PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES: AN AFRICAN

PERSPECTIVE

by

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Declaration

Student Number: **4583-312-5**

I declare that **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE** is my own work and all sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Miss M. F Mpata   Date

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Abstract

This research focused on the personal experiences of both male and female victims of violent crimes. The aim of this research was to explore how indigenous Black South Africans understand and deal with victimisation. An African epistemology was used to help gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling strategy. Five participants were selected for this study. Data was collected using individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Based on the transcribed data, themes were extracted and analysed using content analysis. The results indicate that participants attributed varying meanings to their victimisation.

Keywords: violent crime, murder, attempted murder, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm, rape, direct victim, indirect victim, victimisation, primary victimisation, secondary victimisation, victim's rights, victim's need, victim support, victim empowerment, and African epistemology.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, the focus is on motivation for and the purpose of the study. This will include the context in which this study is conducted. This chapter also includes personal reflections of the researcher, which help motivate the choice of the context of this study, the research topic and theoretical framework for the study. A brief overview on victimisation from an African perspective is provided. The chapter concludes with the study outline.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

One Friday afternoon I visited my in-laws. I had a joyous afternoon with them, as it is always the case. Just before dusk, I said my goodbyes and walked back home. It is a walking distance between my village and the village where my in-laws reside. Just when I was in-between the two villages, I noticed that there were three teenage boys behind me; walking together. I was not bothered because they seemed farther away from me. The boys were walking faster. I just thought to myself that perhaps they were in a hurry to get to where they were going. But I also wondered whether they only began walking faster after they had realised that I noticed them. To my surprise, when they were closer to me, two of them disappeared into thin air. I looked around but could not see them. I started to panic but tried by all means to hide my fear. The remaining boy walked past me, still in a hurry. He walked until he also disappeared. All along I was walking slowly because I was a little tired. I then began to walk a little faster because I had a strange feeling about the three boys. I wanted to reach my village before the three strange boys reappeared, that's if they did. While walking, the boy who walked past me earlier on reappeared,

walking faster than before. At that point, we were walking in opposite directions. I started to panic again, and could not control my fear. When the boy was approximately two metres away from me, I noticed a tiny path and took a detour. He followed me. I did not want to meet him face-to-face, though I wanted to run away but the chances were I might not run fast enough to reach the nearby house. When he got closer, he took out a long shinny knife and instructed me to hand over my purse to him. He said that he would kill me if I did not follow his instructions. I had never been scared like that in my entire life. Because he specifically demanded the purse, I thought he meant the purse inside the handbag and not the whole handbag. I told him not to kill me and that I would give him my purse. As I opened my handbag to take out my purse, the boy stabbed me on my left thumb with the knife and my handbag fell off. He picked it up and ran off. I shouted out, "sebatakgomo", to alert my fellow villagers to come and help me. I was getting closer to my village. I was in such a panic state that I hardly noticed how much I was bleeding. The villagers gathered in a short space of time. My nuclear family also came to see what had happened to me. The villagers and I started looking for the boy. We looked till late in the evening without success. I then went to the local hospital for medical attention. The medical staff at the local hospital treated the injury I sustained during the attack. They also advised me to open a case against the boy. I went to the police station afterwards and opened a case. The following day the villagers, together with the police, continued their search until they found the boy. He was arrested. A few weeks later, I got a court date but we never got the chance to appear in court. The judge kept on postponing the case. Each time I inquired about why they postponed the case I got a different story until the case was closed and the boy released back into the community. I started to have

sleepless nights. I had nightmares about the attack. In the middle of the night, I would feel as if the attack was recurring. I was more worried about my own safety, especially because the boy was now walking freely on the streets. What if he attacked me again? I could not help it but keep on worrying. This began to impact negatively on my daily functioning. I was told that I was not as effective and efficient at work as I used to be. I went to seek advice from my father when I realised that things were getting more and more complicated. I related my story to him and he interpreted the whole incident for me. Apparently, my father also had sleepless nights. His sleep was mostly disrupted by his constant dreams about my late mother whom we did not know where exactly she was buried. He explained to me that both of us were struggling to maintain sleep at night just as much as my late mother is struggling to "sleep" in peace. He told me we needed to find out where my late mother wass buried. My father also explained to me that my late mother chose me out of her four surviving children because I was doing well financially as compared to the others. Perhaps it wass a sign that my late mother wanted the family to erect a tombstone for her, we thought. Things began to take a different shape. My mother communicated with me through robbery. I had been given financial means to erect a tombstone for her and since I did not do that, she was taking away that very gift through robbery (S. I. Mpata, personal communication, March 21, 2009).

This is the story of a Black South African married woman who lives at Ga-Mothiba, a rural village in Limpopo Province. Mrs. Mpata is a direct victim of violent crime. Her perpetrator snatched her handbag from her. She indicated that her perpetrator showed her a knife and threatened to kill her if she did not follow the perpetrator's instructions. Thus, Mrs. Mpata is a

direct victim of armed robbery. Snyman (2002) and Van der Merwe (2008) define armed robbery as the illegal taking or attempting to take property or anything of value from the care, custody or control of a person while carrying a dangerous weapon, regardless of whether the weapon is used or not. In Mrs. Mpata's case, the perpetrator used the knife to help execute the robbery. She sustained physical injuries that needed medical attention.

Mrs. Mpata's story could be interpreted in different ways depending on the interpreter's area of interest or worldview. One interpreter may assess Mrs. Mpata as a crime victim and her needs that resulted from armed robbery and the role played by the different service providers in addressing her needs. Another interpreter may focus on the meaning Mrs. Mpata attributes to armed robbery, taking into consideration her reality and her cultural background. What seems outstanding for the researcher in this story is how Mrs. Mpata and her father interpreted and dealt with armed robbery. They interpreted it as a means of communication with the ancestors. Their interpretation, to a larger extent, influenced how they were dealing with the armed robbery. In her interview, Mrs. Mpata expressed that her family was busy making arrangements to erect a tombstone for her late mother.

J. Mamabolo (personal communication, December 3, 2010) and D. M. Modiba (personal communication, December 03, 2010) explained that an erection of a tombstone symbolizes warmth in many Black African cultures. When ancestors communicate with their family concerning the erection of a tombstone, it means that *badimo ba kwa phefo* (they are feeling cold) and the tombstone will keep them warm. It is the responsibility of the family members to erect the tombstone. If they fail to erect it, the ancestors will show their disapproval to living

family members in the form of misfortunes, like armed robbery as in the story. It is evident that what a tombstone signifies from an African perspective extends beyond financial status of the affected person.

Victims of violent crimes are believed to have *sefifi* (bad omen) after they have been victimised (P. B. Mokgathle, personal communication, November 10, 2009). The victim would most likely experience repeat victimisation if the *sefifi* is not cleansed by a traditional healer. In some tribal groups, an elder in the family, like an uncle, can also perform the cleansing ritual. This did not apply in the story, however.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is important to note how this study resonates with the researcher. To begin with, Mrs. Mpata is the researcher's mother. They live at Ga-Mothiba, a rural village located 20 kilometers East of Polokwane in Limpopo Province. It is also important to note that the researcher is a Black educated, Sepedi-speaking, South African female in her early twenties. The researcher has been brought up in a semi-Westernized way by her Christian parents. She has limited knowledge about indigenous African ways of being. In fact, indigenous African ways of being seem foreign to her. The fact that she is trained as a clinical psychologist, which is mainly rooted within Western philosophical assumptions, does not help give her answers.

The researcher's mother was victimised in December 2008. When her family learnt about her victimisation, they all came up with all sorts of solutions and advice to help her cope with the effects of the robbery. Throughout the researcher's training as a clinical psychologist, she has been exposed to a variety of ways of dealing with people who have experienced traumatic events

like that of her mother. But then she knew it very well that she could not be her mother's psychotherapist. She then advised her to seek therapeutic help by emphasising how she might benefit from such help.

The researcher's advice did not resonate with her mother's reality. At one stage it seemed like she was imposing her reality on her mother. They disagreed, as a result, regarding the appropriate help her mother could receive. The disagreement made the researcher aware that her professional knowledge was incongruent with the worldview of her mother. These differences made the researcher question whether she would be able to give back to her community in ways that were consistent with modes of life of life of indigenous African people in general, including the community of Ga-Mothiba.

The community of Ga-Mothiba is dominated by Black South African indigenous people. There are other groups such as Whites, Indians, Nigerians, and Somalis. These other groups are in minority in the village. Black South Africans are further subdivided into different ethnic groups namely, Pedi, Tsonga, and Vhenda. Most people in this community speak Sepedi even those who are not Pedi in origin. Almost all of the minority groups in Ga-Mothiba are involved in businesses.

Having said that, there is a high rate of shoplifting from businesses that are owned by the people who belong to minority groups. Other crimes common in the village of Ga-Mothiba include armed robbery (as in the introductory story), rape, assaults, housebreaking, vehicle hijacking, breaking into computer rooms in local schools, and murder. The researcher decided to focus on

violent crimes because they are among the common crime categories dominant in Ga-Mothiba. Hoffmann and McKendrick (1990) define violent crimes as acts of violence willfully directed at a person and invade the personal space of a person and his/her rights. In addition, the personal encounter between the victim and the perpetrators in violent crimes may help the researcher understand each victim's experience from the victim's perspective. This may help the researcher gain sensitivity when working with people whose worldviews are different from hers.

The people of Ga-Mothiba are quite traditional and the community is resource limited. The researcher hopes that this study will help her comprehend how victims of violent crimes conceptualise and cope with their victimisation in an area that is rather limited in terms of available economic resources. In the story, there is an example of indigenous understanding of victimisation. It is these reasons that make Ga-Mothiba an interesting study area. Further, African epistemology is used as a theoretical framework in this study in order to explain experiences of Black South Africans using the African knowledge perspectives.

The level of education of the people who live in Ga-Mothiba varies. Some have completed their grade twelve; others dropped out of school before they could complete schooling and a few others who continued with their studies beyond grade twelve. The majority, however, do not have the luxury to learn about other worldviews such as the formalised support services available for survivors of violence and crime within the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP). The VEP is outlined in detail in the next chapter. In as much as the researcher would like to learn from the people in her community, she also wants to be of benefit to them, especially about alternative ways of dealing with the impact of victimisation that she has learnt during her

training as a clinical psychologist without imposing her worldview on them. The researcher hopes that with this study, she will also rediscover her roots and the African indigenous ways of being.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF VICTIMISATION FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

In several African cultures, tragedies such as violent crimes are often interpreted and dealt with culturally. Victimisation is not necessarily seen as an individual problem; it is often seen as an important message for the family or community (Kruger, Lifschitz & Baloyi, 2007) as it is the case in the introductory story of Mrs. Mpata. This is contrary to the Western conception of tragedies; when an individual is victimised his/her victimisation has nothing to do with the family or the community (Kruger et al, 2007).

From an African viewpoint, tragedies and other misfortunes are often due to the retrieval or loss of the soul, sorcery, spirit intrusion, the violation of a taboo (Moodley & West, 2005) or disequilibrium within the family or the community (Kruger et al, 2007). It can be argued that tragedies are means of communication as it is the case in Mrs. Mpata's story; the ancestors convey to the family or the community, through the affected individual, that something is out of alignment.

Victimisation from an African perspective can be seen as a metaphor to the larger ecology. A tragedy that initially served as a hindrance is interpreted and reinterpreted into something valuable, a challenge or growth or transformational opportunity where the personal self is re-conceptualised, reconstructed, and re-authored (Kruger et al, 2007). This may be similar to the possible meanings Christian victims may attribute to their victimisation. For instance, they may

have a belief that victimisation is a form of tribulation that God uses to test their faith. It may also be similar to what a psychotherapist would do if a victim seeks psychological help in dealing with his/her victimisation. For instance, the psychotherapist is likely to reframe victimisation into something that a victim can work with, depending on the psychotherapist's training background.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will explore the impact of violent crimes from the victims' perspective and the meanings they attribute to their victimisation. The researcher will focus on individuals who are the direct victims of rape, attempted murder, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, and assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm. Peltzer (2000) and Prinsloo (2006) point out the different types of crimes common in South Africa including property theft or shop theft, intimidation, and housebreaking. Certain types of crimes are not violent in nature (i.e. there is no threatened or actual physical harm against the person, as is the case in the introductory story), and, therefore, these will not be the primary focus of this study.

To avoid being gender-biased, the researcher will focus on both male and female victims of violent crimes. Although the minister of police (in Williams, 2009) puts more emphasis on strengthening measures aimed at fighting violence against women and children, this raises the question whether men are always only the perpetrators of violence, with women and children as always only the victims. Shefer, Ratele, Strebel and Shabalala (2005) argue that, until fairly recently, much of research on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and gender-based violence in South Africa focused on experiences of women at the expense of the experiences of men. As a result, the experiences of men and the consequent challenges have been ignored or marginalised (Shefer et

al, 2005). Focusing on both male and female victims of violent crimes may help address this side effect of gender-biased research. In her study on gender-biased service delivery to victims of crime, Holtmann (2001) notes that men are most often the victims of crimes.

There is limited research that explores violence qualitatively from philosophical assumptions other than the Western perspective. This research aims to explore the victims' immediate response to their victimisation in order to elicit indigenous way(s) of understanding and dealing with crime and victimisation. Chapter three of this study explains African ways of understating victimisation in detail. This study will, therefore, provide a detailed narrative study of male and female victims of violent crimes from an African perspective. In the discussion that follows, the researcher outlines the purpose of this study in greater depth.

RESEARCH AIMS

The aims of this study are as follows:

- To explore how victims of violent crimes perceive their victimisation. The researcher will ask each victim to relate his or her victimisation so as to give voice to the victims' stories. This will help the researcher comprehend how victims conceptualise and cope with their victimisation in an area with marked scarcity of resources, and validate indigenous interventions for victimisation, and any other indigenous methods, rituals, or practices of helping such individuals. This study will look at how different African cultures view, explain, and understand violence, with special reference to crime victimisation.

- To bring into the victims' awareness, other options available to address their trauma such as victim support centres or services.

- To advocate for the integration of indigenous ways of understanding and dealing with violent crimes within the existing formal support structures of victims of violent crimes. Integrating African and Western ways of coping with victimisation would make it possible for the victim to opt for either one of the two or for a combination of both in dealing with his or her victimisation without being limited by what is available.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research approach is employed in this study. Qualitative research embraces a cyclical rather than a linear method and indulges in the lived experiences of participants under the notion that objective reality cannot be known (Themisticleus, 2008). This is consistent with social constructionism which informs the paradigm for this study. Meanings are co-created when people interact and dialogue.

This study aims to focus on personal experiences of direct victims of violent crimes. The study also involves five participants who have been selected using a purposive sampling strategy who are willing to participate. Through semi-structured face-to-face interviews, the participants will share their stories. The research design is explained in detail in chapter four.

There are key concepts central to the understanding of this study. They are defined in next discussion.

DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts that are essential in the understanding of this research endeavour include violent crime, murder, attempted murder, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm, rape, victim, direct victim, indirect victim, victimisation, primary victimisation, secondary victimisation, victim's rights, victim's need, victim support, victim empowerment, and African epistemology.

Violent crime

Garner (1999) defines violent crime as a crime in which an element is used, and that there is attempted use, threatened use or substantial risk of use of physical force against the person or property of another. Basically, for an act of crime to be considered violent, i.e. violent crime, it must be characterised by the presence of force or threat of force directed at a person or property of the person. Hoffmann and McKendrick (1990) indicate that violent crime is an act of violence willfully directed at a person and invades the personal space of a person and his/her rights. Thus, violent crime is perpetrated on another person with an intention, and infringes the basic human rights of the person.

Murder and attempted murder

Murder is the willful killing of another with malice (Anderson, 1996; Garner, 1999; Gooch & Williams, 2007; Law & Martin, 2009). This study focuses on deaths in which the perpetrator had the intention to kill another person. The intentional but unsuccessful murder, also known as attempted murder, forms part of the definition because if death resulted, it would not be accidental. Therefore, deaths by negligence or accidents do not constitute part of the definition. Suicide also does not form part of the definition because the act of killing is characterised by intentional self destruction.

Armed robbery

Robbery is the illegal taking or attempting to take property or anything of value from the care, custody or control of a person by force, by threat of force, violence or putting the victim in fear (Hoffmann & McKendrick, 1990; Snyman, 2002; Bevans, 2003). This definition suggests that victims of armed robbery engage with their perpetrators face-to-face and as such both their personal safety and property are threatened. The definition also suggests that force or threat of force is used to put victims in vulnerable states so that they submit to the taking of property.

Armed robbery is robbery committed by a person carrying a dangerous weapon, regardless of whether the weapon is used or not (Garner, 1999; van der Merwe, 2008). A dangerous weapon is any instrument likely to cause serious bodily harm under the circumstances of its actual use (Bevans, 2003). The types of weapons that Bevans classified as dangerous include knives, guns, physical strength, spade and brass knuckles. It seems that depending on whether the weapon is used or not, armed robbery may or may not result in bodily harm. Levinson (2002) asserts that the use of or threats to use a weapon must occur either before or simultaneously with the taking of the property.

Vehicle hijacking

Vehicle hijacking is the intentional taking of a motor vehicle from the driver in the presence of that person, or in the presence of the passenger, or any other person in lawful possession of the motor vehicle, by use of force or intimidation (Levinson, 2002). Vehicle hijacking is associated with violent crimes because during the hijacking of the vehicle, the driver or owner of the vehicle may be physically threatened, assaulted, or even murdered. By virtue of the use of a weapon, force or threat of force, vehicle hijacking can be classified as a form of armed robbery

(Anderson, 1996, Levinson, 2002). For the purposes of this research project, vehicle hijacking will be explored separately to focus exclusively on robbery with the purpose of stealing a car.

Assault with intent to inflict severe bodily injury

Assault with intent to inflict severe bodily injury is defined as an unlawful attack by a person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury (Hoffmann & McKendrick, 1990, Levinson, 2002, Alvarez & Bachman, 2008). Assault with intent to inflict severe bodily injury usually involves the use of a weapon or other means likely to produce great bodily injury (Alvarez & Bachman 2008). Attempted aggravated assault that involves the display of or the threat to use a gun, knife or other weapon is included in this crime category because serious personal injury would likely result if the assault were completed (Hoffmann & McKendrick, 1990).

Rape

Snyman (2002) and Bevans (2003) define rape as a crime of a man imposing sexual intercourse on a woman. This definition perpetuates the misconception that only women can be victims of rape; with only men as perpetrators. Men are victims of rape more often than most people would like to believe (Holtmann, 2001; Singh, 2004, Bourke, 2007). Bevans' definition reflects the extent to which rape myths and misconceptions are ingrained in human thinking. What it fails to address is that sexual intercourse imposed by a man on a woman is by far the dominant form of sexual violence and not necessarily the only form of such violence.

In South Africa, the Criminal Law Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act 32 was amended in 2007 to comprehensively and extensively review all aspects of the law (Government Gazette, 2007). According to the new Act (Government Gazette, 2007), "any person (A) who unlawfully

and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant (B) without the consent of B, is guilty of the offence of rape". This description of a rapist is not gender biased and acknowledges that both men and women can be both victims and perpetrators of rape.

