubin & Babbie, 2009). This approach can be defined as a path to knowledge production that is logical and systematic, which seeks to gather several layers of social existence.

Furthermore, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) noted, qualitative research inescapably involves interpretation, because nothing speaks for itself. Interpretations are not always inherent in the interview texts but can be explained by the researcher. To elaborate, Golafshani (2003), emphasised that when researchers employ qualitative analysis, they argue from the underlying philosophical nature of each paradigm by engaging in detailed interviewing of participants. Qualitative researchers embrace their involvement in the research process (Golafshani, 2003). The guiding paradigm for this study is interpretivism, and the approaches used in this study are in line with this paradigm.

In the current study, the experiences of participants were valuable in gaining knowledge about what their interpretations were for the abuse they experienced in their intimate relationships. Interpretive social science describes and interprets how people conduct their daily lives where the researcher provides a rich description of some occurrence known as an idiographic perspective (Lather, 2009). The interpretive approach integrates a sense of another social reality by revealing the meanings, values, and rules of living used by the participants in their day to day lives (Lather, 2009). It also enabled the researcher to reflect on, examine and analyse personal points of view and feelings as part of the process of studying others. Interpretivism trains the researcher to empathise with and share in the social and political views or values of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Thus, the role of the researcher as an interpreter is significant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Just as the

participants construct meanings of abusive events from the range of discourses and subject positions available to them, so too does the qualitative researcher (Lather, 2009).

The research design set out to explore women's experiences of abuse and is therefore regarded as the most appropriate. The main advantage of having used qualitative research methods in this study was to add to the production of knowledge (van Schalkwyk & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2015). The various factors that contributed to gender-based violence were studied from the point of view of the participants' involved. The study, therefore, sought to explore the social phenomena as each of the participant's experience of abuse.

Equally important, qualitative approaches allow flexibility (Gergen, 2008). Using qualitative research allowed the researcher to reflect on her subjective contribution to the research, which is a fundamental part of using the phenomenological framework. Rather than attempting to minimise researcher bias, qualitative approaches acknowledge that we are not removed from the contexts we study (Hammersley, 2007). Researchers are encouraged to examine their roles and impact throughout the research process (Gergen, 2008). The collaboration of feminist research and qualitative methods serve to obtain a better understanding of the women's experiences by providing a voice to women who have previously been marginalised (Larkin, 2006). This research adopted a qualitative methodology with the focus on women's voices to avoid broad theoretical claims being made by generalising experiences of men onto women and including the meanings that the participants gave to their experiences.

Population and Sample

This part of the research methodology covers the issue of deciding who the participants will be in the research project. It covers issues of the population, sampling frame, sampling technique and sample size. The sample size is also a consideration in qualitative research.

Population

Qualitative research typically starts with a specific group, type of individual, event or process (Padgett, 2008). The target population for the current research is women who have lived in abusive relationships. Participants of the study were recruited from local social and legal organisations in the Inanda district in KwaZulu-Natal. These organisations were chosen because the researcher was aware that many women sought social support or legal assistance from them. The population in the Inanda district comprises of all race groups: blacks, Indian, whites and coloureds and people from different socioeconomic and education levels. The researcher often meets women living in abusive and violent relationships at the outreach programmes where she is a volunteer. These areas were chosen because they are easily accessible to the researcher and the researcher is already familiar with the areas given her volunteer work with outreach programmes in these areas.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure refers to choosing that part of a population selected to answer the research question about the entire population. Participants from different race, economic and social groups were identified. Equally important, the sample size, which is determined prior to data collection, depended on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives (Palys, 2008). The study's objectives could not be achieved through a large, representative sample of individuals. Rather the study was required to reach people within the study area who could share their unique reality. This means that with careful sampling and collection techniques, a surprisingly small number of interviews will yield the data to answer the study's research question (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Recruiting and Sample Size. The aim of this research by drawing on a qualitative methodology is to understand the subjective reality of the study's participants. Criteria used to select the participants were women who have lived in abusive heterosexual relationships and had endured more than two years of violence and abuse. Participants selected were 18 years and older. In criterion sampling, it is important to select the criteria carefully, so as to define cases that will provide detailed and rich data relevant to the research (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

In the current study, 10 participants were initially interviewed to realise that no new concepts were emerging. Two participants chose not to partake in the research after being interviewed. The size of the sample, therefore, was large enough to leave the researcher with nothing new to learn with consistent patterns identified (Palys, 2008).

The secretaries, whom the researcher identified as gatekeepers at the two organisations were first contacted telephonically and informed of the study. They were given explanations on the nature of the study and what was expected before and after the study. Letters containing relevant information on the study were emailed to them (See Appendix E). The managers at each organisation were also sent a letter that explained the nature of the study as part of the procedural purpose of permission (See Appendix D). The names of the organisations that the researcher selected have not been revealed to maintain confidentiality which will be highlighted in the ethics section.

Once permission was obtained, the manager at each organisation was contacted to obtain the names of participants that could be chosen for the study. Five participants were identified from two organisations. This number was to cater to anyone that voluntarily chose to leave the research group. Therefore, a total of 10 participants were contacted for the interviews. After the interviews, two women chose not to remain in the study due to unforeseen circumstances that will not be discussed in detail due to confidentiality. Their

decisions to withdraw from the study were respectfully accepted. One of the participants had decided to return to her partner with the hope that she could change him. The other woman was too scared to continue with the research process even though she had been assured of confidentiality throughout the research process.

The goal of the research, therefore, was to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the study's participants. Women that gave initial verbal consent to participate in the study were scheduled for an appointment at the designated location, which in this case was a secluded office at a Magistrate's Court. Because of the sensitive nature of gender-based violence, the researcher realised that obtaining privacy at the participant's home would be impossible and unsuitable. Women who were willing to participate were interviewed at the designated office which was centrally located.

Purposive Sampling

The researcher initiated the use of purposive sampling as the most appropriate sampling method for the study. The chosen sample contained the most suitable criteria with typical attributes representative of the population (Palys, 2008). The researcher's decision to use purposive sampling stemmed from her interest in a particular section of the population. Selection criteria were used to recruit participants that met the requirements for this study (Guetterman, 2015; Palys, 2008). Selection criteria were based on the following: heterosexual women who were 18 years and older, were living in abusive relationships and had endured two or more years of gender-based violence. The duration of longer than two years was selected so as to effectively explore the barriers that prevented the women from leaving sooner.

A purposive sample of participants based on the judgement of the researcher is not a good defence when it comes to alleviating possible researcher biases. This is the reason why reflexivity in the study is employed where the involvement of the researcher is reported so

that the reader can understand why the data is revealed in a particular way or why certain interpretations were established by the researcher (Guetterman, 2015). According to Mruck and Breuer (2003), reflexivity enriches the accounts offered when the reports of the qualitative data have been collected and analysed. Another essential point made by Mruck and Breuer (2003) is that purposive sampling is only disadvantageous when such judgements are ill-conceived. This could occur where judgements have not been based on clear or accepted criteria. However, in the current study, women that had lived in abusive relationships over prolonged periods for more than two years were interviewed which was a clear criterion used for the selection of participants as a representation of the research topic. These women displayed the essential criteria relevant to the research.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to actively select the most productive sample to answer the research question. The sample size is often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation which is the point in data when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions. Purposive sampling is, therefore, most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection. This can involve developing a framework of the variables that might influence an individual's contribution, the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, as well as the available literature and evidence from the study itself (Palys, 2008). This sampling design is usually used when a limited number of individuals possess the trait of interest. This is an intellectual strategy, viable for obtaining information from a particular group of people, though age, gender and social class might be important variables. If the subjects are known to the researcher, they may be stratified according to known public attitudes or beliefs (Guetterman, 2015).

Data Collection Methods & Procedures

The method of data collection was through informal interviews with open-ended questions which were used to gather data from 10 women living in abusive relationships.

These semi-structured interviews that were conducted permitted questions as a prompt, alongside a flexibility for the researcher to adapt to the participant's account. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to obtain a detailed account of the participants' experiences (Guetterman, 2015).

Interviews that collected data from these selected women were used to gain an understanding of women's experiences of violence and abuse. The aim of the interviews was, therefore, to explore in an in-depth and enriching manner, the meanings that the women placed on their domestic violence experiences. Interview questions focus on the participant's overall experience of domestic violence (Appendix H). The questions were designed to establish rapport with the participants while maintaining focus on the phenomena that was being explored. Although it was anticipated that participants would assign unique meanings to their domestic violence experience, it was worthwhile to explore how these meanings were influenced by their specific and individual cultural values and norms that each participant brought with her into the study. The interviews were structured in such a way in order to obtain detailed biographical information and history of each participant, descriptions of their lived experiences of abuse, the impact of the experiences in the lives of the participants and the reasons for the behavioural patterns which contributed to the abuse. The interviews were conducted in the English medium and were audio-recorded with prior permission from the participants.

Immediately before the interview, full disclosure of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the study was made clear to each participant. Explanations were given to the participants on what the interview entailed (See Appendix C). This document, which contained the researcher's contact details, was signed, and handed over to each participant. The participant was informed that they could always contact the researcher should they have any questions regarding the research. Thereafter, the participants were given the Informed

Consent Form (See Appendix F), which the researcher explained to them in full. The participants and the researcher both signed the informed consent form before commencing the interviews. The process of explaining and signing these forms took approximately 15 minutes. Upon completion of this process, the interviews began. The interview took approximately one hour for each participant. Once the interview was complete, participants that took public transport to participate in the interviews received compensation for their transport expenses and were also provided with light refreshments. The venue for the interview was at a place where the participants were most comfortable which was at a secluded office allocated for the interview at a Magistrates' Court. The reason why the desired venue for the interview was at a quiet office at a Family Court, was for the availability of Mrs Jan Charlton (Family Court Supervisor) for further counselling should the participant have required it. Mrs Jan Charlton had given permission for her name and services to be utilised for the study. Gender-based violence is a sensitive issue, and Mrs Charlton was, therefore, readily available for debriefing should the need arise. The participants were comfortable to be interviewed at the chosen venue. It was emphasised that there would be complete privacy during the interviews. During each interview, questions were changed slightly to accommodate each participant's style and response during the interview.

Burgess-Proctor (2015) emphasised that technical competence was needed in organising interviews. The researcher employed technical competence by doing the following: participants needed to be identified, arrangements were made for the interview, matters of confidentiality explained, consent forms prepared, interview participants were made comfortable, and the right words were found to open the interviews.

Burgess-Proctor (2015) stated that interactive competence is required when conducting interviews which refer to paying careful attention to the participant and steering the interview into the desired direction. The researcher has to be able to make the interviewee

feel comfortable while talking. The roles need to be clarified where the researcher asks a few questions but mostly listens while the interviewee talks. This is opposite to the rules of everyday talk as the balance shifts. The researcher needs to be an active listener that shows interest and at the same time encouraging the interviewee to speak. The interviewer needs to find the right moment to ask the next question in the most appropriate manner in order to keep the conversation going. This entails dealing with silence, reading non-verbal signals and sending appropriate signals of empathy and understanding. The researcher needs to be self-reflexive all the time while showing the right level of empathy (Burgess-Proctor, 2015).

The researcher remained aware of her role as a qualitative researcher even though she allowed herself to share her personal experiences of abuse with the participants. This allowed them to be comfortable and at ease in sharing their difficult, often painful, experiences with the researcher even though she was a stranger. By listening to the researcher's own account of her experience with domestic violence, it allowed her to be accepted into the group as a person with a common experience of gender violence. This levelled the field so that the researcher was identified as one of them, also a survivor of gender-based violence. The researcher did not discuss her personal values and views on domestic violence but firmly believed that by sharing her common experience of domestic violence with these women she had created an open and genuine interaction with the participants that made an impact on their ability to discuss their own personal experiences of gender-based violence with her. This was also a very vulnerable moment for both her and the participants.

This is a process called epoche, which served as a reference point that involved setting aside any of her prejudgments, biases and preconceived notions about the phenomenon that she might have had about domestic violence (Gonzalez, 2010). By recounting her own experience on the phenomenon being studied, she was able to identify specific biases and preconceived beliefs about the phenomenon. Through this process, the

researcher became acutely aware of these biases and was mindful of their potential influence and impact on this study. Working with her own thoughts, feelings, expectations and convictions assisted her in dealing with any previous knowledge and personal bias about abuse (Delamont, 2004). This is reflected on in the section on power and reflexivity.

Power and Reflexivity. Qualitative research highlights issues of power, social issues and political agendas (Esterberg, 2002). It aims to grant back power to marginalised or vulnerable groups of people and questions the social dynamics of power. Qualitative research and phenomenological analysis maintain that the researcher can never be fully objective on the reality of a phenomenon (Gergen, 2008). Therefore, it should be noted that the insights and conclusions gained from this study are not without the researcher's views or thinking, assumptions, and agenda. Hence, the insights gained are a combination of the women's experiences and the researcher's interpretation of the accounts.

According to van Schalkwyk and Gobodo-Madikizela (2015), qualitative research in the field of gender requires a high level of personal commitment. The researchers need to assume personal responsibility to uphold ethical practices during the research process and any emotions that occur through these human interactions. Often the very presence of researchers heightens participants' vulnerabilities, especially when they are working with people who have different cultural beliefs. On occasion, researchers may be prying into areas of the participants' lives that are unthinkable to be spoken about according to their cultural and religious beliefs (van Schalkwyk & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2015).

Researchers are generally seen as influential figures of authority who are highly educated, privileged and perhaps even powerful (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Issues of disclosure become more complex when researchers are working with a social issue in mind; when they connect with participants as human beings and not as the all-powerful researcher (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). In the position of the researcher, it is necessary to consider how one

could be viewed by the participants. In this study, the researcher is a university student with a research project and money to reimburse participants for any travelling expenses incurred en route to the interview. This could create an image of the researcher as advantaged and more intellectual by having access to education. This could influence the way participants related to the researcher and in turn, impact how they presented their experiences. It was, therefore, important to the researcher for her to challenge the assumption that the researcher had an advantage over the participant. This was done by emphasising the importance of the participant's opinion and contribution to the research over and above her own.

The Researcher's Position and Reflexivity. In qualitative studies, researchers and participants meet and interact during the process of data collection. Hence, the involvement of the researcher is inherent in qualitative research and this allows for the researcher to be part of the research itself (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Subsequently, being aware of one's own assumptions, viewpoints, and interests is an essential requirement of qualitative research (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). The researcher's response to the participants and their experiences of abuse may have also influenced the direction of the interviews and the experiences which they chose to disclose. Furthermore, researchers begin the analysis and interpretation data from their own viewpoints and could either intentionally or unintentionally have control over the research findings. To reduce such influence, critical reflexive thinking is of vital significance throughout the entire research process (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The researcher had a distinct feeling of familiarity to the world of the participants when they recounted their experiences of violence, as she herself had been in an abusive relationship for 14 years. In this sense, she was not viewed as an outsider by the participants when she informed them that she had previously been in a long abusive relationship, but as someone who could relate to their experiences. The researcher wanted them to feel that she also had her experiences of abuse to give back. Here the researcher drew on Oakley's (1981)

notion of reciprocity which implied a reciprocal give and take situation; a mutual negation of meaning and power (see Lather, 1991, p. 57). The researcher made this feeling come across during the start of interviews which may have influenced what the participants chose to share with her.

In addition, the participants' were more comfortable to relate their personal experiences of gender-based violence to a woman allowing the researcher to gain entry into the world of the participants'. Participants acknowledged her gender and indicated a similarity with her based on this. Participants were also agreeable to the researcher's experience in speaking to survivors of domestic violence, which may have also influenced their ability to disclose their experiences of violence and abuse with her. The research is also part of a larger objective to understand why it is so difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence. A motivating factor for undertaking this research process was her own attempt at ending gender-based violence in her life which was of even more significance for the researcher and participants'.

Throughout the research process, reflection facilitated interpretation and helped the researcher develop a sense of awareness and emotional balance in response to hearing about experiences (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). The researcher had no difficulty in interacting with the participants because they identified with her as an equal when she shared her experiences of gender-based violence with them.

All the participants in the study had one issue in common, which came out in the interview process and is discussed in the findings. Due to cultural issues and that all the participants had children; they were compelled to continue the relationship. Some of the participants whose mother tongue was Zulu experienced some difficulty in explaining their experiences in English. However, on delving further into their experiences, the researcher was able to understand what they were trying to express because she was able to identify with

their emotions and experiences from her personal experience with abuse. The risk of the language barrier was further mitigated with the provision of a safe interviewing atmosphere which allowed the researcher to build trust and empathy with the participants.

The researcher did not employ the services of a language interpreter as the participants' responses could have been altered in the translation process. The interpreter would have needed interview and research training and the expense of employing a language interpreter had to be considered. Most importantly, there would have been a confidentiality risk by having a third party in the room. The researcher interviewed participants across different race groups, and their experiences of abuse were all similar. The researcher's interaction with the participants illuminated societal issues such as the role of the police and the justice system. Making the participants' stories visible in the study provided important insight, contribution and opportunity to examine society's response to domestic violence. Researching domestic violence exposed the researcher and the participants to a sensitive issue which required a range of skills, among them, compassion and resilience.

Data Analysis

The objective of the current study was to gain knowledge of participants' experiences of abuse and violence in their relationships and to capture some of their reflections. The study was conducted on a small sample size of 10 participants. The transcribed data were analysed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis. Much of this research is on the participants' perspectives on the abuse and violence that they were subjected to. This method of analysis was employed as it assisted in searching for meanings in the detailed examination of the participants' lived experiences, seeing as the study focussed on more than just the gathering and interpretation of data (Koopman, 2015). Hence, the basis of this qualitative research lies in the interpretive phenomenological approach to social reality. More importantly, the interpretative nature of the IPA framework permitted the researcher to

interpret, based on her own experiences of abuse and the participants' accounts of their experiences of abuse (Oliveira et al., 2015).

