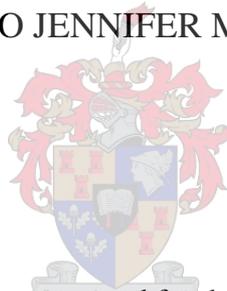# THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Dissertation presented for the Degree of
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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2009

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all women irrespective of colour, who are in violent partner relationships.

May you gain empowerment and strength to live positively and have a good quality of life.

SPEAK OUT!

SUMMARY

This is an exploratory study on the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships.

The study was conducted in two phases at Ilitha Community Psychological Centre at Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown. Since this is a qualitative exploratory study, in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of twenty women. In addition a focus group interview was also conducted with five women from the same site in order to gain a better insight into the phenomenon of violence in partner relationships.

A literature review that focused on the existing literature concerning African women in violent partner relationships was conducted. African women's perspectives on the experiences of abuse were explored, a gender perspective based on radical feminist views was discussed and ethnic-sensitive empowerment needs and the role of the social service practitioners were investigated.

The findings suggest that many African women experience violence in partner relationships. They sustain physical, emotional and economic abuse. A patriarchal system, alcohol abuse, infidelity and failure to support the children financially have been cited as some of the reasons for abuse. Formal and informal social networks assisted these women to some extent.

However, there is need for an ethnic-sensitive interdisciplinary training approach and a legal system that is accessible to rural women to prevent further battery.

Various recommendations have been postulated. The study indicated a need for ethnic-sensitive empowerment programmes for the abused women, rehabilitative programmes for these women and for the abusers, and an effective legal system to curb violence in partner relationships.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie, wat verkennend van aard is, handel oor die persepsies en ervaringe van Afrika-vroue wat binne gewelddadige saamwoonverhoudings verkeer.

Die studie is in twee fases by die Ilitha Community Psychological Centre en die Ezibeleni-woonbuurt naby Queenstown onderneem. Aangesien dit 'n kwalitatief-verkennende studie is, is diepgaande onderhoude met 'n eksperimentele groep van twintig vroue gevoer. Hierbenewens is fokusgroeponderhoude ook met vyf vroue van dieselfde buurt gevoer ten einde beter insig te verkry van die fenomeen van geweld binne saamwoonverhoudings.

'n Studie van relevante literatuur wat op bestaande literatuur ten opsigte van Afrika-vroue in gewelddadige saamwoonverhoudings betrekking het, is onderneem. Die perspektiewe van Afrika-vroue oor die wyse waarop hulle mishandeling ervaar, is verken. 'n Geslagsgebaseerde perspektief gebaseer op feministiese beskouinge is onderling bespreek en die behoefte aan etnies-sensitiewe bemagtigingsbehoeftes asook die rol van sosiale diensleweringspraktisyns het aandag geniet.

Die bevindinge dui daarop dat 'n groot aantal Afrika-vroue geweld binne saamwoonverhoudings ervaar. Hulle ondervind fisieke, emosionele en ekonomiese mishandeling. 'n Patriargale stelsel, alkoholmisbruik, ontrouheid, en gebrek aan geldelike versorging van die kinders binne die gesin, is genoem as sommige van die redes vir die mishandeling. Formele en informele netwerke het hierdie vroue in 'n sekere mate bygestaan. Daar bestaan egter 'n behoefte aan 'n etnies-sensitiewe interdissiplinêre opleidingsbenadering asook 'n regstelsel wat toeganklik is vir landelike vroue om verdere mishandeling te voorkom.

Verskeie aanbevelings is gepostuleer. Die studie het aangetoon dat daar 'n behoefte bestaan aan etnies-sensitiewe bemagtigingsprogramme vir mishandelde vroue, rehabilitasieprogramme vir sodanige vroue asook vir diegene wat hulle mishandel, en 'n effektiewe regstelsel om geweld binne saamwoonverhoudings aan bande te lê.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

Although domestic violence seems to be a widespread phenomenon in South Africa, little is known about the experiences of African women in violent partner relationships. Reliable statistics on African women in abusive relationships are not available. However, some preliminary results obtained in a study covering three provinces – the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo – confirmed the widely held belief that violence against women is a major problem in South Africa (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999:20). The level of abuse reported in that study indicated a general under-reporting of abuse in South Africa. Several reasons for this have been identified. Some women were ashamed of the abuse and probably regarded it as a private matter; others did not wish to denigrate their husbands or partners, and some were afraid to admit that they were being abused. Some even viewed their abusive experiences as "normal".

The research findings of a study in urban (Bellville) and rural (Paarl) areas in the Western Cape indicated an overall increase of 37,6% from 1999 to 2000 in the number of women applying for protection orders (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001:2). The study found that the most common forms of violence reported by women were physical and psychological abuse. In an average of 81% of these cases the women experienced both these forms of abuse.

Parenzee and Smythe (2003) investigated the experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence among Coloured and African farm workers on selected farms in the Western Cape. Their findings suggested that both Coloured and African women living on these farms were vulnerable to domestic violence. Artz (1999a) stated that this may be a result of easy access to alcohol, unequal wages, unfavourable working conditions, and cramped living conditions. According to Human Rights Watch (2001), Southern Cape African women in violent partner relationships encountered problems in gaining access to basic social and legal services because of a lack of transport and telecommunication services. In addition, they had to travel substantial distances to reach police and magistrate's offices. Also mentioned were barriers to the effective

implementation of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, lack of police assistance, and prejudice towards the victims of violence in partner relationships (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001; Parenzee, Artz & Moult, 2001).

Furthermore, one out of every six women in South Africa experiences physical violence from her male partner. Despite the prevalence of abuse, however, the nature of the violence is not well understood. For one thing the methods of recording instances of violence are not consistent. Then, too, violence itself may be described variously as grievous bodily harm, attempted murder, assault, and others (Camerer & Kotze, 1998).

In South Africa, a great need exists for research providing a deeper understanding of African women's experiences in violent partner relationships. Cultural factors, such as gender relations within family systems, often place African women in situations that differ from those of other nationalities or races (Collins, 2000:124). It is also likely that a simple application of theory generated from studies of women of other races may be insufficient when working with African women in violent partner relationships (Fineman & Mykitiuk, 1994:97).

While gender relations within different African contexts have changed substantially for some groups, the base-line profile of economic and political discrimination against women and the manner in which gender relations differ is still inscribed in some of the socio-legal practices. Information derived from an African context as a primary source may contribute to an understanding of African people's perspective on politico-economic empowerment and autonomy.

Furthermore, socio-cultural attitudes almost all weigh against African women. Traditional ideologies of patriarchy exclude African women from public affairs or from holding positions of responsibility when serious matters of state and society, such as marriage arrangements and settlement of domestic disputes, are discussed. In African societies, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, gender hierarchy based on male supremacy is known and taken for granted. Even in matrilineal societies, women are still subordinate to men and considered as second in place to men. In traditional African society there is still a division of labour based on gender. To serve food at traditional meetings, for example, is portrayed exclusively as "women's work". This indicates that African women may endure violent behaviour in partner relationships, but find it

hard to rebel because of traditional ideologies that they are socialised into (Busia & Abena, 1993; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003).

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS

The dearth of studies of women in abusive partner relationships in general, and of African women in particular, resulted in a lack of understanding of their perceptions and experiences. There is a need to gain an understanding of what African female victims of violent partner relationships perceive and experience socially and emotionally, and to explore how they can be empowered (Trevethick, 2000:80).

1.3   THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE, GOALS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1   Theoretical points of departure

In the discourse of radical feminist theory, male violence against women is blamed on patriarchy, which is described as a set of social relations which enables men to dominate and control women. Patriarchy is confirmed through socialisation and may be perpetuated through ideological means and sustained by a gender system in which men assume positions of power and domination, while women adhere to positions of subordination. It is a system from which men most frequently benefit – gaining anything from ego satisfaction to the fruits of economic and domestic exploitation, sexual domination and political power (Busia & Abena, 1993; Firestone, 1970; McKay, 1994). An ethnic-sensitive approach to the experiences of African women in violent partner relationships would not necessarily introduce new practice principles or approaches, but would instead urge the adaptation of prevailing theories, principles and skills in social work to take account of ethnic realities (Zastrow, 2004:431).

A radical feminist perspective would lead to an enhanced understanding of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships. Also, feminist social workers stress the need to teach clients how to empower themselves and how to work with systems that affect them as women (Johnson & Yanca, 2004:29).

An empowerment perspective has been enlisted to understand the position of African women in abusive relationships and their need for empowerment. Empowerment counters feelings of

hopelessness and powerlessness, and emphasises personal ability to make and implement basic life decisions (Clarke, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1999; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003; Stevenson & Parsloe, 1993).

1.3.2   Goal and objectives

The goal of the study has been to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships.

To achieve the goal of the study the following objectives were formulated:

- To explain the nature and forms of, and consequences to violent partner relationships for women;
- To present a gender perspective on women in violent partner relationships;
- To describe the need for empowerment of African women in violent partner relationships;
- To investigate African women's perceptions and experience of violent partner relationships and their need for empowerment services;
- To describe ways in which social service practitioners could offer empowering services to African women in violent partner relationships.

1.4   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

A literature study was conducted in two phases in the field of study in order to establish a frame of reference from which to proceed with the research, and to form a basis for comparison of the research findings. The literature study has focused on African women in violent partner relationships, the radical feminist perspective, and empowerment.

This research has utilised a qualitative approach, because qualitative assessment methods give clinicians access to a client's systems of meaning, frame of reference, personal beliefs, cognitive schemes, values, cultural realities, and personal motivations (Franklin & Jordan, 1995:281).

An exploratory and descriptive research design has been applied because very little is known about African women's perceptions and experiences in violent partner relationships (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005).

The purposive sampling method was used as the available participants were to be found through Ilitha Community Psychological Centre in Ezibeleni Township in the Eastern Cape (De Vos *et al*., 2005; Lee, 1993). Arrangements to obtain 20 participants for interviews and a focus group that consisted of 5 participants were made through the centre. Since the participants lived at their own homes and utilised the Centre only after experiences of violence, the Centre acted as an intermediary. This assisted the researcher in establishing trusting relationships with the participants (Finch in Hammersley, 1993:167). Although there was no guarantee that a sample selected from those participants found in a particular setting (in this case, the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre) would be representative of the wider population which was of interest to the researcher, the participants were nevertheless accessible and the Centre was a feasible source for obtaining a sample. This was appropriate in an exploratory study.

During the first phase in June 2007, detailed in-depth and one-off face to face interviews were conducted. The second phase was conducted in June 2008 and it consisted of a one-off focus group session. This allowed participants to describe events in their home language. Interviews were conducted by mutual arrangement, with informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and in a non-condemning atmosphere (De Vos *et al*., 2005; Lee, 1993). The Ethics Committee of the University of Stellenbosch also gave ethical clearance to the study.