De Wet, Potgieter, and Labuschagne (2010) are of the opinion that the new Sexual Offences Act replaced the archaic law on sexual offences with an expanded statutory definition of rape applicable to all forms of sexual penetration. Sexual Offences Act 32 of 2007 (Government Gazette, 2007: 17) defines sexual penetration as follows:

> *Any act which causes penetration to any extent whatsoever by*
>
> - *the genital organs of one person into or beyond the genital organs, anus or mouth of another person;*
>
> - *any other part of the body of one person or, any object, including any part of the body of an animal into or beyond the genital organs or anus of another person; or*
>
> - *the genital organs of an animal, into or beyond the mouth of another person.*

It is clear that rape is not only perpetrated by a human being on another human; animals can also rape or be raped as in the case of bestiality. In this study, the focus is on violence against a person and, therefore, this study focuses attention on sexual penetrations that is forcefully imposed by a human perpetrator on a human victim. Sexual assaults and attempts to commit rape by force form part of the focus of this study. Any sexual activity that does not involve force such as statutory rape is excluded from this study.

Forced sexual intercourse in a marital relationship, also known as marital rape, will not form part of this study. Although it is a violent crime, the context within which it occurs is complicated

and would involve the exploration of other dynamics such as the cultural socialization of and the roles of men and women in marital relationships in an attempt to understand it. Such dynamics are not the primary focus of this study. The researcher will focus on stranger perpetrated rape. As such, date rape will also be excluded.

Victim

According to the National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment (NPGVE), a victim is any person who has suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of his or her fundamental rights, through acts or omission that are in violation of the criminal laws (DSD, 2004a). A person may be considered a victim regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship between the perpetrator and the victim (Nel, Koortzen & Jacobs, 2001). When referring to victims of violent crimes, the researcher is referring to those who have been harmed through illegal acts.

Direct and indirect victim

Victims of crime and violence can fall into two categories namely, direct and indirect victims. A direct victim is someone who has suffered harm (physical, mental, emotional, financial, or impairment of his/her human rights) because of acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws (United Nations as cited in Nel et al, 2001). In other words, a direct victim is someone who has firsthand experience of crime or violence. The NPGVE (DSD, 2004a) define indirect victims as the immediate family or dependents or even neighbours or colleagues of the direct victim.

Victimisation

Victimisation is a process whereby a person suffers harm through the violation of national criminal laws or internationally recognised norms relating to human rights (Nel et al, 2001). Victimisation occurs whenever a person is raped, assaulted, murdered, or loses property due to robbery, hijacking etc (Levinson, 2002).

Primary victimisation

According to Nel et al (2001) and Steyn and Steyn (2008), primary victimisation involves an individual victim who is directly harmed in a face to face offence, who is threatened or who has property stolen or damaged.

Secondary victimisation

It refers to the victimisation that occurs, not as a direct result of the criminal act, but through the response of institutions, the community at large and individuals, to the victim by blaming the victim, ignoring his/her role in the criminal justice process or through insensitive treatment (Nel et al, 2001). Secondary victimisation occurs when a victim of violence or crime is ill-treated by the people who have knowledge about his/her victimisation. Campbell and Raja (1999) define secondary victimisation as the negative experiences which involve behaviours and attitudes of social service providers that are victim blaming and insensitive, and which traumatise victims of violence who are being served by social service agencies. A victim is re-victimised when people make insensitive comments regarding the victimisation or when service providers that the victim consulted such as police officers, nurses etc fail to refer the victim to relevant people who could effectively help the victim (Nel et al, 2001) or when they fail to understand the cultural meanings victims attribute to their victimisation.

Victim's rights

When persons are victimised, their basic human rights are violated. In South Africa, Service Charter for Victims of Crime in South Africa (also known as the Victim Charter), elaborate and consolidate rights and obligations relating to service applicable to victim and survivors of crime (DoJ, 2004). According to the Victims' Charter (DoJ, 2004; DSD, 2004b) and the NPGVE (DSD, 2004a), victims have the right to be treated with fairness and with respect for their dignity and privacy; the right to offer information; the right to receive information, the right to protection, the right to assistance; the right to compensation, and the right to restitution. It is stated in the Victims' Charter that these rights will be upheld when victims contact the criminal justice system. Chapter two describes these rights in detail.

Victim's need

In the aftermath of victimisation, victims may have emotional, acknowledgement, practical, and information needs; need for understanding, and need for contact with the judicial process (Davis & Snyman, 2005). Chapter two provides an expanded description of the needs of victims.

Victim empowerment

Nel et al. (2001) define victim empowerment as the process whereby the victim is restored to a state as close as possible to that existing prior to the offence. Victim empowerment is defined as the process of promoting the resourcefulness of victims of violence and crime by promoting opportunities to access services available to them, as well as to use and build their own capacity and support networks and to act on their own choices (DSD, 2004a). It seems that with the help of service providers from different social agencies, victims of crime and violence can be empowered to become survivors of their victimisation.

Victim support

Victim support offers emotional and practical support, a shoulder to cry on, identification of symptoms of post-traumatic stress, trauma management and referral to professional services where necessary (Nel et al, 2001).

Victimology

It is an area of criminology which studies the victims of crime and their relationship with perpetrators, the criminal justice system, the media, the cost of crime and social movements (Gooch & Williams, 2007).

African epistemology

Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2002) define epistemology as the study of theories about the nature and scope of knowledge, the evaluation of the presuppositions and the bases of knowledge, and the scrutiny of knowledge claims. Epistemolodge is basically about knowledge generation and claims. African epistemology would then refer to African ways of knowing and claiming knowledge. Throughout the study, the researcher will refer to indigenous African beliefs, rituals and practices to capture not only the African knowledge claims, but also the general way of life. What follows is the chapter outline of the present study.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study consists of six chapters. They are as follows:

- Chapter two discusses the literature reviewed. The focus is on South African literature, including studies conducted in Limpopo Province on crime victimisation.

- Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework. The epistemology underlying this study receives attention. A shift from Western to African epistemology is highlighted. This chapter draws attention to victimisation as understood from an African perspective. The chapter concludes with the description of social constructionism as a research paradigm for this study.

- Chapter four discusses the methodology employed in this study. The research design is explained in detail including sampling and data collection techniques, and data analysis strategy.

- In chapter five, the results of the study are discussed. Participants' narratives of lived experiences are analysed using content analysis. The researcher deconstructs the narratives to see what themes emerge, how themes relate to each other so as to co-create new meanings to participants' experiences.

- Chapter six provides a concluding chapter where an overview of the study is given. An evaluation of the study with reference to its strengths and limitations is included. This chapter also gives attention to the recommendations for further research.

CONCLUSION

The next chapter reviews literature on violent crime, with special reference to the nature of crime and violence in South Africa. The impact of victimisation on direct victims of violent crimes, their rights and services aimed at helping them cope with their lived experiences are also explored.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

If there is righteousness in the heart,

there will be beauty in character,

if there is beauty in character,

there will be harmony in the home,

if there is harmony in the home,

there will be order in the land,

if there is order in the land,

there will be peace in the world.

Chinese proverb

INTRODUCTION

Crime in South Africa has become part of daily life. Hardly a day goes by without media report on violent and heinous crimes committed in cosmopolitan areas, informal settlements and even in the most remote rural areas (Makofane, 2001). Ga-Mothiba, one of the rural areas in South Africa in the Limpopo Province, is also characterised by crime epidemic. Following from the proverb, there is no beauty and/or righteousness in the hearts of the people who hurt or harm others by using violence, or destroy or unlawfully take other people's property. As a result, there is no order, harmony or peace in the country.

Until recently, attention was focused more on the criminal justice system emphasising the punishment that the perpetrators endure. In this chapter, the researcher pays attention to the impacts and consequences of crime and violence on the victims. The focus is on South African

literature including studies conducted in the Limpopo province in reviewing literature. This chapter also includes a review of the South African victim empowerment and support services with special reference to the services offered to survivors of victimisation in the Limpopo Province. Firstly, the nature of crime, particularly violent crimes, is explored to orient the reader about the current state of such crimes in South Africa.

The nature of violent crimes

Statistical representation of violent crimes helps understand the current state of violence and crimes within a given area. South Africans are reliant mainly upon the annual crime statistics provided by the South African Police Force (SAPF). There is also an independent institute, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), which provide statistics on victim surveys conducted nationally. The ISS's national crime surveys are motivated by a need for an accurate picture of crime levels in South Africa to complement that provided by the official crime statistics published annually by the SAPF (Burton, du Plessis, Leggete, Louw, Mistry & van Vuuren, 2004).

The difference between the SAPF's and the ISS's statistics is that the former depends almost wholly on reported crimes and the latter obtains data on crimes from nationally representative samples in all nine provinces including both reported and non-reported cases (Burton et al, 2004). Because the national victims' survey explores crime holistically focusing on experiences of victims regardless of whether they have or have not reported their victimisation to the SAPF, the victims' surveys avoid many of the problems that may affect police data.

Different scholars have different opinions about nature of violent crimes in South Africa (Prinsloo, 2006; Nation & Naude, 2007; Louw, 2008; Danstile, 2008). On the one hand, some of these scholars are of the opinion that the rate of violent crimes within the country is generally declining. On the other hand, the rate of violent crimes is reportedly increasing. SAPF's annual report on violent crimes and the ISS's findings on surveys conducted may help argue whether the rate of violent crimes is increasing or decreasing.

The ISS conducted a survey study in all nine provinces of South Africa in 2007 to ensure the comparability with 1998 and 2003 ISS surveys on violent crimes. The following is a table depicting how reported and non-reported cases of violent crimes have changed since 1998 in the country as found by ISS (Louw, 2008):

TABLE 1: Changes in percentage per 4500 cases

VIOLENT CRIMES	1998	2003	2007
Robbery	2,4	2	3,6
Assault	4,2	2,2	2,2
Sexual assault	0,4	1	0,5
Vehicle hijacking	1,4	0,5	0,4
Murder	0,5	0,2	0,4

The results of the 2007 national victim survey conducted by ISS (Louw, 2008) indicate a generally declining rate of violent crimes in comparison with studies conducted in 1998 and 2003. Robbery was high in 1998 but decreased in 2003. In 2007, the results indicate a marked

increase in incidents of robbery. According to the ISS results, robbery seems to fluctuate. Assault was high in 1998. It decreased significantly in 2003 and stayed the same in 2007. Like robbery, the nature of sexual assault seems to fluctuate. Vehicle hijacking and murder appear to be generally decreasing. The following table portrays the annual provincial crime statistics of the SAPF in the Limpopo province:

TABLE 2: Number of reported incidences of violent crimes to the police in the Limpopo province from April 2003/2004 to March 2008/2009 (SAPF, 2009).

CRIME CATEGORY	April 2003-March 2004	April 2004 -March 2005	April 2005-March 2006	April 2006-March 2007	April 2007-March 2008	April 2008-March 2009
Murder	690	733	688	747	696	751
Rape and sexual assaults	4491	5070	4671	4780	4528	4675
Attempted murder	1254	1032	823	829	722	701
Assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	19016	17756	15946	15752	13670	13221
Common assault	17998	18148	14679	13178	11024	9753
Armed robbery	3361	3285	3020	3216	2447	2815
Common robbery	4399	4881	4638	4515	3760	3332

The findings of the SAPF show a gradual decrease of number of reported cases in the following crime categories: attempted murder, assault, and armed robbery. The occurrence of murder and sexual offences (rape and sexual assault) shows a higher increase in comparison to other violent crimes. Although armed robbery is generally decreasing, the number of reported cases of common robbery fluctuates significantly (SAPF, 2009).

Even though the two tables depict crime statistics at national (Table 1) and provincial (Table 2) levels, the results complement each other. Both the results of the ISS and the SAPF show a generally declining rate of assault and sexual offences (sexual assault and rape). Mistry (in Prinsloo, 2006) also supports the idea that crime rates are generally declining. There are, however, some differences in the findings of the ISS and SAPF. According to the ISS results, robbery seems to fluctuate whereas there is a noticeable decrease from the SAPF results. In addition, the results of the ISS indicate a decrease in the occurrence of murder whereas SAPF indicate a fluctuating occurrence.

The difference between the ISS and SAPF results could be due to the many victims of violence who never report their incidents to the police; they merely report to hospitals for medical treatment of the injuries sustained (Beauregard, Bremmer, Mangeu & Tomlison, 2003). The following table, Table 3, portrays the annual provincial crime statistics of the SAPF in the Mpumalanga province. Table 3 is included to help compare the rate of violent crimes in the Limpopo province with that of a neighboring province to determine whether Limpopo province has a high or low rate of violent crimes in comparison with that of another province.

TABLE 3: Number of reported incidences of violent crimes to the police in the Mpumalanga province from April 2003/2004 to March 2008/2009 (SAPF, 2009).

CRIME CATEGORY	April 2003- March 2004	April 2004 -March 2005	April 2005- March 2006	April 2006- March 2007	April 2007- March 2008	April 2008- March 2009
Murder	1056	1099	882	869	835	902
Rape and sexual assaults	4375	4674	4756	4631	4169	4695
Attempted murder	1805	1568	1343	1305	1271	1265
Assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	20093	19978	18671	18005	16849	17062
Common assault	15019	15736	14196	13522	12202	11491
Armed robbery	6947	6947	6607	6669	5907	6952
Common robbery	4980	5474	5191	5177	4752	4372

In comparison with the annual provincial statistic of the reported cases of murder, attempted murder and armed robbery in Mpumalanga province, Limpopo province has a lower occurrence. The rate at which rape and sexual assaults are reported in the two provinces is not extensively different. Although there is a noticeable gradual decrease of reported cases of assault with intent

to inflict severe bodily harm, the rate at which it is reported in Mpumalanga province is higher than that of the Limpopo province. Limpopo province has a high rate of reported cases of common assault. In general, Limpopo province has a lower occurrence rate of violent crimes than Mpumalanga province.

Despite the declining rate of violent crimes, victimisation may have devastating impacts on both the direct and indirect victims. The impacts, which can be physical, emotional, social and financial, are experienced not only by the victims themselves, but their families and communities (DSD, 2004a). These impacts are discussed below.

The impacts of victimisation

There are number of possible reactions when a person becomes a victim of crime. The multiple and complex consequences of victimisation are grouped into psychological, physical, financial and social categories. It should be noted that these symptoms may vary in extent from person to person. Individuals' reactions to traumatic events may differ due to pre-existing social, cultural, and psychological factors and may be influenced by their personality structure, available personal resources, coping strategies as well as the availability of an extended support structure (Van Zyl, 2008).

Psychological impacts

The possible psychological reactions to victimisation are grouped into two subcategories that is initial crisis reactions and the long term reactions. Zehr (1990), Hoffmann and McKendrick (1990) and Young (2001) summarized the initial crisis reactions as follows:

- Shock, disbelief and denial- initially victims may find it difficult to believe they have become victims of crime. They may even pretend that it did not happen.

- Regression- victims often assume a childlike state and may even need to be cared for by others for some time.

- Fear or terror- victims feel fear or terror following a crime that involved a threat to one's safety or life, or to someone else a victim cares about. Many people talk about having seen their own death. This may become the foundation for panic attacks in the future.

- Anger or rage- anger arises out of the sense of helplessness. It may be expressed as revenge and the desire for vengeance. Victims may be angry with God, the perpetrator, family members, friends, the criminal justice system, or even themselves.

- Frustration- many victims are frustrated by the feelings of helplessness or powerlessness that surface when the crime takes place. In the aftermath of the crime, victims may continue to feel frustrated when they are unable to successfully obtain needed help.

- Confusion- victims are often confused if they are unsure of what actually happened because crimes often occur quickly.

- Victims are often overwhelmed by feelings of vulnerability.

- They may have mood swings, while their feelings of safety and control are shattered.

In addition to the above feelings, Ainsworth (2000), Tangney and Dearing (2002) and Frese, Moya and Meguis (2004) identified the following emotions experienced and reactions displayed by victims of crime:

- Guilt or Self blame – it is common for victims to blame themselves for their victimisation. In the context of rape, the victims may feel that their sexually provocative clothing may have encouraged the assault. In the context of murder, an individual who

survived it may suffer survivor guilt plagued with internal questions about why they
survived.

- Shame and humiliation - it can be destructive because victims may lack motivation to
seek help, and cut themselves off from other people. This may lead to other psychological
problems such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders.

- Grief or sorrow- victims often suffer intense sadness.

- Feelings of inequity, increased awareness of mortality, tension, malaise.

Rosenbloom and Williams (2002) also identified the possible initial crisis reactions. They
include:

- Changes in thoughts about the self as well self-attributes, including the inability to
control fate and feelings of fearfulness and vulnerability

- Experiencing inability to feel safe

- Experiencing difficulty in trusting other people

- Increased emotional distance from others

- Experiencing the inability to feel (alexithymia) and/or the inability to regulate feelings

Psychological impacts of victimisation may result in decreased psychological well-being. When
people survive traumatic events, they often experience distress reaction for years. Victims
continue to re-experience crisis reactions over long periods of time. Such crisis reactions are
normally in response to trigger events that remind the victim of the trauma. The types of long
term distress reactions that victims may have are acute stress disorder, Posttraumatic stress
disorder (PTSD), mood disorder, substance abuse, sleeping disorder (as in chapter one) and

eating disorder (Ainsworth, 2000, Tangney & Dearing, 2002, Frese, et al, 2004, De Villers, Hardcastle, Joyner, Seedat, Suliman & Theunissen, 2007). It should be noted that not all crime victims will suffer long term distress reactions (hereafter referred to as mental disorders). There are factors that may influence and/or complicate the manifestation and development of mental disorders. These factors are outlined in the University of South Africa tutorial letter (Unisa PSY481U, 102/2010) and they include:

- The nature of victimisation

The degree of closeness to victimisation will influence an individual's manifestation of symptomatic behavior. If the individual is directly involved in victimisation (as in a direct victim), it is likely that the manifestation of a mental disorder will be more intense than when the individual witnessed or learnt about victimisation (as in indirect victims). In addition, the presence of physical reminders of victimisation such as physical injuries or scars may perpetuate the development of mental disorders.

- The victim's developmental stage

The stage of development at which the victim is during victimisation plays a role in the manifestation of mental disorders. For example, children often express themselves indirectly and/or symbolically than adults. Also because children may lack the verbal ability to express the impacts of victimisation, they do so physically and, as such they may be at risk of being misdiagnosed. Adults on the other hand may manifest the impacts of their victimisation by experiencing sleep disturbances and memory loss, which are generally synonymous with old age. This may complicate the diagnosis of a sleep disorder, for instance, on an elderly crime victim.

- The pre- and co-morbidity of other psychological disorders

The presence of disorders prior victimisation may increase the victim's risk of developing a subsequent mental disorder. In addition, it is not always easy to assess which is the primary presenting disorder and which is the secondary presenting disorder or when both disorders are equally presented. There is a huge overlap of symptoms of many mental disorders such as mood disorders, somatoform disorders, and anxiety disorders. This further complicates the diagnosis of a specific disorder.

- The role of culture

The role that culture plays in the interpretation of victimisation cannot be ignored. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds are likely to interpret similar victimisation differently. For instance, it is not unusual for an indigenous African crime victim to interpret his/her victimisation as a means of communication with the ancestors (as in chapter one). The meaning a crime victim attributes to victimisation will influence whether the victim will develop a disorder or not. The crime victim who attributes indigenous meanings to his/her victimisation is likely to perform indigenous rituals to prevent future victimisation. When such rituals are performed, the crime victim is less likely to be preoccupied with victimisation and as such symptomatic behavior is less likely to develop. More of indigenous African understandings of victimisation are discussed in chapter three.

- The availability of support system

The availability of a primary support system can prevent the development of a mental disorder in the aftermath of victimisation especially when the support system is sensitive to victimisation. This is because the crime victim has people to talk with regarding victimisation who may help normalize the negative impacts of victimisation.

Physical impacts

At the time of crime, or upon discovering that crime has occurred, victims are likely to suffer multiple physical consequences. Wallace (1998) and Young (2001) describe the possible physical reactions as follows:

- Physical shock, disorientation, and numbness– initially people often experience a feeling of being frozen in response to a dangerous threat. They may realise that something bad has happened but they cannot comprehend the event or its impact. They may be unable to move or react. They may become disoriented because seconds before everything in their life was normal, now the world seems to be chaotic.