After the interviews were conducted, the researcher listened to the recordings. The clarity and the accuracy of the data can be confirmed by listening to the recordings. This is important for the rigour of the research. The recordings were then sent for professional transcribing.

Transcription practices are described by Smith (2008) as ranging from full verbatim to intelligent verbatim. Full verbatim transcripts consist of verbatim representations of speech during which each pause, utterance or stutter, accents and involuntary vocalisations are noted and recorded as accurately as possible. Intelligent verbatim is the opposite method and does not include every sound. Verbatim responses are recorded wherever possible. The current study utilised intelligent verbatim, which involved listing every significant statement expressed by the participant in her own voice, giving it equal value and meaning (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Once the recordings were transcribed, the transcripts of the interview recordings were carefully analysed in order to capture the details and make sense of the interview as a whole (Mruck & Breuer, 2003).

In this process, the researcher made use of different frames of reference, having contrasting and contradictory characteristics. The phenomenon of gender-based violence was approached from divergent perspectives in order to describe the environment that influenced each participant's unique experience of domestic violence (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this way, the textural and structural descriptions were combined into statements of the phenomenon as a whole (Sutton & Austin, 2015). By analysing the interview data, the researcher sought to reduce the information gathered to the common core of the experience as told by the research participants (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). By utilising this method, researchers often try to explore the meanings given to the abusive experiences by the women

(Mruck & Breuer, 2003, Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The objective of the current study was to gain knowledge of the participants' experiences of abuse in intimate partner relationships and to capture some of their reflections. The first step in analysing the data was to read the transcripts. The transcripts were quality checked by listening to the audio recordings and reading through the transcripts as listening errors can occur. This was also an additional measure used to verify that the data had been accurately analysed. The transcribed data were analysed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis. This method of analysis was employed as it assisted in searching for meanings in their experiences, seeing as the study focussed on more than just the collection and analysis of data. Further detail will now be provided on the steps taken in analysing the transcribed interview transcripts.

Coding. The interpretative phenomenological analysis allows for the data to be interpreted through coding during the analysis process (Larkin, 2006). Coding involved assigning a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a summary of a salient, essence-capturing attribute for a portion of data in the interview transcripts (Larkin, 2006). The portion of data coded ranged from a single word to a full sentence to a passage of text. Coding is sometimes a reconfiguration of the codes developed in previous passages (Larkin, 2006). Coding was employed in analysing the interview transcripts in this study.

Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis, the researcher first interpreted her own reactions to the text which was meant to explore how she might have had an impact on the interviews and the research process. The researcher then had to depart from the level of descriptions and interpretation to analysis in order to obtain an understanding that explains why things were as she had found them. Coding was, therefore, a vital aspect of analysis which was only the initial step towards a more rigorous interpretation of the research.

The Atlas-ti software was used as an aid for analysing the data. It helped the researcher to manage, extract, compare and explore the data within the texts, which had a

meaning for the analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). These activities are possible because the software visualises, integrates or puts together relevant issues, discovers and explores hidden concepts. Although the software allows for organising transcript data in preparation for analysis, it does not analyse the data (Larkin, 2006).

The analysed data had to be contextualised with existing theories on abuse to reveal how it corroborates with existing knowledge or whether it revealed a better understanding to the phenomenon of abuse (Larkin, 2006). The researcher kept track of emerging themes, repeatedly read through the transcripts and developed concepts and propositions to make sense of the data (Smith, 2008; Sutton, 2015). The researcher looked for recurring themes that served as barriers to leaving the abusive relationships such as the influence of culture, tradition and religion, social norms and practices, economic factors, education and employment, alcohol and substance abuse, and socialised gender roles.

The themes were used to organise the data in order to gain a more precise and logical understanding of the concepts presented by the interviewees. The data interpretation and results concluded from this study will be a unique contribution to existing knowledge on gender-based violence.

This analysis of data supports the feminist approach, which emphasises the importance of looking beyond the analysis of data to focus on a deeper meaning and understanding to the experiences shared that, in turn, impacts on how we make interpretations and derive conclusions. The analysis of the data was also phenomenological, which represented the participants' experiences and interpretation of the world. Both phenomenologists and feminists acknowledge the significance of symbolic interaction, which highlights the manner in which meanings are constructed, interpreted and understood by individuals within a social and personal world (Denzin, 2003). The role of symbolic interaction was acknowledged when analysing the data by how the participants defined

themselves by their feelings and emotions; how they defined their experiences to produce stories to explain their actions and lives; how such meanings are constantly being built up through interaction with others, and how these meanings are handled by the participants. For this reason, the two approaches reach a commonality; building up to an interest in examining how people view their encounters in life (Fisher, 2000). When the interview transcripts were analysed, the participants' accounts became the phenomena with which the researcher engaged.

Ethical Considerations. Since qualitative research is concerned with ethical issues (Gergen, 2008), permission to conduct the research was requested from the Research Ethics Committee of UNISA and the Division of the Institutional Research and Planning of UNISA (See Appendix A).

The researcher then obtained permission to gain access to the organisations by contacting the gatekeepers identified and secured access to the prospective participants (See Appendix E). Thereafter, a consent form was given to each participant. Each woman was explained the nature and reason for the research and that their participation was entirely voluntary (See Appendix F). The participants were not coerced into participation. Rather their voluntary participation was requested, and all the principles of ethical considerations were adhered to (Blanche et al., 2006). Each participant had access to the researcher's contact details should they decide at a later stage to withdraw from the research. Two participants did withdraw from the study for personal reasons.

Participants were reimbursed for their travel costs incurred for the interview. No monetary gain beyond the reimbursement of transport and the provision of light snacks was offered for participation in the study. Paying participants is a practice that raises practical, methodological and ethical issues in qualitative research studies (Veneklasen & Miller, 2002). Furthermore, providing monetary incentives might compromise the key ethical

principle of participation in research that is of free, informed consent (Veneklasen & Miller, 2002). The researcher did not consider payment besides the transport costs incurred by some of the participants as the interviews were found to be a means to unburden themselves of their abusive experiences and to feel useful in helping other participants feel less alone, recognise abuse and seek help.

The participants appeared to reflect the sentiment that it was good to have someone to whom they could talk. The interview process gave the interviewees a sense of achievement, as well as being used to make sense of their lived experiences of abuse and violence (Berns, 2007). Compensating the participants for their transport costs only displayed a respect for their time and expertise and not for coercing participants into participating when they would rather not (McLeod, 2015). McLeod (2015) has noted payments to participants to be exploitative when dealing with vulnerable groups. The researcher ensured that payments for transport costs incurred were given at the beginning of the interview as this gave a clear message that participants were being compensated for their participation and not for what they had to say (McLeod, 2015). Burgess-Proctor (2015) asserted that payments to participants could be said to degrade the idea of the common good to which research contributes.

The interviews were audio-recorded. Before the interview, the researcher explained why an audio recorder was used and how it worked. The participant had control over the audio recorder and was able to switch it off at any time during the interview. The participant also had the opportunity to request any information to be removed from the research. The professional transcriber was also required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix G).

Following this protocol ensured adherence to the ethical guidelines. Ethics refers to the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. Equally important, ethical norms help to ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public. Researchers have

a moral responsibility to protect research. Ethics is of vital importance in research for the maintenance of quality and integrity along with moral and social values like social responsibility and human rights (McLeod, 2015).

Nonmaleficence. As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the ethical principle of doing no harm asserts an obligation not to inflict intentional harm. It forms the framework for the standard of due care to be met by any professional. Obligations not to harm others are distinct from obligations to help others and are generally more stringent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). An example would be the manner in which the researcher responded to the participant during an interview in this study. The present study is a sensitive one because it involved participants who are vulnerable as they have experienced abuse and violence, which is traumatic.

Participants have to be protected from harm and to ensure this, arrangements with a counsellor were made before conducting the interviews in case there was a need for the participants to be sent for debriefing sessions. According to McCleod (2015), the purpose of debriefing is to remove any misconceptions and anxieties that the participants have about the research and to leave them with a sense of dignity, knowledge and perception of time not wasted. Evidence also suggests that debriefing prevents the development of PTSD and other adverse pathological conditions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Furthermore, participants also had access to counselling due to the fact that the study deals with a vulnerable group of women that live in abusive relationships. The researcher had requested the assistance of the Family Court counsellor at a Magistrate's court for debriefing and further counselling if the participants required these sessions for emotional and psychological support after discussing their traumatic experiences. When obtaining consent for an interview study, it is never possible to accurately estimate risk, in terms of emotional trauma, but researchers can anticipate its potential and take appropriate measures to prevent harm.

In the study, respect for the priorities of the participant and the aims of the project was negotiated throughout the interview. The researcher attempted to recognise when it was inappropriate to probe further, despite the interview guide, as the risk to a person's emotional well-being may outweigh the hope of gaining rich data. Sometimes, seemingly straightforward questions, from the perspective of the researcher, could produce an emotional response from the participant. Recordings were paused when the participants became emotional from relating their emotional experiences.

Beneficence. Beneficence is an action that is carried out for the benefit of the participants. Researchers should, therefore, have the welfare of the research participant as a goal of any research study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The participants in this study will be provided with a report of the results should they be interested. They will be able to assess their situation from the results of the study and be able to analyse their relationship from a different level. The researcher, as a survivor of a 14-year abusive relationship, has found this research to be beneficial in ways she never thought possible. As a result of conducting the research, the researcher has a better understanding of her own experiences of abuse and has gained insight into the reasons why she remained in an abusive relationship for a lengthy period.

Justice. Concern for being just or fair and showing genuine respect for people generates unbiased, consistent and reliable information (Shenton, 2004). An act of fairness, justice, lack of bias, objectivity, lack of prejudice and open-mindedness resists inflexible views and attitudes that might suppress or distort our reflections (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). The participants were treated without prejudice and with fairness. They were not unfairly coerced into participating. Korstjens and Moser (2018), explains justice in research in terms of what is deserved by each individual, and to what each individual is entitled, without partiality and with the aim of delivering equitable treatment. Each participant's experience in the study was

unique; therefore, each woman was given fair and equitable treatment. The researcher gave all the participants equal attention and genuine respect. Hence, each woman was given a voice to express her lived experiences of abuse and violence. Lather (2009), describes the task of giving voice to the participants who are recognised as vulnerable and who might otherwise remain silent or who have been silenced by others. Hence, an emphasis on giving each woman voice attests to the right of speaking and being represented.

Autonomy and Respect for the Dignity of Persons The interview process was designed to help empower rather than simply to protect the participants as identified by Burgess-Proctor (2015). Burgess-Proctor (2015) identified interviewing strategies which included asking participants to select their own pseudonym, offering participants' documentation of their research involvement, expressing and reciprocating emotion with participants, and concluding interviews by emphasising participants' strength and insight. All these strategies were adhered to in the current study. Furthermore, most of the participants expressed their desire to help other women by sharing their experiences which served to empower them.

Additionally, receipts were not offered so as to avoid any breach of participant's anonymity. All the information given by women that took part in the study was completely confidential and used solely for the purpose of the study, thereby ensuring the safety and privacy of the women. The participants chose their pseudonyms and the researcher removed all identifiable information on the transcripts. More importantly, Korstjens and Moser (2018), stated that autonomy is related to freedom of choice, and corresponds to the ability of an individual to decide for themselves based on the alternatives presented to them, free of internal and external constraints. To be autonomous, in the scope of this study, participants chose subjectively to participate and which questions to answer, after taking into account their own principles, values, beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, respect for autonomy

includes considering all factors that interfere with the decision-making ability of the individual (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the study, the researcher respected the decision of the two participants who chose to withdraw. The participants in the study were given their freedom of choice to remain or withdraw from the study, the freedom in choosing the time and venue of the interviews if the selected venue was not desirable for them.

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is a measure of the quality of research. It is the measure of the analysed data being acceptable and trustworthy. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), confidentiality of the data obtained is essential as well as retaining a trustworthy relationship with the participants. The researcher in this study ensured both confidentiality and trustworthiness.

Four strategies ensuring trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Creswell, 2013). The researcher strove to maintain and implement all four strategies throughout the study.

Credibility. The research is engaging with the phenomenon as it is in the world. This promotes credibility because the phenomenon of the experiences of the women has not been altered in any way, minimised or removed from its natural settings, which means that the conclusions drawn relate to the phenomenon as it occurred (Gergen, 2008). One form of ensuring credibility entails honest responses from the participants. To ensure the credibility of the research, only those participants that expressed a genuine interest in the study, were willing to take part in the study and were prepared to offer their experiences as data towards the study freely, were involved. The researcher clearly indicated that no correct answer existed to the questions. Each woman, when approached, was given the opportunity to refuse or agree to participate in the study. Credibility was ensured by the researcher having continual interaction with the participants of the study. Credibility is concerned with the participants' experiences, their construction of reality and the connection to their

understanding of reality. There should be a constant exploration of data to ensure that all data obtained are included in the final analysis of the research (Leung, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), strategies to ensure credibility of the research study are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check.

Prolonged engagement. Several distinct questions were asked regarding topics related to the research, for example, the number of years each participant had been in their abusive relationship and their initial experiences with their abusers when they first met. Participants were encouraged to support their statements with examples, and the researcher asked follow-up questions. The researcher studied the data from the interview recordings and used Atlas-ti software until themes emerged to provide the scope of the phenomenon of gender-based violence (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Triangulation. Multiple methods of studying the same phenomenon of gender-based violence were used. This type of triangulation that is used in qualitative research included interviews, observation, and field notes. Different theories on gender-based violence were used for the interpretation of the data collected. The different hypotheses on gender-based violence assisted the researcher to support or refute findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Persistent observation. Developing the codes using Atlas-ti software, concepts and core themes assisted in examining the data obtained from the interviews. The researcher repeatedly read and reread the data, analysed them, theorised about them and revised the concepts accordingly. Furthermore, the researcher studied the data until the final themes obtained provided the intended depth of insight on the experiences of abuse that the women were subjected to (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Member Check. To further establish credibility, individual meetings were held with the participants before the interview process could begin in order to establish trust. Participants also had to fulfil certain criteria such as remaining in their abusive relations for two years or longer and had to be over the age of 18 years. The researcher met with the gatekeepers and managers of the participating organisations participants before the interviews in order to develop an early familiarity with the members before data collection. The researcher conducted at least two visits to the participating organisations in order to get a perception of the operational running of the organisations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be verified or generalised when compared to other research studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability can be accomplished by describing a phenomenon in explicit detail so that one can evaluate the degree to which the conclusions are transferable to other contexts, times, settings, situations and people. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided as much detail as possible of the findings so that the results can justifiably be applied to another researcher's interpretation for similar settings.

Dependability. Dependability can be achieved if the findings from this study can be applied by another researcher in the same field of study (Shenton, 2004). If other researchers were to look over the data, they would arrive at similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions from their data. This is important to make sure that nothing was missed in the research study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Hence, dependability refers to the reliability of the findings over time and conditions. Dependability is an evaluation of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis and theory generation (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). Dependability is achieved when transcripts and themes are reread and

rechecked consistently by the researcher (Shenton, 2004). The data were analysed twice and were then contrasted and integrated for interpretation. When a researcher outside of the data collection and data analysis interprets the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the results of the research study, there is confirmation on the accuracy of the findings which are supported by the data collected. Thus, the aim is to verify that the findings are consistent with the data collected. This process allows for an outside researcher to examine, explore, and challenge how data analysis and interpretation occurred (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability. Confirmability was achieved in the study by ensuring that the findings emerged from the data obtained and not from the researcher's predisposition. Hence, confirmability has to do with the level of confidence that the research study's findings are based on the participants' narratives and words rather than potential researcher biases or interest (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability is there to verify that the findings are shaped by participants more than they are shaped by a qualitative researcher (Shenton, 2004). One of the techniques for determining confirmability is the auditing of the data and findings of the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose is to confirm the accuracy and to determine whether the findings and interpretation are supported by the data in order to determine the accuracy of a research study. Descriptions and records of the research process is taken from the start of the research study to the reporting of findings and is kept to ensure transparency. These are records of all the research processes, documents, process notes which include reflexive notes and motivations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and discussed the research methodologies and strategies used in this study. This included the research design, procedures, selection of participants, data collection tools, power and reflexivity, data collection and analysis methods. The research design utilised for this study was a qualitative phenomenological design. Purposive

sampling was the procedure used for choosing that part of the population that could best answer the research question about the entire population. The target population for the current research was participants older than 18 years that had lived in abusive relationships for more than two years. Informal interviews with open-ended questions were used to gather data from 10 women across all race groups. The findings and conclusions gained from this study were a product both of the participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretation of their lived experiences using phenomenological and feminist perspectives as discussed in chapter three. The interview recordings were professionally transcribed, analysed and interpreted through coding in order to make sense of them as a whole. The guiding ethical principles of the study were its values of credibility, dependability and trustworthiness which are based on the insight, utility and coherence of its findings.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to critically discuss and explore the findings in relation to the existing literature and research. The participants' experiences and perceptions are described and interpreted drawing on the literature review, which was key to uncovering their meanings. This was achieved by getting acquainted with the transcribed data and using Atlas ti8 to generate codes. Three themes, which were pertinent to the participants' lived experiences of abuse, emerged from the analysis process. These were the factors influencing gender-based violence, the barriers to leaving abusive relationships and the consequences of gender-based violence. The study further extrapolated sub-themes which emerged on closer analysis of the data and these will be detailed under each theme in this chapter. The themes and sub-themes which emerged from the analysis of participants' experiences provided the answers to the research questions of the study. A detailed description of the analysis was provided in the previous chapter (chapter four), whereas this chapter presents the findings.