The interview schedules attached (as Annexure A and B) were designed but not tested, because they dealt with sensitive issues. The processes were refined as the interviews continued. The researcher personally administered the interviews and the questions were in Xhosa, the participants' home language, to ensure that the participants understood the questions. The interview schedule (Annexure A) comprised the following four main themes, with prompts that were implemented later for an in-depth interview: Personal details; History of partner violence and the actual nature of the violent incidents; Nature of social support and empowerment services offered by the psychological community centre; Other available formal and informal resources.

The focus group interview was done in addition to the individual interviews and it had an interview schedule (Annexure B) which consisted of five main themes. Prompts were utilised later for an in-depth interview. The main themes were Personal details; Perceptions and experiences of abuse; Nature of abuse; The meaning and impact of the act of abuse; Perceptions of abuse and need for services; Social service practitioners' empowering services.

At the outset of both types of interviews, the topic was explained and informed consent for obtaining the information was sought. Disclosure of sensitive or confidential information was only possible once a trusting relationship had been established between the researcher and the participants. After each interview the researcher ensured that therapeutic support was readily available to the participant.

The researcher transcribed and translated each of the 20 interviews including the focus group interview to ensure and maintain confidentiality and the participants' anonymity. The Department of African Languages at Fort Hare University assisted the researcher with the translation into English of certain Xhosa concepts transcribed from tape recordings. In keeping with qualitative requirements, the data analysis searched for shared themes, trends and understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:234). The focus group interview was also performed in order to provide insights about the same events and relationships from different viewpoints. This also led to an enriched explanation of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships (De Vos *et al*., 2005). The data were substantiated by existing theory as a frame of reference (Mouton & Marais, 1990:103-104).

Although conclusions were not drawn about all African women who have experienced violent partner relationships, and the findings were not generalised, the data could be utilised for further research.

1.5   LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The limitations of this study will be discussed in chapter 5.

1.6   CHAPTER LAYOUT

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: The nature, forms and consequences of women's experience of violent partner relationships
- Chapter 3: A gender perspective on women in violent partner relationships
- Chapter 4: Empowerment of African women in violent partner relationships from an ethnic-sensitive approach
- Chapter 5: Research methodology
- Chapter 6: African women's perceptions and experiences of violent partner relationships
- Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE, FORMS AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS FOR WOMEN AND INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and in partner relationships has been one of the most highlighted issues in post-apartheid South Africa. History has also indicated that although women's movements have been in existence in the past, they had the kind of activism that exists today mostly in relation to reproductive rights and violence against women and children.

Furthermore, although the African National Congress has recognised the existence of violence in partner relationships, few studies exist that indicate its prevalence, its implication and impact on African women. This chapter provides a general perspective on the prevalence of violence in partner relationships. African women's perceptions and experiences of being abused by their partners will be explored and the nature, meaning and impact of the act of abuse will be examined. Furthermore, legislations including the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, their implementation and implications will be explored.

2.2   PREVALENCE OF VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Presently, accurate accounts of and statistics on African women in violent partner relationships and on sexual violence are few. However, Statistics South Africa found that generally one in two rape survivors reported their rape to the police (Hirchowitz, Worku & Orkin, 2000).

The Medical Research Council (MRC) also found that only one in nine women reported being raped**,** suggesting that rape is being under-reported by women (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). On the basis of these studies it can be deduced that the 52 733 rapes reported by the South African Police Service (SAPS) in their 2003/04 statistics, can be more accurately calculated as being in the region of 104 000 and 470 000 (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

National figures for intimate femicide, that is, males killing their intimate female partners, suggest that this was the most deadly form of domestic violence in South Africa. The female population from the age of 14 and older in 1999, that is, 8,8 per 100 000 of the population, died as a result of violence in partner relationships. This has been one of the highest prevalences reported in research worldwide (Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Van der Merwe & Jewkes, 2004).

2.3   NATURE AND FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The concept of violence is referred to in a variety of ways and has been used interchangeably with terms such as abuse, battery and domestic violence in this study. However, violence lies on a continuum that may include such diverse acts as slapping, coerced sex, threatened beatings, hitting with sticks and other objects, pushing, assaulting with fists, violent rape, stabbing with a knife, threatening with a gun, issuing threats and public humiliation.

Furthermore, battering and abuse are rooted in historical and societal contexts that reflected patterns of coercive control that one person exercised over another. The abuse directed at women by male partners may also include physical and sexual abuse, intimidation, emotional insults, isolation, and economic deprivation (Campbell, 1998; Morrell, 2001).

According to Parenzee and Smythe (2003) further consequences of the widespread violence against women were that such abuse adversely affected the health of women and at times compromised their ability to participate in health promotion and health maintenance activities. Abused women were also less likely to seek primary health care as issues of survival may have to take precedence and the abuser might systematically limit the woman's access to outside resources (Campbell, 1998). Women in violent partner relationships may encounter different kinds of abuse and the following are discussed.

2.3.1   Physical abuse

Physical beatings have been the most general and common means by which some men assaulted their female partners to enforce discipline and control over them. This usually occurred when the man perceived the female partner as having transgressed certain "often implicit rules" underlying the relationship. The women might also have resisted male attempts to enforce these "rules" and

control of their behaviour. The most reported cause of violence has been associated with the female rejecting the male partner. This could be due to actual or suspected sexual infidelity, their sexual refusals, or their acts of resistance to male partners' attempts to dictate the terms of the relationship. In explaining their violence, men may frequently refer superficially to a loss of control caused by anger or mood changes exacerbated by the use of alcohol and drugs (Vundule, Jewkes, Maforah & Jordan, 2001).

Acts of physical abuse cause not only immediate injury but might also result in many psycho-somatic disorders that may include chronic pain, disfigurement, physical limitations and miscarriages. The abused could also suffer from stress and anxiety disorders such as hypertension, hyperventilation, insomnia, gastrointestinal and eating disorders. Consequently, some women when trying to cope with the physical abuse and the resultant health problems are likely to resort to drug and alcohol abuse. Some may suffer aftermath injuries from physical abuse, such as broken bones, facial trauma such as fractured mandibles and tendon or ligament injuries. Some abused women are also most likely to be coerced into substance abuse by their abusers as a mean to maintain control over them (Campbell, 1998). This indicates that male partners may at times use physical violence to settle disputes with their women. These may be exacerbated by the use of alcohol by men.

2.3.2   Sexual abuse

Women in violent partner relationships may experience sexual assaults such as rape and are much more likely to be sexually coerced by their intimate partners than by a stranger (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray & McIntyre, 2003). Further, sexual assaults may not be easily disclosed because of intense feelings of fear of further trauma from the abuser, lack of confidentiality, embarrassment, stigmatisation and not being believed, fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, shame and a perception that such reporting would be unlikely to result in punishment of the abuser (Christofides, Webster, Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Martin, Abrahams & Kim, 2003). Some women are also reluctant to report being raped by their partners. While some may be asked to perform sex acts against their own will, others may suffer physical harm while engaging in sex and may be treated as sex objects. Women may also be forced to view pornography as part of battery (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 2001). In some instances, they may be forced by the abusers to have sex with other people. The abusers may be sexually promiscuous and this might place the

woman at risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection. Some of the abusive men may refuse to use protection or condoms for safe sex and after receiving a diagnosis of a sexually transmitted disease or HIV infection may either not inform their female partners or blame them for the infection (Christofides *et al.*, 2003).

Mataure, McFarland, Fritz, Kim, Woelk, Ray and Rutherford (2002), mention that due to sexual assaults women may be at risk of getting pregnant, suffer from post-traumatic stress, depression, chronic pelvic pain and may be at a greater risk of repeated sexual assault than other women. Loss of function at work, and difficulties in sexual expression may prevail (Morojele, Flisher, Muller, Ziervogel, Reddy & Lombard, 2001). They may become traumatised, shamed and live in fear of the abuser and may suffer from verbal and psychological abuse.

2.3.3   Verbal and psychological abuse

MacPhail and Campbell (2001) state that verbal and psychological abuse characterises most of the abusive relationships and may often predate and precede the use of violence. Verbal and psychological abuse may include yelling, screaming, name-calling, insulting comments, harassment and public humiliation. Abusers may also systematically degrade a woman's sense of worth making her feel unattractive, incompetent and even stupid or crazy (Poulin & Graham, 2001). Some abusers also physically confine and isolate a woman and might even destroy some of her belongings and that of her children causing additional emotional pain and stress. Consequently, psychological feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, disturbed parent – child relationships, symptoms of paranoia and chaos and sometimes suicide may prevail (Kunfaa, Dogbe, Mackay & Marshall, 2002). In other words, degrading and insulting utterances may cause these women to suffer from shame, isolation and a sense of loss of dignity and self-worth.

Abusive male partners may use threats to maintain and have control over their female partners and these may include threats to either kill the woman or her children. The male partner may threaten to take away the children and may make the woman doubt her ability to live independently and obtain custody of the children (WHO, 2002). Murray (1994) also attests that under customary law, Section 11(3) of the Black Administration Act, No 38 of 1927, male partners were head of the household and had control of the family property. The children also "belonged" to the husband's family. Further, abusers may threaten to divulge damaging

information about the woman to her family and friends, her employer, the courts and social welfare agencies. Whether this information is true or false, it tends at times to immobilise the woman from taking action (Sakala, 1998).

Martin (2001) mentions that abusive men may also control women through the use of verbal and psychological abuse. They may refuse to give financial support, and/or belittle and humiliate their female partners. These incidents may often be followed by statements of regret, promises not to abuse again, gift giving, a honeymoon period and other displays of contrite and loving behaviour. These patterns of behaviour place a woman in a state of confusion and she would usually begin to question the severity of the abuse. Some of these verbal and psychological manipulations can also reinforce the hope that the abuse will stop. The abuser may also gradually isolate the woman in the violent partner relationship from avenues of support and outside help. He may begin by controlling her relationship with her family and friends, monitoring and restricting her conversations and friendships, and finally he could alienate her from all social support systems. Isolation also occurs when the abuser gradually and progressively limits the woman's contact with outside sources of help, such as social welfare agencies, health and medical care facilities. The abuser may create excuses such as a lack of finance, suspended medical aid or insurance coverage or he can simply threaten to harm her if she seeks outside professional care and help for herself and her children (Turner, Ndira, Akello & Bukare, 2003). These abusive tactics may create a perceived risk of further abuse and the woman may live in fear and be stressed about the anticipated violence that could place her life in potential danger and harm.

2.3.4   Economic abuse

The perpetrators of violence may also use finances to control and victimise the women with whom they are involved both during and after the relationship. Some batterers may ensure financial dependence by denying the abused women direct access to money or by forbidding them to work outside the home (Campbell, 1998). Abusive men may also limit a woman's access to family money and resources, take her pay cheque, wage or salary and provide her with only a small allowance. Some may control ownership of the home and transportation (Lloyd & Taluc, 1999). Consequently, the woman may find it difficult to achieve financial independence and find resources that will enable her to survive on her own and financially support a home and children. Male partners may even go to the extent of jeopardising their female partners' financial status by

harassing them at work until they lose their employment (Zastrow, 2004). Societal discrimination in the workplace also may reinforce economic dependence because many women, especially those with minimal literacy, earn low wages and some men may fail to pay maintenance for their children (Lein, Jacquet, Lewis, Cole & Williams, 2001).