- Heightened sensory perception– particular senses such as smell are enhanced.

- Increased heart rate, hyperventilation, shaking, tears, perspiration, dryness of the mouth, physical agitation

- Increased adrenalin in the body - once the senses detect a threat, the body generates the power to fight or flee from the situation. The reaction is generated by instinct and emotions, and thoughtful decision-making is rarely involved.

- Regurgitation, defecation, or urination – some people lose control of their bowel movements.

In addition to the above physical impacts, Artz and Martin (2006), De Villers, et al (2007), and Themistocleus (2008) note that victims of forcible rape may experience decreased sexual desire, vaginal bleeding, genital irritation, pain during intercourse, chronic pelvic pain, urinary tract infection, unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Wallace (1998) argue that in extreme cases, victims may suffer disfigurement or permanent disability as a result of the crime and this may have a negative effect on long-term psychological recovery of the victim since the physical scars or disability serve as a reminder of the crime. It appears that physical injuries sustained are complex and may have long-term effects, thus difficult to overcome. Violence appears to be a public health problem with the consequences that require the attention of health practitioners. This is contrary to the popular belief that violence is a justice issue. Crime and violence are no longer solely the concern of the state (Burton, et al, 2004).

The physical injuries sustained and the psychological disturbances that resulted during victimisation characterize the health aspect of violence. Most government hospitals have more medical experts than psychological experts. The medical experts deal solely with the physical impacts if a victim seeks medical help. Psychological experts would deal with the psychological impacts. However, psychological experts are in short supply in most government hospitals. This marks the limitation of the health systems because the complex issues beyond the physical injuries sustained would not be catered for as a result (de Villers, et al, 2007).

Financial impacts

Victims who have possessions stolen (e.g. vehicle hijacking) or damaged, have been financially injured. Hoffmann and McKendrick (1990) and Wallace (1998) describe the ways in which the victims can be financially injured as follows:

- Repairing or replacing possessions
- Installing security measures
- Higher insurance premiums as a result of the victimisation

- Participating in the criminal justice system (e.g. travelling to court)

- Obtaining professional counseling to come to terms with the psychological impact

- Taking time from work or other income generating activities, and

- Funeral and burial expenses of the murdered direct victim of murder.

Social impacts

Victims of violence often find themselves vulnerable to the stigma that the society attaches to being a victim of any kind of violence (Danstile, 2008). Danstile (2008) further claims that the family of the victim might choose to suppress all knowledge about the family member's victimisation perhaps because of fear of being potential victims of the perpetrator should they expose him/her. This creates an impression that the direct victim of violence or crime should be ashamed of his/her own victimisation implying further emotional and psychological distress. This may intensify the negative impacts of victimisation on the victim especially in a resource-limited context like Ga-Mothiba. Clearly, primary support is crucial to the improved psychological well being of the victim.

Violence in the society has become a common social ill and people have naturally become desensitized to it (Themistocleus, 2008). People become desensitized to violence when it occurs frequently to the extent that it forms part of the norm and is not perceived as unusual (Hoffmann & McKendrick, 1990). Although there are campaigns against violence and crime, they do not seem to be sufficient. People still fear to walk freely in their own neighborhood. According to Louw (2008), South Africans feel increasingly unsafe, despite the declining crime levels. Even the indirect victims (the significant others of the direct victim of violence or crime like parents,

children, spouse, etc) may experience these feelings due to their continuous contact with the direct victim.

The experience of being criminally victimised has major psychological, physical, social and financial impacts. The impacts of violence and crime are detrimental with multiple immediate and long term effects. Further, the impacts of victimisation suggest that crime victims may be in need of information, care and support in order to restore their normal ways of functioning. It should be noted that not all crime victims will be affected in the same way. As such, the kind of support and information that they may need are likely to differ. In as much as the victims' reactions vary, their means of coping with the trauma also vary (Strydom & Schuttle, 2005).

Based on the aforementioned, it seems pivotal to explore services that seek to address all areas of victims' lives that have been adversely affected by exposure to traumatic events such as victimisation. What follows is the South Africa victim empowerment services including their rationale and the objectives. Victim empowerment services in the Limpopo province also receive attention.

Victim empowerment and support services

Van der Berg and Klopper (2001) maintain that there are a growing number of initiatives (such as victim empowerment and support services) to empower victims of crime, both at national and provincial levels, by developing partnerships between governmental, non-governmental organizations and private enterprises. Victim empowerment and support services are services rendered by organizations that endeavour to assist victims by assessing their needs and actively

working to address the needs (Nel & Kruger, 1999). These services offer support in a variety of ways to crime victims.

Victim empowerment is aimed at restoring the loss or damage caused by criminal acts and their consequences through a variety of actions intended to empower the victim to deal with consequences of victimisation (DSD, 2004a). Victim empowerment is the process whereby the victim is restored to a state as close as possible to that existing prior to the offence (Nel, et al, 2001). Victim empowerment can also be defined as the process of promoting the resourcefulness of victims of violence and crime by promoting opportunities to access services available to them, as well as to use and build their own capacity and support networks and to act on their own choices (DSD, 2004a). It appears that victim empowerment services seek to mobilize crime victims to access and utilize a range of resources to help restore to a state as close as possible to that existing prior victimisation.

According to Pretorius and Louw (2005), victim support can be regarded as a new but rapidly expanding field which aims to aid victims or survivors of crime of a violent nature with practical and emotional support, information, and advocacy. Victim support appears to be the empathic and practical aspect of victim empowerment. The objectives of victim support are to:

- Reduce the psychological shock and trauma victims may suffer by providing emotional support and practical assistance immediately or shortly after the incident;
- Identify symptoms of post-traumatic stress and to refer victims to counseling and other professional services where necessary;

- Prevent and reduce secondary victimisation by the criminal justice system by providing information on matters such as the status of the investigation, the functioning of the court system and the rights of the victims within it;

- Prevent repeat victimisation by advising and guiding their individuals towards a preventative lifestyle and by creating awareness among the public of the risks of crime (Kotze in Davis & Snyman, 2005).

According to Pretorius and Louw (2005) survivors may benefit from early interventions such as victim empowerment and support and trauma counseling in order to allow them to talk about the impact of crime, their feelings, behavior and fear. By voicing one's emotional experiences there is a direct expression and release of the feelings as well as support and understanding from significant others. Reeves (in Nel & Kruger, 1999) outline the primary needs that are catered for or supposedly catered for by the victim empowerment and support services.

Emotional needs

People who are suffering or are under severe stress, have a greater need for close and supportive interactions with others. Access to victim empowerment and support services help crime victims to normalize their reactions, deal with the initial trauma and reduce the chances of developing other disorders (e.g. PTSD) by providing support, and by linking the person in crisis to other helping resources where necessary. For example, the service providers at victim empowerment and support services may refer a crime victim to other professionals when they feel that the victim may benefit from additional help.

Acknowledgement needs

Victims are often surprised at the intensity and extent of their distress. Victims who believe that their reactions are signs of weakness appear to appreciate the reassurance that their feelings are regarded as normal. This further normalizes their symptoms. The NPGVE (DSD, 2004a) further stresses the importance of acknowledging the needs of crime victims in that crime victims are to be treated with respect and in a nonjudgmental manner.

Practical needs

Practical needs refers to the need for medical care, clean clothing, advice or assistance in filling out necessary form (e.g. insurance forms), replacement of stolen goods or documents, and transportation to and from the hospital. Many victims are capable of dealing with their practical problems themselves.

Information needs

Victims often want to know whether the perpetrator was caught, what charges were, whether the perpetrator is in custody or out on bail, when will the court appearance be, whether they have to give evidence in court, whether the perpetrator was convicted, and if so, what the sentence was.

Need for understanding

Victims need to be understood and not blamed for or questioned on their involvement in the crime or violence. Crime victims need to be shown a non-judgmental attitude which will convey empathy and understanding.

Need for contact with the judicial process

With regard to participating in the criminal justice system, victims need guidance and support regarding their rights and obligations. Within the criminal justice system, victims were often re-

victimised by the ignorant and insensitive attitudes of the service providers. Thus, when victims are treated with respect and sensitivity, this can help restore their faith in humanity and their perception of a just and meaningful world.

It seems that crime victims are empowered when they are being listened to, understood, respected, and when they are given information and the opportunity to participate in the criminal justice system. The nature and severity of the crime and the availability of formal or informal support services determine which of the above needs are relevant and the extent to which they are perceived to be urgent (Pretorius & Louw, 2005). Not all victims will have the same needs especially for those victims who have other means of dealing with victimisation. Nel and Kruger, (1999) emphasize that the extent to which these needs are perceived as pressing is also influenced by factors such as aid from family or friends and the coping skills of victims themselves.

One may argue that the role of victim-centered services is to provide information, emotional and practical support, and to refer victims who approach the center(s) to other support services where necessary. With the help of victim empowerment and support services, the needs of victims that arose from the incident of victimisation can be satisfactorily met. Addressing the needs of crime victims, both practically and emotionally, can enable them to cope better with the experience of victimisation, encourage them to participate in the investigation and prosecution of offenders (Lutshaba, Semenchuk, Williams, 2002).

Van Zyl (2008) identified a few possible problems which may be regarded as obstacles in planning and executing victim empowerment services aimed at attending to the needs of victims or survivors; namely:

- The stigma regarding counseling and therapy may prevent victims from seeking some sort of professional help and guidance. They might be regarded as being "soft" or "weak" and therefore avoid these therapeutic possibilities;

- The stereotype that "Real men do not cry"- in relation to the problem above is the notion generally thought to be accepted by the public that males are not allowed to show emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness and helplessness. Male victims who are perceived to be strong men who are capable to protect themselves and their families may even more so be the "victims" of this stereotype;

- The direct and indirect victims may be reluctant to participate in victim empowerment services because of their lack of faith in the criminal justice system. If the victim empowerment services consist of service providers from the state, the victims may then view the program in the same light as the criminal justice system and due to anger and hostility towards the system they might refuse to take part.

The identified problems may prevent victims' needs that arose from the incident of victimisation from being satisfactorily met. Davis and Snyman (2005) counter argue van Zyl's ideas because they assert that victim empowerment services are culturally sensitive in that they target people who experience difficulty in accessing services or who experience difficulty in accessing appropriate services. These arguments have been put forward to argue for a service delivery that is sensitive to the way of life within a given community in order to offer culture-sensitive, non-

racial and non-sexist services. Such services may be effective in understanding and addressing each victim's unique needs and are likely to be adequately utilized.

Nel and Kruger (1999) identified the following five key indicators as the determinants of a successful victim empowerment services:

- Services to victims are accessible and available;

- Services are rendered in an empowering, respectful and supportive manner;

- Thorough and professional services are rendered to victims by efficient and capable people;

- The victim is provided with all the necessary information of services available, the progress of the related criminal investigation and the relevant information on procedures and processes; and

- An effective coordination and integration of services.

These key indicators of a successful victim empowerment center stress the importance of a victim-friendly service that is easily accessible. In the next discussion, the focus is on empowerment services available and accessible for the people of GaMothiba.

Victim empowerment services in Limpopo province

In Limpopo province, there are organizations that seek to offer support to victims of crime in the aftermath of the victimisation. The researcher narrows her focus on services for victims of violence and crime that are available in Mankweng. Mankweng is a township just outside the village of GaMothiba, located eight kilometers East of GaMothiba. The rationale for focusing only on services available in Mankweng Township is that research show that services for crime

victims are often inaccessible with regard to their location (Nel, et al, 2001). It would be defeating to focus on services that the community of GaMothiba may find it difficult to access. The following table outlines the different services for crime victims in Mankweng Township:

Table 4: Services for victims of violence and crime in Mankweng Township (DSD, 2009).

Town	Service	Organization/ department	Address	Contact/ numbers
Mankweng	Specialized services for victims	Mankweng community VE project	Mankweng SAPF	Tel: 015 267 2400 Fax: 015 267 2346
Mankweng	Victim friendly facilities, protection & investigation	Police station	Mankweng SAPF	Tel: 015 270 1000 Fax: 015 270 1022
Mankweng	Court preparation & support	Justice	Stand no 1057, UnitC, Mankweng Township,	Tel:015 267 03005 Fax: 015 267 1063

Other services that may help victims deal with their victimisation are professional services offered by Psychologists and Social Workers in Mankweng hospital. E. Nyamane (personal communication, March 21, 2009) and W. Makwela (personal communication, March 21, 2009),

volunteers at Mankweng community victim empowerment center, explained that they offer free services to the community of Mankweng and the surrounding villages including GaMothiba. They also explained that they receive most of their referrals from police officers. They further expressed that they feel that the community is not adequately making use of their services.

Since distance is not a barrier for victims who reside in Mankweng Township and the surrounding areas, there seems to be other barriers present that may contribute to the underutilization of service offered in the Mankweng victim empowerment center. Nel, et al (2001) note that services of crime victims are often not used especially when they are poorly marketed or when there is a service fee. Since the services are free of charge, perhaps services offered at Mankweng are poorly marketed and the community is unaware of the availability of such services. In their study on services to victims of crime, Lutshaba, et al (2002) found that support services for victims of crime and violence are limited, fragmented, uncoordinated, reactive in nature and therefore ineffective. Whatever causes victim-centered services to be underutilized, the end result is that the needs of the victims will not be addressed effectively.

Based on the principles and objectives of victim empowerment, it seems that the needs of crime victims will be effectively addressed when different service providers make appropriate referrals to help address the needs of the victims, when they are victim friendly, and when victims have information regarding to relevant service providers to consult regarding whatever need that they may have. Research shows that not all service providers from the various social agencies offer victim-friendly services. The next discussion highlights the impacts of victim-unfriendly services on the nature of crimes in this country and also on crime victims.

Statistical misrepresentation of the nature of crime and violence

There seems to be loopholes in statistically presented data about the nature of violent crimes. De Villers, et al, (2007) note that violence is neglected, underreported, or under documented. There are various reasons that may influence the neglect, poor reporting and recording of victimisation that cannot be addressed by the statistics namely; victims may think that the crime is not serious enough; it may be inconvenient to report their victimisation especially when access to the police is a problem; they believe that the police cannot help or will not take the matter seriously; if they are intimidated by the perpetrator or fear of being intimidated by the perpetrator; and pressure from family not to report (Burton, et al, 2004). These reasons will inevitably affect the number of cases reported to the SAPF and may result in statistical misrepresentation of the current state of violence and crime in general.

The process of bringing the perpetrator to justice can be traumatic for the victim as it requires the recollection of the victimisation. Referring to the complexities of problems that arise in reporting victimisation, Danstile (2008) points out the insensitive and judgmental attitudes of police officers when dealing with victims who report their victimisation. This could reinforce the feelings of self-blame on the side of the victim and may discourage future reporting of victimisation. Lutshaba, et al, (2002) concur with Danstile's opinions when they maintain that crime victims often endure secondary victimisation in the criminal justice system at the hands of the police or the court. Mistry (1997) also concurs with both Lutshaba and her colleagues and Danstile's ideas when he asserts that the poor quality of statement taking, the police's failure to take victims' concerns seriously, the identification and tracing of witnesses and witness

intimidation have negative impacts on the faith in, their satisfaction with and their support from the criminal justice institution.

It appears that the attitudes of and treatment by the different service providers may have major impacts on the many lives of the crime victims. For instance, when police officers treat crime victims with respect, dignity and treat each reported crime seriously, crime victims are likely to utilize the services offered in the future when the need arise. However, when crime victims feel that they have been mistreated and disrespected, the likelihood is that they may have long term negative attitudes towards the service the police officers offered, for instance. This may contribute to the poor reporting of victimisation. Peltzer (2000) and Lutshaba, et al, (2002) are of the opinion that many South Africans are dissatisfied with the treatment given by the police and they feel discouraged to report future victimisation to the police. Davis and Snyman (2005) are of the opinion that non-reporting results in victims being re-victimised, remaining traumatised, and reluctant to access services in order to break the cycles of crime and violence.

In relation to the ill-treatment crime victims may experience when reporting their victimisation Ramalepe and Phaswana-Mafuya (2008) noted that victims' experiences when seeking support from health services where both positive and negative. The experiences where regarded as positive when medical doctors and nurses treated victims with kindness and gave them the opportunity to talk about their victimisation. Positive experiences with health care workers can be described as good, helpful and supportive to the victim. Victims' experiences where regarded as negative when medical doctors and nurse treated the victims badly by shouting at them and by using painful words.

From the findings of the aforementioned study, it would seem that crime victims may be vulnerable to secondary victimisation not only at the hands of the police officers, the court or the criminal justice but also at the hands of insensitive health care workers (medical doctors and nurses). It is for this reason that the researcher may argue that not all principles highlighted earlier on regarding victim empowerment are put into practice. Thus, some of the needs of crime victims may not be met. If the needs of crime victims are met they may be able to fully recover from the emotional trauma, regain their sense of autonomy and power, and resume normal relationships with others (Hargovan, 2007). However, since some of the needs of crime victims may not be met, there is a great possibility that they may not move on to the recovery phase.

Based on the factors that may affect the reporting of violent crimes highlighted above, one must be critical about the crime statistics. There might be a reported general decrease in crime and violence rate simply because victims chose not to report their victimisation or there was insufficient evidence to support the reported victimisation resulting in the charges against the perpetrators being dropped, hence the supposed decline in crime rate. Due to the dynamics involved in reporting cases of violence and crime, the SAPF statistics may be inconclusive and should be viewed with caution.

Often victims do not do not know where to turn to when they have been victimised (Nation & Naude, 2007, Danstile, 2008, Ramalepe & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2008). It is, therefore, the responsibility of the initial service provider, usually nurses and police officers, to refer victims to services where they will receive relevant help. For instance, medical doctors and nurses are

trained to treat physical ailments. When confronted with patients who need more that medical attention, referral is necessary (DSD, 2004a, Ramalepe and Phaswana-Mafuya, 2008).

Since research indicates that some services do not comply with the principles of the Service Charter for Crime Victims in South Africa, then crime victims need to be enlightened about their rights and what will be expected of them when they chose to open a case against the perpetrator, when testifying in court, expectations regarding treatment by the health care workers, etc.

Victims' rights

Crime victims have the following rights, as contained in the Service Charter for Victims of Crime (DoJ, 2004) and the NPGVE (DSD, 2004a):

- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for dignity and privacy. Crime victims have the right to be attended to promptly and courteously, and to be treated with respect for their dignity and privacy by all members of any department, institution, agency or organization providing service to them (hereafter referred to as service provider).

- The right to offer information. Crime victims have the right to offer information during the criminal investigation and trial.

- The right to receive information. They have the right to be informed of their rights and of how to exercise them.

- The right to protection. They have the right to be free from intimidation, harassment, fear, tampering, bribery, corruption and abuse.

- The right to assistance. They have the right to request assistance and, where relevant, have access to available social, health and counseling services, as well as legal assistance.

- The right to compensation. They have the right to compensation for loss of or damage to property suffered as a result of a crime being committed against them. Victims may request to be present at court on the date of sentencing of the accused and request the prosecutor to apply to court for a compensation order.

- The right to restitution. They have the right to restitution in cases where they have been unlawfully dispossessed of goods or property, or where their goods or property have been damaged unlawfully.

In summary, victims' rights are aimed at minimizing secondary victimisation that crime victims may endure at the hands of the different service providers, to ensure that victims fully participate in the criminal justice process, victims have information regarding all relevant services available to them, to ensures fair service provision, referrals are made where necessary, and victims are compensated for loss or damage to their property. Schonteich (in Lutshaba, et al, 2002) emphasizes that when victims know their rights, they would be likely to assist the police in their investigations, be prepared to testify in court and there will be less cases being withdrawn by the authorities.

CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the literature available on violent crimes. The SAPF, ISS and the findings of studies conducted by many scholars indicate that crime rate is declining. The literature reviewed was mainly on studies conducted in South Africa including findings of studies conducted in the Limpopo province and a few of international literature. It was evident that crime statistics do not tell the full story. Therefore, they should be read cautiously. This chapter also reviewed the formal empowerment services for crime victims. With the help of victim-

centered and victim-friendly services, many crime victims can overcome the psychological, physical, financial and social impacts of victimisation. Lastly, when victims are enlightened about their rights, they may take responsibility in ensuring their recovery.

The next chapter positions African epistemology within this study as a theoretical framework. This will include its applicability to the topic in research. The chapter also highlights the role the researcher maintains throughout the entire study; the research paradigm.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Not knowing is bad.

Not wishing to know is worse

Nigerian proverb

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an overview of victimisation from an African perspective was briefly discussed. This chapter discusses it at length. In this chapter, the researcher attempts to define or describe what African epistemology is; followed by a review of indigenous African ways of understanding crime victims. In addition, indigenous healing practices for crime victims are discussed. A shift from a Western to an African perspective is highlighted. This chapter also outlines social constructionism which serves as a theoretical frame for this study. The stance that the researcher maintains throughout the study is included among other things.

Defining Epistemology

Becvar and Becvar (2006) define epistemology as the study of grounds of knowledge. In simpler terms, epistemology refers to how things can be known. Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2002) define epistemology as the study of theories about the nature and scope of knowledge, the evaluation of the presuppositions and the bases of knowledge; the scrutiny of knowledge claims. Based on the latter definition, it may be argued that all people have the ability to know. There are various ways in which things can be known. There are, for instance, African and Western epistemologies which govern how knowledge can be generated. In this study, the researcher focuses mainly on how Black South Africans generate their knowledge and explain how this

differs from the Western way of knowledge generation. Thus, both African and Western epistemologies will be included.

The researcher needs to be aware of the epistemology that guides her study because it will affect how she perceives, thinks about, and understands things (the nature of inquiry). Epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (Durrheim, Painter, & Terre Blanche, 2006).

The ways in which persons of a particular racial, cultural, or tribal group come to know or claim to know may differ significantly from the ways in which persons from other racial, cultural, or tribal groups claim knowledge. Although epistemology as a study of knowledge is universal, the ways of acquiring knowledge vary according to the socio-cultural contexts within which knowledge claims are formulated and articulated (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2002). Therefore, African knowledge claims may differ from Western knowledge claims.

This study focuses on experiences of Black South Africans. Thus, it seems mandatory to understand and analyse Black South African experiences within African knowledge claims because according to Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2002) the means to, presuppositions and bases of knowledge claims vary from culture to culture. Given the fact that South Africa is a multicultural country, there may be variations in knowledge claims among the diverse cultural groups. This contradicts the belief that knowledge is universal.

Explaining the lived experiences of victims of violent crimes from Black African descent may enable the researcher to have a thorough understanding of such experiences from the cultural context within which they occur. In addition, the epistemology of this study may minimize the tendency to label behaviours that might seem deviant when viewed from a culture other than that of the participant. Cultural differences are not primarily differences in behavior, but rather in meanings attached and attributed to the same behaviours (Landrine, in Parham, 2002).

This study does not aim to discard the Western ways of understanding and dealing with violence. The focus, however, is on African understanding of victimisation. As it has been mentioned in the introductory chapter, this study seeks to advocate for the co-existence of both African and Western explanatory models. The researcher is of the opinion that a combination of forms of explanation in traditional African thought and Western science can provide a more comprehensive understanding than the exclusive use of either. And also, the victim may choose to use either one or a combination of both explanatory models without being limited by what is readily available.

Both traditional African thought and Western science are concerned with explanation, prediction and control of the natural phenomenon (Horton, 2002). Knowledge of past and present events may serve as the basis for predicting future ones. By way of analogy, what an African diviner aims at is similar to the objectives of modern preventative medicine. In traditional African thought, acceptable explanation of illness is tied to people's general conception of health and disease which depends on their worldview. An important aspect of the African conception of health and illness is that it is the whole body, unlike in the West were merely certain parts of the body, are considered either well or in state of disease (Sogolo, 2002).

This above mentioned non-specificity in associating disease with parts of the body in African thought is clear from the fact that, generally, indigenous African healers do not start their diagnosis of illness by physical examination of the patient's body. Their primary concern is with the patient's background in socio-cultural and divine spiritual relations. The argument here is that in Black African belief systems, spirits, witches, ghosts, gods, etc can help in the explanation and understanding of observable events like violent crimes.

Dichotomy between African and Western explanation of tragedies like victimisation in this study is not necessary. What is necessary is how one explanatory model can augment the limitations of the other. Western scientific explanations are concerned with how an individual became a victim. Indigenous African and Western spiritual explanations move beyond the *how* question to the *why* question (Why me and not someone else?). In searching for answers to this question, unlike in the Western scientific thought, the concept of chance hardly plays a role (Sodipo, 2002). Supernatural causes cannot be resolved by applying the cannons of scientific reasoning because they appear to be illogically incompatible with modern scientific thought (Sogolo, 2002).

It is not surprising that some Black South Africans tend to overlook and undermine their indigenous ways of understanding and dealing with the effects of violent crimes, because colonization and Christian missionaries in this country made people, especially Blacks, believe and view their indigenous interventions as less important and irrational. Indigenous practices were described as heathen, primitive, barbaric, exotic and superstitious (Kruger, et al, 2007). For a long time in South Africa, indigenous Africans were made to look down on their indigenous ways of being and doing. They were also made to think that their indigenous theories and explanations of illness, among other things, were outdated. Instead of being outdated, African

conceptions of socio-psychological processes have been rendered invisible by the competition between cultural systems, of which the Western is the most dominant (Mkhize, 2004).

Despite the inclusive and non-discriminatory nature of epistemology, the South African history of apartheid made it impossible for groups, other than the White, Christian, patriarchal group, to have authority over their cultural ways of being and doing things. It is impossible not to take into account the history of colonialism and its impact on indigenous African people. It is therefore essential to explore these ideological obstacles that perpetuate discriminatory knowledge claims.

The impact of South African history on knowledge claims

The history of South Africa is mainly characterised by racial and other inequalities. There are a number of ways in which racism can be implemented. Duncan, Stevens and Bowman (2004) understand racism to be an ideology by means of which racial denomination is organized and justified. Race has been used by Whites as tool to relegate other racial groups to a lower social standing. It is apparent that any act of racism has a beneficiary and a victim. In South Africa, the Whites benefited from the racist practices at the expense of Blacks.

Racism can also be defined as a set of ideas and discursive and material practices aimed at reproducing and justifying systematic inequalities between races or racialized groups (Duncan, et al, 2004). Through racism, power inequalities in all spheres of life were created. That been said, different cultural and racial groups do not have equal authorities on knowledge generation and knowledge claims. Experiences of Blacks are explained using conceptual categories and philosophical systems that favor the White racial group (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2002).

Blacks were denied the power to have authority over or even talk about their cultural ways of doing. Biko (1998), describing the South African society, defines Blacks as those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group. Biko's understanding of being Black extends beyond the pigmentation to reflect a mental attitude. It could be argued that the inclusive nature of the general definition of epistemology was just an illusion in this country.

As a way of perpetuating racial inequalities in knowledge generation, there were claims that knowledge is the same across all cultural contexts (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2002). Consequently, the epistemological characters of different cultures were thought to be the same. The fact that Western epistemology was used to describe and understand behaviours across all cultures in South Africa, gives the impression that the apartheid system perpetuated the racially skewed processes of knowledge production. In addition, the supposedly 'universal' knowledge was used to silence any form of knowledge that favors Black, Indian, etc philosophical systems (Duncan, et al, 2004).

Traditional African socio-psychological frameworks are not used because they belong in the category of marginalised knowledge (Mkhize, 2004). In this way, Indigenous African socio-psychological frameworks are oppressed. Indigenous Africans are denied the opportunity to be and at the same time they cannot fully participate in the Western way of being because it is foreign and does not resonate with their realities.

There is a need for indigenous Black South Africans to reclaim their indigenous ways of being. Biko (1998) argued that the oppressed need to be aware of their oppression and work to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. Koukkanen (in Kruger, et al,

2007) also argued that the marginalised worldviews need to re-emerge to contribute to different ways of knowing and theorizing that go beyond Eurocentric conventions of knowledge to include indigenous knowledge. There is a common idea in the two arguments posed by the different scholars; the marginalised group (in South Africa this includes Blacks, religious groups other than Christians, homosexuals, females, etc) need to be conscious of the status of their philosophical systems and correct the false images of themselves in terms of culture, education, religion and economics. It is difficult to be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage (Biko, 1998).

In an attempt to move beyond Eurocentric knowledge conventions, the next discussion focuses on indigenous African worldviews and ideologies.

African-centered understanding

In line with the racially skewed knowledge claims, research is mainly based on Western ideologies and worldviews. This means that other ideologies and worldviews that can help understand phenomena in study have been overlooked. Before going any further, the researcher would like to unpack the concepts "ideology" and "worldview". Hornby (2005) defines an ideology as a set of beliefs, especially one held by a particular group that influences the way people behave. A worldview is a person's way of thinking about and understanding life, which depends on their beliefs and attitudes (Hornby, 2005).

Ideologies and worldviews shape the way people from different cultural groups think and behave (Hornby, 2005). To say that ideologies and worldviews are inherent in every culture means that each culture has its own set of beliefs through which members of that culture make sense of themselves and the world. African ideologies would then refer to belief systems that shape, and

maintain the behaviours of Black South Africans. Therefore, one can speak of African formulation of knowledge and hence African epistemology.

Landrine (in Parham, 2002) asserts that shifting the way in which the world is seen, how reality is defined and how human behavior is understood, would truly embrace the African centered understanding. Some of the African ideologies and worldviews are discussed which help to explain how violent crimes and victimisation are perceived from an African perspective. For practical reasons, not all African ideologies will be covered. Mokgatlhe (2006) maintains that an understanding and knowledge of the African perspective will enable one to understand and be sensitive to people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and understand the cultural context and belief systems of persons of African.

Oral tradition

African knowledge is generated orally, and it is mostly not documented. It is passed down from generation to generation through spoken language. The elders play an important role in the passing down of knowledge to the youngsters. Songs, storytelling, and aphorisms may be used to pass down knowledge. Traditions, wisdom and knowledge are shared and transmitted through unwritten and subtle ways of being such as rituals, ceremonies and other non-verbal communications (Bujo, 1997). From an African perspective, knowledge is not gained through reading instructions.

Oral traditions are contemporary systems of information, presents rationally coherent systems of thought that are no less than the conventional written texts and they should be treated with intellectual reverence (Hallen, 2006; Baloyi, 2008). From time to time in this study, the

researcher uses knowledge shared through personal interviews with some Black African individuals who are more experienced in certain aspects of life as a way of embracing oral tradition. What follows is one of the many indigenous thoughts which helps understand how the language of African forefathers shapes how Black South Africans carry themselves on a day-to-day basis.

Monna ke nku o llela teng is a Sepedi aphorism which means it is not unusual for a man (a male) to suppress his feelings. There is a saying in xiTsonga "*Wanna anga rileli ehandle, u rilela endzeni*" that holds the same meaning. From childhood, young boys are socialized not to express their feelings whereas young females are encouraged to be emotional. When in pain (either physical, emotional, or both such as following violence or crime victimisation), a man is expected not to share his emotional distress for instance, with other people because if he does so he is perceived to be weak.

It is likely that male victims of violent crime would not seek professional help because of the way they have been socialized. They are more likely to suffer in silence as compared to their female counterparts. This may be similar in Western patriarchal cultures where men are encouraged to keep strong even when in pain (Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, & Shabalala, 2005).

The custodians of African knowledge

Knowledge in Africa comes from the ancestors (Hamminga, 2005). They are dead but existing and acting ancestors. Put simply, knowledge is given by the ancestors. They are also known as the 'living-dead' because of their continuous relationship with their relatives. The elders are also the custodians of knowledge because new generations learn from the members of the older

generations (Hamminga, 2005). The more experienced individuals in certain aspects of life also hold knowledge. For instance, women are the holders and transmitters of indigenous knowledge about birth, childrearing, socialization, and the promotion of well-being. Therefore, elders may play a role in interpreting or clarifying why a person has been victimised, as it was the case in chapter one.

The relationship between the living and the 'living-dead'

The living-dead refers to family members who have departed. The living-dead are also known as ancestors, *badimo* in Sepedi (gods) or *abaphansi* in isiZulu (those from down underground). In traditional African cultures, it is mandatory to maintain a bond with the spirits of the departed (Gumede, 1990). Members of the family perform rituals to maintain the bond with the living-dead. The bond can be maintained by slaughtering a beast or by sprinkling snuff and home brewed beer over the family's sacred place known as *thokgola* within the yard as a way of communicating with the ancestors, for example. This ritual is known as *go phasa* and can be performed for a variety of reasons. Gumede (1990) believes that a sacrifice such as slaughtering a beast can restore the ontological balance between the living and the departed.

According to J. Mamabolo (personal communication, November 15, 2009) some families perform the ritual on an annual basis. When they discontinue their old tradition of performing the ritual, perhaps because the elders have died and their children are uninformed about why and when to perform such rituals, Mkhize (2004) and J. Mamabolo (personal communication, November 15, 2009) stress that the living-dead will make their concerns known to their relatives through dreams, visions, tragedies, etc. Thus, failure to restore the good relationship with the ancestors could lead to their disapproval. The ways in which indigenous Africans conceptualise

tragedies such as victimisation are to a larger extent shaped by their ideologies and beliefs. It would not be surprising when Black African victims of violent crime attribute their victimisation to the discontinued relationship with the living-dead.

Bodibe (1992) also stresses that going against the will of the ancestors makes the individual incur their displeasure and this leads to ill-health, misfortune, bad luck, disease, and even death. It seems that the ancestors form an essential part of the living family members. As a consequence, one should continuously maintain the relationship with one's ancestors. However, this does not necessarily mean that ancestors are worshiped in indigenous African cultures. It means that ancestors are respected, appeased, celebrated, admired and emulated, but not worshiped (Parham, 2002). The argument here is that, from an African point of view, incidents such as crime victimisation do not just happen. Often, there is a deeper underlying cultural explanation or cause.

Indigenous healers

Indigenous healers such as *isangoma* (head diviner) and *raditlama* (herbalist) play an essential role in indigenous African cultures. Diviners*/isangoma* according to Gumede (1990), are healers who can see into the remote past and the distant future who are assumed to have a special relationship with the supernatural spirits of the ancestors. Bodibe (1992) describes *raditlama* as a traditional herbalist who is well versed in the pharmaceutical aspects of herbs, plants, roots and leaves. *Raditlama* chooses and applies relevant medicines.

An indigenous Black African individual who has been victimised may consult *isangoma* whose unique relationship with the ancestors will enable him or her to explain to the victim the origin of

his/her victimisation. Thus, *isangoma* provides diagnosis. Further, *isangoma* will prescribe an indigenous solution to the cause of the patient's problems based on what he/she believes to have gone wrong. The same individual may consult *raditlama* for a second opinion or instead of consulting *isangoma*. R*aditlama* will prescribe the patient with medicinal herbs. *Isangoma* and *raditlama* can be described as traditional doctors who differ in their area of expertise.

Indigenous healers play a vital role in the lives of people who rely mostly on services premised on traditional African worldviews. According to the World Health Organization, about 80 % to 90 % of people in developing countries rely on indigenous healers for health care (Mkhize, 2004; African Press, 2010). The majority of the people in this country, as one of the developing countries, consult indigenous healers. Indigenous healing is the most affordable and accessible health care system to the majority of the people (African Press, 2010). At times Black Africans who rely mostly on indigenous interventions consult traditional healers even before adversities could happen. They consult with traditional healers to protect themselves from adversities. The process of consulting traditional healers for protection is known as *go ithekga/go itiisa* in the Pedi and Tswana cultures. The traditional healer would then use his/her ability to see into the future to prevent potential adversities.

Traditional healers also play a role in protecting their patients' homesteads; *go thekga motse* as it is known in the Pedi culture. Mongalo N. I (personal communication, 2 December, 2009) explained that the ritual of protecting one's homestead is performed on an annual basis to protect one's belongings, such as vehicles, businesses, house furnishings, and homestead from witchcraft, theft, and/or burglary. Protecting a homestead is more or less like an insurance policy. However, the two differ. An insurance policy is paid on a monthly basis and does not prevent the

insured property from damage or loss, whereas the ritual of protecting homesteads prevents the property from either damage or loss. Mamabolo, J (personal communication, November 15, 2009) argues that people will steal, for instance, a vehicle that has not been protected by a traditional healer. Hence, from an African perspective, when people become victims of robbery, vehicle hijacking, attempted murder, etc it is often believed that they did not protect themselves or their personal belongings by indigenous means.

Whereas people protect themselves and their belongings from damage or loss through the help of traditional healers, perpetrators of violent and criminal behaviours on the other hand also consult traditional healers for protection. Phoshoko, M (personal communication, December 19, 2009) emphasizes that perpetrators of violence and crime consult traditional healers for protection so that whatever violent or criminal behavior they plan succeed. As a consequence, it becomes complicated when both the perpetrator and the victim of violence or crime are both protected. Based on the above discussion, it may be argued that there are people who may consult traditional healers for all the wrong reasons.

Spiritual healing

Acculturation had an impact on African cultures resulting in Christian Black South Africans. In South Africa, most Black people affiliate with different Christian denominations, such as the Roman Catholic, the Dutch Reformed, Anglican and the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). The ZCC is the largest African initiated church in Southern Africa, with 10 - 15 million members belonging to ZCC star and 3 - 5 million members belonging to the Saint Engenas ZCC (Anderson, 1999). The ZCC headquarters are at Zion City Moria in Limpopo Province. The church attracts more than a million pilgrims every Easter, in early September and over Christmas

for religious celebrations (Zion City Moria, 2010). Anderson (1999) describes the characteristics of the ZCC church as follows:

- There is a belief that the religious and administrative leader of the church (or bishop) is a mediator between the congregation and God; that, like Jesus Christ, he can perform supernatural acts and faith-healing in the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

- There is also a belief that senior officials in the ZCC (known as *baruti*) can use the power of the Holy Spirit to perform healing.

- *Baruti* use different faith-healing mechanisms. These include the laying-on of hands; the use of holy water; drinking of blessed tea and coffee; the wearing of blessed cords or cloth and the burning of blessed papers called *mogau*.

It seems that Christian Africans attribute the good and bad things that happen in their lives to God. It should not be assumed that people with the same cultural characteristics will opt for a specific intervention when dealing with victimisation. One individual may choose the Christian or indigenous African route, or a combination of both.

From an African Christian perspective, Buthelezi E. S. (personal communication, December 01, 2009) maintains that hardships like being a crime victim is perceived as God's way of strengthening his spiritual relationship with the victimised Christian. According to Buthelezi, this is because the victimised Christian will pray so that the Lord helps him or her to cope with his or her victimisation. It is common for the victimised Christian to make his or her victimisation known to other Christians who will pray together with him or her and hope that God will hear and answer their prayers. Fellow Christians at the same time provide support and talk words of comfort.

Mothiba E. M. (personal communication, November 17, 2009) is of the opinion that in a Christian life, there is a continuous battle between the physical, spiritual, and emotional being; and that at all times, the spiritual being must dominate the other, for when it dominates, one is assured of a good life in heaven. This argument that has been put forward suggests that Christians nurse their spiritual being more than their physical and emotional. In addition, when working with persons with such values, it may seem insignificant to focus on anything other than their spiritual beings. This does not necessarily mean that their physical and emotional beings are of less importance; it means that they do not take precedence when helping the individual to cope with the effects of victimisation.