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of each participant. Seven of the eight participants are no longer living with their abusive partners. A total of 10 participants were initially interviewed. After the interviews, two participants chose not to remain in the study. Their decisions to withdraw from the study were respectfully accepted. One of the participants had decided to return to her partner with the hope that she could change him and did not want him to discover her participation in the research. The other participant was too scared to continue with the research process even though she had been assured of confidentiality throughout the research process.

Excerpts from the participants' interviews are included verbatim to ensure that the participants' voices are represented. The rationale for this method is that through presenting verbatim quotes, the voices of the participants are heard in a transparent manner as one of the effects of abuse is to silence them. Pseudonyms, which were chosen by the participants, were

used to maintain confidentiality. Equally important, the participants did not have to be referred to as numbers because numbers do not give them the identity they deserve. The number depicted in square brackets represents the interview number, e.g. [I.1]. Pseudonyms give voice to each participant; her individual lived experiences of survival and endurance, which were shared with the researcher. The findings were then located within the interpretive phenomenological paradigm. Through the phenomenological and feminist perspectives, the participants' accounts of abuse were explored and interpreted in a meaningful, ethical and attentive manner.

The Participants

Table 2:

Demographics of the Participants

Participants	No. of years in abusive relationship	Race	Age
Annie (I. 1)	5	Indian	28
Jenny (I. 2)	4.5	Indian	44
Valerie (I. 3)	30	Indian	57
Joyce (I .4)	25	Black	44
Lilly (I. 5)	10.5	Black	41
Nancy (I. 6)	5	Indian	24
Razia (I. 7)	15+	Indian	42
Samantha (I. 8)	9	White	30

Interview 1 (I. 1): Annie

Annie is almost 30 years old whose family lived in another province. She lived an isolated life in KwaZulu-Natal and was thus vulnerable to abuse. Annie was in her early twenties when she met her husband at a shopping centre where they worked. Their friendship eventually turned to love as they got closer discussing his marriage problems. He used his

failed marriage and the custody battle for his daughter to get Annie's sympathy. Annie now lives with her son and has applied for a divorce.

Annie was of the Islamic faith and her husband Hindu. She converted to Hindu without her family's knowledge which is considered a grave sin in Islam**.** Deserting Islam is defined as 'riddah' which means that one has deserted 'his' religion under compulsion (Douki et al., 2003). Her husband did not appreciate Annie's tremendous sacrifice.

Annie's abuse began during her pregnancy. This was the first warning signs of the abuse to follow. After their son was born, Annie's husband was often drunk and abusive. Annie had a serious health issue, and the violence she experienced aggravated her medical condition. She felt completely alone, and his parents were of no help to her during the abusive episodes. Annie remained until the final violent attack, almost losing her life. She remained with her husband for five years before exiting the relationship. The interview took place two years after Annie had left her husband. Annie revealed that she was now happy and confident and was looking forward to a bright future with her son.

Interview 2 (I. 2): Jenny

Jenny had remained with her abusive partner for four and a half years before leaving him. She is now in her early 40s. She has two children and is currently happily married in her second relationship. Jenny's father was very abusive, which made life unbearable for Jenny as a child. She completed her matric and eloped at the age of 17. Her boyfriend was her first love, and she loved the attention he gave her. However, Jenny's expectation of trust, love and happiness with her partner was another environment for abuse. The abuse got worse with time, and Jenny often prayed for a day free of assault.

Her husband's manipulative and erratic behaviour patterns made her feel as if she was going insane. She realised that he had other girlfriends and was happy when he focussed on

them. Jenny blamed herself for all the abuse and did not confide in her family. Then again, he refused to allow her any contact with family or friends.

Jenny would go to work with bruises on her face and body. She left work when the bruises could not be hidden any more. Jenny left her husband on a few occasions but always returned due to his threats to kill her and her family. Jenny finally left her husband when she discovered that another woman was pregnant with his child.

Interview 3 (I.3): Valerie

Valerie is in her late 50s. She lived a life of abuse and violence for almost 30 years. She had been separated from her husband for six years at the time of the interview. Valerie is from a loving, supportive family with strong family values. She has a finance degree and has a successful career which began during the final years of her abusive marriage. Valerie's experiences are indicative of the fact that a woman with the highest self-esteem, who is financially stable and has a loving family, can also find herself trapped in an abusive relationship.

Valerie has four children. She met her husband after she had completed her grade 12 and it was love at first sight. After marriage, Valerie realised that he was not the person she had thought him to be. The physical abuse began every time he got drunk. On one occasion he attempted to attack Valerie and their two young daughters with a cane-knife. He had also once held a gun to her head with a threat to kill her. Valerie left him whenever the abuse became intolerable. However, he was aware of her vulnerability and was good at manipulating Valerie to return.

Valerie attempted suicide on a couple of occasions when she felt she could not tolerate the abuse and his extra-marital affairs. She started working again and eventually became the sole breadwinner in the family after he lost his job. Finally, Valerie could not ignore the effect of the abuse on the children and left him.

Interview 4 (I. 4): Joyce

Joyce is in her early 40s and is currently separated from her abusive partner. Her husband was still paying lobola, and he was her first and only love. They have four children. Her husband has been abusing her for many years, especially when he was under the influence of alcohol. He was aware that Joyce has a hearing problem. He became very angry and assaulted her when she could not hear him. This made her feel depressed and worthless. He also shouted at the children and chased them from the house. Joyce refused to have sex with him as he had attempted to have sex without a condom, and she knew this was dangerous to her health. Joyce was scared to get HIV/Aids because she knew he was capable of being unfaithful whenever he was intoxicated.

During an abusive episode, he had stabbed her, which resulted in Joyce being in constant pain. She had maintained a steady employment as jobs are important for dignity and self-worth but had no option but to resign because of the abuse she was experiencing at home. All the abuse that she had gone through has resulted in Joyce getting constant headaches and has made her feel confused and unsettled at work and home. Joyce remained with her husband for more than 20 years in the hope that he would change but she realised that this would never happen. Joyce was scared that her children would be left without a mother if she continued living with him as she feared for her life. She now leads a peaceful life with her children and a life free of violence.

Interview 5 (I. 5): Lilly

Lilly is in her early 40s and had a younger boyfriend who is unemployed. She has a daughter studying in another province. Lilly takes care of her 14-month-old grandson and her sister's three children. Lilly is a widow, currently separated from her boyfriend. She had two abusive relationships after her husband's death.

Her mother had lived with abuse and violence for almost 30 years. She had advised Lilly to remain with her first boyfriend despite him being abusive and violent. Whenever Lilly refused him sex, he resorted to raping her. Years later, Lilly discovered that he had infected her with HIV. Lilly had then told him to leave and continued with her antiretroviral treatment.

Years later, Lilly found herself involved in another abusive relationship. They had been dating for about three weeks when Lilly noticed changes in his behaviour. He was violent and abusive instead of the charming and attentive partner that he had been initially. Lilly has been to court to apply for a protection order against her second boyfriend. She had remained with him for more than a year before realising that he was never going to stop the abuse.

Interview 6 (I.6): Nancy

Nancy is in her early 20s and has a two-year-old son. She is currently separated from her husband. Nancy's husband continued to harass and assault her after their separation. She went to court to apply for a protection order against him.

Nancy had met her husband after leaving school and was overwhelmed with the love and attention that he showed her. After a few months of marriage, he began borrowing money from her. Soon, Nancy noticed that money was missing from her bank account, and he was not at work whenever she called. After about five months of marriage, Nancy discovered that the money he was constantly demanding and stealing, was for drugs. He was addicted to the drug commonly called 'sugars'. 'Sugars' is the street name of a popular drug in South Africa which is highly addictive with a poor rate of recovery. His drug addiction eventually led to him living on the streets.

Nancy had remained with him for nearly five years. After the separation, Nancy had to apply for a protection order against him because while he assaulted her, he threw a pot of

boiling water on her when she did not have money to give him. Nancy had revealed the red scald marks on her body to the researcher. Nancy has realised that he does not care about her and their son due to his drug addiction. She now lives in fear of him as she has seen how much he has changed in the time that she has known him.

Interview 7 (I. 7): Razia

Razia is in her early 40s, married with four children. Razia met her husband while working as a maid. The abuse began before they were married and increased during the marriage. Razia had no one to turn to for help. She has been married for 15 years and continues to live with her abusive partner. Razia had tried to look for employment, but it was difficult since she did not matriculate. Her husband Riaz (pseudonym), used to tell her that she was useless and uneducated. Razia had applied for a protection order, but this had made the abuse worse. After a while, when Razia could not tolerate the abuse any further, she ran away to a shelter. Two years later, Razia returned for the sake of her children who pleaded with her to never leave them again.

Razia's husband used to hit her with whatever he could get his hands on. There were occasions when he assaulted her until her nose or mouth bled. She even became aware that her husband was having an affair, but she felt that this gave him less time to abuse her.

Razia used to beg for groceries from their neighbours when they had no money. There were times when Razia contemplated suicide. Razia remains with her husband as she has no one and no other place which to go. She continues to hope that her husband will become less abusive as he gets older.

Interview 8 (I. 8): Samantha

Samantha is in her 30s and has three children. Samantha is currently separated from her husband after nine years of marriage. Samantha's mother and sister live in other provinces. She had no friends or family in KwaZulu-Natal. It was especially difficult for

Samantha as she was white, and he was Indian. Their lifestyles were very different. He made all the decisions in their relationship. He found fault with everything that Samantha did, and she could only associate with friends whom he chose. Her husband thought his behaviour was normal because his father had treated his mother this way: he did not view it as abusive. Whenever they went out with friends, he would get jealous for no reason at all. To Samantha's horror, he had once called her a 'whore' and kicked and assaulted her in the presence of their friends. When they went home, he had dragged her to the room and raped her. Samantha had no one she could turn to for support.

Samantha neglected her appearance and ate to put on weight so that he would stop getting jealous. Samantha once sought comfort in alcohol in order to be able to cope with the pretence that everything was normal. After leaving her husband, Samantha felt heartbroken at the ending of her marriage, but at the same time, she feels a sense of freedom from a life of abuse and violence.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the discussion will concentrate on the central themes that emerged from interviewing the eight participants in the study. The main themes that emerged from the analysis are the factors influencing gender-based violence, the barriers to leaving abusive relationships and the impact of gender-based violence on their lives.

The experiences of the participants living in physically abusive relationships are explored in the semi-structured interviews. Listening to the women talk about their experiences, it became clear to the researcher that an abuser does not have to physically keep a woman as a prisoner; there are concealed barriers which bind her to an abusive relationship. These include being manipulated by her abuser, isolation from possible support networks, futile responses by social and legal services, lack of alternative housing, a lack of funds, her own personal safety and that of her family. Hence, the complexities surrounding the reasons

contributing to these participants remaining and enduring the abuse are identified. The three pertinent thematic categories mentioned above were then split into sub-themes and described further, elucidating the aims and objectives of the study.

Theme 1 Factors Influencing Gender-Based Violence

The findings of this study suggest that gender-based violence is caused by multiple factors which suggest that there are many risk factors for violence and that violence can take many different forms. It could present in the form of isolated acts of emotional abuse or systematic incessant patterns of physical violence combined with emotional abuse.

The participants in this study highlighted a combination of several factors that resulted in a life of abuse. When exploring this theme on a deeper level, the following three sub-themes emerged: childhood exposure to violence in the home; jealousy and controlling behaviours of the abuser, and the influence of alcohol and substance abuse in intimate relationships.

Childhood Exposure to Violence in the Home. This sub-theme explores the subjective interpretations of the participants' childhood experiences of abuse and illustrates how this influenced their choice in romantic partners. Growing up in a home characterised by abuse may influence a woman's choice on a life-partner as an adult. Many of the participants reflected on their upbringing and how it was characterised by abuse. Lilly (I. 5) said that "Because my mother was staying in the same relationship with my father since I was young, but I can see it. He will not change … She went through a lot of violence all the time." Lilly's father had been abusive towards her mother for more than 30 years until his death. Lilly had two abusive relationships. Her childhood experiences had eventually helped her to realise that it would be futile to hope for her abusive partners to change.

Similarly, Jenny (I. 2) explained that her father was very abusive to her mother. "that's why it became unbearable. I think that's what pushed me more out of the house. And

then it's like coming from the pot into the fire." Jenny left her childhood home of abuse and violence only to find herself trapped in a relationship with a higher level of violence. She explains how she found herself in a worse situation with her boyfriend than with her father. "it started getting very bad where I was abused physically, mentally. I got hiding with a bat, with a baseball bat, with a cricket bat. I've got twelve stitches on my head, that's how bad it was."

Samantha (I. 8) also spoke of her childhood exposure to violence at home. "My mum left my dad because he was a very violent and abusive person."

The participants' felt that their exposure to violence in their family of origin may have influenced their later relationships.

The findings of the current study was supported by the research conducted by Callaghan et al. (2018); Kitzmann et al. (2003); Whitfied et al. (2003) who argued that violent childhood experiences increased the risk of victimisation by their male partners in adulthood approximately two-fold. It is not uncommon for girls raised in abusive homes to end up with an abusive partner.

According to Butler (1988; 1990; 2016), acts and non-verbal communication are performative, as they serve to define and maintain identities where becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal. In the study, the participants who had an abusive parent portrayed their childhood lives of abuse into adulthood. By drawing on Butler's (1988; 1990; 2016) concept of performativity, one sees how gender roles that were enacted in the home of the family of origin, is validated by the participants' responses to abuse in their adult life. The participants' exposure to their parent's behaviour patterns was highly influential in shaping their individual behaviour, including their submission to their own abusive husbands. These gender roles are prescribed as ideal or appropriate behaviour for children. One can surmise that the participants performed what they witnessed from their mothers' behaviours. The

participants tried to save their relationships and lived in hope of their partners changing, which was similar to their mothers' response to abuse.

Jealousy and Controlling Behaviours of the Abusers. The understandings derived from the experiences of the participants describe a pattern of behaviour that most abusers follow to take control of every aspect of their partner's lives. Jealousy and controlling behaviour patterns of abusers were strongly referenced in the participants' experiences of abuse. The participants were also exposed to their abusers' rapid mood swings which alternated between violence and apologetic loving behaviour with promises to change. Lilly (I. 5) told the researcher, "Before, I was working for a construction company where there were lots of men workers. Because it's a construction, then we meet each and every people. Then I was not allowed to talk to them … I have to leave the job." Lilly was forbidden to talk to anyone else. She had to leave work because she worked in a male-dominated industry. She was warned by her husband not to talk to anyone at work, which placed her in an impossible situation.

This behaviour is also clear in Annie's experiences with her husband.

> He used to phone, ask me what I'm doing, and he was a very possessive kind of a man. Even if you talking on the phone to your sisters, it's like you're not talking to your sister, there was some man that you were talking to, he used to phone, who I'm talking to, who I'm busy with, why I never answer my phone, why it takes me so long to answer my phone. (Annie, I. 1)

Annie's experiences are an example of an abusive relationship characterised by frequent phone calls to investigate what she was doing; to check up on her. At this stage of the interview, Annie spoke fast and looked upset. She was very frustrated as she spoke about her husband's insistence on knowing her whereabouts throughout the day which indicated how overwhelmed and claustrophobic she had felt by his possessiveness. Power, control and

dominance of Annie and Lilly's partners over them are evident from their experiences. Their abusers wanted to control every aspect of their lives, including their whereabouts and employment. This control enhanced the participants' subordination and dependence on their abusers.

According to Adams et al. (2013), abusers often discourage their partners from working or entering into any social arena because they fear that their control over their partners may be threatened. Similarly, studies by Barnett (2001) and Kaur and Garg (2008) revealed that abusers use a pattern of coercive control which highlights that relationships of dominance enhance the suppression of women making them dependent on their abusers.

In contrast, the findings also illustrate the socially charming and charismatic behaviour of the abusers, which served to disarm the abused, revealing misplaced trustworthiness and credibility. The participants provided an account of how their partners initially behaved in a loving manner which made them believe in the possibility of them being capable of not being abusive. According to Valerie (I. 3), "It was love at first sight. He swept me off my feet. We had a two-year courtship. Perfect behaviour. My fairy-tale." Similarly, Samantha (I. 8) said, "He was charming. Very charming. We worked together for a few years."

Valerie and Samantha were initially showered with praise, love and attention. Valerie's face lit with joy when she reminisced about their courtship and their fairy-tale romance. Even Samantha was misled by her husband's charming behaviour when they worked together. Both Valerie and Samantha saw no signs of their partners' abusive behaviour during their courtship. According to Antai (2011) and Jewkes et al. (2002), an abuser's charm and charisma are part of the intent to deceive and manipulate. Abusers are thus not easy to identify during the courtship phase and this is reflected by some of the

participants. Six of the eight women interviewed spoke of their abusers loving behaviour at the beginning of their relationships.

After an abusive incident, Valerie's husband would appear contrite, apologise and claim ignorance of the abuse. Her husband never revealed his violent side to his friends and extended family. According to Valerie (I.3), "Other people see this person as the most loving, kind person ... they have two faces … if you're gonna ask their friends and colleagues, they'll say this person is really such a lovely person." Abusers rarely reveal who they really are to their family and friends (Weiss, 2000). In the same way, Samantha's husband expected life to continue as normal after apologising. He felt that his apologies were all that was needed to placate her. Samantha (I. 8) said, "Then he'll just … if I say I'm sorry or … no matter how many times I repeated it before, then the moment he decides it's okay now, then it's all just okay."