Furthermore, Cuomo (2000) mentions that some abusers may cause women to be evicted from their houses by causing damage to property and behaving violently. Without access to housing many abused women are forced either to live in unsafe and inadequate abusive conditions or to return to the abusers for shelter. The general lack of access to public housing may place the abused in a compromising situation (Vetten, 2005).

Hence, some battered women may have zero credit and rental records that are so badly marred by violence that they may find themselves representing too great a risk to landlords (Menard, 2001). As a result these women may not be able to find and maintain permanent and affordable housing independent of the abuser. The shortage of transitional housing as an alternative living shelter or accommodation for African abused women in general and rural women in particular compromises their safety (Melbin, Sullivan & Cain, 2003). African women in violent relationships are confronted with threats, control and victimisation. Consequently, at times they blame themselves. Isolated, they suffer in silence due to economic dependence, poverty, lack of alternative shelter and fear of reprisal from the communities.

2.4   CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN

Francis (2000) suggests that the experiences of the different forms of abuse usually manifest in circumstances where the abused woman blames herself for the abusive behaviour. Due to these calculated manipulative abusive behaviours, the woman may fear for her life and hence find it difficult to leave the relationship (Suffla, Seedat & Nascimento, 2001).

2.4.1   Self-blame

According to Shamai (2000) self-blame as a main characteristic results in abused women holding themselves responsible for the violence. Some may suffer from low self-esteem, weak ego, withholding emotions, frustration, stress and shame, all of which may contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness which may be accompanied by suicidal thoughts. They may think

that they are responsible for choosing the abusive partner. They may also blame themselves for failing to fulfil a wife's role. Even when women do not shift the blame of violence onto themselves, they may continue to blame themselves for staying in the destructive relationship. The most destructive expression of self-blame may be the anger that is directed towards the self and a tendency towards self-destruction. Roberts (2002) also states that the shame associated with violent episodes may result in emotional insecurity where the abused loses confidence and assertiveness due to the mixed feelings that may result from verbal insults and physical abuse. Ego-deflating and incriminating circumstances may also serve to keep women trapped in violent situations as they may perceive themselves to be incapable of ending a relationship due to their own faults and imperfections (Prochaska & Prochaska, 2002). Abused women generally and abused African women in particular, can also find themselves in situations where they have to defend themselves against societies that justify violence and the status quo in a violence-prone world (Melbin *et al.,* 2003).

Roberts (2002) states that in order to survive, the women may resort to using defense mechanisms such as denial, identification with the abuser, and rationalisation of the abuse and denial may permit the women to "pretend" the violence is not as bad as it is portrayed and sometimes trivialise and try to "forget" the episodes. However, one is aware that these defenses at times assist the battered to survive and after a while they may rationalise the aggressive behaviour.

2.4.2   Silence

Campbell (1998) describes silence as the typical response that most abused women would resort to and black communities in particular would respond with silence to violence committed against its most vulnerable members, women and children. Furthermore, silence does not stem from acceptance of violence as a black cultural norm, but may emanate from shame, fear, and a sense of racial loyalty. Internal forces of abuse and external forces of community and racial loyalty though detrimental, may at times prevent African communities from addressing the multiple issues of violence as they are manifested through rape, incest and domestic violence.

Furthermore, according to Collins (2000) African men are in a more vulnerable position than men from other races due to racial oppression and discriminatory practices. Being aware of the

suppression, some of the abused African women may be reluctant to expose their male partners to more ridicule. Women in violent relationships however should recognise that abuse is a serious crime despite the problematic issues of race, colour and oppression. Nevertheless, African women can be sensitive to the effects of racism and victimisation of black men, but should not feel obligated to tolerate abusive behaviour from their partners. Additionally, studies have also shown that battered women of all ethnic backgrounds may be reluctant to reveal their abuse out of concern for their abusers. The conspiracy of silence may also be due to peer pressure to have a male partner whom the woman may perceive to love her because of the gifts like clothes and money he may provide. Finally, violence in partner relationships may also contribute to femicide and homicide (Outwater, Abrahams & Campbell, 2005).

2.4.3   Homicide

Campbell (1998) points to homicide as being one of the leading causes of death and the most frightening type of violence that confronts women. Amongst others, the most common cause of femicide and homicide seems to be psychological or emotional problems that manifest in anger and revenge. Poverty appears to be strongly associated with murders of family members and friends rather than of acquaintances. Partner relationship homicides tend to be associated with a belief in male dominance (Steady, 2006). Excessive consumption of alcohol and abuse of illicit drugs may exacerbate the situation. Most of the homicides are committed at home with a gun or a weapon.

However, Martin (1999) indicates that African women are more likely to strike back at their abusive partners in self-defense and self-preservation; instruments like knives or other cutting instruments could be used as murder weapons. Violence in partner relationship could contribute to physical, verbal, psychological and financial abuse. This could also lead to the death of one or both partners (Morojele, Brook & Kachieng'a, 2006). Therefore, women in violent partner relationships may suffer from self-blame and frustrations due to repression of their emotional distress. A conspiracy of silence may prevail and in some cases this could result in femicide and homicide.

2.5 NEED FOR FORMAL AND INFORMAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Women in violent partner relationships can find themselves in situations that necessitate them to seek assistance from informal sources such as relatives, friends and neighbours. At times they may have to approach formal sources of support such as social service professionals. There is therefore a need for social service practitioners to be knowledgeable about these sources of support as these structures play a pivotal role in providing a better understanding of women's experiences. The following are highlighted.

2.5.1 Informal sources of support

The International Committee of the Red Cross (2005) states that a process of systematic isolation from social networks and sources of potential help is another key characteristic and consequence of abusive relationships in general. This may be compounded by geographically isolated rural areas where the circumstances of especially African women prevail. Nevertheless, women in abusive relationships initially attempt to resolve the abuse on their own. If the abuse continues they may turn to family members, friends and neighbours for assistance. This initiative may place the woman at risk of ridicule and being doubted or ignored, or the woman may be held responsible for the problem. Potential helpers may be reluctant to become involved in another family's problem as involvement may imply interfering or causing embarrassment for that family. Fear of the aggressor may be another deterrent and consequently, it is thought best to ignore the situation, look the other way and leave the couple to resolve their own problems. The International Committee of the Red Cross (2005) adds that these women in patriarchal societies may also find themselves in situations that leave them stigmatised and without social status when they lose or leave their husbands.

Women in violent partner relationships may also seek help from the traditional healers. Usually, African women would seek help from traditional healers who they think might be able to appease the violent spirit of the abuser through traditional medicine and customary rituals.

2.5.2 Formal sources of support

Usually, when all these informal sources of support have been exhausted, abused women may resort to formal structures such as religious institutions and law enforcement agencies.

2.5.2.1   Religious institutions

Traditionally, the clergy and religious community have responded with silence to family violence. Forgiveness, renewed dedication as a wife and mother, and reference to relevant scripture readings have been a source of available support (Campbell, 1998). However, the religious community has become aware of the need to educate the clergy about the dynamics of violence in partner relationships and to take an active role in assisting victims (Miller, 2003).

2.5.2.2   South African Police

The police as one of the law enforcement agencies in most situations may be concerned and willing to help a woman regain safety but may be unable to offer reliable protection from harm (Webster & Malala, 2002). In addition, battered women may realise the active role of the police as a protector but may be reluctant to seek help because criminal charges may be laid against the men and may appear in the local newspaper resulting in unwanted attention to the abused women (South African Law Commission, 2002).

Two studies conducted in the Western Cape both highlighted how the legacy of apartheid legislation such as the under-resourcing of rural areas, resulted in women and African women in particular having problems in accessing the justice system (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003). However, the pertinent role played by the South African Police Service will be discussed in-depth in the following subsection that deals with the Prevention of Family Violence Act, No 133 of 1993, and the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, respectively.

2.5.2.3   Magistrates

Artz (2003) mentions that magisterial decisions on domestic violence cases most of the time depend on how the other part of the criminal justice system manages and presents the incident of domestic violence. At times cases of abuse are compromised in circumstances where the application forms, police statements and witness statements are inconclusive, missing or even illegible. However, the magistrate's role is to examine the documents presented to the court and further interrogate the case until a reasonable and substantive decision can be made.

Magistrates further attest that when cases of abuse are reported, they find it difficult to distinguish between perceived risk and the actual risk of abuse as at times the victims of abuse may appear to have an "over-developed" sense of perceived risk of further violence. However, the "real risk" of abuse eventually increases over time. This indicates that at times, the reasons behind the fear shown by the abused are based on facts and not unfounded. Therefore, the magistrates need to treat cases of abuse as serious offences and in trying these cases they should consider the potential danger to the lives of the battered women. The abused women should also not be sent to court for protection orders in terms of The Domestic Violence Act, No 118 of 1998, in order to seek protection from harm and further abuse. Women in violent partner relationships should be sufficiently informed of their rights to lay a criminal charge (Parenzee, Artz & Moult, 2001).

However, the following human rights and legislative initiatives are available and set to be of assistance to women in violent partner relationships in South Africa and globally.

2.6   INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Green (1999) states that for many years, the mainstream international human rights community treated women's "human" rights as gender neutral. Nevertheless, gender-based violence has now been widely accepted as constituting a violation of the rights and fundamental freedom of females. These acts of violence against women grossly impair and negate their enjoyment of those human rights and freedoms. What evolves is the internationally accepted norm and body of laws which require that governments prevent, investigate and prosecute violations of "bodily integrity", which include cases of women abuse perpetrated by its citizen.

Human Rights Watch/Africa (1995) adds that, when governments fail to prohibit women abuse or frequently fail to respond to acts of violence against women, it sends the message that violent attacks are justified or at the least would go unpunished. Inaction against women abuse is a violation of Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Therefore, states that fail to provide the necessary protection of their female citizens' rights to physical integrity are considered to be discriminating against them on the basis of gender. These rights and principles are also enshrined in other international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), and The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was also established in 1946 by the General Assembly and simultaneously, the United Nations Human Rights Commission was created. The United Nations Human Rights Commission's main function is to monitor and encourage the implementation of international laws on women's rights (Human Right Watch, 1995). The South African government in January 1993 signed on as a member state of the United Nations Convention and embraced a number of conventions on issues of women. The following can be cited (Linnegar & McGillivray, 1998).