Indigenous African understanding of illness and healing practices

Not all people who have experienced traumatic events like violent crimes will exhibit similar behavioral manifestation or understand their trauma in the same manner. Eagle and Hook (2002) assert that different cultures exhibit different behavioral manifestations. From a Western medical model, a person who has experienced a traumatic event, such as being a direct or indirect victim of violent crimes may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms:

- Dissociative amnesia
- Detachment
- Depersonalization
- Subjective sense of numbing
- Flashback episodes
- Recurrent dreams of the event
- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty sleeping

- Exaggerated startle response, among others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

These symptoms may not be observable across all cultures because numerous scholars are of the opinion that psychological disturbance or observable behavioral differences are culture bound (Edwards & Louw, 1997; Edwards, 1999; Mokgatlhe, 2006). It is for this reason that the researcher will highlight culture bound syndromes that are specific to Black African cultures. These include *intwaso* and *senyama*.

Intwaso: a culture specific syndrome that originates from the ancestors

In several African cultures, when a person is being chosen to become a traditional healer, he or she is struck by an incapacitating illness. Buhrmann (1984: 36-37) describes the symptoms of this illness as follows:

> *The afflicted usually becomes withdrawn and irritable when spoken to. Sometimes they become restless, violent, abusive and aggressive. There is a marked tendency to aimless wandering, and they often disappear for days at a time. They neglect their personal hygiene, eat poorly, often look and become really ill physically. They hear voices talking to them- these come from inside me, from the ancestors. The most constant feature is the excessive dreaming. The dreams are particularly disturbing because they are complex and unclear, unlike usual dreams, and they interfere with sleep.*

This condition is known as *intwaso* among the Xhosa people and results in significant personal distress. *Intwaso* is described as an initiatory illness (Edward & Louw, 1997). Having this illness is called *ukuthwasa kwegqira* (to emerge as a healer) among the Xhosa. *Intwaso* is believed to be sent by the ancestors.

It is believed that *intwaso* cannot be explained or treated by medical experts. Only a trained diviner can diagnose and treat the affected person. The affected person should accept the calling and go through the process of training to emerge as a healer. The healing process could also be regarded as a training process (Gumede, 1990; Mokgatlhe, 2006). The diagnosis of this initiatory illness is often resisted, and the affected person and his or her relatives can consult several traditional healers to have it confirmed or negated (Buhrmann, 1984). If the affected person ignores or does not accept the calling, he or she will encounter emotional and physical sufferings such as being victimised violently and criminally until such time he or she accepts the calling.

Senyama: Culture specific syndrome due to impurity

Senyama (as the condition is known among the Pedi people) refers to experiencing illness or adversity because of contact with places or people immediately associated with the major life events such as birth, death, miscarriage, abortion and menstruation (Mokgatlhe, 2006). Within an African context, people may experience adversities such as vehicle hijacking, assault or robbery because they have made contact with impure places or people. In African cultures, there is a great emphasis on the relationship between a human being and his or her environment (Mamabolo, J, personal communication, November, 2009). A person may become a victim of violence or crime simply because of the impurities within which the person is found.

The conception of illnesses and tragedies from an indigenous African viewpoint informs the healing process. Healing ceremonies often starts with cleansing rituals in a consecrated space. For instance, the Zulu speaking, Black South Africans perform a ritual of slaughtering a goat to connect an adult or a child with the ancestors. Thwala and Makhunga (2010) describe the ritual as follows:

The ritual (umsebenzi) connects the child or the adult with the ancestors and it fulfills a therapeutic role. The healing process commences at the time when the elderly communicates with the ancestors, inviting them to feast and explaining the purpose for the feast to them while the whole family is sitting quietly in the main hut, a specialized place for the ancestors to be consulted. The conversation with the ancestors takes place while the person concerned holds the goat to be slaughtered at the doorway. This ritual is done to welcome the child in the family as well as to appease the ancestors in case there has been a traumatic incident in the family. After slaughtering a goat, the person concerned is offered an animal bangle. Once the person has been offered an animal bangle; a sense of hope is instilled.

In other African cultures, chickens, sheeps and cattles are slaughtered during ritual sacrifices. Treatment techniques such as drama, dreams, medication, dietary restrictions, sacrifices of tobacco, snuff and home-brewed beer, and periods of isolation may be used in the healing process (Moodley & West, 2005). It seems that indigenous African healing practices focuses on disruption of relatedness in the bigger cosmos because a healing community forms around the person that include the affected person, family, friends and spiritual connections (Kruger, et al, 2007)

Ubuntu

Ubuntu (isiZulu) or *botho* (Sepedi) refers to humanity toward others. Ramose (2002) explains *botho* as being human and a humane attitude towards other human beings. In other words, a person (*motho)* is said to have *botho* by the way she or he relates to other human beings (*batho*).

Thus, one is who one is because of others (*motho ke motho ka batho*). Tutu (in Beliefnet, 2004: 2) explains ubuntu as follows:

> *Ubuntu is a concept that we have in our Bantu languages at home. Ubuntu is the essence of being a person. It means that we are people through other people. We cannot be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence, we are made for family. When you have ubuntu, you embrace others. You are generous, compassionate. If the world had more ubuntu, we would not have war. We would not have this huge gap between the rich and the poor. You are rich so that you can make up what is lacking for others. You are powerful so that you can help the weak, just as a mother or father helps their children.*

Ubuntu then forms the basis of African philosophy. It is the way of life of Africans. Ubuntu implies that person of Africa are relationally defined by virtue of their interactions with others.

In an African context, when a person is experiencing some form of distress, the whole community shares his or her hardships. Mokgatlhe (personal communication, November 10, 2009) explains that the immediate reaction among the Tswana people would be *go isa matshidiso* in cases of loss or *go ya go emela* in cases of hardships such as illness whereby the members of the community pays the victim a visit to convey that he or she is not alone in pain. The community provides support by availing itself to the victim and his/her family. According to Tutu (2008), *Ubuntu* becomes evident when people care for one another or when they are concerned about the distress experienced by another person.

Interdependence

Closely related to Ubuntu is a sense of community. Africans are interconnected. An individual is seen within a community context and not in isolation. The emphasis is on "We" rather than "I".

This counters the belief that a person can exist in isolation. Mokgatlhe (2006) notes the sense of connection is particularly evident in people's relationships with those who are part of the extended family, the clan and the community. Agulanna (2010) concurs with Mokgatlhe's s idea of connectedness because he asserts that it is in the community of other human beings that the life of an individual can have a meaning or significance.

Connectedness extends beyond the living relatives to include the living-dead and God. Since culture influences issues of explanation and treatment of observable differences in behavior, it is not uncommon for the indirect crime victims to seek help on behalf of the direct crime victim. This is their way of communicating that the pain experienced by the afflicted individual is not highly individual, personal or private. The argument here is that pain experienced by the direct victim does not only cause personal distress but also social distress.

In the next discussion, the researcher highlights the use of evil magic and how it relates to violent crimes such as attempted murder or murder.

Witchcraft-related violent crimes

Several scholars have argued that since 1990s, in various regions throughout South Africa, there has been an escalation in incidents of witch killings, and *muti* or medicine murderers, particularly in rural African communities (Neihaus, 1997; Hund, 2003; Petrus, 2008). People attempt to or kill each other because of witchcraft and sorcery. These types of crimes can be classified as ritualistic crimes or witchcraft-related crimes. Permutter (in Petrus, 2008) defines ritualistic crime as any act of violence characterised by a series of repeated physical, sexual and/or

psychological actions or assaults combined with a systematic use of symbols, ceremonies and/or machinations.

A ritualistic crime has a ritual attached to it. An example of a ritualistic crime is that of potential members of a gang who are expected to hijack, murder someone, or perform any violent or criminal act in order to belong to a group of gangsters. When potential gangsters do perform the ritual by committing crimes, it appears that the motivation for acting in a criminal manner extends beyond the victim's possessions. These ritualistic crimes cannot be explained by modern scientific thoughts.

Witch killings tend to occur when individuals may be accused of attempting to harm others through the use of invisible agents or familiars (Petrus, 2008). When the alleged witch is exposed, the community members may kill the witch as a symbolic ritual of cleansing the community of evil. In the eyes of the community, the killers may be regarded as heroes for eliminating the alleged witch (Mavhungu in Petrus, 2008). In the eyes of law enforcement officers, however, the killers are murderers and may be dealt with as such (Petrus, 2008).

For this reason, the community may then see the police as protecting witches, which damages the faith that the communities have in the police to deal adequately with witchcraft cases. This complicates the role the police are expected to play. Further, it is problematic to obtain "hard" evidence of witchcraft since witches are believed to operate by means of psychic or spiritual agents (Petrus, 2008). This makes it difficult for the police officers to take charges of witchcraft seriously (Petrus, 2008). It can be argued that ritualistic and witchcraft-related crimes are interrelated.

The few African ideologies explained above help elaborate African knowledge claims. The researcher is aware that South Africa is a multicultural country and that there may be variations in knowledge claims among the many cultures. For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected some ideologies and worldviews from some South African cultural groups to illustrate and explain victimisation from an African perspective.

In order to understand the theoretical framework of this research project, it is essential to explain the researcher's view of the world. Thus, it is important to highlight the theoretical paradigm which will influence the nature of the inquiry of this study. The section that follows outlines social contsructionism as the theoretical paradigm of the study and how it challenges traditional views of reality.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructionism is a theoretical paradigm informing this study. The focus is on understanding and exploring how the victims of violent crimes who participate in this study socially construct their realities. Assumptions underpinning social constructionism are explained to help understand this paradigm as a suitable theoretical foundation for this research. Social constructionism is consistent with African epistemology which guides this study. It is essential to highlight how this paradigm will influence the nature of enquiry. Theoretical paradigms are central to research design because they impact both on the nature of the research question and on the manner in which this question is to be studied (Durrheim, et al, 2006). The basic tenets of social constructionism are explained below to help understand the stance that the researcher maintains throughout the entire study.

Problems are socially constructed

According to Ashdown (2006), one of the assumptions of social constructionism is that problems are socially constructed and are relative to the values of the society. This assumption implies that values and norms of a society may inadvertently contribute to the problem or escalation of the problem common within a society. People can create or worsen their problems in their attempt to uphold their cultural ways of life.

The belief that *Monna ke nku o llela teng* (men are discouraged from expressing emotional and/or physical pain) may discourage male victims of violent crimes from utilizing services aimed at supporting survivors of various violent and criminal acts. As a result, male victims of violent crimes who hold this belief may suffer for a considerable period of time as compared to their female counterparts. This however is not to say that cultural values are inherently disempowering but they can help understand problems such as violent crimes, poverty, substance abuse, to name but a few.

To further explain how problems are socially constructed, Maturana (in Ashdown, 2006) explains that problems occur when people name a situation a problem. Ashdown (2006) notes that until a problem is perceived as such and is so labeled, there is no such thing as a problem; a problem only exists in the eye of the beholder.

The solution becomes the problem

People also create their problems by their attempted solutions to the problems (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). The simple type of problem solution posits that the desired outcome could be achieved by doing the opposite of what has happened (Watzlawick, et al, 1974). For

example, survivors of attempted murder may resort to killing their perpetrators as a solution to their victimisation. There is no guarantee that should the survivors of attempted murder succeed in killing their perpetrators, their problems that resulted from being victimised would be resolved. Perhaps they may have satisfied their need for anger or revenge but the emotional and physical injuries sustained, if any, will remain untreated. They may even face the wrath of the law if their violent acts are reported to the police.

When people attempt to solve the problem but the attempted solution fails to produce the desired outcome and the problem remains unchanged then the solution becomes the problem (Watzlawick et al, 1974). On the other hand, the solution to the problem forms part of the problem when the problem grows worse after the attempted corrective behavior was carried out (e.g. victims of attempted murder could face charges of murder if they succeeded in killing their perpetrators). Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, people create problems by their inappropriate attempted solutions to the problems. This is a clear counterproductive form of problem solution. The participants' typical way of solving problems will help the researcher understand the extent to which counterproductive corrective behaviours have become part of the victims' problems.

Ecological reality

Social constructionists assume that an individual's reality derives from meanings that develop within a historical, social, and community context (Rapmund, 2000; Marques-Fernandes, 2004). In an attempt to understand an individual's reality, relationships are a central point of focus. Social constructionists go beyond constructivists' individualistic view of reality. Constructivism is based on the assumption that reality and meaning are constructed through the individual's own

senses, cognitions and perceptions, while social constructionism focuses on reality and meaning that are constructed through social processes and interactions (Mojapelo-Batka, 2008). There is a shift from focusing on how cognitive processes play a role in reality construction to focusing on how people interact with one another to construct and influence each other's reality.

Although the individual is the focus of this study, one cannot ignore that the individual is part of an ecology, in which he/she interacts with other family members, the community and culture (Themistocleous, 2008). The researcher will view participants within their network of relations in an attempt to understand their lived experiences of victimisation. In this way the researcher as a social constructionist assumes that all knowledge and understanding of the world develop through social interactions (Lloyd, 2003; Pera, 2004). Life experiences cannot be studied out of context.

It appears that there is a shift from the traditional process of psychological inquiry which focused only on the individual. Now social and political factors are taken into consideration in assessing an individual's psychological make-up. Reality cannot have validity outside of a particular historical context (Themistocleous, 2008).

Focusing on human interactions does not necessarily overlook the importance of individual factors in the social construction of reality. Ratele and Duncan (2003) explain that relationships are twofold in that they bring the public and the private together. The public would refer to an individual independent of the relationship, while private would refer to the people within a relationship. Thus, relationships are dualistic in character. The researcher will focus on the relational contexts of victims of violent crimes to explore the interaction between individual

understanding of victimisation and meanings attached to victimisation by the society within which victims are found.

According to Hruby (in Mojapelo-Batka, 2008), socially constructed meanings are often taken at face value by the members of the community as facts, the reality, common sense, or even as in arguable foundational meanings. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on how meanings developed within a social, historical and community context affect meanings attached to victimisation by victims. The focus is also on how stereotypes and social talk affect meaning-making.

In a nutshell, the ontological views (the nature of reality that is to be studied) of social constructionism seem more appropriate in providing the understanding of the victims' subjective experiences of the reality of being a victim of violent crimes since the main aim of this study is to understand the personal experiences of victims of violent crimes.

Reality as socially constructed

Social constructionism is based on the assumption that in the process of perceiving and describing an experience, whether to ourselves or to others, we construct not only our personal knowledge base about reality but also our own reality (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Victims of violent crimes construct their realities when trying to understand what is going on in their lives or what had happened. This challenges the belief which considers reality to be separate from people and the belief that reality comes from the external experiences (Themistocleous, 2008).

"Reality as multiple-verse"

From a social constuctionist's perspective, reality is seen as tentative (Themistocleous, 2008). Reality seems to be unpredictable and distinct. Individuals attach different meanings to similar experiences. It is these differences in meanings that constitute different realities. Even an individual may attach more than one meaning to an experience, like victimisation, which contributes to the notion of multiple realities. This assumption has significant implications for this study. Themistocleous (2008) briefly describes the implication of multiple realities for researchers as follows:

> *....all meanings attached to art, literature, and experiences are open to evaluation and seen as non-static within universal theories. This suggests that as a researcher, I cannot assume an objective stance and 'see' reality, but rather need to keep in mind my own context and the context of my participants and the uniqueness of their experiences.....*

Awareness of this assumption will help the researcher understand that her reality is just one of many, to embrace multiple realities that emerge during data collection and refrain from overlooking the realities of the participants.

Dialogism in meaning-making

Social constructionists also focus on how people construct reality through dialogue. Oosthuizen (in Lloyd, 2003) asserts that language is not seen as a representation of the world, but rather as constructing the world. The argument here is that language is seen as the means whereby people create meaning out of their experiences and make sense of their lives. Reality is constructed within relationships and mediated through the process of language (Marques-Fernandes, 2004).

Anderson and Goolishian (1988) concur with Marques Fernandes' view of the role of language in the process of meaning making because they believe that meaning is created by the language people use to describe an experience, rather than that language simply reflects some inner experience. Their ideas challenge the traditional view of language as a neutral medium which merely reflects reality. Meaning is not pre-given, nor does it arise internally; it is constructed actively and dialogically when interacting with other people (Mkhize, 2004).

Lloyd (2003) stresses that if reality is constructed through language, then meaning, experience and understanding are also products of the language used to describe it. Providing victims of violent crimes with a space to narrate their lived experiences will allow them to simultaneously create meanings to their experiences. The process of talking about certain issues will lead to the development of new themes, new narratives and new histories (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

The researcher as a participant observer

It is crucial to highlight the role of the researcher because, from the social constructionist's point of view, the research narratives are partly her contributions. When participants narrate their lived experiences, the researcher's own perspective influences what she sees and how she is perceived by the participants. Schuttleworth (2008) stresses that qualitative methods require a lot of careful thought to ensure that the results obtained are as accurate as possible. Schuttleworth's opinion implies that the researcher is the actual instrument of the study.

The researcher plays a co-constructionist role when interviewing the participants. Her knowledge and experiences guides how she goes about carrying out the actual study. Baker (1999) is of the opinion that what the study will be depends on what the qualitative researcher

brings forth from the research experiences. This further stresses the importance of the role played by the researcher in a qualitative study. The emphasis is on how the researcher and the participants reciprocally co-create meanings to the lived experiences of the participants. This adds complexity that guards against linear thinking.

Social constructionism is based on the assumption that people participate in creating their reality (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Reality is co-constructed. The argument here is that reality is not something out there. Mavoric (2000) explains that what is known through observation tells us more about what the observer has constructed than about the object that has been observed. Social constructionist thinking assumes that the act of observing affects that which is observed. Therefore, a description of what is researched tells more about the researcher than about what has been researched. Consequently, knowledge cannot be value-free and reality is seen as a construction (Lloyd, 2003).

Social constructionism challenges the objective view of reality. An objective view of reality assumes that there is no mutual influence between the researchers and that which is researched (Marques-Fernandes, 2004). This means that researchers do not allow the research to be influenced by their assumptions, theories, social or cultural norms, hypotheses, personal or individual perspectives and values. This view of reality is inconsistent with the ontology of this study.

From a social constructionist's point of view, the researcher becomes part of what is being researched. The researcher invites the participants to be partly involved in the research process while she is just as partly involved (Marques-Fernandes, 2004). In this way social

constructionism adheres to the principles of second-order cybernetics, the observer and that which is observed influence each other in a circular pattern (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Unlike first-order cybernetics where there is no mutual influence between the observer and what she observes, the researcher is not an external, objective expert but a participant in the construction of reality. It can be argued that social constructionism denies the researcher the opportunity to maintain a knowing stance because it is through participation and integration of her reality and the reality of participants that she can know about lived experiences of violent crimes.

Principles of social constructionism seem to uphold the idea that individuals and their experiences are unique. If this was not the case, individuals' experiences will be universal and identical regardless of their unique ecologies because meanings would have already been ascribed to events. Pera (2004) is of the opinion that meanings are never static; they evolve throughout the entirety of the life of a person. There is constant negotiation and renegotiation of meanings.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the epistemology underlying the study was explained. It helps the researcher to formulate understandings consistent with the knowledge claims within which participants' experiences are found. African epistemology also brought forth the different African belief systems, particularly the indigenous and Christian African belief systems. The researcher explained how each belief system understands and deals with adversities such as crime victimisation.