Butler (2001) defined this control over women, on what it is to be a woman, as the very existence of women's lives as something decided by men. Gender-based violence is substantially a product of gender inequality and the lesser status that is afforded to women compared to men in society. Butler and Berbec (2017) and Flood and Pease (2009) emphasised that women are socialised into roles that reinforce their subordination. Butler's account is useful for understanding how control of women further marginalises women whose position is already precarious. Butler (2009), speaks of forms of power into a discursive performance as a way of being. Under Butler's account, the agency implies a social agency, which is someone exhibiting actions that are already publicly identifiable. Thus, the participants in the study exhibit submission and acceptance of the jealous and controlling behaviours of their abusers and still maintain the integrity of their gender. Therefore, for Butler, gender is performative. Gender has become embedded in our institutions, our very own actions, beliefs, and desires, that it appears to us to be completely

natural. There are gender-specific forms of subjugation affecting the participants in the study. Valerie (I.3) mentions that her husband "wouldn't approve of if the men are sitting and talking to the women … because the women in his family are all housewives.". Valerie was expected to act her role of a housewife and refrain from conversing with the men in the family. Samantha (I.8) also talks of her expected gender role in order to please her husband ", if I don't cook if he comes home, I'm a lazy woman." According to Lilly (I.5), her husband frowned upon her talking to other men "I was working for a construction company where there were lots of men … I was not allowed to talk to them." The participants were expected to conduct themselves in a manner based upon their husbands' expectations of how females should behave.

Butler's theory of performativity is necessary for understanding how women negotiate their gender identities within the home and conform to their gender scripts, norms and expectations as set down by the participants' abusers (Butler, 2009; Butler & Berbec, 2017).

The Influence of Alcohol and Substance Abuse in Intimate Relationships. The findings of the study revealed that nearly all the participants had partners that abused either alcohol or drugs. This theme corresponds with the literature on the extent to which alcohol and drug dependency of abusers serve as a serious precipitating, aggravating factor in the abuse of women. Razia's (I. 7) words show this clearly when she says, "He starts taking drugs, and then he gets over vicious, and then he wants to attack us." Joyce (I. 4) talks about the influence of alcohol on her husband's behaviour:

> He's drinking too much alcohol. Sometimes, you call me as a stupids woman, sometimes you tell me I'm a woman as similar as like a dog. Sometimes he hits me, keeping the knife … he was keeping a knife to stab me here [hand]. He going to drink. Buying the petrol, after that, he's coming to destroying my house.

The lived experiences of the participants convey that their partners' propensity for violence was exacerbated when they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Hence, the confluence of domestic violence and substance abuse created an extremely dangerous situation for both Razia and Joyce.

In the case of Razia, it can be seen how her home is not a place of safety for her. Testa (2004) stated that abusers frequently choose symbols of safety or freedom, such as breaking a door, car or telephone. Extensive research has identified alcohol abuse to be positively associated with violence against an intimate partner (Fals-Stewart, 2003; Graham & West, 2001; Peralta et al., 2010; Shorey et al., 2014). Likewise, Gilchrist and Hegarty (2017) and Jewkes (2002) identified that chronic drug abuse is associated with elevated risk for intimate partner violence. The findings of other studies are in line with the current study as they show that alcohol and drug abuse aggravate gender-based violence (Fals-Stewart, 2003; Smith Elwyn, Ireland, & Thornberry, 2010).

Here the concept of Butler's (2004; 2009) precarity denotes the lived experiences of the women characterised by abuse, uncertainty and instability that render them more vulnerable to violence when their partners consume alcohol or drugs. Butler (2004) took the bold step of considering all human life precarious. Precariousness, in this sense, implies the women's dependency upon their abusive partner. The resultant experience of enhanced precariousness created by the abusers consuming alcohol or drugs is what Butler calls precarity. In the specific context of the study, Butler's concept of precarity allows us to think about the relationship between different forms of precarity that frame the lives of the women living with abuse. Hence, the participants in the study, especially when they have no control over their partners' drug or alcohol habits, embody precarity (Butler, 2004; 2009; Butler & Spivak, 2007)

Theme 2: The Barriers to Leaving their Abusive Relationships Barriers to a violent free life can seem insurmountable to women living with abuse. Every woman's situation is unique, and she may be unable to leave an abusive relationship for a complex combination of reasons. This theme addresses the main objective of this study which is to explore the barriers that prevent heterosexual women from leaving abusive relationships.

The barriers identified in this study served to immobilise the participants' and influenced their decisions to remain in their abusive relationships. Jenny (I.2) says, "He put fear in me … that fear also made me stay." Razia also speaks of her confinement with her abuser "I used to keep quiet … I'll go in the room, and I'll start crying … fifteen years of my life I'm staying … I'm not allowed to go bang door to door for anything." The sub-themes that emerged from this theme are victim manipulation, financial abuse, isolation from support networks and stakeholder responses to gender-based violence.

Victim Manipulation. Many of the participants indicated that part of the reason for staying in the abusive relationship stemmed from the hope that their partner would change. Findings from this theme indicate that the participants loved their partners and some expressed concern about their partner's well-being. Some participants felt that the abuse was due to their own behaviour and thus blamed themselves for the abusive episodes while the abusers portrayed themselves as victims.

> Between day and night, he just twisted around and he was okay, yes, I love you, I'll see you later. There was love. He's charming. And then, after that, I'll say the children. The children and the belief of thinking that we can work through it, we can try and fix each other. (Samantha, I. 8)

Samantha had been convinced of the possibility of her husband changing. This belief was instrumental in her remaining with him for nine years. Her husband's manipulative tactics of contrasting behaviours of love and violence coerced Samantha into believing that

there was a possibility of him changing. His ability to exude charm and love after a violent episode made him seem remorseful.

Joyce (I. 4) describes her feelings of hope: “I think maybe, one of the days we are going to be changed … I’m still staying.”

Joyce had remained with her husband for 25 years due to an abiding hope that he would change. She believed that they could one day become a loving couple and this hope served as a barrier to her leaving sooner. Eventually, Joyce could not tolerate further abuse to her and the children and went to court to apply for a warrant for his arrest. Joyce could not protect herself from the abuse but became distressed when her children were affected and harmed by the abuse. Her priority was to protect her children. Her concern was about the impact of the children’s exposure to violence in their homes.

Annie (I.1) initially felt that she could help her husband to change: “I wanted to put him right instead of just take my things and go away. … I wanted to help him, stand by him, and try to help him to understand that what you are doing is wrong.” Lilly also had hope that her abusive partners could change: “It’s difficult sometimes when you love someone, maybe told yourself that maybe it will change ... I tried to make them change.”

The participants in this study consistently cite similar reasons for remaining in abusive relationships; an abiding hope that he will change. Zimmerman (1990) called this outcome learned hopefulness, which is an abused woman’s ongoing belief that her partner will change. However, according to Antai (2011) and Romito (2008), as much as a woman may care about her partner, she cannot change the character of the person who abuses her.

The violent phase is often followed by a calm, loving or honeymoon phase during which the abuser becomes apologetic and manipulates the woman with promises of change (Walker, 1999). Abusive partners are skilled at coercion and manipulation. An abuser knows that apologising will make him seem remorseful (Jewkes et al., 2002). The lived experiences

of the participants entwined meanings associated with the contrasting and manipulative behaviours of violence and love to which they were subjected. According to the literature, numerous promises of change and vacillations between periods of abuse and calm results in women grappling with their partners' behaviour, questioning aspects of themselves and their relationships (Lipshitz & Ekström, 2006; Walker, 1999). Based on the findings of Kriegel (2009) it can be emphasised that phenomenology has the task of uncovering the phenomena of gender-based violence implicit in the participants' relationships.

> That was the first time he slapped the child. So, he felt so bad about it, the next thing I know there he was, pulling my hair and taking it all out on me, and blaming me. Then he quit that job, and that was his last opportunity at being employed. He quit that job that he had a company vehicle and everything. And then he blamed it on me, and I felt guilty because maybe I should have let him stay in the house eventually, …he did come back in and all of that. (Valerie, I. 3)

According to Valerie's words above, her husband blamed her for when he had slapped their daughter instead of accepting that he was at fault. "That was the first time he slapped the child. She expresses that he made her feel guilty for his violent behaviour when he assaulted their daughter. When he lost his job, he led Valerie to believe that she was at fault for that as well. As a result, Valerie felt guilty and allowed him back into their home.

The findings of the current study are in line with the study conducted by Harsey et al. (2017) that reveal abusers typically blame others for their mistakes. This occurs because most abusers do not hold themselves as being accountable for their actions. Instead, they will say that victims deserve the abuse or are a cause of the abuse. Harsey et al. (2017) identified that abusers often use a strategy of Deny, Attack and Reverse Victim and Offender (DARVO) to confuse, intimidate and silence their victims. It is used as a manipulative strategy to establish the victims' feelings of self-blame. Koss, White and Lopez (2017) claimed that experiencing

victim-blaming can be shocking, demoralising and is about self-preservation. People in society generally think that women did something to encourage abuse.

Annie speaks of her mother-in-law blaming her when she tried to defend herself from the violence and abuse:

> She told me you need to come and apologise to me because what you did to my son was not right … I always said to myself, what about when your son hits me? .... they [his parents] never, ever said that they will help me …. and then I went to her [his mother] and I said … I'm sorry

The message is that it is the responsibility of women to avoid abuse if only they are careful enough. A significant task of the feminist perspective has been to question and refute such claims. Feminists are emphatic on their stance that a woman's dressing, where she chooses to go and her choice of company, or the sexual choices she has previously made have any relevance to whether she should be seen as having encouraged the abuse. Another essential point is that feminists contend that abuse of women must be understood as an important by-product of patriarchy. Feminists view abuse as arising from patriarchal constructions of gender within the context of a dominant system of men's power and emphasise the harm that it causes to women.

The world, from the point of view of women, is socially constituted, where their diverse experiences still need to be expressed (Butler, 2004). According to Butler (2004), to be a woman is, in reality, to be oppressed and this, in turn, makes a woman vulnerable to abuse and violence. According to Butler (2009) the concept of gender performativity:

> presupposes that norms are acting on us before we have a chance to act at all and that when we do act, we recapitulate these norms that act upon us perhaps in new or unexpected ways, but still in relation to norms that precede us and exceed us (p. iv).

The performativity of gender has everything to do with who counts as a life, who can be understood as a living being (Butler, 2009). In this way women perform their gender by giving men the benefit of the doubt, having an ongoing belief that their abusive partners will change and hold themselves accountable for their abusers' actions. These beliefs work against women who become trapped by violent men (Butler, 2004). When women hope that their partners will change, when they believe that they are at fault for the abuse, it reveals the tenuousness of gender reality in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms (Butler, 2004).

Isolation from Support Networks. This sub-theme refers to how the participants were isolated from all forms of social support, which included their family, friends and neighbours. They were not allowed to visit or talk to their family and friends that could have supported them. The intention of abusers is to weaken and distance women from social networks. This lack of support and isolation is made clear by the following participants:

> Speaking to his parents shouldn't help. I could not phone my father; I couldn't phone my sister ... my brothers and tell them this is what's going on. He'll go and tell my sisters and my brothers, your sister said like this about you and your sister … my brother was so angry he just stopped speaking to me for one year. (Annie, I. 1)
>
> When I had my son, my family used to come to see me. He will be hitting me not to go ... I must sit quietly in the room, and he'll tell them, no, no one is here. He hit me as I was walking up the stairs. And the neighbours were shocked. He hit me and … dragged me by my hair, why I had to go to my family ... I never used to go with him in public, maybe because I know I will catch hiding. (Jenny, I. 2)
>
> When we moved to Durban, obviously I was then in his territory, so he would not have to cut off so many of my friends or family. There are one or two friends that I made out of my own through work or social events which he has banned me from

> seeing, and then there are only mutual friends that we had that he tries to make me be friends with, their wives or their partners. (Samantha, I. 8)

Annie had no one to turn to for support. Her in-laws were indifferent to the abuse. Annie's isolation from her family is one of the main manifestations of psychological violence, through actions that weakened her support network to prevent her from maintaining relationships with her family. Similarly, Jenny's husband would hit her in the presence of neighbours as punishment for visiting her family. Her husband limited her space to the home environment, subjecting her to routine activities in the home. Samantha's husband's isolation tactics aimed to undermine her life and identity outside the relationship that fostered a sense of dependency on him. He even decided with whom she could be friends.

These abusers were intent on damaging the participants' relationships with people with whom they maintained emotional ties. Instead, the participants were forced into a situation of isolation and helplessness. The participants did not establish any relationship with other people for fear that it might give rise to new episodes of violence, exacerbated by jealousy from their intimate partners. The experiences of violence and abuse were similar amongst all the participants' even though their ages, economic backgrounds and levels of literacy were different. All the participants were isolated from support networks by their abusers and they all experienced some degree of financial dependence on their abusers while they lived with them. The women all expressed concern about their children and the harmful effects of their exposure to violence and abuse. The women's ages ranged from 28 to 57 years and the number of years that they remained with their abusers ranged from four and a half years to 30 years. Each woman's level of dependency on her abuser and tolerance level to the violence was different. Seven of the eight women have left their abusers, but one participant continues to live with her abuser as she is completely dependent on her abuser financially and has no support system available to her.

When applied to the current study, the experiences of the participants highlight how isolation harmed their relationships with people to whom they could have turned for assistance, as well as with institutions that could provide support (Barnett, 2001; Cohen & Walthall, 2003). Johnson (2006) identified that abusers resent the time that women spend with others. When the abuser forbids his partner from working, studying, talking to friends or relatives, he becomes successful in inserting emotional wedges between the victim and a possible support network.

According to Barker & Ricardo (2005), any behaviour of men to control women are the first attitudes that result in the woman remaining in her individuality and isolating herself. When women lose their individuality, they are unable to think for themselves and become dependent on the abuser. Eventually, the victim finds it too difficult to connect with others due to the abuser's embarrassing behaviour. The findings of Antai (2011) identified that the abused can also isolate themselves or remain exclusively dependent on their abusive partners, due to their social environment where the elements of their network may be indifferent and apathetic to their vulnerability.

According to Butler and Berbec (2017), the abuse of women and their oppression is one way of establishing the femininity of the victim. It is an attempt to define the very existence of women's lives as something decided by men, as a masculine prerogative. The abusers' attempt to isolate the participants from any support network increased the women's marginalisation within society as they became increasingly isolated.

Financial Abuse. The current study identified the economic difficulties women encountered within their violent relationships and their level of education as a contributing factor towards remaining or exiting an abusive relationship. This sub-theme describes how many of the participants were dependent on their partner's income. The sub-theme shows how the participants' partners controlled their ability to acquire, use and maintain financial

resources. The participants were either prevented from working, had their own money restricted or stolen by the abuser, had little or no access to money or other resources and often had to account for every cent they spent. For those participants who were financially dependent on their abusive partners, the decision of leaving the abusive relationship becomes difficult. Their reasons centred on a lack of academic qualifications or working experience or both.

> No, eye shadow, lipsticks and all, and I got no money to buy, and he'll have … sometimes he'll have the money. Now, I will ask. I'll say, Riaz [pseudonym for Razia's husband], please buy a lipstick for me. Now, with him now, go and work and get your own money. (Razia, I. 7)

> Every six months, my boss used to give me a bonus. I'm collecting my bonus and I said I wanna go get my licence. He was like, no, you not gonna do your licence. We gonna take this money and we gonna go out. (Annie, I. 1)

Razia had to go without food and other necessities because she had no money. Her husband's insults lowered her self-esteem and self-worth. Annie was not earning enough as a cashier to be financially independent. Her husband made all the financial decisions in their relationship and she was subjected to restrictions on the use of her own meagre earnings. Annie (I.1) felt that she had no control over her own earnings. She could not fulfil her own ambition but had to comply with what he wanted to be done with her money.

Economic dependence of women is reinforced with minimal literacy, such as with Annie, Razia and Joyce, resulting in them earning a low or no income at all (Adams et al., 2013; Showalter, 2016). It is, therefore, unsurprising that even though abused women may fear for their lives, lack of access to financial income has been consistently identified as an obstacle to leaving abusive men (Kaur & Garg, 2008; Krug et al., 2002; Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Wood & Ridgeway, 2010).

Butler (2016) is opposed to all restrictive and violent measures that regulate and restrict a woman's life. There are certain types of freedoms and practices that are essential for human flourishing. According to Butler (1999), any excessive restriction of gender limits or undermines the capacity of humans to flourish. In the present study, the restrictive measures put in place to prevent women from flourishing are financial abuse and isolation tactics.

Stakeholder Responses to Gender-Based Violence. This sub-theme depicts the responses of legal and social stakeholders to abuse within the state and civil society. This was a dominant theme in the study as it highlighted the crucial role of legal and social services offered to the participants.

Social Responses to Gender-Based Violence. Social responses to gender-based violence in the study fall under the categories of family, friends and the social practice of patriarchy. Socialised roles of gender are a common trait of women in the study. The women in the study are socialised to be subordinate and submissive to their abusers (Flood & Pease, 2009; Pingley, 2017). This phenomenon explains how women are socialised to be victims and live in constant fear of their abusers. This tradition by which men are known to violate, control and dominate females, is supported by the concept of patriarchy (Coetzee, 2001; Wood, 2019). However, patriarchy does not operate in a vacuum. Social practices are deeply embedded in a disciplinary culture within communities that condone or even encourage violence (Flood & Pease, 2006; Veneklasen et al., 2002). The following participants' experiences demonstrate how families can condone violence against women:

> He was trying to paying the lobola. So, my mother was very, very old, but you are not telling me, if my husband, you doing like this, paying the lobola … I must doing like this because you are so old. You telling me maybe you … my husband, you're gonna be changed. I'm still staying. (Joyce, I. 4)

> I tried to tell my mother about the abuse, but she always telling me that, if the man supports you, give you everything that you want, then there's no way that you can go out. You have to stay and be a good wife to him. (Lilly, I. 5)

Joyce's mother needed her daughter to remain in her marriage despite the abuse, in order to obtain the lobola payments. As a result of Joyce's husband paying lobola, she had to tolerate the abuse as expected of her by her mother. Similarly, Lilly's mother had also advised her to remain with her partner and be a good wife despite the abuse. Keeping the family intact can sometimes be of more importance to the women's families. This also speaks loudly of the cultural value and respect that the women have for their parents. The denial of family members or their refusal to assist the victim can also serve as a barrier to women leaving abusive relationships. Family members are an important source of support to the victim experiencing abuse and their lack of support can leave the victim without any hope of the abuse abating (Parker, 2015).