2.6.1 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

According to Green (1999) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) is one of the laws that specifically recognises women's human rights and deals in its articles with issues pertaining to gender violence, inclusive of those that deal with traditional attitudes, equality in employment and access to health services. Although there have been criticisms and objections to these inclusions, the CEDAW Committee has put forward General Recommendation No 19 that suggests that state parties in reviewing their law and policies should take cognisance of the recommendations concerning gender-based violence.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action of 1993 also recognised that the human rights of women and of the girl child are inalienable, integral, and an indivisible part of universal human rights. The declaration also embraces factors as expressed in other documents, for instance, the 1994 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and urges states to withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of CEDAW. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women as put forward to the United Nations General Assembly is not a treaty but sets common international standards and is a non-binding resolution that recognises the urgent need for the universal application to women of rights and principles with regard to equality, liberty, integrity and dignity.

According to Linnegar and McGillivray (1998) on 15 December 1995, CEDAW became the first of these conventions to be ratified by the South African government. CEDAW required that

states signing this convention embody the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitution or other laws, to ensure the practical realisation of the principle of equality.

Article 1 states that governments themselves must not discriminate against women and must ensure that public authorities or institutions, private persons, organisations or businesses do not do so either. All existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women should be changed. Article 3 emphasises that the states agree to ensure that women have opportunities to develop and advance fully in any field, be it political, social, economic or cultural. Laws must be passed to ensure that women are able to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men. Article 4 provides for the use of affirmative action that provides for equal job opportunities. Article 5 requires that programmes be developed that teach societies that child bearing and child rearing are fundamental social functions, significant to the development of a healthy, balanced society and that child upbringing should be a shared responsibility (McQuoid-Mason, Pillemer, Friedman & Dada, 2002).

Article 11 also requires that men and women have the right to equal job opportunities, equal pay and equal benefits for work of equal value. Article 12 provides that women have access to health care services even during pregnancy, and including family planning. Article 13 addresses the economic needs and social benefits of women and Article 14 expresses special concern for rural women. This means that special attention must be paid to the problems of rural women and importance must be attached to the role they play in doing work without receiving any money for the survival of their families. Article 15 ensures that women will be equal with men before the law and must be treated as such during court trials. Women must share the same rights as men to sign contracts and administer property. Any contract or agreement that tries to restrict the legal powers of women will not be enforced.

Article 16 obliges states to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters that relate to marriage and family relations. Therefore, women and men irrespective of their marital status must have the same rights as parents, must have equal access to information about family planning and to methods of contraception. They must also have the same legal rights and responsibilities pertaining to matters of guardianship and adoption of children. The law must also set a minimum age for marriage and must require that all marriages be registered in an official registry (Linnegar & McGillivray, 1998; McQuoid-Mason *et al*., 2002). It has also been noted

that in South Africa, minimal mechanisms exist to enforce or ensure that women especially in rural areas who have traditional marriages have registered their marriages as some are ignorant of the existence of this law.

2.6.2   The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Additionally, there have been a number of initiatives to address violence against women. A variety of initiatives were launched in September 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, People's Republic of China. The conference's focus was on the problem of violence against women and the women of the world urgently urged governments to embrace the goals as expressed in the CEDAW. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) launched an antiviolence campaign, reminding governments to uphold their promises to stop violence against women. During the Beijing conference a Platform for Action which was petitioned by a million signatories was presented to the UN Human Rights Commissioner, its objective being to seek protection for women and girls from rape, domestic violence and from all forms of sex discrimination. It was also emphasised that governments should see to it that the Platform for Action is implemented (Beijing Platform for Action).

The South African government undertook to adopt all parts of the Platform for Action and government departments also have to ensure that all policies and actions are in accord; steps have to be undertaken to ensure the empowerment of women.

A Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women was also established in 1994 its main task being to investigate and punish crimes associated with gender violence and also to urge countries not to use traditions or customs as an excuse for abdicating their responsibilities to prevent violence against women (McQuoid-Mason *et al.*, 2002).

2.6.3   National initiatives to protect women's rights

In 1993 an interim South African Constitution was drawn up and in 1996 the Constitution of The Republic of South Africa Act, No 108 of 1996, was promulgated by the Government of National Unity (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). A discussion of the position of women in South Africa under its first democratic government follows.

Linnegar and McGillivray (1998) define a constitution as a written document that comprises the legal rules and principles governing the exercise of state authority. This collection of rules also governs the relationship between the citizens of the state and the organs of the state. South Africa is one of the states with a supreme constitution. When a constitution is supreme, the courts have "testing power" that is, the power to enquire whether the laws are in accord with the constitution, "over legislation", that is, the Acts have been passed by a national Parliament, provincial assembly or a local council.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No 108 of 1996, came into force in February 1997. The Bill of Rights which forms the cornerstone and basis of democracy embodies the various rights of all people in the country. According to The Constitution of South Africa (1996), of particular significance to women are the provisions of Section s 9 also known as the "equality clause". The provisions of Section s 9(3) of the Bill of Rights entrench the right to equality. Section 9(1) guarantees the right to equality before the law and protection of the law. This gives every individual the right of access to a court of law. According to the South African Constitution (1996) this also encompasses the duty of the state to grant protection to those groups such as women who in the past found themselves in vulnerable positions. Section 9(2) of the equality clause states that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. It promotes the achievement of equality and is the adoption of legislative and other measures designed to protect and advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination.

The Constitution of South Africa also includes categories of groups such as women or blacks as a group, historically disadvantaged individuals or so-called affirmative action groups. Affirmative action in this case implies treating women differently because they are women. This process may critically be perceived as discriminating against men purely on the basis of their sex, which violates the provisions of Section s 9(3). However, this is an attempt by the government to redress past discriminatory practices against certain individuals or groups and preferential treatment is deemed to be warranted in these circumstances. It could also be argued that women, in particular black women, can be seen to qualify as one of the designated groups against whom past discriminatory practices have occurred (Linnegar & McGillivray, 1998; McQuoid-Mason *et al.*, 2002).

The essence of all these policies and legislations, amongst other responsibilities, is to take into consideration the issues of women and any gender discrepancies that allow women to be victims of discriminatory practices and abuse. Hence South Africa has the following legal remedies that deal with cases of women in violent partner relationships.

2.7   LEGISLATION RELATING TO WOMEN ABUSE

South Africa has identified women abuse as a crime that the criminal justice system has to deal with. Vetten (2005) states that women battery was dealt with in a manner that marginalised and dismissed the seriousness of gender-based violence. Consequently, it has remained a "private matter" dealt with behind closed doors. Nevertheless, due to the lobby of women's groups and social and legal activists, violence in partner relationships has received attention and the following legislations became applicable:

2.7.1   The Prevention of Family Violence Act, No 133 of 1993

Parenzee, Artz and Moult (2001) state that The Prevention of Family Violence Act, No 113 of 1993 (PFVA) was the initial legislation to deal specifically with domestic violence and was enacted in recognition of violence within families as a social problem. However, this Act has been subjected to substantial criticisms and the South African Law Commission launched a team to remedy all the shortcomings of The Prevention of Family Violence Act, No 113 of 1993.

Some of the shortcomings that were highlighted were that, only married couples by civil and customary law or those in common-law marriages could access the interdict. Other forms of love relationships like dating couples not living together and same-sex partners had to find recourse in other legal remedies (Murray, 1994). The Act also lacked a definition of what constitutes domestic violence. As a result the judicial officers exercised wide discretion to determine behaviour that could be recognised as abuse (Vetten, 2005).

The task team that was assigned to review the Act produced a draft legislation based on the understanding that domestic violence includes financial, psychological and other social issues such as divorce, custody and maintenance. Subsequently, the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998 in its current form was adopted on 28 November 1998 and became operational in December 1999 (Parenzee *et al*., 2001).

The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996 was also established to deal with crimes of violence against women and children. As a national priority, a number of legislative reforms were instituted in this area. The Criminal Law Amended Act, No 105 of 1997, for instance, mandated minimum sentences for certain rapes and enforced certain bail conditions for those charged with rape through the Criminal Procedure Second Amendment Act, No 85 of 1997. The National Policy Guidelines for the Handling of Victims of Sexual Offences were also finalised in 1998. The Policy Framework and Strategy for Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in South Africa was established in 2003 (Vetten, 2005).

These intervention laws and strategies were established to criminalise violence against women and children and to assist women in violent partner relationships to navigate the criminal justice system.

However, this study focuses on the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), No 116 of 1998, which will be explained in more detail in the next section.

2.7.2   The Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998

According to Meintjies (2003) there was a general debate around the issue of men's rights to a fair hearing that was felt was being violated by the PFVA. However, there was also a question of the victim's urgent need for protection from harm that eventually led to the establishment of feminist lawyers and experts in the area of domestic violence to review the legislation. This resulted in the passage of Domestic Violence Act, No 116 in 1998, which became operational on 15 December 1999.

Stack and Soggot (2001) mention that the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, is a workable act, brought about by women, for women with their interests at the fore. The Act is also based on the South African Constitution's provision regarding the "right to equality, freedom and security" as well as international commitments and obligations of the state towards eliminating violence against women and children. Mathews and Abrahams (2001) state that the Act defines domestic violence as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, and damage to property, entry into the complainant's residence or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant.

2.7.2.1   Application process for a protection order

The Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, contains 13 forms in total as part of the Regulation to the Act. These are the application for a protection order, interim protection order, protection order, warrant of arrest and application for variation or setting aside of protection order. A protection order is obtained when various forms provided by the Regulations of the Act have been completed and through the following processes.

2.7.2.2   The Interim Protection Order

The first stage of applying for a protection order is the completion of Form 2, that is Application for a Protection Order; these forms are available at police stations as well as the courts. Upon completion, Form 2 must be certified. Parenzee *et al*. (2001) state that certification of the form is a necessary procedure that is done either in a police station or at the courts by a Justice of the Peace or a magistrate. During this process, the clerk of the court has to assist the complainant and the clerk will also complete Form 4 which is the Interim Protection Order and has to set a return date for the case. Both Forms 2 and 4 have to be signed by a magistrate and the applicant and respondent are provided with an opportunity to supply information that pertains to the alleged incident of abuse.

According to Parenzee (2001), when the interim protection order has been granted, the abused woman is provided with a copy of the order and has to take it either to the sheriff or police to have the interim protection order served. The court is responsible for covering the costs if the complainant cannot afford the sheriff fees. The Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, states that the effect of the order can only become relevant once the interim protection order has been served to the respondent; there should be proof of service of the order. This is imperative as without proof of the service, the order is not valid. This may also mean that the complainant has to return to the court to collect the warrant of arrest and this can only occur once there is evidence that the order has been served. The court mostly uses the police to serve this order and this at times creates problems as police are overburdened and at times do not have sufficient resources to serve protection orders. A return date is specified for both parties to appear in court and during the court process the court may cancel the interim protection order and grant the final order with changes to the conditions as set in the interim order. The above discussion implies that the application for the interim order takes time. Women in abusive relationships may also find the

process of application complicated and tedious and those who are illiterate may be intimidated by the process.