The nature of inquiry that is followed in this research endeavour allows the researcher to view the meanings victims of violent crimes who partake in this study attribute to their victimisation as created through interpersonal conversation. Therefore, meanings are context based. Since this study is about the lived experiences of the direct victims of violent crimes, the researcher adopted a co-costructionist stance to help embrace the victims' realities.

In the next chapter, the researcher discusses the guiding methodology of this study. This includes the research design, sampling technique, data collection technique, and data analysis method.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters highlighted the aims of this study, and reviewed literature on violent crimes and indigenous African understanding of adversities such as victimisation. The focus in this chapter shifts to the guiding methodology of the study. That is, the process that helps the researcher achieve research aims is explained. A qualitative research design is described in detail including its applicability to the study. In addition, the researcher draws attention to the method of selecting relevant participants, data collection techniques, and the data analysis strategy. Lastly, this chapter concludes with ethics that were adhered to throughout this research endeavour.

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was used as the methodological approach of this study. The primary goal of a study using this approach is to describe and understand the phenomenon in study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It will be limiting to address this research using a quantitative method because of several reasons. According to Marques-Fernandes (2004), the limitations of a quantitative approach are as follows:

- Lived experiences of participants cannot be answered by a simple true or false, be measured, or analysed statistically. By presenting the victims of violent crime with a questionnaire that has set questions could restrict them from saying only what they are asked for thus limiting their views and opinions.

- Quantitative research is based on the idea that there is one reality out there. This approach is inconsistent with the theoretical assumptions guiding this research.

- Subjectivity is overlooked. Researcher bias which may contaminate or influence data is ignored.

- Participants' ecologies are overlooked. Generalizations of descriptions are ultimately seen as statements of truth that do not take into account aspects of time or the complexities of social relationships and contextual factors.

The limitations of a quantitative design clearly interfere with the aim of exploring the participants' feelings and experiences from their point of views rather than from that of the researcher. A qualitative design is used in order to achieve the aims of this study. Investigating the lived experiences of victims of violent crimes using a qualitative design enabled the participants to open up their lives for exploration and provided the arena in which their experience of violent crime were interpreted, described and understood.

To further explain the applicability of a qualitative design for this study, Rees (1996) noted that qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realties, studied through sustained contact with people in their natural environments, generating rich, descriptive data that helps researchers to understand their experiences and attitudes. This research design allowed the researcher to explore and interpret each participant's lived sense of the relationship between their experience of violent crime and their cultural identity.

A qualitative method allows the researcher to collect data in a form of spoken language and to study issues in depth, openness, and detail as she identifies and attempts to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data (Durrheim, Painter & Terre Blanche, 2006). A qualitative design appeared to maintain the integrity of narrated data. This illuminated participants' experiences through the eyes of their cultural scrutiny and offered an interpretive

appreciation of meaning within participants' socio-cultural context. The comments made about qualitative research justify its usefulness especially in minimizing the possibilities of altering data.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Sampling strategy

Themistocleous (2008) describes sampling as a part of research design which is concerned with the selection of participants for the study and involves decision about which people, behaviours, events, etc to observe. This study follows a purposive sampling technique. The researcher selected participants who were willing and able to tell their stories. Individuals who have experienced violent crimes were selected to participate in this study. It can be argued that the selection of participants for a qualitative study is concerned with participants who can provide information which is relevant to the phenomenon in study.

Inclusion criteria

There are a number of factors to be considered when selecting participants for this study. The following criteria were followed in the selection of participants:

- The researcher located one participant per five crime category, i.e, one victim of rape, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, attempted murder and assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm. A total of five individuals who have experienced violent crime(s) have been chosen deliberately so that they meet the aims of the study. Both male and female victims participated in the study.

The subjective nature of a qualitative research allowed for the study of human experiences in small samples. A sample size of five participants seemed to be manageable especially in a study that focused primarily on in-depth information. A limited number of cases facilitated the researcher's close association with the participants, and enhanced the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). This study did not aim to generalize the findings to other populations with similar characteristics to that of the participants.

- The researcher located individuals aged between 20 and 70 for this study. This is because individuals who fall within this age group are more likely able to articulate their thoughts and feelings verbally.

According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), any person 14 years and older can give consent for research, assessment or therapeutic purposes. It would be difficult to interview a minor child (younger than 14 years) who meets the selection criteria for this study because children express themselves mainly in behavioral terms and they are legally incapable of giving informed consent.

Individuals aged between 14 and 19 years (adolescents) are legally capable of giving consent for participation in research projects. According to Gething, Papilia and Olds (2005), the many significant changes that this age group undergoes during this stage of development (adolescence), influence their lives considerably. Thus, adolescents were likely to find it difficult to differentiate between the challenges associated with

adolescence and the effects of being a crime victim. As a result, research descriptions would likely reflect the effects of adolescence on an individual and this was not what this study aimed to achieve.

The cut-off age was 70. The findings of a study on violent crimes indicated that the age of both male and female victims ranges between 20 and 71 (Pretorius, 2008). Individuals older than 70 years were excluded from participating in this study. This is because cognitive decline which is characterised by increasing difficulties with memory is quite inevitable in a person 70 years and older (Gething, et al, 2005). Thus, individuals who are older than 70 years may forget some aspects of their victimisation when interviewed resulting in incomplete narrated experiences of victimisation and erroneous interpretation of their experiences.

- For the purpose of this study, the focus was on victimisation that was not less than three months old. Focusing on recent victimisation made it easier for the participants to recall their experiences as they still had vivid memories of their experiences.

However, victimisation that was too recent did not form part of this study because it would have been overwhelming for the victims to talk about it especially if they have not yet reached sufficient closure. Three months after their victimisation, victims are likely to have noticed significant changes in their lives, might have found ways to cope with their victimisation, and may have something to say regarding how they are dealing with it.

- Participants were Black South Africans who are residents of Ga-Mothiba.

Contacting the participants

Rees (1991) explains that the entry route of a research project begins with people in important organizations and/or socially defined roles who make known prospective informants to the researcher. The identified gatekeepers or key persons in this study were the nurses in the local clinics, the communication department of the Mankweng police station (the communication department keeps record of the reported cases according to different crime categories), the local traditional healers, and priests of different churches.

In order to achieve the desired sample, the researcher approached the key persons and requested assistance in locating prospective participants for this study. The researcher also explained the purpose of the study to the key persons so as to ensure that they understood what was requested of them. Once the key persons have agreed to assist, the researcher explained the inclusion criteria to them so that they locate relevant participants. The researcher depended entirely on the assistance of the key persons when locating participants. In order not to breech voluntary participation, the key persons were encouraged not to enforce participation on individuals who met the inclusion criteria for this study.

In addition, the key persons provided the researcher with information regarding individuals who were willing to participate in this study with their permission. The researcher then contacted the prospective participants and made appointments for data collection. Even though the prospective participants would have expressed their willingness to participate in this study, the researcher

still explained the purpose of this study to them and emphasised that their participation was voluntary.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher met with each participant twice. During the first meeting, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview to collect data. Before participants shared their experiences, the researcher requested a written consent from the participants to make use of a digital voice recorder to record their stories.

The interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. In-depth interviews help uncover and describe the participants' experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) from the point of view of the participants. The researcher allowed participants to express their opinions freely. In so doing, each participant's point of view unfolded. This minimized research descriptions based on how the researcher views them. The interviews were designed to resemble a conversation rather than a set number of questions and answer.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured questions, according to David and Sutton (2004), may distort participants' experiences that are not best categorized within the prescribed pigeonholes of the researcher. However, participants were given the opportunity to discuss beyond the limits of the questions in order to address the argument raised by David and Sutton. According to Stead and Struwing (2001), this enabled the researcher to obtain multiple responses to set questions and allowed for detailed responses.

The researcher began with open-ended questions to minimize the possibility of influencing how participants frame their stories. In order to reduce cultural biases and complications inherent in misunderstandings and misinterpretations related to other languages, Marques-Fernandes (2004) proposed that interviews ought to be conducted using the participants' native language. Conducting interviews using the participants' language enabled them to express themselves more openly and thoroughly. The aforesaid made the researcher aware that interviews ought to be conducted using participant's home language.

The suggestion put forward by Marques-Fernandez challenged the ideal inclusion criteria for this study because not all people who live at Ga-Mothiba speak the same language. It was possible to find someone who was willing to participate in this study but the researcher cannot speak or understand his/her native language. In addressing this limitation, the researcher allowed the participants to express themselves in a language that they were most comfortable with. In this sense, language was used as exclusion criteria.

The reviewed literature indicated that there are indigenous meanings attached to victimisation which may be difficult to translate into English such as *intwaso* and *sefifi*. Such concepts often lose the meaning when translated. It would be contradictory not to preserve the meanings the participants' attach to their lived experiences. Translating data can result in loss of the original meaning of the data in general.

Recorded interviews were transcribed from a verbal into a written format. The researcher transcribed each interview using the language used during the interview. When deconstructing interviews, it was only then that the researcher used English to put into words the themes that

emerged focusing only on meanings and not necessarily translating. The researcher conceded that something was lost in the process of linguistic translation. Therefore, in as much the same way as transcription, there can be no perfect translation.

In addressing the possible limitations of transcription and translation of data using a language different from the one used during data collection, participants were given a copy of their own transcribed and translated interview to read through, after which a follow-up interview was scheduled with each. This interview was viewed as a necessary 'walk through', to ascertain that the translation remained as close as possible to the participants' originally held and intended meaning. In essence, to each participant the follow-up posed question was, 'how does my transcript represent your experience?'

The follow-up interview provided each participant an opportunity to refine their original descriptions, where they felt necessary, by providing any additional information they felt would speak more to their experience and therefore enhance the researcher's appreciation thereof. Follow-up enhancements were added to the original transcript, thus setting the stage for analysis and interpretation of each narrated experience.

Data analysis

The data collected was analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a process of sorting and making sense of the data, especially written and narrative data (Boyd, Douglah, Seaman & Taylor-Powell, 2009). It is also the process of systemically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, process notes, and other materials that the researcher accumulates to increase her understanding of them and to enable her to present what she has discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

In this study, data analysis involved working with process notes and transcribing recorded interviews. The researcher reconstruct both the process notes and the transcribed data to see what themes emerge, what participants talked about the most, and how themes related to each other (Ratcliff, 2009). Content analysis seeks themes revealed across the interviews; including information such as the participants' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, perspectives and so on (Marques-Fernandes, 2004). The proposed data analysis strategy was in accordance with a qualitative study and helped provide an understanding or an explanation of the narrated lived experiences of the participants from their perspectives.

To further emphasize the methodology of this research project, it seemed important to highlight ethics that were considered throughout this study. The section that follows outlines the ethics.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethics were adhered to in this in this research endeavour.

Informed consent

According to Babbie (2007), research participants must base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved. The researcher provided participants with information pertaining to research that they needed to make decisions about participation. At the beginning of data collection, the researcher discussed with research participants the nature of this study including the role and responsibilities of the researcher during interviews, the aims of the research, the risks that may be involved during data collection, the participants' rights, and the limits to confidentiality.

Folkman and Sales (2000) maintain that informed consent includes a clear statement of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of the research project, as well as the obligations and commitment of both the participants and the researchers. After discussing these key elements, the participants were given the opportunity to choose to or refuse to partake in the study. Participation was voluntary.

Nonmaleficence and beneficence

This study involved people who experienced violent crimes. Durrheim, et al, (2006) describe nonmaleficence as the ethical obligation not to do harm in research. The researcher minimized risks and harms by guarding against providing participants with false information or deceiving them. For instance, it was inevitable for participants to re-experience their victimisation as they narrated their stories. Participants were assured that, should they re-experience trauma during the interview, the researcher would refer them for counseling or trauma intervention at the nearest victim support center. The principle of beneficence obliges the researcher to attempt to maximize the benefits that the research will afford to the participants in the research study (Durrheim, et al, 2006). In this study, this principle was upheld by building understanding of what victim empowerment services can offer to crime victims.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Principles of anonymity and confidentiality are integral parts of research. The principle of anonymity is achieved when the researcher does not record the identity of participants for research purposes (David & Sutton, 2004). Pseudo names were used to guarantee anonymity in this research.

According to Halgin and Whitbourne (2007), confidentiality refers to safeguarding participants' disclosures as private. The researcher ensured that the information participants shared during data collection were not divulged to other people and she refrained from sharing participants' private information with other people without participants' consent. Communicating this to the participants might have enabled them to share their experiences openly.

CONCLUSION

The guiding methodology and a research design that were followed in this research project were explained. Approaching this study qualitatively helped the researcher embrace participants' subjectivity and their lived experiences. The researcher asked semi-structured and open-ended questions to ensure that research descriptions reflect participants' lived experiences. This study is about the lived experiences of victims of violent crimes and as such, aimed to reflect their realities. The nature of this study is up-close and personal. The researcher was ethically obliged to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and not to harm participants.

The next chapter discusses the findings of this study. The focus is on distinct themes that emerged from each participant's story and on how the themes relates to one another.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of this study. Among other factors that are revealed, the researcher considers how Black South Africans understand and deal with victimisation. Five individuals agreed to share their stories of being victims of violent crimes. The first part of the chapter provides a brief background of each participant. The second part of this chapter discusses themes and subthemes that emerged across the board. Extracts from interviews are used to elaborate the themes. In an attempt to preserve individual meanings, distinct but dominant themes that emerged from each participant's lived experiences also receive attention separately.

RESULTS: BRIEF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Individuals who partook in this study met the inclusion criteria discussed in the previous chapter. A total number of five individuals aged between twenty to sixty two years agreed to participate in this study. Four participants were males with one female participant. Clearly male victims of violent crime at Ga-Mothiba were more willing and forthcoming in participating in this study as compared to their female counterparts. This gives the impression that there may be more male victims of violence and crime than one would like to believe. In addition, perhaps their willingness to partake in this study is a suggestion that it may have been their first time sharing their lived experiences in a safer environment wherein they were assured that they will not be re-victimised, undermined, or blamed.

All participants were interviewed in Sepedi as it was their native language. Anderson and Goolishian's (1988) idea of the role of language extends beyond its use as a medium of

instruction to reflect the role it plays in the process of meaning making when people interact. Participants were offered the opportunity to use their native language to make meanings out of their lived experiences. The role of language in meaning making is further emphasised in that the process of talking about certain issues leads to the development of new themes, new narratives and new histories (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Sepedi is also the researcher's native language. This enabled her to gain an understanding of the co-created meanings participants attributed to their victimisation.

With the exception of one case, all of the incidents in this study occurred at night between approximately seven in the evening and one o'clock in the morning. All of the perpetrators used threat and in all cases they were armed with a variety of weapons that did result in severe bodily injuries when used or could have resulted in such injuries in cases where-in the weapons were used to merely threaten the victims.

The weapons used by the perpetrators who violated individuals who participated in this study include firearms, a spade, knives, and physical strength. Victims reported that they were hit, kicked, dragged by their arms, and held at gunpoint or even shot. One victim of rape reported that her hands were bound during the incident and that left her in a helpless state. Other victims also expressed their helplessness during their victimisation. Further, all the participants mentioned death as one of the biggest amongst their fears.

Participant 1

The participant, Ramadimetsa (pseudonym), is a sixty two year old woman. She is a Sepedi speaking mother of two children. She lives with both her children and a granddaughter. She has

been a widow since 1984. She is currently unemployed. Her family survives on a government grant she receives on a monthly basis. Ramadimetsa is a Christian and attends the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

Ramadimetsa agreed to be interviewed after being approached by her family friend who had heard about this research from the researcher. Her family friend is also a Priest at the Roman Catholic Church. Ramadimetsa was interviewed at her home in Ga-Mothiba. She disclosed that she is a victim of rape. She described the rape by saying:

> *I will not forget that day for as long as I live. I was in the mealie field ploughing. It was on the 20th of February last year (2009) around four in the afternoon. Somebody grabbed my neck from behind. He tripped me and I fell on the ground. He started to strangle me. I could not scream because his other hand blocked my mouth. He instructed me not to scream. I nodded to show that I will not scream as he suggested. He told me to open my legs. I was scared he would kill me, so I did as he pleased. He then raped me.*

Ramadimetsa appeared somewhat embarrassed and nervous during the interview. She looked uncomfortable at the onset of the interview but when the interview progressed, she appeared to be at ease. She was very expressive and elaborative when relating her experience of being a victim of rape. She constantly expressed that she had never been humiliated like that in her entire life.

When interviewed, it was apparent that Ramadimetsa experienced secondary victimisation when seeking help from the police. The way she was treated by the police made her to regret seeking help from them in the first place. In addition, her right to receive information and right to

protection were overlooked by the criminal justice system. Ramadimetsa was not informed of her rights and could not exercise them as a result. It was also apparent during the interview that Ramadimetsa appeared to have anger directed towards her perpetrator. She reported that she wanted to bewitch the perpetrator as a way of getting even. Further, Ramadimetsa was affected financially. She reported that she had to travel to and from the hospital for frequent medical check-ups and the police station to check up on the case she had opened against her perpetrator.

Participant 2

The participant, Matome (pseudonym), is a fifty six year old married man. He lives with his wife, four children and a granddaughter at Ga-Mothiba. His first language is Sepedi. Matome left school after he had passed his grade six to look for a job. He works for a security company; his wife and his two older children are unemployed. His other two children are scholars.

Matome was accessed through a Priest from his neighborhood who knew about his past experiences and the researcher's intended study. Matome was informed about the research and agreed to be interviewed afterwards. He was interviewed at his home. In 2008, Matome survived assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm. He described the incident as follows:

> *I was on my way home from work. If I remember correctly, it was just after seven in a winter evening. I walked past a corner house that was not occupied. A group of boys came running out of the house and started assaulting me. I could not defend myself because they were too many. I screamed for help loud enough to be heard by people who live closer to where I was assaulted but nobody came to help me out. The boys hit me so hard that I could no longer feel the pain. I thought I was dying; I then lost*

consciousness…. I do not think there was any motive behind my assault. I mean I did not

have money at that time and they did not rob me off my cell phone.

During his interview, Matome was somewhat expressive in answering questions that were posed to him. He looked sad when relating his lived experience. He was open in most of his responses. He gave vague responses about how he understood and dealt with his victimisation. When probed, he appeared to close up. He appeared to be forgetful and could not remember the date of his assault. His wife, who was present throughout the interview, helped him recall some of the information that he reported that he had forgotten.

It was evident during his interview that Matome is secretive about his assault. His secrecy seems to stem out of shame of being assaulted by young boys. His shame seems to bring about a need for vengeance. Like Ramadimetsa, Matome was also affected financially. This is because he reported that he had to make travels to and from the hospital for frequent medical check-ups.

Participant 3

The participant, Lethabo (pseudonym), is thirty two years old. He is not married but he is in a committed relationship. He is the middle child of five children. His home language is Sepedi. Lethabo has a diploma in Electrical Engineering. He is currently employed as an Electrician in a mine. During week days, he lives in employee quarters at his workplace. On weekends, he lives with both his parents and his two younger siblings. His two older siblings moved out of the family home when they got married.