Women are placed at risk in relation to men when it involves cultural practices such as lobola, ukuthwala and dowry systems (Flood &Pease, 2009). The woman's family may refuse to get involved when their daughter is experiencing abuse because they may not be able to return the lobola to the men's family (Ansell 2001; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Wagner, 2010). Women endure abuse and find it extremely difficult to rebel as a result of traditional socialisation (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). However, a parent's decision to not interfere in their child's marriage because they are unable to return the lobola money on some occasions is not a social norm. According to Parker (2015), some traditions do allow for men to get back the lobola money paid.

Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) highlighted that men are socialised into keeping women subordinate through the use of violence within a patriarchal culture. Families also played a distinctive role and was a primary place of socialisation for the women. (Koenig, 2018) The

women of the research had learned social beliefs either through observations of violence in their families of origin or from their social customs. In most cases gender-based violence continued from one generation to another. Parents can sometimes prefer to keep the family structure intact and would advise their daughters to remain married to their abusers despite the violence their daughters were subjected to. Families feel a greater duty to keep the family together based on their heightened sense of interconnectedness (Asay et al., 2015). Hence, families can also be a strong training ground for these socialisation processes, which sets the rules of acceptance and submitting to violence by their partners (Koenig, 2018).

However, when women do what they have been taught to do; stand by their man, take care of their children, they are then blamed for staying (Flood & Pease, 2009). Institutional and societal level factors such as gender roles and media surrounding the abuse of women contribute to an overall environment promoting victim blame (Harsey et al., 2017). Victim-blaming increases women's sense of threat and defensiveness. When women living with abuse are exposed to victim-blaming, the experience may effectively silence their voices, rendering them silent and powerless. (Furusa &Limberg, 2015).

Butler (2004) argued that social norms and culturally imposed ideas can keep a woman from having a viable life and is one of the biggest concerns about whether a woman will be accepted if her actions differ from the norm. Thus, woman functions not as an equal but as support derived from and dependent on men. She stated that one may feel the need of being recognised in order to live, but that at the same time, the conditions to be visible make life unliveable. The participants in the study remained with their abusive partners in order to abide by the social norms even though their lives were unliveable. This signifies how difficult the consequences of going against these norms are, that the women would rather endure such abuse, highlighting the destructiveness of such norms.

Legal Responses to Gender-Based Violence. The state has the primary responsibility and obligation for addressing gender violence. The legal and policy framework form an important part of responding to gender violence while enabling the provision of justice for women living with abuse. However, many of the participants were unhappy with the legal responses they received when they needed assistance as the following reveals:

> The next morning, I went to the police station again, I want to open a charge, then I told them I won't … this is the third time I came there. I said it's the third time, I need help and I said I won't drop the charges. (Nancy, I. 6)

Nancy had been to the police station on three occasions but was denied assistance because the police officers were of the opinion that it was a family matter and had insisted that as the abuser's wife, she would surely withdraw the charges. Instead, of the police assisting Nancy, they sent her to court to apply for a protection order.

> I'm carrying this protection order ... My husband is still not stop it to abusing me. He still continued … he signs it but he still continued to abusing me. I've decided to go to Legal Aid … The lawyer, he said it's better to tell the police, to put in the court. (Joyce, I. 4)

Joyce's husband continued to abuse her after the police had served him with the protection order. The protection order placed her at greater risk of violence. Protection orders can sometimes have an adverse effect by compounding the violence at home instead of ending or alleviating it. In some instances, protection orders may end the physical violence but exacerbate psychological abuse (Furusa & Limberg, 2015).

Joyce had been to see a legal aid lawyer for help to get her house in her name, but he had advised her to seek the court' assistance. However, the court is not responsible for transferring property to the rightful owner. This is an example of the failure to apply fair and consistent procedures, thus rendering the legal mechanisms in place as ineffective.

With no one to help them, the participants were forced into a situation of isolation, powerlessness and helplessness. These feelings of isolation harmed their relationships with other institutions as well as with people they could have turned to for assistance. Jenny (I.2) says: “He hit me and … dragged me by my hair, why I had to go to my family.”

When exploring the overall theme and its significance, isolation was highlighted as a barrier to the women seeking social support. Several studies stipulate that the failure of SAPS on being compliant was a major issue and it highlighted the reluctance of police officers to make arrests (Martinson & Gamache, 2016). This means that the police are not fulfilling their duty as outlined in Section 2 of the DVA. The role of the SAPS has been heavily scrutinised when it comes to the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (Furusa &Limberg, 2015; Parenzee et al., 2001; Vetten, 2017). When the police do not carry out their constitutional duty and fail to investigate domestic violence, the whole legal process collapses.

According to research by Furusa &Limberg (2015), the main reasons for the withdrawal of protection orders are debilitating feelings, an intense fear of the abuser or an abuser’s false promises to change. Abusers are prone to making the abused feel guilty when they are served with a protection order. Most abusers blame the women, promise that the abuse will never happen again, in order to get the protection orders withdrawn (Furusa & Limberg, 2015).

According to a South African conference report on the DVA (2008), it is evident that protection orders do not always assist the abused where abusers blatantly violate the orders and inflict further abuse upon victims. Furthermore, at the 2008 SA conference, Verster from the Restorative Justice centre stated that women have testified to still feeling unsafe after their partners were served with a protection order (Lopes et al., 2013).

Furthermore, according to Gibbs, Mpani and Pretorius (2015), the unwillingness to intervene in what is considered to be personal family conflict and their discriminatory attitude

has remained pervasive among police officers. Feminism has challenged earlier sociological and psychological models of domestic violence that portrayed abuse as a family problem (Abrahams et al., 2013). Despite criticism, the police remain one of the key frontline services which victims can use when assistance is needed. Currently, over 2 000 complaints of gender-based violence were made to the SAPS in the first seven days of the lockdown from the 27 March 2020 during the worldwide crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNDP Report, 2020).

By using the law, we also have a responsibility to remake the world, and to institute standards of non-violence. Political responsibility must go hand in hand with legal responsibility. The killing of women is very often aided and abetted by both the police and courts who fail to acknowledge the crime, and by a government that refuses to assert the equal rights of women to live their lives without the fear of violence. Social and political institutions are designed to decrease conditions of precarity, especially within the nation-state. However, precarity causes conditions for women to suffer when their social and legal needs are not met. Women are then exposed to abuse, violence, and even death (Butler, 2004; 2009).

Theme 3: The Impact of Gender-Based Violence

The findings of this theme illustrate the psychological effects of gender-based violence such as depression, stress, fear, low self-esteem and emotional problems that the women experienced due to the abuse they were subjected to. Subsequently, the participants emphasised their concern over their children and were deeply troubled by the psychological and behavioural effects of the violence on their children. The sub-themes that emerge from this theme are the effects of gender-based violence on children, learned helplessness and living in fear.

The Impact of Gender-Based Violence on Children. A central finding that was common among all participants was their concern about the impact of the children's exposure to violence in their homes. The women were distressed over the harmful effects of the violence on their children. The participants talked about how difficult and painful it was to see the violence affecting their children's development and the children's subsequent violent and delinquent behaviours including alcohol dependence that stemmed from them witnessing their mothers being abused. Lilly (I. 5) told how "He was trying to beat me with the bottle, and the child was there watching him hitting me … In front of the children, and they will always scream, and cry." The other participants had similar stories to tell:

> He don't care if my children know … he knows those words is not right. He told me, in front of this childrens that he going to burn the house with us, the childrens scared now … childs small one very frightened of the father now. Sometime, my childrens, when you are going to school, you can't understand the teacher because he's thinking of the fighting was lefted at home. (Joyce, I. 4)

> The eldest one [daughter] because she started becoming quite rebellious as a teenager, and with a drink. There's been times she would hang out with the wrong crowd at school. He [the child's father] beat her up from head to toe, he kicked her, and he booted her. The older one would cower in fear, and I would see it. So, today, she is a victim of abuse because she has learned to be submissive, like what I used to be. She's now got this guy who's worse than my husband. (Valerie, I. 3)

This is significant in that it reveals that the participants were desperate to shield their children from abuse and violence but were alone in their struggles to protect themselves from the violence and abuse. The women were understandably focussed on correcting the situation and ending the abuse.

In the above excerpts, Valerie's daughter displayed behavioural problems at home and at school. She became rebellious and began consuming alcohol. Valerie feared that she had been responsible for modelling her victim behaviour onto her daughter. Her daughter's exposure to the violence as a child resulted in her marrying an abuser as well. Similarly, Lilly's children were severely traumatised when they witnessed her being violently assaulted. Joyce's children were affected by their father's threats to burn their home with them in it. Joyce expresses her concerns over the negative impact of the violence on her children at home and at school.

For the women in the study, protecting their children was a high priority, which for some meant leaving. This highlights the participants' attempts to be role models to their children, that the violence occurring in their home was not acceptable behaviour. When it came to protecting their children, the women, after failing to protect themselves from the violence, resolved to end the cycle of violence. The women felt caught up in a cycle without space to access help or gain control; however, they were intent on protecting their children from the harmful effects of witnessing their mothers being abused. To elaborate on this point, it has been highlighted that women are more likely to seek help or end an abusive relationship when their children are at risk for becoming emotionally or physically harmed (Rakovec-Felser, 2014).

The work by Pingley (2017) allows one to see the effects abuse has on children in that they display hypervigilance and hyperarousal, constantly watchful and fearful of danger. The findings of this study are supported by the research conducted by Lloyd (2018), in that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to develop conduct and attention deficit disorders. A similar study by Kitzmann et al. (2003) revealed that children exposed to violence in their homes develop negative psychological, academic, maladaptive peer relationships, social and developmental problems to their well-being.

The participants in the study were all mothers who struggled to protect themselves and their children. The women talked about how difficult and painful it was to see the violence affecting their children's lives and this influenced their decisions to attempt to leave their lives of violence for the safety of their children. The eight participants in the study are women with children who have endured physically abusive relationships. The women talked about how difficult and painful it was to see the violence affecting their children's lives and this influenced their decisions to attempt to leave their lives of violence for the safety of their children. The following are just some of the struggles the women had to cope with:

Nancy (I. 6) talks about how she cannot cope with the abuse any longer and that she needs to protect her child:

> I am so tired. I want him locked up. I can't live like this. He has killed all the … so much love I had for him. I am frightened of him every time that he's coming near me. When he kills me my baby will be alone. I don't want that to happen ... the child doesn't deserve a father like that.

Lilly (I .5) talks of her battles against the abuse and violence in her relationship. To add to her struggles, her boyfriend had lied to her about his HIV status:

> to sleep with him, it was very difficult because I have to do it by force ... the thing that his father [Lilly's boyfriend] is doing ... it's a rape … he didn't tell me … there's the thing that made me get angry … found out that I'm HIV positive as well. In front of the children … and they'll scream and cry … from Saturday, he beat me. On Sunday, he tried to throw the bottle into me … the child was there watching him hitting me … even now, I'm worried about the baby while talking to the court.

The women highlighted their struggles with the power and control that their abusers maintained over them. Hence, in this study, IPA pays cognisance to the way that the women perceive their experiences of violence and abuse. It aims at exploring, understanding and

making sense of participants' personal experiences. This is pertinent in this study as the attempt is to explore and try to understand and make sense of the violence initiated by their partners. The interpretivist paradigm not only captured the shared reality of abuse and violence of the women in the study but also highlighted the women having different experiences of this shared reality. Thus, phenomenological research provided a clear interpretation of the experiences of abuse and violence from each woman's individual perspective as well as the complexities surrounding the reasons and loss of control they experienced in their physically abusive relationships. Equally important, feminism which identifies the magnitude and gravity of gender-based violence, highlighted the issue of male dominance and control over the women in the study. The use of feminism in the study accounted for the complexity of the prejudices that the women faced (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). In summary, interpretative phenomenological analysis and feminism identified the gendered lived experiences of women in the study. The study further highlighted the complexities surrounding the reasons to women remaining with their abusers and the loss of control they experienced in their physically abusive relationships.

Learned Helplessness. This sub-theme refers to how the participants passively accepted their abuse because they believed that they had no control or were unable to change their circumstances. They accepted their lives for what it was, which meant that they accepted the abuse. They learned that responding to abuse was futile.

The participants began to think, feel and act as if they were helpless and resigned themselves to being abused. This phenomenon is labelled as learned helplessness (Maier & Seligman, 1976) which corresponded with a similar study conducted later by Ackerman (2017). The excerpts below reveal the extent of the helplessness experienced by the participants:

> When it [abuse] all started again, I just completely gave up hope. I stopped worrying, I stopped messaging, find out how he is at work, I used to stop waiting to give him supper, I used to stop waking up in the mornings and making his lunch. I should just wake up, go to work, come home, see to baby and sleep. (Annie, I. 1)

The abuse was worse for Annie after she cancelled the protection order. Thereafter, Annie lived her life by rote without any extra effort to please her husband. Annie realised that her previous attempts to please her husband and hence stop the violence were futile. She felt helpless and unable to change her circumstances. Annie felt emotionally cut off from life, and her only concerns in life were her work and child.

Valerie also describes how helpless she felt.

> I wasn't eating, I didn't go to work for three days. It impacted me so badly that I was so depressed. I tried to, while living with him, committed suicide when I had the two girls. You don't know what to expect. You constantly walking on eggshells. (Valerie, I. 3)

Valerie had become depressed and despondent after constant abuse. She had even tried committing suicide. She felt helpless and powerless in the face of the violence she was subjected to. This signifies the hopelessness that Valerie felt at being stuck in a cycle of repeated abuse without a space to access help or to gain control of her life.

The participants felt that they had no control over their lives and believed that they were unable to escape an unbearable situation. The prominence of feelings of helplessness was a defence mechanism by the participants to cope by trying to dissociate themselves from the abuse.

Based on the findings of Avdibegovic et al. (2017), it can be concluded that women victims with a higher frequency of abuse become helpless, sad, apathetic, lonely and feel worthless. The prominence of feelings of helplessness can be a factor for the re-victimisation

of women victims of domestic violence. According to Seligman's theory (1976), learned helplessness can lead to depression. Ackerman (2017) pointed out that those who feel helpless are likely to suffer from low self-esteem. The abuser's aim is to acclimatise the victim to the abuse. Subsequently, this leads to a lack of motivation to escape the abuse.

Butler (2004a) asserts that in certain cultures women are expected to be caring and submissive, making it socially acceptable for men to control women. Butler (2004a) argues that gender violence must always be acknowledged within the matrix of a discursively en-gendered society. This submission of women to their partners' results in them becoming conditioned to expect pain and suffering, resulting in a feeling of helplessness.

Living in Fear. This sub-theme explores the ways in which gender-based violence works to establish fear in women's lives. It is evident from the participants' experiences that the continuous sentence of abuse and the psychological aspects of control by their abusers all helped to maintain and reinforce high levels of fear in them. Nancy (I. 6) expressed her fear for her life in the presence of her husband who was now extremely violent and aggressive. "I am always frightened. He's changed so much. He's a different man. I am frightened of him every time that he's coming near me. When he kills me my baby will be alone."
Razia (I. 7) echoed her, saying, "I used to live bad … every day of my life, I used to live in fear. Sometimes, I used to actually take tablets." Razia, who lived in fear of her abuser, took any tablets that she could find to make her feel numb to the relentless violence to which she was subjected. Participants lived in daily fear:

> It was bad. Besides the sexually abused, it was terrible. That was a fear that I had. You take it with you. He put fear in me. He put fear. He always said, if I leave him, he'll come and kill me. So, that fear also made me stay. (Jenny I.2)

Jenny's husband had threatened to kill her if she were to leave him which instilled fear in her. This fear remained even after she had left him. The participants had constant

feelings of susceptibility to danger which gave their abusers another means of exerting control over them. Fear stopped the participants from seeking help as they felt that they could not change their lives.

Johnson (2006) observed that abuse works through establishing fear which reinforces control over the abused person. Evidence suggests that fear increases mental health problems, including depression and post-traumatic stress (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). According to Bloom (2008), McCarthy (2018) fear is often a key reason for not leaving, and this fear is logical and justified. The fear that the abuser instils in his victim is, according to Butler (2016), an attempt to control the vulnerable, such as the participants in this study. Butler (2004) believed that to master the fear of the violence imposed, tends to arouse a feeling of anxiety in the face of the difference that fixes the other as a threat even before he has done any harm.

There were many similarities as well as differences between the participants and their experiences. The numbers of years that the participants remained with their abusers varied, from four and a half years to 30 years, while one participant continues to live with her abuser. This suggests that it is not possible to give a time frame to the number of years that a woman will remain with her abuser. The study recognises the uniqueness of each individual and her experiences. Socio-economic factors such as social class and poverty, low levels of education, unemployment and limited social support were also different amongst the participants. Razia talks of her experiences where she had to beg for money in order to feed her family. “I’ll do beg for money…. because I got no food now.” Razia also discusses her struggles in getting a job with no qualifications. “They want qualified and they want papers … If you not educated … if I haven’t got the papers, how am I gonna work?” The barriers that Razia experiences of having no money of her own, little education and no support system available to her, results in her continuing to live with her abuser.