2.7.2.3   *The Protection Order*

Parenzee *et al*. (2001) mention that the application for a protection order is contained in Form 2 which is tedious and time consuming and at times leads to confusion about the information that is required. However, section 1 requests the demographic information of the complainant, the nature of the relationship between the applicant and the respondent, and the occupations of both parties. Section 2 requires that those who make application on behalf of the complainant must provide personal information to specify their relationship to the complainant and provide reasons for the application. The legislation DVA states in section 4(3) that "…notwithstanding the provisions of any other law" the application may be brought on behalf of the complainant by any other person, that may include a counsellor, health service provider, member of the South African Police Service (SAPS), a social worker, teacher or any person who suspects and has evidence of abuse. The applicant has to provide written consent by the complainant except in circumstances where the complainant is a minor, mentally deficient, unconscious, or in circumstances where a person has been proven beyond reasonable doubt by the court to be unable to provide the required consent. Where a complainant is in a life-threatening situation and consent cannot be sought, a member of the South African Police Service should be mandated to make the application on behalf of the complainant.

Section 3 requires that the personal information of the respondent who is committing the act of domestic violence, be provided. This may include work details and contact details and lack of this information curtails the serving of the order and potentially places the complainant at further risk of battery. Section 4, subsection 4.1, requires information pertaining to children and adults sharing the same residence of the abused. This subsection has been criticised as "sharing the residence" may exclude all persons affected by violence, such as other family members who share the same property but not residing in the same residence as required by law. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 enquire about how persons sharing the same residence are affected by the violence in partner relationship. Section 4.3 requests details of disabled persons who are affected by the domestic violence and this has been criticised as in some courts, physical and mental disabilities are noted while others concentrate only on those who suffer from stress and depression as

disabilities. The purpose of this section of the act has been criticised as being unclear and needing to be reviewed. Section 6 requires the applicant to provide evidence that warrants the application to be considered as a matter of urgency by the court. Section 7 is applied when the applicant highlights the kind of abuses she would like to be protected from and needs to provide a detailed description of the protection sought. Section 8 allows for additional conditions to be attached to the terms of the protection order. These may include the seizure of a dangerous weapon, rent, emergency monetary relief and custody of children. Section 9 refers specifically to property that the complainant needs assistance for collecting and this may include personal clothing, furniture and others. Section 10 states that the police station must be contacted in the event of a breach of the protection order (Parenzee *et al*., 2001).

There are additional forms that are vital in this process, for example, Form 12 which sets aside or varies the protection order, in cases of misuse of the Act by a complainant or due to allegations that have been proven to be unfounded. J88 Forms request the medico-legal experts to provide information on injuries sustained due to abuse (Parenzee & Smythe, 2003). It has been noted that the process of the application for a protection order to assist women in violent partner relations may be long and complicated for some battered women. Abused women who may be distressed could also lose hope and feel helpless when they are confronted with this complicated process.

2.8   PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY ABUSED AFRICAN WOMEN

Many problems have been noted that are encountered by African women when dealing with the criminal justice system. According to Vetten (2005), 74% of South African police stations were located in white suburbs or business districts, consequently underprivileged women in rural and semi-urban areas have to incur unaffordable travel costs to reach them. Furthermore, Artz (1999) drawing on the research based in poor black rural communities in the Southern Cape has listed some of the obstacles that women have to overcome to obtain assistance in cases of domestic violence:

- Expensive travelling costs;
- Limited or lack of taxi and bus services;
- Slow response times by police and ambulance services;
- Poor or expensive telecommunication services;
- Long distances to travel to public services such as social workers' offices and others;

- Lack or absence of child care services becomes a bigger problem if travel is necessary;
- Few support services and lack of shelters for safe accommodation;
- High rates of unemployment and under-employment result in women struggling to pay for basic necessities, travel, safe accommodation, separation and relocation costs.

It has been noted that some of these obstacles such as lack of facilities, basic amenities and professional services like health and welfare services and others among poor and rural communities may pose a danger and place these communities in compromising circumstances (Ambrosino, Hefferman, Shuttleworth & Ambrosino, 2005).

Artz (2003a) also noted that staff at rural courts have to incur additional prohibitive costs of transporting witnesses of partner violence from outlying areas and accommodate them if it is required that they stay within courts' jurisdiction in order to testify. There are also impediments that result in complainants not being able to access the justice system such as the negligence of police who lose victims' court dockets; an inability to find the money for documents to be served on respondents; and failure to inform the parties on due court processes and appearances (Bennett, 2005). Ultimately, some women withdraw their applications, as they find the process of the justice system too overwhelming. Others who experience the court proceedings are unable to cope with the administrative requirements of the Act (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001).

Interestingly, while South Africa has eleven official languages, the protection order in terms of Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, is in only two official languages. Reading and completion of the application forms become a challenge for women with varying degrees of literacy. These application forms are also not available in Braille and sign language and interpreters for deaf women are few and may not be readily available at courts (Vetten, 2005). It is also known that the criminal justice system and some of the magistrates have been voicing their own frustrations concerning the stringent budget that they have to operate with, lack of personnel, lack of police vehicles, fax machines and photo copiers. Although these factors place an additional burden on law enforcement officers, they also compromise the safety of women in violent partner relationships (Stack & Soggot, 2001). Furthermore, some of the police still have the negative perception that domestic violence is an intimate love dispute and they are unwilling to intervene in "household and private disputes". Consequently, this attitude of impartiality remains pervasive in the SAPS and domestic violence is rife among police officers themselves (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001).

In spite of progressive legislation therefore, the uncooperative attitudes among law enforcers, failure to act according to the legal obligations as set out in the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, legislation and other role players may create not only negative attitudes towards complainants but may lead to victimisation of abused women. However, non-governmental organisations such as Mosaic Training Services and Healing Centre for Women and others based in the Western Cape play a significant role in assisting women with applications for protection orders and also help them to go through court proceedings. Such services are either provided on a voluntary basis or mostly funded by foreign donors (Vetten, 2005).

According to Campbell (1998) the police are aware of the criticisms that are usually directed towards them and they voice their concerns on issues of staff shortages. They accept that they are often unable to offer reliable protection from harm to battered women. The police also cannot shield these abused women from future assault nor can they transport the women to distant safety if regulations forbid it. In addition it cannot be over-emphasised that in remote areas there is very little access to the courts. Therefore, the chances of a battered woman pressing charges against her abuser may be jeopardised.

2.9   CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter has discussed the prevalence of violence in partner relationships. Various types and forms of violence were pointed out and the consequences of abuse were highlighted. Both international and national legislative initiatives were discussed and the content of the Domestic Violence Act No 116 of 1998, as a legislation that affords victims of domestic violence maximum protection from abuse was provided. It introduces measures that seek to ensure that the relevant organs of state fully adhere to the provisions of this Act. This may be indicative of the fact that the state is committed to the elimination of domestic violence. However, although the government has expressed a commitment to eradicating gender-based violence and inequality regarding women, the question is still about how it can be ensured that African women's circumstances are understood. The following chapter will provide some insights into how African women's circumstances are similar and yet different from those of other races, and how various feminist campaigns and the radical feminist theory in particular have sought to break gender categories to assist and free women from gender oppression.

CHAPTER 3

A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN IN VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed extensively the nature and some of the forms and consequences of women's experiences in abusive relationships. Some of the problems that African women experience to gain access to the criminal justice system were explained. This chapter will focus on the meaning and impact of the act of abuse from a feminist perspective. This chapter also briefly describes various feminist theories that explain the plight of women and how ideologies perpetuate gender violence. This study places greater emphasis on the radical feminist perspective to elucidate some of the contributing factors that lead to African women's perceptions and experiences of partner abuse.

3.2 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN IN VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

A brief glance at women worldwide suggests that all women are oppressed. Such a glance may also suggest that educational attainment, participation rates, occupational structures, private and public laws, family planning systems, technological advancements and mostly socio-cultural attitudes are causative factors in oppression. Throughout history and in societies, women have almost always been regarded, cherished and honoured as princesses and goddesses but also imprisoned within domestic injustices. They have been romanticised in literature, poetry and musical lyrics, but also commercialised in real life. They have been owned, used and still work as mules even today (Busia & Abena, 1993). The focus of this study is on the situation of African women in violent partner relationships.

It could be argued that African women have many issues of oppression that they need to grapple with. One is oppression by the society, the second is exclusion from traditional structures, the third is the slave-based communal system, and the fourth is illiteracy and backwardness. Another form of oppression can be the man, her colour, her race and herself (Collins, 2000). The study will discuss some of these issues of oppression and their cultural significance from the radical feminist perspective.

3.3.1 Radical feminist perspective

McKay (1994) states that feminist theories are committed to investigating the situation or situations and experiences of women in society; to attempting to view the world from the women's social world perspective; to being critical and an activist on behalf of women with its main objective being to influence and produce a better living world for women, and, therefore for humankind. Therefore, the feminists' imperative role is to raise a conscious awareness of the plight of women in violent relationships and to make a difference in their lives by improving their circumstances as women.

In addition, McKay (1994), recognises liberal, Marxist and radical feminist theoretical approaches as representative of the most important factual feminist views. However, an attempt to name and classify the different theoretical perspectives may pose problems. This is because of the extensive overlap between the above-mentioned feminist theories and to changes in orientation over a period of time. However for the purpose of this study, issues that contribute to the marginal status of women and of African women in particular in the society are examined and explained.

McKay (1994), defines patriarchy as violence that is practised by men and male-dominated societies against women. The author concurs with radical feminists who link patriarchy with sexual violence such as rape, wife abuse and incest, and view patriarchy as a set of relations that enable men to dominate and control women. Additionally, patriarchy is underlined by a material base, which is comprised of hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them in controlling women. It is thus male oppression of women (Imbrogno & Imbrogno, 2000).

While liberal feminism focuses on a sexist attitude as the view in which gender roles are entrenched in societal cultures, radical feminism blames men. The main point of discussion focuses on the issue of patriarchy and how the biological factors and sexual class system places women in circumstances that are abusive and male dominated.

3.3.2 Biological factors

Sweeney (2004) emphasises the debate that biological difference between the sexes contributes to male domination. However, radical feminists challenge the biological argument that endorses

male violence, and views gender as a political class into which human beings are placed according to their anatomical possessions or non-possessions. Rather than a biological definition, womanhood should be perceived as possessing a female body that has capacities like child bearing and sexuality, to name a few, and any other labelling as construed by patriarchy (Jeffreys, 1997). Furthermore, the concept of gender and its relationship to sex, have allowed feminists to criticise how perceptions of biological difference between the sexes have been politicised to substantiate male dominance and female subordination, and to create a system of male supremacy (Sweeney, 2004).