Lethabo agreed to participate in this study after being approached by his friend who heard about this research from the researcher. The interview was conducted in his friend's office. Lethabo is

a victim of vehicle hijacking. His car was hijacked on the 27th of June 2010. In explaining the vehicle hijack, he said:

> *It was on Tuesday night. I was on my way to pick up a friend who had asked for a lift. I drive a silver Ford Focus. I thought I had lost the direction to my friend's place when I stopped my car on the other side of the road to make a call. While I was on the phone, two men approached me. I do not know where they came from. They asked me where I was going and I told them that I was on my way to work. They told me that they are lost and needed a lift to town (Polokwane). I could not give them a lift since we were going in opposite directions. They walked away for a short while. All of a sudden, I noticed that the two men were walking back towards my car. I wanted to drive away. Just when I started my car, I heard a gunshot. I freaked out and could not drive away. I then remained inside my car. When they reached my car, they forced to get inside. I was reluctant to let them in. They threatened to shoot me and drive it anyway. I was helpless and let them in. Then they forced me to drive it to where they want to go. I refused and we started fighting over my car keys. One of them shot me on my right arm. It was then that they managed to get the keys. They also took my phone and my money. I managed to get out and they drove away with my car.*

Lethabo was tearful when he related his story. He tried very hard to stop himself from crying. He expressed that he feels like the incident was recurring whenever he talks about it. He seemed willing to continue with the interview. He looked depressed and maintained a closed sitting position at the onset of the interview. As his interview continued, Lethabo appeared to be relaxed. He was able to open up when he told his story.

Throughout the interview, Lethabo appeared to have anger directed toward the police. He seemed unhappy about the mismanagement of the case he opened against his vehicle hijackers. He also seemed to have lost hope in getting help from them. His family and friends seem to be playing an important role in his healing process since he only consulted with medical doctors for injuries he sustained. With regard to experiences when seeking medical help, Lethabo seemed happy with the kind of help he received. In addition, Lethabo was also affected financially because reported that he had to install a new locking system on his car.

Participant 4

The participant, Tumelo (pseudonym), is thirty years old. He is a Sepedi speaking individual. He is not married. He lives with his mother and his two brothers in the same household. His father passed on early 2010. Tumelo has a degree in Accounting. He works as an Assistant Manager in Nedbank. He is a Christian and attends the Dutch Reformed Church.

Tumelo agreed to be interviewed after being approached by a priest from his church. He was interviewed at his home in Ga-Mothiba. Tumelo is a victim of two incidents of armed robbery. He described the two incidents as follows:

> *The first incident took place in 2006. I'd been drinking with friends in a tavern a bit far away from home. It was in the early hours of the next day when I decided to go home. I had to walk back home because I have no car and there was no public transport at that time of the day. On my way home from the tavern, something hit me on my forehead. Some boys started to attack me. They beat me up and forcefully took my phone, money and my shoes. I was told that I fainted for a few hours.*

Tumelo went on further to state:

> *The second incident took place last year (2009) in October. I was with my best friend the second time. Strange enough, the both of us were robbed at the exact spot where I had been robbed before. They took our phones and money. We were both drunk so we could not fight back.*

Tumelo was expressive when he related the two incidents of armed robbery. He spoke fluently and with ease. Throughout the interview he maintained a relaxed sitting position. He also maintained eye contact. His mood was sad when talking about the first incident. When talking about the second incident, his mood was euthymic. He also looked embarrassed when talking about his drinking behavior.

Tumelo was re-victimised by members of his nuclear family when they leant about his victimisation. He reported that he was made to feel that he deliberately brought back luck onto himself. When he became a victim of armed robbery again, Tumelo resorted to secrecy in an attempt to avoid secondary victimisation he experienced after his first disclosure. Members of his extended family, especially his grandmother, seemed to have played a significant role when no one close to him sympathized with what had happened to him. Further, Tumelo was discouraged from opening a case after the second incident of armed robbery because he reported that with the first incident, the police were not of any help. Like the other participants, he also suffered financially.

Participant 5

The participant, Kgothatso (pseudonym), is twenty one years old. He is not married. He lives with his mother, older sister, his younger brother and a nephew. His father moved out of the family home when he and Kgothatso's mother divorced a few years ago. He further reported that

he has an older brother who works in Johannesburg. His brother visits his family on a frequent basis. Kgothatso works as a fashion designer in a family business. Sometimes he works from home.

Kgothatso was invited to participate in this study by a traditional healer. He agreed to be interviewed. He was interviewed at his home in Ga-Mothiba. In December 2009, Kgothatso survived attempted murder at his home. He said:

> *It all began at a party. My friends and I attended a twenty first birthday party last year in December just before Christmas. Such parties usually start late in the evening. Because the party was organized in a village not far from my village, we attended it as a group of four friends. You know the saying 'safety in numbers'?*

> *So, when we were at the party, the deejay lost his cap. Rumors said a person who took the cap had a black leather jacket on. The deejay looked for his cap and could not find it. Then he accused the first guy that he saw who wore a black leather jacket. Guess what? The apparent suspect happened to be my friend Khutso. He had his black leather jacket on. He must have thought to himself that Khutso is the one who stole his cap. He and Khutso argued for a while before they started fighting each other.*

> *Friends of the deejay joined the fight against my friend. I could not stand seeing my friend being defeated. I joined the fight as well. My other two friends also joined in. It was a big fight. If you were not there when the fight started you would not know who was fighting who. When we realised that they were defeating us, we ran off from the party. We*

ran in the direction to our village. The deejay and his friends chased us. Thato, one the older guys from our village was also at the party. Apparently when he learnt that people were chasing us, he got upset and chased after the guys who were chasing us.

The researcher probed and Kgothatso went on further with his story to say:

Thato managed to get hold of one of the guys who were chasing us. He started fighting the guy. He stabbed him with a knife and the guy died on the spot. I do not think he meant to kill him. That was the last day we saw Thato.

The researcher further probed Kgothatso about why people wanted to kill him and he said:

It seems like family members of the deceased do not know who killed their son. I was accused of murder that I did not commit simply because when they made investigations, my name kept on surfacing. I think what made me the perfect suspect was that I went to a party with friends who are not known by many people around Ga-Mothiba because they do not live full time at this village. My friends are full time students in tertiary institutions away from home. I am well known since I was born and bred here (referring to his village). The fact that the murderer went missing did not help much.

The researcher asked how Kgothatso was nearly killed and he said:

It was on Saturday night when the guy was killed. The following Friday, a day before he was buried, the deceased's family organized a group of his friends and cousins to kill the person who killed their friend/cousin. They came to my home armed with potentially deadly weapons. One of them knocked on the door and I opened. I heard a voice saying

that it is Kgothatso. That is the one we should kill. I was told that if I do not give them

back their friend/cousin alive, then they kill me. They did not give me a chance to explain

my side of the story. They started dragging me outside my home. They wanted to take me

somewhere where they would kill me. Luckily I was with my neighbor who was supposed

to sleep over since I was home alone that weekend. He came to my rescue. His ran off to

his home to call his parents who backed me up. I could have died that night.

During his interview, Kgothatso articulated his story clearly. He appeared to be at ease and relaxed at the onset of the interview. He became emotional as the interview progressed. He looked apprehensive and uncomfortable. His fluctuating mood was appropriate to the content of the interview. He was generally cooperative throughout the entire interview.

Kgothatso suffered secondary victimisation at the hands of his neighbor. He reported that his neighbor was doubtful of his innocence in the murder case. Further, he reported that his neighbor insulted him when he tried explaining his innocence. Kgothatso also suffered financially following his attempted murder since he took time from work a few days after the incident and could not generate money as a result.

The preceding discussions of this chapter gave the context of each participant including clinical impressions during the interviews. In the next discussions, the researcher focuses on the themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews in detail. The researcher acknowledges that she maintained a participant-observer role during the interviews. As such, she co-constructed the realities of the participants through her engagement with them. Therefore, the narrative realities

that follow should not be seen as absolute reality but as the by-products of the reciprocal influence of the person they conversed with, in this case, the researcher.

RESULTS: THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

From the transcribed interviews with the five individuals who participated in this study, the researcher identified themes and subthemes, and grouped them into the following categories:

- After-effects of victimisation

- Support system

- The meaning attached to victimisation and ways of dealing with victimisation

At the end of each theme or subtheme, the researcher will provide an integrated discussion with theoretical interpretation. Integrating the findings of this study could be beneficial because meanings are born of co-ordinations among people-agreements, negotiations, and affirmations (van Zyl, 2005).

After-effects of victimisation

Intense fear

Within each participant's story, there appears to be a strong theme of fear. It is common for victims to feel terror or fear following a crime that involved a threat to one's safety or life (Young, 2001). Most participants talked about having seen their own death during their victimisation. It can be argued that fear is the primary emotion that a person experiences when exposed to a traumatic event like being a crime victim.

Secondary victimisation

In most stories, there is a theme of secondary victimisation which is manifested in multiple ways. Ramadimetsa suffered secondary victimisation on the hands of the police officers who came to her house on the day she was raped. She explains the way police officers ill-treated her as follows:

> *.....they asked me why I took time to report that I had been raped. Before I could even respond, they made comments that did not sit well with me. They shouted at me. I felt undermined. I did not like the way they treated me.*

She further suffered secondary victimisation when she was not informed about the criminal justice process.

> *I opened a case against my rapist. For the rest of the year, I did not know what went on with my case. I did not know whether the police were busy with investigation; or anything. I went to the police station to inquire about the case. I was surprised that my rapist had appeared in court without my knowledge. I felt left out.*

Furthermore, the police were doubtful that Ramadimetsa could identify her rapist.

> *They constantly asked if I am definitely sure that I will be able to identify my rapist. I am not that old, I told them.*

Tumelo also experienced secondary victimisation. His was different from Ramadimetsa's as it was perpetrated by some of the members of his family. His mother made insensitive comments towards him. Tumelo explained:

With the first incident, I told everyone at home about it. My mother shouted at me and blamed me for it. She told me that people who walk late in the evening or in the early hours of the day attract such things and that I should not expect her to feel sorry for my irresponsible drinking behaviours.

Through the response of his neighbours, Kgothatso was re-victimised. He said:

My neighbor, the one who came to my rescue when people wanted to kill me, doubted the fact that I am not the murderer. He went on and on talking about how I could possibly be the murderer. I could not give him the side of my story because I was seen as back chatting. I just stood there defenseless to his insults.

Ramadimetsa, Tumelo and Kgothatso were ill-treated by people who had knowledge about their victimisation. Their insensitive comments made the three victims to feel that they are to blame for what had happened to them. The three victims experienced further victimisation following on from the original victimisation in a form of victim blaming, ignoring the role of the victim in the criminal justice process, and through insensitive treatment. Nel et al (2001) suggest that secondary victimisation occurs when institutions and the community at large respond negatively to the victim.

Secrecy

As the researcher immersed herself in the narrated lived experiences of the participants, it became apparent that the insensitive comments made by people whom the victim disclosed his/her victimisation can discourage further disclosure. It seems that the way Tumelo's mother responded to his first victimisation discouraged him to inform her, or any other member of his

nuclear family, at a later stage when he became a victim of armed robbery again. He kept the second incident to himself. This is suggested by the following comment:

> *I did not tell my mother. I knew she would blame me like she did when I was attacked the first time.*

He went further to say:

> *They (my mother and brothers) were surprised to see bandages on my head. When they asked, I told them that I bumped into something sharp and injured myself on the head. That is all they knew.*

The perceived lack of understanding of the suffering of victims can lead to secrecy. It seems that Tumelo kept the second incident a secret to avoid secondary victimisation that he endured after he informed his nuclear family about his first incident. He suffered in silence.

Matome also seems to be discouraged from telling other people about his assault. His secrecy seems to be perpetuated not only by the insensitive reaction of others but also by feelings of shame. He reported that he is ashamed to tell people that he had been assaulted by a group of young men. This is suggested by the following comment:

> *What would people say if I tell them that I have been assaulted by a group of young men? They are likely to look down upon me, think that I am just a coward or laugh at me like the others did.*

Need for revenge

The term revenge was mentioned on many occasions when interviewing Matome and Ramadimetsa. Each of them wants to punish or hurt their perpetrators because they made them

suffer. Although Matome explained that his assault occurred so quick that he could not identify the people who assaulted him, he appears to have a need to get even with his perpetrators. He reported that he has not yet executed one of the following plans:

I could have opened a case against the boys but I did not. I also thought of consulting a witch doctor to make the boys pay for what they did to me. I want to do something bad to those boys.

Due to humiliation that Ramadimetsa experienced after being raped, she wanted to pay revenge at her rapist.

If I had money, I would have taken that boy's semen to a witch doctor and ask him/her to bewitch my rapist so that he rapes his mother and grandmother. To think that I was raped by a boy younger than my own son is such a disgrace.

The pain and humiliation victims endure in the aftermath of their victimisation may influence them to use evil magic powers to get even. The reviewed literature suggests that individuals who attempt to harm others through the use of evil magic powers are often killed by the members of the community as a symbolic ritual to cleanse the community of evil (Petrus, 2008, Hund, 2003). Matome and Ramadimetsa expressed that they have not yet executed their revenge plans. Perhaps they are insightful about the possible consequences of paying revenge through the use of Black magic.

If Matome and Ramadimetsa execute their plans, they are likely to suffer more than they have already suffered if members of the community know that they are the ones who bewitched their

perpetrators. Watzlawick et al (1974) noted that people can create secondary problems by their inappropriate solutions to the primary problem. It is clear that bewitching is an inappropriate and counterproductive solution. Furthermore this can be a vicious cycle especially if the perpertrator's family may also seek revenge in their effort to help their affected member and that means also bewitching the victim. In addition, the fact that both Ramadimetsa and Matome have strong desires for revenge suggests that they have anger directed towards their perpetrators.

Future non-reporting

Most participants linked the insensitive and judgmental attitude of the police officers with future non-reporting. The way the victims have been interrogated negatively by the police and the way their cases have been managed or mismanaged at the police station made the participants to feel discouraged from reporting criminal and violent cases in future. This is reflected in the following statements:

> *Lethabo: The police officers opened a case against the two guys who hijacked my car based on the statement provided by my friend. When they took my statement it almost felt like it was just complementing my friend's. Who is the victim? I was angry; I am the victim and not him. To top it up, when they left they told me that they will give me feedback about the investigations. I have not seen or heard from them ever since. Sometimes it is useless to involve those people.*

> *Tumelo: I did not report the second incident to the police. It is just a waste of time. It has been four years since my first attack and I have not heard anything from them (the police). What difference would it make if I reported the second incident?*

> *Ramadimetsa: If I knew I would be made to feel like I am to blame for the rape, I would not have called them (the police) in the first place.*

Previous research has indicated that difficulty in accessing the police and the belief that the police cannot successfully help with the case are among the various reasons that may discourage future reporting (Danstile, 2008, Burton et al, 2004). In a survey on the perceived causes of non-reporting of crimes in the then Northern Province, Peltzer (1999) found that factors related to the court system and personal reasons were the major causes. Peltzer (1999) went further on to state that people avoided reporting crimes because of the difficulties involved in the process of seeking justice from the legal system and personal reasons such as taking revenge themselves as in Ramadimetsa and Matome's stories.

Experiences when seeking medical help

Due to injuries sustained during their victimisation, Lethabo, Tumelo, Matome and Ramadimetsa sought medical help. There is a general theme of satisfaction with the treatment received from the medical doctors and nurses.

> *Lethabo: They helped me a lot. I had to go for an operation because the bullet that shot me on the arm was in my tummy. At least they managed to take it out. I stayed in the hospital for eight days in total. The doctors and the nurse treated me well during my stay……..It was the nurses who phoned the police to come to the hospital regarding my vehicle hijacking.*

> *Tumelo: When I went to the hospital, I was bruised and had toothaches because I lost some of my teeth during the robbery. The nurses washed and stitched my wounds. They also gave me painkillers so that I do not feel the pain.*

> *Matome: I am thankful for the kind of help I received at the hospital. I could not have asked for more.*

Ramadimetsa: The nurses gave me medication to treat the pains that resulted from the rape. I do not feel them anymore. They referred me to a Psychologist who was kind and helpful. They also advised me to report the matter at the police station.

Participants' experiences of the help they received from doctors and nurses are positive. In comparing the help he received from a private hospital with the help he thinks he would have received if he went to a government one, Lethabo had a belief that he would have been mistreated by government medical staff. The experiences of the others who went to government hospitals disconfirm his belief. Based on the extracts above, it is evident that the medical staff, regardless of whether they work for a private or government hospital, made appropriate referrals in addressing the needs of the victims.

The findings of this study confirm, to a certain extent, the findings of a study conducted by Phaswana-Mafunya and Ramalepe (2008) on experiences of abuse among women in rural areas of the Limpopo Province when seeking support from health care centers. Their findings indicated that victims of abuse had both positive and negative experiences. Phaswana-Mafunya and Ramalepe (2008) believe that negative experiences may discourage future consultations at health care centers. Since experiences of victims who participated in this study are generally positive, it is likely that they will continue to consult with doctors and nurses when the need arise.

Financial injuries

Each individual who participated in this study meets the criteria of what Wallace (1998) and Hoffmann and McKendrick (1990) classified as financial injury. Kgothatso took time from work a few days after his attempted assault and could not generate money as a result; Tumelo lost

money during the robbery and had to replace his stolen cell phone; Lethabo installed a new locking system on his car when he recovered it and Ramadimetsa and Matome made travels to and from the hospital for frequent medical check-ups.

Support system

Victims of violent crimes who took part in this research endeavour relied primarily and/or exclusively on the support available in their immediate living environments. Based on the transcribed data, most of the participants survived their hardships because of the support members of their families, friends and neighbours offered.

> *Matome: My wife was there for me throughout. Because I had braces, I could not eat the food that we normally eat especially for supper. Every time when my wife cooked, she prepared me something that I was able to eat, like soft porridge..... Some members of my community paid me a visit whenever they could to check-up on me. We talked about my assault. Some gave me advices on traditional medicines I could use to heal my wounds. I could see that some of them were just as affected by my attack.*

> *Lethabo: My family advised me not to think about that day. They comforted me. I remember my dad used to drive me around my village over the weekends when I was on sick leave just for fresh. We would joke about the hijacking. He helped me find a less threatening way of talking about the hijack……well my friend was always there for me when I needed someone to talk to, either personally or telephonically.*

> *Tumelo: My grandmother was so understanding. I got the sense that she understood what I was going through.*

> *Kgothatso: I would have died if my neighbor did not rescue me. I was home alone and there was no way I would have defended myself against a group of armed guys.*

It is clear from these extracts that primary support system is of utmost importance in many Black South African communities. This may also be the case in other racial groups. However, since the focus of this study is on experiences of Black South Africans, the researcher cannot generalize this finding. Family members, friends and neighbours shared the emotional pain with their beloved ones who had been victimised. They were there for the victims when they needed them most (*Ba ile go ema*). According to Mokgatlhe (personal communication, November 10, 2009), it is common in Black South African cultures for members of the community to pay a visit to a person who is going through difficulties to support him/her. This is the way of life of many Black South Africans. It is a way of showing the responsibility towards another family member. Based on the study, it can be argued that in Black South African community, the word family extends beyond blood relatives to include friends and neighbours.

The meaning attached to victimisation

There are variations in terms of how participants understood their victimisation. It is for this reason that the researcher will look at how each participant understood and dealt with victimisation.

Ramadimetsa's interpretation

Ramadimetsa is a victim of rape. She believes in God and attributes Christian meanings to her rape.

> *I blame God of the ZCC. The prophets warned me that I am going to encounter problems in the near future. I was told to perform ditaelo (Christian rituals) to prevent the potential problems. Unfortunately, I could not perform them on my own. I needed the*

help of the Priests. I invited them to my home for the rituals but they never showed up

until the day I was raped.

Ramadimetsa seems to have anger directed at both God and Priests from her church. She believes that the potential problems that God warned her about manifested themselves in a form of rape. She also believes that she would not have been raped if Priests helped her perform *ditaelo.* It can be argued that Ramadimetsa sees her rape as a punishment from God; God told her what to do and by not doing exactly what she was told, she was seen as going against God's will. She thinks that she deserved punishment.