Valerie, on the other hand, was qualified: “I managed to get a finance degree.” Valerie also had a successful career which allowed her to be financially independent of her abuser: “He’s totally financially dependent on me for everything.” The socio-economic levels of these two women, Razia and Valerie, were completely different, and yet both women were vulnerable to abuse and violence. Hence, the study recognises that gender-based violence does not recognise social, racial, educational or economic boundaries.

Despite all these differences amongst the participants’, they all experienced violence that was frequent, sometimes brutal and resulted in feelings of devastating despair and low self-esteem. Annie talks of how her abuser lowered her self-esteem:

> He will tell you things. As a woman, you won’t even feel like you are a woman … You feel like you can’t do anything with your life ... I never had matric or anything, he’ll tell me you illiterate, you don’t even know how to read ... you can’t even be a mother because you don’t have a education.

Joyce’s husband made her feel as if she had no value: “You see me as a stupid girl, stupids woman … sometimes you chasing me, you talking nonsense … you call me as a stupids woman, sometimes you tell me I’m a woman as similar as like a dog.”

Samantha’s husband often humiliated her: “He called me a whore in front of our friends … it was very demeaning and embarrassing.”

This thesis recognised that the women’s individual perceptions of and how they coped with the abuse were all very different. All the women interviewed experienced some form of domestic violence, ranging from emotional and controlling abuse, sexual abuse to severe physical violence. Samantha recounts her experiences: “He’ll keep verbally going at me … he pushed me everywhere … he kicked me … he throttled me, threatened to kill me … he raped me … he was dragging me to the room, ripping everything off.” Valerie describes the abuse and violence she had been subjected to:

It started first with emotionally. And then it also then got into the physical where he would actually hit me …. he's actually strangling me … he slapped me so hard that I would actually see the sparks … the next thing I know is that he actually took his foot and he tramped me on my back.

All the women gave accounts of being frightened of their partner regardless of whether or not they were physically abused or not. Nancy says of her abuser: "I am always frightened." Lilly expresses her fears of her abuser: "I'm scared because I can see that he can kill me."

Two of the women were threatened with weapons including knives in their lived experiences of abuse. Valerie explains how she was threatened with weapons during the violent attacks: "He actually took a cane knife and he wanted to attack us with it … I had the gun at my head … he followed me to the toilet, with the firearm.' Joyce recounts her experience of being threatened with a weapon: "Sometimes he hits me, keeping the knife … he was keeping a knife to stab me here." In most instances, the perpetrator used their fists and feet to physically abuse the women.

None of the women interviewed experienced physical violence at the start of their relationship; they all appeared to be emotionally and physically attracted to their partner. Nancy describes her relationship in the beginning: "He originally showed that little bit care and love … this guy here, you know when someone shows you a lot of love and care." Valerie also talks of her husband as being very loving to her in the beginning: "When we were courting, there was no abuse … It was perfect. My fairy-tale."

As the relationship progressed, the violence began to move stealthily into the relationship. Lilly says: "After three weeks, then he started to change." Nancy also talks of her relationship changing: "And then, say three/four/five months after marriage, then I can see the changes."

It became apparent during the interviews with the women that they wanted the researcher to have an understanding of their experiences so that their individual circumstances within a larger context could be identified. All the participants felt trapped in their abusive relationships, more so because they had minor children, who depended on their male partners as providers and for a living space. The women talked openly about their experiences which described the ways in which the private gendered spaces of their households become sites of abuse and violence.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain insight and understanding of the barriers that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. The study provided meaning to the participants' experiences of violence by implementing interpretive phenomenological analysis and qualitative research. Three themes and their corresponding sub-themes have been interpreted and discussed in relation to the participants' lived experiences of violence and abuse. It may seem inconceivable that women remain in abusive relationships; however, the participants' lived experiences of abuse provide an in-depth understanding as to why they stayed.

Many of the participants lived with abuse as children and this increased the risk of victimisation by their male partners in adulthood as they grew up in a home where violence was the norm. The participants did not intentionally seek out abusive relationships, but their childhood played a role in how they viewed themselves and the perceived validation they received from the abusers. In a childhood home where violence is the norm children often have lower self-esteem and learn to please the abuser, to be 'good' to try and stop the abuse against their mother and/or themselves (Berenson & Andersen, 2006; Pingley, 2017). This behaviour could be projected into their adult lives, where they would try their best to conform

to their husband's expectations of what a 'good wife' should be (Berenson & Andersen, 2006; Koenig, 2018).

Alcohol and drug dependency of abusers intensified the violence, and this is consistent with previous literature. The participants referenced feelings of isolation, depression, self-blame and fear, due to the perceived and uncontrolled risk of violence. Their lives were shaped by the demands and threats of patriarchy. Due to constant criticism, they engaged in strategies to 'fix' themselves, instead of realising that the abuse did not originate with them. The participants held onto an abiding hope that their partners would eventually change.

The participants' lack of financial means to make a transition to independence served as a major barrier. The inadequacy of shelters, legal and social support services provide women with little alternative but to remain in a life of violence. Barriers to reporting abuse include a lack of faith in the criminal justice system, the sensitive and stigmatised nature of gender-based violence and the privatisation of domestic violence as a family matter by the police. Sustained periods of living with abuse led to the participants to feeling helpless, worthy of abuse with constant feelings of susceptibility to danger, loss of power and control and feelings of entrapment. The violence also affected their children's quality of life.

The following chapter will focus on the findings and contributions to the study. Research findings of this study will form the basis of chapter six from which conclusions and recommendations are made.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter discusses the contributions to the study. The primary objective of the study was to explore and understand the barriers that prevent women from leaving their abusers. The secondary objectives were the factors influencing gender-based violence and the impact of the abuse on the participants in the study. The objectives are assessed in accordance with the aims of the study. In this chapter, the researcher presents the contributions of the study, limitations and recommendations for future studies and lastly, offers concluding remarks.

Contributions of the Study

The study's strengths lie in the rich, holistic insights gained from listening to the participants' experiences, which allowed the researcher to represent the findings on the lived experiences of women living with abuse. Questions around why women do not simply leave the abusive relationship in reaction to stories of gender-based violence are not simple ones to answer. Asking these questions places the burden of the abuse further on the victim. Questioning why women simply do not leave diverts the focus off the abuser and can unintentionally blame the victim for what is happening to them, even though the fault does not lie with those who are abused. Hence, the research contributes to an understanding of the complexities and barriers that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships.

Analysis of the participants' lived experiences of abuse from the interviews revealed the barriers to leaving as victim manipulation, financial abuse, isolation from possible support networks and responses by social and legal services to the women living with abuse. These barriers serve to provide an understanding to the challenges that participants have to face when leaving abusive relationships. Subsequently, these barriers reveal that the decision to leave is not a simple one to make; the abused women cannot decide to make a quick decision to leave and act upon it. Leaving an abusive relationship is a lengthy process that can vary

from one woman to the next, depending on the circumstances of their relationships and the barriers that first need to be addressed. Understanding and exploring these barriers raises questions as to what delays or prevents women from leaving abusive relationships and draws focus to the actions of the abuser.

The study reveals the manipulative and coercive behaviour of abusers as a predominant barrier to women leaving by looking at the participants' experiences. The participants were led to believe that they, as the abused, were at fault for the abuse and violence they were subjected to. The participants spoke of their partners exhibiting loving behaviour followed by apologies, generosity and helpfulness after an abusive episode. They revealed that they loved their partners and held onto an abiding hope that their abusers would change their behaviour. Significantly, it is this hope that helped the participants in the study to endure and not give up despite difficult circumstances.

The participants' isolation from support networks was a further barrier that emerged. They were isolated from any possible assistance from friends, family, work colleagues, neighbours or any institutions that could provide support. Their economic dependence on their abusers further reinforced their isolation. The participants' lack of or limited financial income was identified as an obstacle to them leaving their abusive partners. One of the participants in the study continues to live with her abuser due to her financial dependence on him, and because she has no support network available to assist her. Without money, access to resources or even a place to go to, leaving seems impossible for her, as she is entirely dependent on her partner and cannot contemplate leaving the relationship. Furthermore, not being able to provide financially for her children is a fundamental challenge to leaving.

The study highlighted the social and legal responses to women's abuse as a further barrier to women leaving. The social practice of patriarchy encouraged the participants' submission to their abusers and the abusers' dominance and control over them. Traditional

socialisation encouraged the participants to endure and accept the abuse to which they were subjected. The commitment displayed in their relationships was a desire to live up to a cultural ideal of being a ‘good wife’ to their partners. The widespread violence and abuse of women domestically is because of the patriarchal society that still encourages dominance by men in the form of abuse and restriction on women.

The legal responses exacerbated the participants’ negative experiences with abuse and violence. Legal services available to the participants were inefficient considering the abuse to which they were subjected. Regarding the participants’ experiences, it was clear that the SAPS were often unwilling to intervene in what they considered to be a private family matter. The protection orders intensified the abuse of the participants instead of minimising or halting the violence. The research leads to the conclusion that there are complex contributing factors which discourage women from exiting their lives of abuse.

The study also identified factors that served as risks for gender-based violence. These risks foster a culture of abuse and violence. By understanding the underlying, interlinked risks of gender-based violence, its root and structural causes, society can work towards preventing it from happening in the first place. The risks of gender-based violence cannot be attributed to a single factor. The study revealed that the participants are vulnerable to abuse and violence when they are exposed to violence as children. Violence becomes normalised in their lives, thus increasing their acceptance of abuse as adults. In this way, the cycle of violence continues. The participants in the study were encouraged to take a step back and look at the larger patterns in their relationship and to realise that the only solution they had was to take action and break the cycle of domestic violence. Findings of the study further reveal that participants are disarmed and deceived during their courtship when they become vulnerable to an abuser’s charm and charisma.

The participants in the study described their experiences of being controlled by their abusers' threats of violence and unpredictable behaviour patterns. Thus, an abuser's jealousy, lack of trust, possessiveness and rapid mood swings vacillating between remorse and violence, places women at risk of violence and abuse.

Many of the participants' experiences indicated that their partners' alcohol or drug abuse served as a serious aggravating factor to the violence in their lives. Drugs and alcohol intensified the abuse and hence further endangered the lives of the participants. However, the episodes of violence do not necessarily occur only when the abuser has been abusing drugs or alcohol. This study makes progress in increasing understanding of how perpetrator and victim factors may directly or indirectly influence gender-based violence.

A further objective was to understand the impact of violence and abuse on women and their children. The findings of the study correspond with the literature that describes the environment in which the women and their children live as unpredictable, filled with tension, anxiety and dominated by fear. The findings describe the impact of abuse on the women as ranging from confusion to symptoms of depression, stress, low self-esteem and even psychological problems. The participants describe feelings of having no control and a belief of being unable to escape an unbearable situation. The literature highlights the increased risk of HIV infection among women with violent partners. One of the participants in the study reveals her positive HIV/Aids status due to sexual abuse by her partner. Given the impact of the abuse on their children, many participants were prompted to seek help or leave when they felt that the abuse and violence were affecting their children negatively and psychologically. Hence, the study supports the literature in confirming that abuse and violence render women powerless in all spheres of their lives when they become trapped in abusive relationships.

Butler (2004) helps us to understand that abuse of women is gendered and is a result of coercion and not consent. The ongoing violence that women are subjected to can be

described through the analysis of how power compels women to consent to that which constrains them (Butler, 1999). Abuse is a matter of asserting power and control that forces the participants in the study into submission. The study highlights the dynamics of gender that exist when exploring gender-based violence. This definition extends to all forms of violence that are related to firstly, social expectations and social positions based on gender and secondly, not conforming to a socially accepted gender-role (McCarthy, 2018; Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2004).

The study succeeded in producing a meaningful and detailed exploration and understanding of the participants' lived experiences of abuse and an understanding of the barriers that prevented or prevent them from leaving. This research will be helpful for future researchers in that it draws special attention to an understanding that barriers to leaving cuts across diverse backgrounds of race, age and economic circumstances. An understanding of the multiple, complex barriers presented in the literature and research study would contribute to future endeavors to address the prevalence of gender-based violence.

Limitations of the Study

The findings do have some limitations as it was conducted in a limited time frame, is of a small scale, and therefore only eight participants were interviewed. However, their experiences, using semi-structured interviews, were more than adequate to understand the multiple barriers that exist to prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. The participants who shared their experiences did so generously and in great detail. Furthermore, having participants ranging in age, education, race and financial status provided diversity to the voices of abused women.

The sample in the present study is not indicative of all women in the Inanda district in KwaZulu-Natal. Only heterosexual women experiencing abuse were interviewed. There are also men who are victims of abuse, and this study does not mention the abuse experienced by

LGBTI minorities. However, as supported by the literature, the overwhelming burden of intimate partner violence is borne by women.

It is impossible to discuss sexual abuse without vulnerability to HIV and Aids in South Africa. Although there was only one participant in the study who was infected with HIV due to sexual abuse by her partner and another who was aware that her abusive husband could infect her with the HIV virus, women's vulnerability to HIV infection due to intimate partner violence is widely prevalent both globally and nationally. Although one of the secondary objectives of the study was to highlight the consequences of gender-based violence, which it did, this did not include HIV/Aids, as the sample was not adequate to highlight the connection between gender violence and HIV in the current study.

A limitation might have been the language for two participants for whom English was not their first language, it was isiZulu, and the interviews were conducted in English. However, the researcher believes that these participants conveyed their experiences as there was a rapport and shared understanding. The researcher's interview skills served to alleviate the slight language barrier. The researcher did not want to include a language interpreter, as there would have been a confidentiality risk by having a third party in the room and the participants might not have been as forthcoming in disclosing their experiences in their presence. However, on delving further into their experiences, the researcher was able to understand what the participants were trying to express as the researcher identified with the participants' emotions and experiences from her personal experience with abuse.

The participants in the study were recruited from social and legal organisations and results in the limitation of excluding the group of women who do not have access to these support services.

The study did not focus on the role of health care providers. This is an avenue which future researchers can explore in order to understand the role health care providers can play in

assisting survivors of gender-based violence.

Recommendations

There are a growing number of countries taking action towards ending gender-based violence (Kange, 2018; Muluneh et al., 2020). Measures are being implemented by governments to address gender-based violence, in the areas of laws and policies, prevention, services and statistical data (Muluneh et al., 2020). However, this has proved to be inadequate since gender-based violence is still widespread in South Africa. The rate in South Africa is six times higher in intimate relationships compared to the global average figures (Jewkes et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2007; Seedat et al., 2011; UNDP Report, 2020).

It would be beneficial to research on gender-based violence to include other adult members of the family affected by the abuse, as this would assist in understanding the phenomena better e.g. victim's family, abuser's family and friends. This would broaden knowledge on gender-based violence, and its consequences on society as it shows how the abuser's behaviour also impact the family and friends of the abuser and victim. Women who experience gender-based violence are often afraid of further violence from their abusers, as expressed by the participants in the study. Women living with abuse also commonly express their distrust in service providers, thinking that nothing could be done. This indicates a lack of awareness among respondents about the significant impact of gender-based violence on their well-being, potential support services for recovery and raises concerns about support services (Lloyd, 2018). Qualitative findings also indicate that women living with abuse are concerned about their rights and confidentiality, especially among health care providers and law enforcement officials (Rakovec-Felser, 2014, Romito, 2008, Vetton, 2017, Machisa, 2018). The absence of sufficient educational information relating to sexual violence is a key concern in creating awareness of the risk factors associated with gender-based violence (Grose et al., 2020).

Patriarchy contributes to abuse. More research is required to change attitudes in society towards socialised gender roles and hegemonic masculinities. Future interventions by researchers to end gender-based violence need to involve men and boys in their research to help them to change their attitudes and behaviours positively, and even reestablish their position and identity in society.

The experiences of two participants in the study indicated that the use of weapons intensified during violent episodes. The current study recommends that there should be provision for the courts to safeguard against allowing perpetrators to use firearms and to ensure more intense screening before a person is allowed to possess a weapon such as a firearm. This could involve an investigation into possible prior abusive behaviours or any reported incidents against the applicant. However, the researcher is aware that this does not prevent an abuser from using other weapons such as knives, etc. The screening, though, could prevent possible fatal injuries to the victim.

Adequate access to resources needs to be provided to enable women to escape their violent situations. Current resources are inadequate in assisting women in freeing themselves from abuse. Women, therefore, frequently return to their abusive situations. This is supported by the experiences of participants in the study. A participant in the study escaped for two years to a shelter that did not cater for children. Hence, out of concern for her children, she returned to her life of abuse.

Empowerment programmes for women should be established so that women can be financially independent and made aware of the support services that are available to them. This will reduce the financial abuse women experience in abusive relationships. Economic barriers present powerful roadblocks in leaving an abusive partner (Hughes et al., 2015). This is especially true when the woman's income is dependent on her partner. As shown in the current study, some of the participants' partners controlled their ability to acquire, use and

maintain financial resources. Participants were either prevented from working, had their own money restricted by the abuser, or had very little access to money and other resources.

The inefficiencies of legal responses towards gender-based violence need to be addressed. The state needs to acknowledge gender-based violence as socially unacceptable and strengthen sanctions against perpetrators. Some of the participants' highlighted their experiences of sexual violence by their husbands and their inability to address the situation. While South Africa has a generally good framework concerning rape and marital rape, there should be further research conducted on the statutory definitions of rape which are currently inept to better capture the harm and wrongdoing of sexual abuses that many victims still experience. Steps should be taken to include redefining and expanding laws on rape and sexual assault, especially within marriage and should explore the implementation of such laws.