3.3.3   Sexual class system

Zastrow (2004) reiterated that patriarchy is confirmed through socialisation, is usually perpetuated through traditional ideologies and becomes sustainable through traditional institutional methods. Through sexual class systems men assume positions of power and domination, and women assume positions of subordination. There is also a view that supports the position that sex role differences are entrenched through socialisation patterns and can be culturally determined (Sweeney, 2004). Zastrow (2004) also states that the wide variations in sex role expectations among cultures suggest that sex roles are learned rather than biologically determined. However, Darke and Cope (2002) concede that there is tremendous variability in gender socialisation, because while one talks generally about female socialisation, the experience of every female may be different and one cannot predict with any certainty the attitudes or skills that may emanate from a particular woman. Bornstein (1998) also states that from birth gender is documented by the state, enforced by the legal profession, sanctified by religion and bought, sold and promoted by the media. The main issue in doing away with gender discrimination is to create the ability for one to move freely into and out of existing gender perceptions and gender roles. Arguments about moving in and out of gender roles and perceptions have been postulated. This may have to involve male normalisation on how males perceive issues of femininity and its limitation to female behaviour of subordination.

Although Bornstein (1998) assumes that masculinity and femininity are freely chosen, Jeffreys (1997) argues that women comply with the expectations of femininity like cosmetic surgery and excessive dieting at the expense of their safety and health. She further suggests that women's economic and even physical survival can be dependent on both acknowledging and embracing

femininity with the performance of real material work associated with housework, sexual work and child care.

Darke and Cope's (2002) examination of gender has helped feminists to understand that gender is a social construct that is also influenced by racism, hetero-sexism and other forms of oppression that are designed to reinforce men's positions of power over women. Through this exercise the feminist tradition has moved a step further breaking down both gender and sex and making people aware and questioning entrenched assumptions on gender stereotypes, the experiences, needs and rights of women and reconceptualisation of gender and sex. Thus, according to these authors, the liberation of women requires that a woman has a right to live freely from the assumption that she be heterosexual, bear healthy children and support her husband even at the likely cost of her own career. Instead women should be able to have the freedom to make their own choices concerning their lives, and be able to deal with stereotyped gender role expectations and embrace their own sexuality.

3.4   PATRIARCHY FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Gender sex roles and patriarchy in African societies can be similar and yet different from those of other races. Ramphele (1990) argues that in order to understand African women's oppression one needs to understand that there is a link between sexual and gender relations. For instance, the African patriarchal class system is usually formed by the accumulation of social dependants where sexual division of labour is comprised of a gender relation based on class society, where the "class of patriarchs" will own and control means of production. The class of patriarchs also has "dependent classes" of workers comprising wives, unmarried daughters and younger sons that provide the labour. The patriarchal class also contributed to the accumulation of social dependants. Consequently, structural relations in African societies, for example, are at times based on a sexual division of labour where the production from the farming system is relegated to women. Land ownership is also based on acceptance of sexual roles that have patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance patterns (Busia & Abena, 1993).

Furthermore, Busia and Abena (1993) state that the study of African women's exploitation and oppression will contribute to an understanding that, although oppression is defined as an unjust or excessive exercise of power and authority, it should be understood within the context of the trans-

historical nature of patriarchy as an ideology. It also shapes the construction and perpetuation of African women's oppression. For instance, in African culture, the extended family is the fundamental production and consumption unit. Usually, women's production and reproductive capacity contribute to social and economic resources which provide men with political leverage. African women are also primarily responsible for the economic, social and political production of the household, the bearing of and caring for children, the production storage and preparation of food (Green, 1999).

Additionally, Mndende (2006) claims that women have an exchange value called "ilobola" within the context of marriage that forms alliances between households, clans and nations. Traditionally in Shona, Ndebele and Xhosa societies, the practice of bride price or ilobola signifies the validity of the marriage. It is also recognised as compensation to a father for the loss of his daughter and as a means of stabilising the marriage. Green (1999) points out that traditional African marriage is an alliance between two kinship groups for the purpose of realising goals beyond procreation and survival but as an institution that allows men to acquire rights over women and responsibilities for them. Rather, marriage is commonly viewed in much of Africa not as a union of two individuals but of two lineages, and women in the process become "wives" of the family as a whole "umfazi wasemathileni". Ironically, African women play a significant role in ensuring the cohesion of both family and community life. On the other hand, patriarchal ideologies undermine women. Men are also given social sanction to resort to beatings and other violent devices to keep women in check and in some cases female members of the extended family may assist in exacerbating and exerting this control (Green, 1999).

Nevertheless, strong familial ties usually exist between mothers and daughters. However, when a young African woman enters into marriage she is usually considered as an outsider among her husband's family. Almost all African women retain their clan identity after marriage. At times this creates problems for the newly-wed as she is being undermined and subordinated when the in-laws indiscriminately keep on regarding her as an outsider due to her different clan name (Feldman, 2001).

3.4.1   Patriarchy and historical practices

Radical feminism also links patriarchy to historical practices and patterns such as witch burning and stoning to death of adulteresses. For instance, by 1916, African women's sexuality was legally subjected to legislative control under the Native Adultery Punishment Ordinance that made adultery a criminal offense (Busia & Abena, 1993).

Radical feminism can also be linked to traditional patriarchal oppressions like the killing of widows and the use of children as collateral for debt, child marriages and pre-arranged marriages of young African women and girls (ukuthwala). According to Feldman (2001) based on a study of Bangladeshi women, some of the personal laws that govern the privacy of marriage, divorce inheritance, custody and guardianship are usually regulated by the community into which one is born and at times legitimised by religious doctrine.

These laws also become sources of power and control that organise women's lives and set conditions for sanctioning and controlling women's and family behaviour. These institutionalised personal and civil laws also give the communities the right to intervene in the name of the family and community and to honour and justify the issuing of punishment of women who challenge the norms, or the religious doctrine of that community. For instance, Safi (2005) states that, within the Islamic community, legitimacy is given to the "shalish", that is "village court", which has supplanted the judicial system in many remote areas of the country. It is often regarded as the arbiter of Islamic morality and justice and has played a major role in judging the behaviour of women. It has been used to adjudicate charges against women for alleged prostitution, illicit sexual relations and pregnancy, spurning lovers, rape, and for being "beparda" that is "without purdah". Purdah is female seclusion that also prescribes that women travel in groups of six and more, be modestly dressed and walk quickly along the same roads. When necessary, these women should be chaperoned by either an older or younger male companion or relative. It has also been used against women who are employed and those who have used contraceptives.

Safi (2005) suggests that these actions taken against women indicate that women's relationships to their communities are usually tied directly to the regulation of sexuality and to women's "possible tendencies towards infidelity". Feldman (2001) mentions that these are behaviours that are usually controlled through shame, and shame is based upon sanctions imposed by members of a group who establish the rules of the game and are authorised by members of the community.

For these women, personal shame is equivalent to shaming one's family. Thus if a woman is not killed by stoning or publicly ostracised, she may nonetheless have to commit suicide to avoid further shame to the family (Chakravarti, 1989).

3.4.2   Patriarchy and the philosophy of Ubuntu

The philosophy of Ubuntu plays a significant role in African societies and nearly 80% of South Africans and most people of sub-Saharan Africa are members of the large Bantu language group. They almost all embrace "Ubuntu" as a philosophy and way of life that is the spiritual foundation of many African societies and is also regarded as the central cultural factor but is not easily translatable (Loew, 2003). Ubuntu means the promotion of the common good by building community through shared humanhood. Violence is not readily used unless in the just defense of the community. In African cultural literature, a person who manifests Ubuntu is the one who is kind, helpful, not quarrelsome, slow to anger, generous, helpful to others, prepared to sacrifice for the good of his people, cooperative and courageous (Mulokozi, 2003). The South African Government White Paper on Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, Government Gazette, 1997) officially recognises Ubuntu as the principle of caring for each other's well being, a spirit of support, meaning that people are people through other people. In Xhosa it means "umntu ngumntu ngabantu".

Masuku (2001) points out that South Africa as a young democracy emerging from a totalitarian state has been associated with escalating violence. Violence has also become an accepted form of conflict resolution and women and children have been victims of violence, rape and HIV transmission and alcohol abuse (UNAIDS, 2002).

African women find themselves within the strong patriarchal organisations and societies that are characteristic of most of the indigenous and non-indigenous people inhabiting South Africa (Morrell, 1998). In line with that is the spirit of kinship that keeps these families together. For most women, leaving an abusive relationship is perceived as difficult or perhaps at times virtually impossible. Some of the reasons may be the fact that most black South Africans live within former homelands that lack economic opportunities, usually forcing and urging many Africans to work as migratory labourers in cities or urban areas. Husbands and partners periodically return to unite with their lovers and wives and also maintain their families. The homelands are mostly

inhabited by women, children and old and sickly men who have returned from the mines. The long period of absence from home at times results in extra-marital affairs in cities and multiple partner relationships (Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2001). This eventually leads to fights and arguments that result in violence within relationships. Two population prevalence studies have documented high levels of violence against women, showing that one in four women reported having been abused by a partner (South African Law Commission, 2002).

Falola (2003) views Ubuntu as a given and a harmonious factor in African societies, it is part and parcel of Africans' cultural heritage and should play a pertinent role to assist women in violent partner relationships. However, it clearly needs to be revisited and revitalised in the era of democracy and in the hearts and minds of some Africans in sub-Saharan countries and in particular South Africa, to curb male domination and gender violence (Karsten & Illa, 2005).

3.4.3   Patriarchy and sexual violence

Acts of sexual violence such as rape in intimate relationships have been identified as sexual assaults perpetrated by male domination and the patriarchy system on women. A prevalence study among working African men in Cape Town found that 42% of them reported the use of physical violence and nearly 16% reported use of sexual violence against a partner with whom they had an intimate relationship in the past ten years (Abrahams, 2002). These sexual relationships may also contribute to the high HIV infection rates, and more severe histories of abuse (Maman, Campbell, Sweat & Gielen, 2000).

It has been suggested that African township men at times assert their masculinity through violence (LeClerc-Madlala, 1997). These men are also often reacting as victims themselves and women serve as coping mechanism for their frustrations, due to risks and dangers of everyday working lives. The patriarchy system entrenches the notion that real men are expected to be, and regarded as brave, fearless, and willing to risk death. For instance in the mines, men are expected to fulfil their role as breadwinners; hence at times they perpetrate violence against those weaker than themselves and lead them to disregard even their own safety from HIV/AIDS (Campbell, 2000). Violent behaviour such as rape and coerced sex by men is in a way some form of male domination, control and punishment of women in particular situations, and a notion indicating

fearlessness and aggression that is socially acceptable to all ages of both sexes (Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

Wojcikci and Malala (2001) also indicate that there is cultural acceptance of violence on women and children as they are easily perceived as victims. These situations at times are complicated and it is difficult to interpret how societies can accept the abuse of women by their male partners.