The meanings individuals attach to their victimisation will, to a larger extent, influence the way they deal with it (Eagle & Hook, 2002). When probed about how she dealt with her rape, Ramadimetsa explained that through her consultations with a Psychologist at Mankweng hospital, she gained courage to deal with her rape. She explained that she went to the head church of the ZCC and received divine intervention. She reported that Priests finally came to her house and performed *ditaelo*. It seems that the psychological help she received mobilized her to deal with her rape in ways that resonates with her beliefs.

Tumelo's interpretation

Tumelo is a victim of repeated robbery with aggravating circumstances. When asked about how he understands the two incidents, this is what he said:

With the first incident, I thought it was bad luck. With the second incident, my grandmother advised me to consult a traditional healer to check why I have been robbed the second time. She made me think that there is more to my second incident. I then asked her opinion about the two incidents. She looked at the two incidents from a different

angle. According to my grandmother, badimo ba mphuraletse (My ancestors are not happy with me). She told me that my ancestors blessed me with a promotion at work (Assistant Manager) and I did not thank them for the blessings. She said that she thinks they are trying to tell me something. She made sense but I wanted to confirm or disconfirm her opinion. I mean when I was young, we used to perform thanks giving rituals to our ancestors (Re be re phasetsa badimo) especially when we passed our exams or when a new baby was born.

The meaning Tumelo attached to his repeated victimisation was influenced by his grandmother. She looked at his victimisation from an indigenous African perspective. She thinks that Tumelo ruined the good relationship he had with his ancestors by discontinuing the family ritual of appeasing the ancestors especially when something good happened in the family. Mkhize (2004) and Mamabolo (personal communication, November 15, 2009) believe that when people discontinue their old tradition of performing the ritual perhaps because the elders have died and their children are uninformed about why and when to perform such rituals, ancestors will make their concerns known to their relatives in a variety of ways. With Tumelo, his ancestors made their concerns known to him through his repeated victimisation. Tumelo consulted a traditional healer to have his grandmother's opinion confirmed or disconfirmed. He said:

My grandmother accompanied me to consult a traditional healer. The traditional healer told me about my two incidents and my grandmother's interpretation of them even before we could tell him why we were consulting. I had no choice but to believe him. The traditional doctor confirmed my grandmother's interpretations. He told me that I have sefifi and that I should be cleansed to stop the repeated victimisation. He also advised us

to ask for forgiveness from our ancestors. It was only then that I had to tell my nuclear family about my second incident because I had to involve my uncles in my cleansing ritual.

It is clear from this case that some Black South Africans have indigenous ways of understanding and dealing with victimisation. For Tumelo's repeated victimisation to come to an end, he has to be cleansed by his uncles through the use of indigenous African medicines. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, within the traditional African cultures, uncles are the custodians of culture and knowledge. Thus, they are knowledgeable about indigenous African cultural practices and rituals including African ways of dealing with victimisation.

The traditional healer focused on interruptions in a bigger context and the healing rituals he prescribed involved Tumelo, his uncles and his ancestors. In addition, his victimisation was a message to the family; his family was reminded to continue with the family cultural practice of appeasing their ancestors. Therefore, the focus shifted from an individual to focus on the whole family system. In deed Indigenous African healing practices focuses on disruption of relatedness in the bigger cosmos and healing community includes the affected person, family, friends and spiritual connections (Kruger, et al, 2007).

Kgothatso's understanding

Kgothatso also attached indigenous African meanings to his attempted murder. The researcher asked him how he understands his attempted murder and how he dealt with it. This is what he said:

We are Christians at home but when we encounter problems we are open to different ways of dealing with problems. After my incident, my mother and I had a meeting with

elderly members of her family who advised us to consult faith and traditional healers. We sort of followed the traditional healer's solution to the problem because it made sense to us. The traditional healer told my mother that since her divorce with my father, she distanced us (the siblings) from our paternal relatives including our ancestors. He told my mother that the fact she and my father are divorced does not necessarily mean that we are no longer part of my father's family. I was scared to hear the traditional doctor saying that my ancestors are finding it difficult to protect me and my siblings because we have been encouraged to disown them. He further explained that we are still going to encounter life threatening problems for as long as we disown our ancestors. The traditional doctor encouraged my mother to allow us (the siblings) to be involved in my paternal family matters like just as it was the case when they we still married.

When probed about how he used to be involved in his paternal family matters, Kgothatso said:

During Easter holidays my nuclear and extended families used to go to the graveyard together. We would clean graves of our late family members, put flowers and light candles. While we were busy cleaning, each family member would be given a chance to talk to our late family members. We told them everything. Since my parents' divorce, we have never been to the graveyard for cleaning.

It can be argued that from an African perspective, tragedies such as victimisation do not just happen. In most cases, there is a deeper indigenous meaning underlying the tragedy. With Kgothatso, it seems that his ancestors disowned him when he was nearly killed just as he disowned them by discontinuing his relationship with them after parental divorce. Since they

bought into the traditional doctor's interpretation of Kgothatso's attempted murder, his victimisation became a family issue. Kgothatso cannot make a decision to reconnect with his ancestors on his own. He needs his mother's permission.

Matome's interpretation

When probed about how he understands his victimisation, Matome explained that crime and violence in his community occurs frequently especially on weekends and month ends. He seems to believe that it has become part of the norm to the extent that people in his village do not seem surprised when they learn about it. Matome seems to be desensitized to violent crimes.

> *I think people who live close to where I was attacked just know it when somebody screams at night that "it" is happening once again.*

His desensitization to violent crimes also seems to influence the meaning he attaches to his victimisation. Matome sees his attack as just a mere assault with intent to inflict severe bodily harm. He did not attach either Christian or indigenous African meanings to it.

Lethabo's interpretation

Lethabo's understanding of his victimisation is similar to that of Matome. He also sees his vehicle hijacking as a mere accident. He explained that when learnt that his vehicle was hijacked at a high hijack zone, he then thought that there is no motive behind his vehicle hijack other than to sell it at a later stage. Lethabo did not attach any other meanings to his victimisation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study were presented and discussed in this chapter. Participants were more or less affected in the same manner. Some participants reacted with intense fear during or immediately after victimisation. Some were subjected to secondary victimisation at the hands of

the police, family members, friends and neighbours. For those who sought medical help, their experiences were found to be generally positive. There are, however, variations in meanings participants attached to their victimisation. In addition, there were also differences in how participants dealt with their victimisation. This suggests that it cannot be assumed that individuals from the same cultural group will deal with victimisation in the same way. Primary support system proved to be helpful in the recovery of the many participants.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher provides a brief summary of the findings and reflects on the purpose of this study. In addition, the overall strengths of the study, limitations and recommendations for further research are presented.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to firstly explore how victims of violent crimes understand and deal with their victimisation. Based on the personal experiences of individuals who agreed to partake in this study, it appeared that there were variations in meanings they attributed to their victimisation. Most participants attached either Indigenous African or Christian meanings to their victimisation. This is because some participants reported that they consulted with traditional and/or faith healers who interpreted or confirmed participants' interpretation of their victimisation. Based on this finding, it is argued that some Black South Africans have a different understanding of victimisation. In addition, the Christian meanings attributed to victimisation suggest the extent to which acculturation had impacted on Black African cultures.

Few participants saw their victimisation as a mere misfortune. This finding marks another variation in meanings attributed to victimisation. In view of this finding, it should not be assumed that all Black South Africans who had been victimised will conceptualise their victimisation from either an Indigenous African or Christian perspective.

Secondly, it was the purpose of this study to validate indigenous methods, rituals and practices of dealing with victimisation. The findings of this study suggest that the meaning each participant attributed to his/her victimisation had an influence on how the participant dealt with it. This is because some participants reported that they performed Indigenous African and/or Christian rituals. The researcher is of the opinion that indigenous interventions such as the rituals discussed in the preceding chapter are legitimate African ways of understanding and dealing with victimisation.

Based on the aforementioned finding, there should be an inclusive approach which integrates indigenous African rituals and practices of dealing with victimisation within the formal victim support services and programs. This study did not intend to replace the victim support services that are predominantly based on Western philosophies. It however, aimed to enhance such services so as to ensure that the service providers are sensitive towards crime victims' cultural ways of dealing with victimisation. Perhaps crime victims may be encouraged to utilize victim support services without feeling ashamed, judged or even marginalised. In advocating for an inclusive approach whereby both indigenous African and Western interventions co-exist, the researcher stresses than neither intervention should take precedence over the other. In addition, the legitimate African ways of understanding victimisation should be treated with intellectual reverence.

Another purpose of this study was to make victims of violent crimes aware of other support services available such as the victim empowerment and support centers. Based on the findings of this study, none of the participants knew about the existence of the victim empowerment center

that is located within the Mankweng police station. At the end of the interview with each participant, the researcher brought into each participant's awareness services offered at the center.

The findings of this study suggest that respondents, as victims of violent crimes, have all been affected emotionally. This study confirmed the findings of other studies in that victims of violent crimes reacted with fear, shock, anger, shame, humiliation, and self-blame (Zehr, 1990; Ainsworth, 2000; Young, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Frese, Moya & Meguis, 2004). In the study, the presence and the duration of emotional reactions to victimisation varied from victim to victim. These variations were mainly influenced by the nature of the victimisation, the presence of physical reminders of the victimisation, the role of culture, and the availability of support systems for each victim. These confirmed factors outlined in the University of South Africa tutorial letter that may influence and/or complicate the manifestation and development of mental disorders (Unisa PSY481U, 102/2010).

Further, the findings of this study confirm the financial impact victimisation has on crime victims that Hoffmann and McKendrick's (1990) noted. For instance, the findings reflected that following crime victimisation, some of the participants took time away from work and could not generate an income, had to travel to and from the hospital for medical check-ups, travelled to court, and replaced items that were forcefully taken during victimisation. One participant reported that he had to install a new locking system after recovering his hijacked vehicle. The financial impact that crime victims endured suggest that crime victims continue to suffer long after victimisation.

There were similarities with the findings of other studies with regard to experiences when crime victims sought help from the police and during the criminal justice process. With the exception of one participant who did not report his victimisation to the police, all participants expressed the insensitive and judgmental attitudes of the police when reporting their victimisation. This confirms the findings of Mistry (1997) and Danstile (2008) who found that crime victims endured secondary victimisation in the criminal justice system, at the hands of the police or the court. Such subjective experience of ill-treatment by the different service providers may discourage future reporting of victimisation to the police and/or reluctance to participate in the criminal justice process. Peltzer (2000) and Lutshaba, et al, (2002) are of the opinion that many South Africans are dissatisfied with the treatment given by the police.

There were variations with the findings of other studies with regard to experiences when seeking medical help. The findings of Ramalepe and Phaswana-Mafuya (2008) indicate that crime victims can be vulnerable to secondary victimisation not only at the hands of the police officers, the court or the criminal justice but also at the hands of insensitive health care workers (medical doctors and nurses). This was not the case in this study since all participants expressed their satisfaction with the help they received from the nurses and medical doctors. Generally, nurses and doctors were described as helpful.

STRENGTHS

This study seems to be of value to the field of Psychology. It was clear in the reviewed literature regarding the epistemology of this study that the Western epistemology is predominantly used within the field of Psychology to describe and understand behaviours across all cultures including Black African cultures. The intention of this study was to advocate for the explanation

of lived experiences of Black South Africans using African knowledge claims. The findings of this study have a potential of creating awareness to Psychologists regarding the African ways of understanding and dealing with victimisation.

Further, it is the researcher's opinion that the impact of the negative, judgmental and insensitive attitudes on victims that were highlighted created some sense of understanding and sensitivity on other people who may have knowledge regarding an individual's victimisation. The researcher is of the opinion that the findings of this study might encourage and challenge different service providers to show sensitivity towards the victims. In view of this strength, such sensitivity may minimize potential secondary victimisation.

Although participants were not guaranteed that they would benefit from this study, they seem to have found a safe space where they talked about their lived experiences freely and in confidence. This maximized a nonjudgmental space in which participants narrated their experiences while minimizing the tendency to make them experience self-blame with regard to their victimisation. Since this study was sensitive in nature, crime victims were likely to recall emotions that may be overwhelming and difficult to deal with. In maximizing the ethical obligation of beneficence, the researcher provided each participant with contact details of counselors who work at Mankweng victim empowerment center should they need counseling assistance at a later stage.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Regardless of the above contributions, there are several limitations in this study that need consideration. This includes a small sample size since this study focused on experiences of five participants. The results of this study reflect participants' unique lived experiences. Therefore,

the findings drawn from their experiences are not necessarily representative of all Black African cultures. Therefore, one should exercise caution when generalizing the findings to other individuals with similar experiences.

The purposive sampling strategy used in this study was also limiting. Only individuals who met the inclusion criteria partook in this research endeavour. Furthermore, this study excluded potential participants who met the inclusion criteria based on their place of residency since this study only focused on individuals who reside at Ga-Mothiba.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges her personal influence on the results of this study. Since the researcher maintained a participant-researcher stance, the possibilities are that, the findings reflect both the participants' and the researcher's view points. As such, the study does not claim to have made findings of a hard and fast set of facts, but rather it attempted to explore possible ways of understanding the lived experience of victims of violent crime using a knowledge claim different from the Western one and using their narratives and ascribed meanings as a source of information. In addition, since the researcher is a resident of Ga-Mothiba, this could have encouraged or discourage certain participation, the degree of disclosure and the outcomes of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

Issues raised in this study form the basis for further research. It is recommended that future research focus on the following areas:

- Exploring experiences of victims of violent crimes from an African perspective using a bigger sample size.

- Exploring experiences and perceptions of indirect victims of violent crimes. Particularly, the focus can be on the impact of victimisation on significant family members.

- Exploring, in a broader context, the general public's perceptions and understanding of victimisation including traditional doctors, faith healers, elders etc.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The researcher hopes that this study will stimulate further research on experiences of Black South Africans in relations to their cultural ways of being and documentation of the findings of such studies. Perhaps in light of the findings of this study, information gathered might be used as feedback and to assist in developing a model with clear guidelines for victim empowerment training and intervention which will make it more relevant to the needs of victims within an African context.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Biographical details

Name (This will be kept confidential):

Age:

Sex:

Language:

Race:

Level of education and occupation:

Marital status:

Home circumstances (who lives with participant):

Family structure:

Type of violent crime (s) experienced:

Particulars of victimisation

- Can you remember when you were victimised with (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant)?

- What happened?

- How did it happen?

- Where did it happen?

- When did it happen?

- What was your initial reaction when you were victimised with (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant)?

      i. How did you feel?

      ii. What did you think?

iii. What did you do?

- If a participant was negatively affected: Was there anything that eased your feelings, thoughts, etc?

<div align="center">

Assistance sought after and self perception

</div>

- What meaning did you attach to the experience?

- How did you deal with it?

- Did you seek any assistance?

  i. If so, from whom did you seek assistance?

  ii. When did you seek assistance?

  iii. How did they respond?

- What were you told about (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant)?

  i. By the health professional, the police, indigenous healers, and the faith healer (This question will depend on how the participants dealt with their victimisation)?

  ii. By other people?

- What was your reaction to these people and what they said?

  i. How did you feel?

  ii. What did you think?

  iii. What did you do/say?

- Has your perception of yourself changed in any way following your victimisation?

  i. If so, how?

    ii. If the participant's self perception was negatively affected: Is it still the case or has anyone or anything changed your perception of self?

- How would you describe yourself

    i. Before victimisation?

    ii. Since being victimised?

- What was the hardest thing about being victimised with (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant)?

- Are there any positive outcomes of being victimised with (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant)?

<div align="center">

Interpersonal effects

</div>

- How has your victimisation affected your relationship with other people?

- Did you tell other people about your victimisation?

- If so, who did you tell and why?

- If not, what keeps you from telling others?

- Is there anything that makes it easy to tell people?

- Is there anything that makes it difficult to tell people?

- Have you ever regretted telling anyone about your victimisation?

    i. If so, how did this affect your future disclosures?

- How does your family understand what had happened to you?

- How did your family respond to your victimisation?

- Was that the response you were hoping for?

- How did you deal with the impact of their response?

- Would you change anything about their response?

- Has your relationship with your family changed after victimisation?

- In general, from whom do you seek support/who is your provider of support?

- Would you say you have/had sufficient support or would you (have) benefit(ed) from more support?

- How does your community understand what had happened to you?

- How did your community respond to your victimisation?

     i.   If the response is negative in nature: Are there people who respond differently?

Occupational/educational effects of victimisation

- How has your victimisation affected your occupational /educational functioning?

- Would you say you have been disadvantaged through your victimisation?

     i.   If so, in what way?

- Would you say you have benefited in any way from your victimisation?

     i.   If so, in what way?

- How would you describe your level of functioning in life?

     i.   Would you say you have adapted to being victimised with (name the type of violent crime experienced by the participant), you are in the process of adapting to being victimised with it, or you are nowhere near adapting to being victimised with it?

Indigenous understanding

- Some people tend to interpret victimisation from a cultural perspective. Has this been the case in your experience?

     i.   If so, in what way?

- Have you ever consulted indigenous healers regarding your victimisation?

- What was your reaction to them and what they said?

      i.   How did you feel?

      ii.   What did you think?

- Contrary to cultural understanding of victimisation, some people tend to interpret their victimisation from a religious perspective. Has this been the case in your experience?

      ii.   If so, in what way?

- Have you ever consulted faith healers regarding your victimisation?

- What was your reaction to them and what they said?

      iii.   How did you feel?

      iv.   What did you think?

Other

Any other information pertaining to research that arises may be discussed. The participant may be asked if there is any additional information or question she/he would like to share or ask.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

Original consent form- Participant Copy

My name is Modjadji Fletta Mpata and I am registered as a Master's student in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). As part of my Master's course I am required to complete a dissertation of limited scope. I am conducting research regarding the personal experiences of victims of violent crimes. I am interested in finding out how victims understand and deal with their victimisation from an indigenous perspective. I therefore require individuals willing to participate in my research study, who would be prepared to discuss their own personal experiences of being victimised. My hope is that this research may benefit each participant, though this may not be guaranteed, and may be helpful to professionals and lay people who deal with similar clients.

The interview will be available to my dissertation supervisor, Prof Juan Nel, and my dissertation co-supervisor, Ms Banti Mokgatlhe. To protect your anonymity, no personal identifiable details will be used in the transcribed version of the interview. Your name will not be recorded anywhere on the transcribed interview, and no one will be able to link it to you. All personal information will remain confidential. Only general information will be used.

The interview will last around 90 minutes. I would like you to be as open and honest as possible in answering the questions I put to you. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I may ask some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which involve thinking about the past or the future. Even if you are not absolutely certain about the answers to

these questions, try to think about them and answer as best as you can. When it comes to answering these questions, there is no right or wrong answer.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you do not wish to answer any question, you may refrain from doing so. Even if you agreed to participate initially, you may stop at a later stage and discontinue your participation. If you refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If I ask a question that makes you feel sad or upset, we can stop the interview and discuss it. There are also people to whom I can refer you who are willing and able to talk it through with you if you so wish. If you need to speak with anyone at a later stage, Ellen Nyamane and Welheminah Makwela who are lay counselors at Mankweng Victim Empowerment Centre situated in the Mankweng Police station can be reached at the following telephone number: 015 286 2000.

If you so wish, we can have an additional meeting at a later stage once I have completed this study. During the additional meeting, I would like to discuss the findings around this study with you. Note that it is ethical for the researcher to give research participants feedback about the findings of a research study once the study is completed. While giving feedback, a participant can identify understandings of victimisation that are similar or different to his/her initial understanding. This could enable a participant to broaden his/her understanding of such lived experiences. Note that this additional meeting is optional. An electronic copy of the findings will

also be made available once the research has been completed. Thank you in anticipation of your participation.

Signed at ……………………………….., on this ….…... of ………………. 20….

…………………………………   ……………………………………

Name of Researcher   Signature of Researcher

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