The study has indicated that the SAPS are reluctant in their duties towards their implementation of the Act. The police viewed the violence and abuse as a private family matter as experienced by one of the participants. They often do not have the necessary sensitivity and appreciation of the seriousness of gender violence. Women are in danger of more severe abuse after protection orders are served. The protection orders that the study's participants applied for served to exacerbate the violence by their abusers. One of the participants was coaxed to cancel the protection order that she had applied for, supported by the abuser's promise to change. However, the abuser's violent behaviour continued unabated.

Hence, research needs to address the shortcomings of the DVA. Another aspect that needs to be explored is the need for SAPS training on the capacity for change that lies in the reform of the law and in its application. This is an avenue that future researchers could concentrate on in order to understand the necessity of training in creating a transformed society that allows for gender sensitivity.

Concluding Remarks

The study was successful in addressing the objectives of the study, which was to explore and understand the various barriers that exist to prevent women from leaving, factors influencing gender-based violence and the impact of the abuse on women. The barriers addressed in the study are all supported by the literature.

The process of planning qualitative research, recruiting women who have lived with abuse, interviewing them and thereafter analysing their responses has been an indelible positive experience, for me, as the researcher. The researcher was inspired by the courageous, strong, determined and remarkable women who had emerged stronger than ever after years of abuse. The participants had been through varying levels of abuse, yet all were still willing to recount difficult and painful experiences openly and allowed themselves to be vulnerable to a stranger. The interview process provided the participants with the choice and freedom to express their experiences and opinions of the abuse they have endured. This is supported by Avdibegovic et al. (2017), who suggests that listening and understanding women's experiences of violence can in itself be a validating and supportive process.

The study informs that several barriers exist to prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. The barriers are multiple and complex, which does not make leaving the relationship as simple as it may seem. By understanding these barriers, it is my hope that more conversations will focus on how not only to create safer spaces to assist women in leaving but also to create an understanding of the experiences of a woman living with abuse and a society that does not accept any form of violence directed towards women.

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Ref. No: PERC-17001

UNISA university of south africa
Department of Psychology

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants
The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Student Name: Dhevamoney Padayachee **Student no.:** 07606109
Supervisor: Ms E. L. Long **Affiliation:** Department of Psychology, Unisa
Title of project:

Barriers to leaving an Abusive Relationship amongst women living in the Inanda district in Kwa-Zulu Natal

The application was approved by the departmental Ethics Committee on the understanding that ---

- Information which may be reasonably expected to be confidential will not be used to identify potential participants. Potential participants will have to indicate their willingness to participate by volunteering. Social organisations will not be asked to disclose the identities of potential participants, but may play a mediating role by making the study known to potential participants and requesting voluntary participation;
- Any formal procedures that may be required to get permission from the organisations from which the participants are to be drawn, and all conditions and procedures regarding access to information for research purposes that may be required by these institutions must be met;
- All ethical requirements regarding informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, the protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality of the information will be explained to the research participants in a way that will be clearly understood and signed consent forms will be obtained from each of them;
- No identifying information which may undermine the confidentiality of information will be released, and information disclosed in confidence will not be made available to any person or organisation without informed consent.

Signed:

Date: 21 February 2017

Prof P Kruger
[For the Ethics Committee]
[Department of Psychology, Unisa]

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) *The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
2) *Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Psychology Department Ethics Review Committee.*
3) *An amended application should be submitted if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
4) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

Please note that research where participants are drawn from Unisa staff, students or data bases requires permission from the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SENRIC) before the research commences.

B1 Title of the thesis/dissertation

Barriers to leaving an Abusive Relationship amongst women living in the Inanda district in KwaZulu-Natal

B2 Supply a short abstract of the proposal (maximum of 300 words)

There has been a "silent epidemic" regarding the nature of gender-based violence (Shapiro, 2013). Gender-based violence is silent in the sense that it is often hidden as a private life of despair, shame, and disbelief while it exists everywhere in popular culture, war, and sports. In addition, the unreported incidents of violence by the victims have also been viewed as contributing to the silence around the phenomenon (Kilpatrick et al., 2010). Silence is not solely created by the victim but it is also reinforced by communities that do not want to acknowledge crime and its consequences (Akamu, 2005; Franek, 2015). There are many factors such as difficult childhoods, psychological factors, or the perceived complicity of victims which are used to explain the occurrence of gender-based violence (Ferree, 2004). Thus, silence is used to conceal their suffering. All around the world, there is a tendency to victim blame, thus, women are blamed for the violence committed against them (Akamu, 2005). There are various reasons as to why women remain in abusive relationships.

The study will be beneficial for women to understand the situations they are placed in. It is also for society to become more sensitised to women who are experiencing gender-based violence and shows the importance of listening to women's experiences and perspectives on the violence they endured. The consequences of gender-based violence on these women will also be brought to the forefront. The study will reveal the increase in emotional or psychological abuse which has been found to be as damaging to the well-

being of women as physical abuse (Sartin, Hansen and Huss; 2006, p. 216).

An interpretative phenomenological theoretical framework will be used to locate the experiences of women being subjected to gender-based violence. Participants will be interviewed, and semi-structured interviews will be used to gather data from female partners of abusive men. The semi-structured interviews will give me an opportunity to listen to the experiences of the women from their interpretation and by the women using their language to give meanings to their experiences of abuse (Esterberg, 2002).

The qualitative methodology will be used to explore what contextual issues are impacting on the women to remain in these relationships over a prolonged period (Goldman & Du Mont, 2001). Therefore, a qualitative approach is appropriate for this project as it prioritises the experiences of those it studies. Moreover, using the qualitative methodology will allow me as the researcher to reflect on my own subjective contribution to the research, which is a fundamental part of using the phenomenological framework.

B3 Specify the objectives of the research, as described in your full research proposal

The objective of this study is to explore and investigate these barriers that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. Researchers who study gender-based violence have long attempted to understand factors influencing the decisions of women who are in abusive relationships (Rhatigan, Street & Axsom, 2006). To many people, the decision to remain in or leave a violent relationship may seem an obvious one because of the negative physical and emotional consequences of the violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). However, research on the subject indicates that the decisions of women to remain in these violent relationships is a complex one that is influenced by situational, personal, and environmental factors.

The consequences of abuse on women range from confusion to symptoms of, or the development of, mental disorders (Evans & Holly, 2012). Thus, a further objective is to explore the psychological effects of violence on the women who have experienced prolonged abuse for two years and longer. The study intends to consider the influence of various elements of abuse, such as communication difficulties, decision making and verbal arguments that may characterise the relationship.

B4 Describe the method by which you will conduct your research, including details on the research design and techniques of data analysis

The proposed study will adopt a qualitative phenomenological design. Qualitative research emphasises the subjectivity, individual perspective, and context of the meanings that people give to experiences. The researcher takes the standpoint that there is no objective truth to be discovered (Willig, 2001). Qualitative research is therefore also concerned with the role of the researcher (Banister et al., 1994). Phenomenology is embedded within qualitative research because it acknowledges that there are multiple truths and that a person's interpretation of their experience is dependent on the social context that they are in (Goldman & Du Mont, 2001). Interpretation, as the core of qualitative research, focuses on the meaning of human experience. The experiences of participants are important in gaining knowledge about what their interpretation is for the abuse that they are experiencing. It is also acknowledged that meaning and behaviour occurs within particular social and historical contexts. Furthermore, as Denzin (2003) noted, qualitative research inescapably involves interpretation, because nothing speaks for itself. Qualitative

interpretations are not inherent in the interview texts but are constructed by the researcher. Thus, the role of the researcher as 'interpreter' is significant. Just as subjects/women/others construct meanings of events from the range of discourses and subject positions available to them, so too does the qualitative researcher. It is, therefore, necessary to acknowledge the particular positions from which the researcher interprets experience and constructs meaning.

In addition, qualitative approaches allow flexibility (Willig, 2001). Moreover, using qualitative research allows me as the researcher to reflect on my own subjective contribution to the research, which is a fundamental part of using the phenomenological framework.

Rather than attempting to minimise researcher bias, qualitative approaches acknowledge that we are not removed from the contexts we study. Researchers are encouraged to examine their roles and impact throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

After the interviews are conducted, I will listen to the data and transcribe it. The transcribed data will be analysed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis. Interpretative phenomenological analysis will be employed to analyse the data after transcription. This method will be 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. Interpretative analysis is most suitable, as it allows for interpretation of the data through coding during the process of analysis (Kafle, 2011). This form of analysis supports the feminist perspective which accentuates the importance of looking beyond data being disclosed and also focuses on an underlying significance that, in turn, influence the way in which we make interpretations and draw conclusions from information shared. Both phenomenologists 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, 2005). For this reason, the two approaches converge; leading up to an interest in examining how people view their fates. When analysing the interview transcripts, the interviewees' accounts will become the phenomena with which I engage. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, I will first record my own reactions to the text. Examining my own reactions is a way for me to explore how I might influence the interviews and research process. Following this, I will organise the text into themes and groups of themes. The themes are used to organise the data in order to gain an understanding of the experiences shared by the participants'. The resulting analysis of the data is, therefore both phenomenological and interpretative as it represented the participants' experiences of abuse and violence but was also dependent on the researcher's view of the world.

B5 Describe the source of your research participants, and how you intend to find a sample (not required for purely theoretical studies)

The present study uses purposive sampling as a form of sampling that is based in its entirety on the judgement 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. Selection criteria will be used to recruit

participants. The selection criteria are based on the following: women who have been living in abusive relationships and have endured more than two years of gender-based violence in their heterosexual relationships. Participants selected will be 18 years and older.

Participants of the study will be recruited from local social organisations groups in the Inanda district in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The population in the Inanda district is comprised of all race groups: blacks, Indian, whites and coloureds and people from all socioeconomic and education levels. The target population for this study will be clients of social welfare organisations. These societies were chosen because I am aware that many women seek assistance at these organisations. I often meet them at the outreach programmes where I am involved in as a volunteer. These two towns were chosen for the following reasons: it is easily accessible and convenient. The social welfare organisations that I have chosen will not be revealed due to confidentiality purposes which will be highlighted in the ethics section.

I will seek to identify participants from a different race, economic and social groups. I will contact the manager at each organisation to obtain names of participants that I could choose for my study. Five participants will be identified from the two organisations to cater for anyone that chooses to voluntary leave the study group. Therefore, I will interview a total of ten participants.

B6 Describe whether your data collection techniques will fall in any of the categories below

B6.1	Personal, social or other information to be collected directly from research participants (e.g. questionnaire or interview)	Yes	No
B6.2	Participants are to undergo psychometric testing [a]	Yes	No
B6.3	Participants are to undergo a physical examination [b]	Yes	No
B6.4	Participant behaviour will be observed directly (live or by camera)	Yes	No
B6.5	Identifiable information will be collected about people from available records (e.g. medical records, staff records, student records, etc.)	Yes	No
B6.6	Other data collection method that may impact on anonymity or privacy of participants	Yes	No
B6.7	If question B6.6 was answered 'yes' please supply details:		

B7 If question 6.2 (relating to psychometric testing) was answered 'yes', please answer the questions below

B7.1	Is the assessment measure suitable in terms of its purpose and the individual(s) for whom it will be used?	Yes	No
B7.2	Will the participant(s) be informed with regards to the aim of the assessment and the use of the results?	Yes	No
B7.3	Have issues of feedback been clarified with the participant(s)?	Yes	No
B7.4	Have issues of confidentiality of the results been clarified with the participant(s)?	Yes	No

B7.5	Will the assessment measure be administered by an appropriately qualified person? (Applicable in case of restricted psychometric tests)	Yes	No
B7.6	Have you considered all copyright and related issues that are applicable to this instrument and made required arrangements with the test publisher/distributor? (Applicable in case of restricted standardized tests)	Yes	No
B7.7	If the answers to any of the questions B7.1 to B7.6 were 'no', please supply reasons:		

B8 Give the age range of participants in this study [c] 18 years and above

B9 Describe procedures that will be used to obtain informed consent from research participants and other relevant affected persons (such as parents and guardians)

n/a

B10 If any risks are posed by the research project, describe these as well as steps that will be taken to limit the possibility of harm to research participants (any discomfort, pain/physical or psychological problems/side-effects, persecution, stigmatisation or negative labelling should be considered. Also See Appendix 5A for a list of possible risk factors)

Since qualitative research is concerned with ethical issues (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008), permission to conduct the research will be requested by the Research Ethics Committee of UNISA and the Division of the Institutional Research and Planning of UNISA (See Appendix A). I will then obtain access to the organisations by contacting the gatekeepers identified and obtain access to the prospective participants (See Appendix E). Thereafter, a consent form will be given to each participant informing her of the research and the voluntary nature of participation (See Appendix F). Participants will be reimbursed for their travel costs. No monetary gain beyond the reimbursement will be offered for participation in the study. All information given by the interviewees will be kept confidential and not used for any other purpose besides that of the study. I will provide participants with pseudonyms and remove all identifiable information. Participants will be informed of their right to end their participation at any time without any penalty or negative consequences. At the end of each interview, participants will have access to debriefing. According to Harris (1998) "The purpose of debriefing is to remove any misconceptions and anxieties that the participants have about the research and to leave them with a sense of dignity, knowledge, and a perception of time not wasted" (p. 208). Furthermore, participants will also have further access to counselling due to the fact that the study deals with a vulnerable group of women that live in abusive relationships. I have requested the assistance of the Family Court counsellor at the Verulam Magistrates' Court to assist with the counselling should there be a need for further counselling after the debriefing sessions.

The interviews will be audio-recorded. Before the interview, I will explain why an audio recorder will be used and how it works. The participant will have control over the audio recorder and will be able to switch it off at any time during the interview. The participant will also have the opportunity to request that anything that they say be removed from the research and to keep my contact details should they decide at a later stage to withdraw from the research.

Following this protocol ensures an adherence to the ethical guidelines. Ethics refers to

the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. We have a moral responsibility to protect research participants from harm. However important the issue under investigation psychologists need to remember that they have a duty to respect the rights and dignity of research participants. This means that they must abide by certain moral principles and rules of conduct. (Harris, 1998). Women will not be coerced into participation. Rather their voluntary participation will be requested and all the principles of ethical considerations will be adhered to. (Blance et al., 2006).

For participants 18 or older, the informed consent form should be submitted. For minors or in cases where diminished responsibility exists, a consent form to be signed by the parent or legal guardian must be submitted.

B11	Do the intended research participants fall under the category that can be described as "vulnerable participants" [d]	Yes	No

B12 If question 9 was marked 'yes', please provide details and steps that will be taken to protect these participants:

Gender-based violence is a sensitive issue. Women who have experienced violence are therefore vulnerable. This is an issue to be treated sensitively and the women will be provided with debriefing sessions as they will be discussing issues that can cause them further trauma. Furthermore, participants will also have further access to counselling due to the fact that the study deals with a vulnerable group of women that live in abusive relationships. I have requested the assistance of the Family Court counsellor (Mrs Jan Charlton) at the Verulam Magistrates' Court to assist with the counselling should there be a need for further counselling after the debriefing sessions.

B13	Are participants likely to incur any costs by participating in this research?	Yes	No
B14	Will any kind of compensation or reward be presented to research participants?	Yes	No

B15If Question 5 (above) was answered 'Yes', please supply details:

Participants will be reimbursed for their travel expenses

[d] See the *Policy on Research Ethics of UNISA*, page 1 and especially page 15, paragraph 3.10

B16	Will any arrangements for indemnity be made?	Yes	No

B17 If Question 5 (above) was answered 'Yes', please supply details:

B18	Will any special arrangements be made for steps to be undertaken in case of adverse events or harm is experienced by the participants attributable to their participation in the study? (E.g. debriefing, counselling etc.)	Yes	No

B19 If Question 5 (above) was answered 'Yes', please supply details:

Debriefing information will be available to all participants. Participants will be given the number for the UNISA Psychotherapy Clinic – XXXX.

Family and Trauma Counsellor: Mrs. Jan Charlton; Verulam Family Court; XXXX

B20 If countries other than South Africa are involved in the research project, list the countries here, as well as the nature of the involvement of each:

n/a

B21 If institutions other than Unisa (e.g. clinics, hospitals or schools) are involved list the relevant institutions here and specify the nature of the involvement of each

n/a			
B22	If question 21 above is answered 'yes', will any of the institutions listed require ethical clearance from an appropriate ethics committee at Unisa before the research study can proceed?	Yes	No

The form should be accompanied by the following appendices when ethical clearance is requested:

1. A copy of your full research proposal.
2. A copy or copies of each of the consent forms which you will use (for research participants, and parents/guardians for minors or cases where this is required)
3. Any other documentation that is of direct relevance to ethical clearance.

SECTION C CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Dhevamoney Padayachee , declare that I have read the Policy for Research Ethics of UNISA and that the contents of this form are a true and accurate reflection of the methodological and ethical implications of my proposed study. I shall carry out the study in strict accordance with the approved proposal and the ethics policy of UNISA. I shall maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about research participants, and maintain security procedures for the protection of privacy. I shall record the way in which the ethical guidelines as suggested in the proposal has been implemented in my research. I shall work in close collaboration with my promoter(s)/supervisor(s) and shall notify my promoter(s)/supervisor(s) in writing immediately if any change to the study is proposed. I undertake to notify the Higher Degrees Committee of the Department of Psychology in the College of Human Sciences in writing immediately if any adverse event occurs or when injury or harm is experienced by the participants attributable to their participation in the study. I have taken note of paragraph 5 of the Policy for Research Ethics in which integrity in research is detailed and have read and understood UNISA's Policy for Copyright Infringement and Plagiarism (See Appendix B).

Student: Dhevamoney Padayachee **02/02/2017**

_____ _____

Signature Date

Supervisor:

_____ _____

Signature Date

A list of issues which may require special consideration or ethical sensitivity is given

below. The list can be used to evaluate your project as an aid to filling in the Ethics Clearance Form.