Furthermore, in a study that was conducted by Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) on Xhosa-speaking adolescent pregnant women in the poorest township, it was reported that male violence and coercive practices dominate sexual relationships. The conditions, timing and the circumstances under which sex occurred were defined by the male partners. Teenage girls were expected to submit even when violence was to be used (Morojele, Kachieng'a, Mokoko, Nkoko, Parry, Nkowane, Moshia & Saxena, 2004). There is also the legitimacy of these coerced sexual experiences and acceptance of certain constructions of love, intercourse and entitlement and a conspiracy of silence that are endorsed by female peers (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Some of the reasons that were indicated for the girls not terminating the relationships were peer pressure to have a male partner, perceptions that the beating was a sign that the male partner was jealous, therefore really cared and loved the girls and because they gave them gifts of clothing and money (Madu, 2001). Forced intercourse in these situations could often not be interpreted as rape because it was with the "boyfriend" and happened within a "love relationship". There is still a taboo against open discussion of sex and sexual intimacy issues in the daily discourse of African women. The language used to describe sexual organs is peculiar and the language used to describe lovemaking is also the language used to describe a violent act (Morojele, Kachieng'a, Mokoko, Nkoko, Parry, Nkowane, Moshia & Saxena, 2006). Sex at times is also not referred to directly but rather there is use of a range of euphemisms, such as "he loves her".

3.4.4   Patriarchy and female sexuality

The patriarchy system, most of the time, encourages women to prove their sexuality and young women are also encouraged to become pregnant by their partners as a form of proof of fertility and womanhood. According to Wood and Jewkes (1998) child bearing and the ability to have children in African communities are central to a woman's status and worth in the relationship. Cohabiting relations are generally more accepted and pregnancy is more tolerated than the

possibility of infertility. It has also been reported that in this study and in another one conducted at Umtata, some men had multiple concurrent partners and the number of girlfriends was important in attaining positions and status among peers (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). It is also of interest to note that having multiple girlfriends can be an indication of "successful manhood" (Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

3.4.5   Patriarchy and HIV/AIDS

Patriarchy can contribute to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS as women are coerced into sexual relations with men who have multiple partner relationships. According to Wood and Jewkes (1998) a study has indicated that there is evidence that the cultural ethos of Ubuntu for Zulu youth is very strong and has perhaps been reversed from its original meaning. For instance, the strategies that forged youth to a sense of community and brotherhood towards their struggle against apartheid has now been used as a perverted response to HIV/AIDS, placing women at high risk. A youth culture emerged in KwaZulu-Natal townships in 1995, where there was a display of a strong sense of youth group destiny. Young men concealed a definite HIV diagnosis and at the same time sought to spread the infection so as to embrace the "die together troop mentality" that was prevalent during the liberation struggle.

Knowing that one is infected with the HIV/AIDS virus was accepted not only as a death sentence, but also as a passport or "sexual license" and as a way to share the burden of spreading the infectious disease. Consequently, this desire for a group destiny contributes to and encourages the documented high incidences of rape (Outwater *et al*., 2005). At times African women find it difficult to leave abusive relationships because of cultural factors, peer pressure, lack of resources at their disposal, poor education, lack of job opportunities and secure and entrenched financial dependence on men who can provide and are breadwinners (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001).

3.4.6   Patriarchy and multiple partner relationships

Women in violent partner relationships are confronted by male domination that is characterised by infidelity and men who have multiple partners or girlfriends. Abdool-Karim (2001) notes that a cross-section survey conducted in the early 1990s in KwaZulu-Natal indicated that 62% of women thought that their male partners had a right to multiple partner relationships, 49% did not believe they had a right to refuse sex with their partners, while 51% stated that their partners

would be angry when asked to use a condom. Thirty percent said their partners would leave them while 28% said their partners would threaten violence. These results signify that violence or perceived threats of violence can also be a strong deterrent to adopting prevention measures to avoid abuse (Abdool-Karim, 2001). There are of course many other underlying factors that compromise African women in relationships. Those include socio-economic factors such as poverty, migratory labour, commercial sex workers, the low status of women, illiteracy and lack of formal education, stigmatisation and discrimination (Republic of South Africa, 2001).

3.4.7   Patriarchy and parental guidance on sexuality

Most African societies are patriarchal and it has been revealed that communication and guidance on sexual matters between parents and children, friends, relatives and even partners is rare. This creates a situation where women are shy and disempowered on sex issues and are therefore widely perceived to be unable or powerless to negotiate safe sex with their partners. Threat of violence from males is common and often prevalent in cohabitation and sexual relationships outside marriage and violent activities are thus tolerated. There is also a lack of parental guidance amongst mothers and daughters on issues of sexuality and morality. The reasons for teenage girls indulging in sexual activity are that they are forced or coerced by a partner, and peer pressure. Teenage girls are also easily carried away by passion, or are asked to prove they are normal, or to prove to their boyfriends that they love them. They are also influenced by tantalising movies and films, are seeking physical pleasure, or desire to be mothers (Abdool-Karim, 2001).

Wojcicki and Malala (2001) argue that sexual negotiation should be more properly perceived as a dispersed collection of unequal power relationships that leave women enduring patriarchal power, which suggests subordination of women. Lastly, African women and women in general should not be perceived as victims but also as people with power who can and do make decisions and have strategies even when their actions are sometimes only at the minimal level compared to their male partners (Campbell, 2000). African women live in patriarchal societies which strive under the philosophy of Ubuntu to be a cornerstone of humanness. Sexual assaults are prevalent amongst the violent partner relationships and some women are still reluctant to seek assistance and speak about it. This places African women at risk of HIV/AIDS infections, as multi-partner relationships are prevalent and coerced sex among teenage girls is also common. In some cases,

there is still a lack of parental guidance to empower the youth on issues of gender equality, morality and sexuality.

3.5 STATUS OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

A woman's status in a patriarchal society may increase with age, as the elderly African woman massively gains power and control over her children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. Elderly African women usually control and supervise the familial household labour and are responsible for the formal and informal education of young children. Keats (1997) also emphasises that social competence becomes a pre-eminent goal of development. The elevation of the status of elderly African women has been based on traditional values which have a large historical base. Their role is to induce children into their respective gender roles from an early age. A common method is that of apprenticeships rather than direct instructions. These women can also gain recognition as traditional midwives, healers and visionaries (Green, 1999).

Busia and Abena (1993) state that in pre-colonial Shona communities, the geriatrics and post-menopausal women were considered to be endowed with wisdom, great experience, respect, self-esteem and were at times very influential in the community. Working in groups when brewing ritual African beer, these women usually perform by singing and dancing to honour their ancestors. Through folktales and historic accounts, owing to their position of power, elderly African women can instruct and socialise the young about role expectations and how to behave appropriately in the community. It has been noted that at the onset of menstruation (intonjane) young African girls are usually ceremonially instructed by older women or grandmothers about their role expectations as women. Gender stereotypes are usually inculcated at times through these traditional and initiation schools and these stereotypes later manifest in division of labour.

3.6 AFRICAN WOMEN AND LABOUR IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Women in a patriarchal society are confronted by divisions of labour, unpaid labour and oppression. However, according to Busia and Abena (1993), African women are not always exploited or oppressed, nor do they experience the same level of oppression and exploitation. For instance, under the feudal tributary mode of production, land ownership is solely in the hands of the king. Consequently Zulu, Xhosa, Shona and Ndebele women of royal lineage usually possess formal political power. The class structure of the feudal Shona and Ndebele societies is based on

who owns the land usufruct and not on the sexual division of labour. Consequently, female exploitation and oppression are structured in terms of the political, economic and social relations of the Shona and Ndebele societies. Those reactions contribute to the exploitation of poor people's labour in general.

Nevertheless, peasants or poor working class women, although they lack formal political power can also exercise their influence based on their marital status, their age and reproductive ability. Through songs, barbed lyrics and naming of their children, Shona and Xhosa women can publicly voice their grievance experiences within the familial household. Murray (1994) recognises these methods of influence as culturally recognised forms of customary law that allow women to voice criticism and grievances. African women at times can also survive male domination through female bonding as they embark on their familial household responsibilities and ceremonial rituals.

3.7   AFRICAN WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Spirituality has traditionally been embraced by African traditional practices and within patriarchal society and this includes the recognition of ancestors as possessing "divine powers" to assist and appease families spiritually in their lives. According to Busia and Abena (1993) elderly African women are also perceived as possessing spiritual powers; hence, within the culture some women are recognised as "Rain Queens" that is, they possess both the power of making rain and the power of the sun. The status and authority of these older women within the patriarchy system mean they can be elevated in society due to their ability to communicate directly with their ancestors.

Although women also form work parties while planting and weeding in the fields, African men also bear a labour responsibility during the time of harvesting. These collective actions usually become a source of empowerment to African women as these are acceptable cultural role expectations between men and women. Collins (2000) also states that the patriarchally structured nature of African societies at times contributes to hierarchical power and authority based on gender identity.

Additionally, the recapitalised mode of production can also be entrenched and determined by class position as the "haves" control surplus labour. Consequently, the poor find themselves both

oppressed and exploited by the labour system. However, despite the oppressive and exploitative nature of patriarchal societies, African women at times do not perceive themselves as powerless victims. Instead, they challenge the repressive structures of their societies and almost always contribute to the well-being and preservation of their cultures (Busia & Abena, 1993).

Furthermore, Collins (2000) note that in the familial household, African women are not always oppressed and exploited, but can also be a source of their social standing and their limited protection within the society. When they encounter family disputes and violence, this usually becomes the site and foundation of collective action to express their dissatisfaction and to bring about change. For example, it is not unusual at times to find women mass demonstrating in alliance with a gender movement and other structures during trials of sexual abuse and rape perpetrators (Bennett, 2005).

In addition, Bennett (2005) states that due to the dominance and influence of colonial capitalism, African extended families can find themselves in a distorted state of influx and dominance of kinship and lineage. There is now an individualisation of land holding, the growth of large-scale capital-rendering farms and growth of agricultural wage labour. The value of traditional African women's labour has changed because colonial capitalism separated the work place from the family. The state and industrial enterprises are still restricting the majority of urban employment opportunities to African men. According to Abrahams, Jewkes and Laubsher (1999a), African women still find themselves vulnerable to violence at the hands of their partners or men as this is entrenched in the ordinary life of homestead survival. Women at some of these homes are also at risk and subjected to bullying, assault and even murder. They find it difficult to leave a violent relationship due to economic dependence (Bennett, 2005).

Malley-Marrison and Hines (2004) reiterate that African women are often subjected to inhuman social situations and oppressive cultural practices. They can be tormented even when they are helplessly mourning the death of their husbands. The moment a woman pays her last respects, various changes occur in her life situation and inheritance and property stripping becomes one of the sad experiences that some African widows have to face. This is usually practised by the in-laws and other close relatives of the deceased husband and continues to disadvantage African widows and lessen their hope for a stable life. Due to these problems African widows' wellbeing often deteriorates fast after the loss of their husbands. They at times suffer threats to both

physical security and property and some eventually lose the inherited property to the in-laws in accordance with traditional family patriarchal rules (Okunmadewa, Aina, Ayoola, Mamman, Nweze, Odebiyi, Shedu & Zacha, 2002).