Section 1: RESEARCH TOPICS

1.01 research about parenting
1.02 investigating sensitive personal issues
1.03 investigating sensitive cultural issues
1.04 explorations of grief, death or serious/traumatic loss
1.05 depression, mood states, anxiety
1.06 gambling
1.07 eating disorders
1.08 illicit drug taking
1.09 substance abuse
1.10 self report of criminal behaviour
1.11 any psychological disorder
1.12 suicide
1.13 gender identity
1.14 sexuality
1.15 race or ethnic identity
1.16 any disease or health problem
1.17 fertility
1.18 termination of pregnancy

Section 2: RESEARCH PROCEDURES

2.01 use of personal data obtained from external agency without participant's knowledge
2.02 deception of participants
2.03 concealing the purposes of the research
2.04 covert observation
2.05 audio or visual recording without consent
2.06 recruitment via a third party or agency
2.07 withholding from one group specific treatments or methods of learning, from which they may otherwise benefit (e.g., in therapy, medicine or teaching)
2.08 any psychological interventions or treatments
2.09 administration of physical stimulation
2.10 invasive physical procedures
2.11 infliction of pain
2.12 administration of drugs
2.13 administration of other substances
2.14 administration of ionising radiation
2.15 tissue sampling or blood taking
2.16 collecting body fluid
2.17 genetic testing
2.18 use of medical records where participants can be identified or linked
2.19 drug trials and other clinical trials
2.20 administration of drugs or placebos

Section 3: PARTICIPANT VULNERABILITY

3.01 suffering a psychological disorder

3.02 suffering a physical vulnerability
3.03 people highly dependent on medical care
3.04 minors without parental or guardian consent
3.05 people whose ability to give consent is impaired
3.06 resident of a custodial institution
3.07 people who are unable to give free informed consent because of difficulties in the understanding of information (e.g. language difficulties)
3.08 members of a socially identifiable group with special cultural or religious needs or political vulnerabilities
3.09 those in dependent relationship with the researchers (e.g. lecturer/student, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil, professional/client)
3.10 will it be possible to identify any participant in any final report when specific consent for this has not been given?

Section 4 - RESEARCH WHICH MAY PUT RESEARCHERS OR FIELD WORKERS AT RISK

4.01 research being undertaken in a politically unstable area
4.02 research involving sensitive cultural issues
4.03 research in countries where criticism of government and institutions may put participants and/or researchers at risk

Appendix B: Unisa Policy Statement on Plagiarism

Unisa policy statement on plagiarism

POLICY FOR COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AND PLAGIARISM

1. PREAMBLE

Where a student or researcher's work is not authentically his/her own, such work does not qualify as an academic output, whether this is a student assignment or employee research, and will be viewed as plagiarism, which is defined as the appropriation of another's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, without proper acknowledgement. Copyright is the specific intellectual property right, which an author acquires in accordance with the Copyright Act, No. 98 of 1978 in respect of a protected work. Copyright infringement includes the infringement of the economic rights of the right holder and the moral rights of the author.

Academic dishonesty is a denial of ethical values, it undermines the credibility of research results and is a negation of sound academic practice. No value is added if copyright is infringed or where unethical research practices are used. Material gained through dishonesty adds nothing to existing knowledge: there is no growth in the independence of the writer's intellectual involvement and the writer's academic integrity is compromised. Unethical research practices undermine the purpose of education by casting doubt on the institution's ability to promote sound and efficient scholarship.

2. AIM

The aim of this policy is to empower Unisa employees and students to uphold ethical standards and to give the University of South Africa the power to act in cases where contraventions of ethical academic standards occur. A further aim of this policy is to inform employees and students of the rights of copyright holders and to provide staff and students with guidelines for ethical research and study practices.

All academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by an employee or student is expected to be the result of his/her own skill and labour. The economic rights of a copyright owner are infringed when a person knowingly or unknowingly makes an unauthorized reproduction or adaptation of a substantial part of another person's work. Moral rights are infringed when the author of a work is not given due acknowledgement by means of clear quotations and clear acknowledgements giving details of the publication concerned.

3. COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

3.1 Copyright is infringed where any of the copyright owner's exclusive rights are performed without authorization.

3.2 Statutory exceptions limit the copyright owner's rights in permitting that a copyright work to be reproduced or adapted by any fair dealing with a work for the purpose of research or private study, criticism or review of that work or for the purpose of reporting on current events in a periodical. The source of the work as well as the name of the author must be mentioned.

3.3 The following will be an infringement of a work and will not be exempted as fair dealing:

3.3.1 failure to indicate clearly (e.g. with quotation marks or indent and different font) phrases or passages taken *verbatim* (word-for-word) from a published or unpublished text without crediting the original text and author;

3.3.2 paraphrasing of an article, a book or an electronic text without acknowledging the source(s) and the author of the work. This amounts to reproducing a text in different words as the author, by changing the word order of the text, the sentence types and the style of the author;

3.3.3 using more than a substantial part of the work will not be fair dealing, even if an acknowledgement of the source and the author is given.

4. PLAGIARISM AND OTHER DISHONEST PRACTICES

4.1 Unethical use of another person's work for research or study purposes may, in addition to the infringement of the copyright owner's economic rights, also infringe the author's moral rights and constitute a criminal offence.

4.2 The following will amount to the infringement of an author's moral rights:

4.2.1 failure to acknowledge the author where phrases or passages are taken *verbatim* (word-for-word) from a published or unpublished text;

4.2.2 use of a summary of a work which contains the ideas of others and presents the essence of an argument in language that condenses and compresses the original language of the source without acknowledging the author of the work;

4.2.3 using the patch-writing (cut-and-paste) method, where pieces of other persons' works, including those taken from the internet, are blended with one's own words and phases without acknowledging the author of the source work;

4.3 Dishonest practices may also amount to criminal offences, such as fraud, theft and criminal copyright liability. Such dishonest practices include the following:

4.3.1 copying information from another person (e.g. another student's assignment or portfolio) and submitting identical work where such work is not the result of teamwork and indicated as such by all participants,

4.3.2 buying an essay from a ghost-writing service and pretending that it is one's own work;

4.3.3 asking someone else to do an assignment on one's behalf.

5. CONTRAVENTION OF THIS POLICY

A student or an employee who is guilty of the infringement of copyright or unethical practice will be subject to the applicable disciplinary code.

6. AVOIDANCE OF LIABILITY

6.1 Acknowledging sources ensures:

6.1.1 compliance with the provisions of the Copyright Act and universally accepted scientific practice; and

6.1.2 that the reader of the work could satisfy him/herself that the authenticity and integrity of the sources and the research methodology have been upheld.

6.2 Citation is a form of respect for the relevant author's proprietary rights.

6.3 Fair use is a form of respect for the author's economic rights.

Appendix C: Participant's Letter of Request

Dear Participant

My name is Dhevamoney Padayachee. I am a student at the University of South Africa completing a research report towards a Master of Arts Degree in Psychology. You are invited to take part in a Gender-Based violence study. The research is being done to understand the reasons as to why it is difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence.

This study is to investigate and better understand the reasons as to why women find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship.

The reason why you are being asked to participate in this study is because your experiences and opinions regarding this study is invaluable in obtaining and understanding these reasons. It took me, the researcher, 14 years to eventually break free from my abusive relationship with my husband. It is never easy as many people assume it to be.

Your participation is voluntary and by no means compulsory. Should you participate in the research, you may also leave the study whenever you wish to do so without providing a reason.

Your participation will include you completing an information brochure on the research that is being carried out and thereafter a one-on-one interview. The interview will be approximately one hour and will be held at a place convenient for you.

All information obtained during the study will remain strictly confidential. The interviews will be tape recorded with your permission and once transcribed will not reflect your name or any of your personal details.

Your participation will go a long way in making society understand the implications of gender-based violence, the impact it has on the survivor both mentally and physically and why it is so difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence.

The study is being supervised by Ms Errolyn Long, who is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. Her contact details are XXX

Should you have any further enquiries regarding the study you may contact me:
Dhevamoney **(**Mogie**)** Padayachee: XXXX/ XXX
Thank you for affording me the time to participate in the research especially since I am well aware that it involves disclosing personal and sensitive information.

With Warm Regards

Mogie Padayachee

Supervisor: Ms Errolyn Long
Office telephone number: XXXX
Email: XXXX

Appendix D: Manager's Permission

Dear (Name of Manager)

My name is Dhevamoney Padayachee. I am currently completing a research report towards my Master's degree in Psychology at the University of South Africa. The research being carried is to investigate why it is difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence. The study aims to investigate and better understand the reasons as to why women find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. The research will contribute to the discipline of Psychology in gaining understanding as to the complexities that prevent women from leaving abusive/violent relationships.

I hereby ask permission to access clients at your organisation that are living in such abusive relationships that are willing to participate in the study. All participants that volunteer will remain anonymous while their experiences will be known. Each interview will be approximately 60 minutes. Interviewees may refuse to disclose any information they are not comfortable in sharing and they also have the option of withdrawing from the study at any given time without any consequences whatsoever.

Debriefing will be made available should the participant require it. Debriefing and information will be provided to the organisation. Each interview will be recorded and later transcribed. The recordings will be kept locked away for at least five years before they are discarded. The transcripts will probably be included in the final study, but all known details of the participant will be removed or changed. There will be a report available after the findings are concluded to those that wish to have access to it. There will be no financial gain to the participants. However, they will be compensated for their transport costs and snacks and refreshments will be provided after the interviews.

You are in no way compelled to participate in this study. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. It is necessary for me to obtain your consent before I can begin my study.

With Warm Regards

_____

Dhevamoney (Mogie) Padayachee
Cell. No. XXXX
E.mail : XXXX

Supervisor: Ms. Errolyn Long
Office telephone number: XXXX
Email: XXXX

Appendix E: Gatekeeper's Permission

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Dhevamoney Padayachee. I am currently completing a research report towards my Master's degree in Psychology at the University of South Africa. The research being carried is to investigate why it is difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence. The study aims to investigate and better understand the reasons as to why women find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. The research will contribute to the discipline of Psychology in gaining understanding as to the complexities that prevent women from leaving abusive/violent relationships.

I hereby ask permission to access clients at your organization that are living in such abusive relationships that are willing to participate in the study. All participants that volunteer will remain anonymous while their experiences will be known. Each interview will be approximately 60 minutes. Interviewees may refuse to disclose any information they are not comfortable in sharing and they also have the option of withdrawing from the study at any given time without any consequences whatsoever.

Debriefing will be made available should the participant require it. Debriefing and information will be provided to the organization. Each interview will be recorded and later transcribed. The recordings will be kept locked away for at least five years before they are discarded. The transcripts will probably be included in the final study, but all known details of the participant will be removed or changed. There will be a report available after the findings are concluded to those that wish to have access to it. There will be no financial gain to the participants. However, they will be compensated for their transport costs and snacks and refreshments will be provided after the interviews.

You are in no way compelled to participate in this study. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. It is necessary for me to obtain your consent before I can begin my study.

With Warm Regards

_____

Dhevamoney (Mogie) Padayachee
Cell. No. XXXX
E.mail XXXX

Supervisor: Ms. Errolyn Long
Tel. XXXX
Email: XXXX

Appendix F: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title: Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship amongst Heterosexual Women Living in the Inanda District in Kwazulu-Natal.

Researcher: Dhevamoney (Mogie) Padayachee

The research being carried is to investigate why it is difficult to break the silence on gender-based violence. The study aims to investigate and better understand the reasons as to why women find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. The research will contribute to the discipline of Psychology in gaining understanding as to the complexities that prevent women from leaving abusive/violent relationships.

I understand that sharing my experiences may cause me some anxiety. I am aware that the interview will require approximately 60 minutes of my time and that the interview will be recorded.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the research at any given time. I am also aware that I can contact the researcher should I have any queries and that I have access to her cell. no. which is XXXX.
I give full consent to participate in the study and I have been made aware that my identity will be kept confidential throughout the study and even after it has been published. The researcher, transcriber and the supervisor will be the only ones that have access to the recording of the interview.

_____
Participant's Signature

_____
Date

_____
Researcher's Signature

_____
Date

Appendix G: Confidentiality Form

Appendix G: Confidentiality Form

I, ____Nikki Solomon (transcriber's name), declare that I will keep the confidentiality of the participants and the information gathered from the transcription shall also not be disclosed. I will ensure that I adhere to security procedures that are vital to the study.

Signature of transcriber

___2018/06/13

Date

Signature of Researcher

13/06/2018

Date

Appendix H: Interview Questions

Details of Participant

Participant Number: Race:

Number of dependents: Age:

Marital Status: Period of relationship:

Interview Questions:

I am going to be interviewing women who have been in abusive relationships in order to understand why they have remained in these relationships. This may offer insight into why women who are currently in abusive relationships are staying.

1. Can you tell me about the abusive relationship you were in?

2. What was he like when you first met him?
   Probing questions: Was he always abusive? If he wasn't always abusive when did the abuse start? How did you respond when he first hit you? How did he react?

3. During the abuse, what was your relationship like with your family and friends?

4. What were the reasons you stayed in the relationship for so long?

5. What made you eventually leave? (For the participants that left their abusive relationships)
   Probing questions: How did you feel when you left? How do you feel about yourself now?

Appendix I: Request for Debriefing of Research Participants

From: Mogie Naicker
Sent: Tuesday, Mar 07, 2017 1:44 PM
To: Charlton Jan
Subject: Debriefing of Interview Participants

Hi Jan,

This is a request for your assistance with regards to the counselling of the research participants. As you are aware, I will be interviewing research participants at the designated office at Family Court. Will you be able to debrief the participants should the need arise? The research is on gender-based violence and I will be interviewing women that have been in abusive relationships.

I understand that your services will be voluntary, and that all information revealed to you by the participants' will remain confidential. It is necessary for me to obtain your consent to debrief the participants that will be interviewed.

Thank you
With Warm Regards

Mogie Naicker
Finance Section
Department of Justice & Constitutional Development
"Change your thoughts and you change your world"

Appendix J: Reflections on the Research Study

These reflections are based on research conducted as part of my Master's study, the purpose of which was to explore the barriers to leaving abusive relationships and the meanings women attach to their experiences of violence in their intimate heterosexual relationships. In the following paragraphs, I refer to my experiences as a researcher, my personal values and thoughts about gender-based violence in the Inanda District in KwaZulu-Natal. These personal reflections afforded me as the researcher to assess the implications of the knowledge claims emerging from the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to qualitative research. It allowed the researcher, and the women being interviewed, to make sense of the phenomenon of gender-based violence. The research gave me the opportunity to reflect on my role as an Indian woman researcher conducting feminist research on gender-based violence. Added to this were my own experiences on gender-based violence which were partly responsible for shaping the research questions and aims of the study. I set out to understand more about how ideas around power, control, and gender are so often tied to abuse by their partners. I wanted to understand the cultural ideas sustaining these beliefs on women being submissive to their controlling partners.

Prior to embarking on fieldwork, I had already made choices about the theoretical orientation of the study and about how power is negotiated within intimate heterosexual relationships. However, the purpose of this essay is to show how these choices guided my actions during the interviews.

The participants were recruited within a two-month period in 2017, and semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of about five months in 2017. In an attempt to secure informed consent, a description of the study was provided at the beginning of each interview. Participants were told that the information they offered would be confidential as I would not use their names nor any other details that could connect them to

what we discussed. I explained the interviews would be recorded; they were informed that they could stop at any time during the interview, and I thanked the participants for agreeing to participate in the research as well as emphasising that were an integral part of the research process.

Demographic data were collected at the beginning of the interview, including information about age, ethnicity, marital status, religion, employment status and living arrangements. The phenomenological study provided access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. Hence, the research sought to include the participants' voices in the study. It was essential to consider my own biography and biases as I attempted to understand the experiences of the women in the study. These concerns guided my discussion during the semi-structured interviews.

Talking about the experience of violence in relationships is, of course, fraught with numerous challenges. For women who have been abused, this often means returning to very traumatic experiences, a process which was quite difficult for several of the women whom I interviewed. At times I found myself drawn into the participants' experiences and felt compelled to offer comfort, as my experiences of abuse were so similar, but I had to remind myself to be acutely aware of my role as a researcher. It was important to be able to assess and respond to participants' reactions during the interview to minimise the possibility for further harm. Participants generally spoke at length about their feelings and experiences. The information given prompted me to probe for greater details on specific issues. In short, there was no strict adherence to the interview schedule. There were, however, a few occasions where I intervened to steer the session in a particular direction, but for the most part, participants were allowed to give direction to their accounts. It was difficult to remain unmoved during the interviews.

I was completely reliant on the availability of participants, and often interviews had to be rearranged. Some women who had previously confirmed their participation withdrew at a later date. My concern about interviewing women living with abuse was based mainly on the possibility that I might cause further harm to those who are typically considered vulnerable, given their exposure to violence. Talking about violence can be distressing for those involved, especially for women who are the ones recalling the experiences. The informal interviewing process was sometimes suspended, and the audio recorder turned off in a few instances when it became too traumatic for some women to speak about their experiences.

My interest in this subject of gender-based violence stemmed from my own personal experience of relationship violence. Hence, the implications of violence as one of the most overt manifestations of gender inequality for women's well-being is of great concern to me. I remember clearly being gossiped about and blamed for living with abuse and violence for 14 years. The lack of understanding from the people around me on the barriers I faced to leaving increased the isolation from family and friends. These experiences prompted the topic of the research study.

The relationships that were formed in my interviews with women highlighted the extent to which women positioned me as an equal. This construction was often based on notions of shared ideas about my personal experiences with violence. I continue to live with an immense hope that women living in cultures that are rich with solidarity will be treated as equals to men and live in a world where we can be supported, nurtured and protected. Women are not supposed to fight to survive on a daily basis but were born to thrive.