3.7.1   The role of religion

Religion has played a prominent role in African societies and missionaries also played a significant role by providing safe havens for young African girls and women who rejected parental opposition to their entering a religious order or parents' choice of a husband for them. These actions were supposedly the positive results of the colonisation process of African women. However, Busia and Abena (1993) critically observe that the church and the state's main objection to African patriarchal power over women was based on the interest of colonial profit. They regarded African females as a threat to the recruitment of African labour. African patriarchs were also able to mobilise family labour and control of land and crop production. However, the state and church's recognition of only monogamous Christian marriages and condemnation of polygamous African marriage was a salient factor, not only for the protection of the well-being of women but for the maintenance of Christian norms and values (Linnegar & McGillivray, 1998).

Polygamous African marriages were probably used for the production of more children within families to sustain and expand the labour forces utilised in the family system. Furthermore, radical feminists argue that these tendencies usually lead to promiscuity, incest, sexual molestations, sexual slavery and extra-marital relationships that not only expose women to sexually transmitted infections but also to diseases such as HIV and Aids. Battery and male domination may be rife within some of the African societies but the study also noted with interest that there are similar trends globally (Shisana & Simbayi, 2002).

3.8   PATRIARCHY AND POLITICAL AND LEGAL STATUS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

According to Gopal and Salim (1998) sub-Saharan Africa comprises African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, some of which are patriarchal and have customary laws that legitimise polygamy and simultaneously give power to various ethnic groups to administer estates according to their customs and traditions, resulting in widows suffering (Coldham, 1999). Although the general law usually presents the surviving spouse and their

children as the major beneficiaries, customary law in most instances prefers and favours males as heirs (Kuenyehia, 2003).

However, the present South African Constitution Act, No 108 of 1996, has challenged and changed the institutionalised political and legal status of women and of African women in particular as minors and or dependants that are subjected to male control. For instance, in the KwaZulu Code of Zulu Law Act, No 16 of 1985, the customary law has changed and improved on issues of customary marriages, ilobola, holding, possession, transfer and disposition of land and goods, testate and intestate succession thereto of marriage, divorce, legitimacy and other rights of property and personal rights that were engendered (Linnegar & McGillivray, 1998; South African Constitution, 1996). This is in line with Bennett (2005) who views gender-based violence as not only consisting of isolated incidences of family violence but rather as enmeshed actions, interpretation of laws, customs, culture and attitudes that permeate every level of society.

3.9   PATRIARCHY IN OTHER CULTURES

According to Kunfaa *et al*. (2002), in order to promote an understanding of the conditions of male domination within an African perspective, one needs to define culture within a broad, comprehensive perspective. Culture is perceived and defined in this study as a complete product of people's "being" and "consciousness"; emerging from the society that grapples both with nature and living with other humans in a collective group. Thus culture can be further defined as being a product and a reflection of the history built on the two relations with nature and with other men. It is therefore, an all-encompassing expression of a people in the two relations basic to human existence in society; the relations between generic man and nature and the relations between person and person in that society. To provide a definition of culture is fraught with problems and trying to avoid references to masculine concepts can create difficulties for this study. However, an awareness of the pertinent role that culture plays in perpetuating and combating violence within intimate relationships and families can be helpful (Busia & Abena, 1993).

Schubert (2005) states that patriarchy is also a characteristic of other cultures, for example, within Greek and Macedonian families, women also lack power and control. Land ownership and use of rights are compromised and there is often discrepancy between formal rights of women

and actual access to resources. There is also a bilateral kinship system which emphasises matrilineal kinship whereby matrilocal residence encourages cooperation between mothers and daughters and between married sisters. Power is vested in women but the husbands remain the unchallenged heads of household and very patriarchal. Men in these societies have greater prestige compared to women primarily, because their prestige is publicly acknowledged, visible and not confined to the private or domestic sphere. Consequently, this leads to an inability to "see" the authority and power of women in situations where they are not as visible in the public arena as men (Schubert, 2005).

Significantly, a common feature that is found among South Slav societies including Macedonian is similar to that found in African societies; that is, older women hold quite authoritative positions especially as mothers of sons. Children are identified with and exclusively belong to the family of the father and father's father. When a woman marries into this family her family explicitly have no claim on her children and have no moral right to interfere with the upbringing of their daughter's children. On many occasions a man's parents will criticise their son if he frequents his wife's family home, on the grounds that such visits compromise his status as a son-in-law and undermine the grandchildren's natural place as members of their father's family. Women in these societies have to change their surnames when they get married and the offspring were invariably referred to not by their mother's name but by the father's family name or surname. A conclusion that could be drawn is that this ideology give preference to mothers-in-law and women are perceived as possessing procreative powers. Women are also regarded as instruments of child-bearing and so perpetuate the "houses" of men (Schubert, 2005).

According to Stafford (2000) a study conducted in Chinese societies has highlighted that male domination favoured the birth of males to females and the prejudice against women seems to be particularly difficult to resolve. Presently, in China, there is a one-child family system per household and preference is still given to a boy child rather than to girls and abortion of girl fetuses is rife (Stafford, 2000).

3.10   CONCLUSION

Male domination is prevalent in most societies and due to culture and traditional practices women may find themselves in situations that make them prone to abuse. Radical feminists link patriarchy to issues of historical practices and cultural patterns such as the stoning to death of an adulterous woman, and because of these practices women may become prone to battery. Women may also find it difficult to leave violent partners due to influences of family members who may shame them for disgracing the family name. It has become apparent that there is a need for African women and women in general to develop strategies that could assist them in curbing male violence against them. These are dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

EMPOWERMENT OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years violence against women has become a major concern in South Africa and throughout the world. This chapter will explore and integrate both Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives to provide an understanding of traditions, beliefs and behaviours that should be considered when providing care and empowerment to battered African women. This may assist health care and social service providers to have a better understanding of African women in violent partner relationships and thus provide culturally specific empowerment and interventions with battered African women in health, social service and other community settings. The basic premise is that the simple application of a Eurocentric interpretation of behaviours and values in health and social service assessment and interventions may lead to inappropriate assessments and interventions activities with battered African women. However, when working with people the professional helpers need to be aware of the wide diversity among various races and their cultures and for this study among African people in particular.

This study investigates abused African women's need for empowerment services. The following discourse is based on the ethnic-sensitive understanding of African women's needs and on how these women can be empowered and assisted by various stakeholders.

4.2 A EUROCENTRIC APPROACH TO BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR

According to Campbell (1998) a Eurocentric approach to behaviour presents an understanding of a European and American view of behaviour that primarily views the world from an Anglo male-dominated perspective. This approach asserts that human behaviour is universal and can thus be explained by universal theories of behaviour. These "universals" are presumed to transcend differences relating to race, gender, class and sexual orientation. Such an approach may negate, devalue and misinterpret the psychological importance that may include the perceptions and experiences of persons who differ from the norm. Hence, behaviour of families which varies

from this approach may be viewed as deviant, dysfunctional and perhaps unhealthy. African women are one group whose behaviour and experiences are likely to be misinterpreted by health and social service professionals whose orientation is based solely on a Eurocentric approach.

4.3 AN AFROCENTRIC APPROACH TO BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR

An Afrocentric approach emphasises prominent African traditions and values that usually form the basis and roots of African culture (Campbell, 1998). These notions may include the unity among human beings, nature and the spiritual world. African individuals are viewed as an integral part of the "larger African society". Central to this worldview is the belief that individuals cannot and do not exist alone but through social support, social connectedness and interrelatedness as opposed to autonomy and individualisation (Oliver, 2000). Therefore, an Afrocentric approach may be useful in gaining a better insight and understanding of the experiences of African women and should lead to more culturally competent and sensitive empowerment and care for battered African women (Nelson, 2002).

In working with African women in violent partner-relationships, social service providers must initially identify and draw upon their strengths of enduring and surviving abusive relationships. The following strengths are similar to those for other races but yet peculiar to African women:

4.3.1 Resistance and sovereignty

Wright and Tierney (2000) state that African people have continuously struggled to preserve their cultural integrity. However, irrespective of their level of education, some African women still find it difficult to confide in and seek help from professional workers outside their immediate families when confronted with violence. Manuh (1998) mentions that traditionally African women need to discuss their problems and seek advice from their elders, mothers-in-law, immediate family and adult extended family members. They may also engage the assistance of relatives to mediate disputes within the household. Some are not comfortable discussing family issues and disputes with strangers due to the secrecy around the issue of battery, and as they are used to discuss problems with informal sources (Chigudu, 1999).

Saleebey (2002) also states that there are recognised tribes that have inherent power of self-governance and these tribes may be similar to those that are prevalent to African societies. They

may create their own traditional courts of law, and may enforce their own traditional laws, and possess territories or lands that are protected under trust agreement with the government. Social service professionals and other professionals should therefore respect indigenous sovereignty and should be aware of the traditional tribal laws regarding the protection, welfare and empowerment of women and children. Sovereignty preserves the rights and resources of African tribes and clans and may be recognised as a source of strength and a powerful protective factor.

Osirim (2001) observes that through these traditional territories some African indigenous cultures have managed to maintain and preserve the parts of their traditional culture that contrast with other surrounding races and cultures. For instance, some African women may receive daily instructions from tribal elders preparing them to fulfil traditional roles in their families and clans, wear traditionally accepted clothes, speak their own language and to prepare and eat traditional foods. They also need to be knowledgeable about traditional beliefs and practices that prepare them to be ready to take their place as women within their communities. They have a strong identification whether by force or by choice to have a positive identification with their respective cultures and may continue to participate in the dominant culture and promote a sense of well-being. Hence to maintain cultural identity some women are expected to return home regularly to spend time with their in-laws, family and friends, and participate in cultural rituals and feasts. Such celebrations may also foster solidarity among the clans and facilitate coming together to seek solutions to common grievances, amplify the voice of traditional African people and demonstrate the power and authority of their culture (Saleebey, 2002).

4.3.2   Suspicion and mistrust

Saleebey (2002) observes that suspicion and mistrust are responses that social service professionals have to reckon with as some clients may wonder whether the social service professionals show genuine warmth and empathy. The abused women may also have reasonable doubt and question the social service professionals' intentions. These factors should be perceived as protective factors for these women and should be embraced as coping resources for themselves. They could also be viewed as an invitation to social service professionals to reflect on their own attitudes and motivations in working with African women.

However, when working with African women one should also be aware that African societies are inextricably interconnected through a complex web of relationships that may include blood relatives, clan, tribe and adoption. Mutual dependence, cooperation, kinship, "Ubuntu" and individual standing in the community largely relate to the extent to which a person is helpful to others during customary rituals, celebrations, funerals and others within the families and communities. Everybody is expected to fulfil prescribed relationship roles and have to prioritise the needs and welfare of others (Saleebey, 2002).

Campbell (1998) notes that a maternal uncle can also be expected to fulfil the role of the father figure or head of a household and all children are expected to receive unconditional love and may grow up in extended family households under the care of members of multiple generations. They are claimed, cherished, cared for and clothed not only by their biological parents, but by all of their relations. Similarly elders in traditional households are respected and have an active influence in family issues like family disputes, raising of children and in the decision making process.

As African families continue to practice sacred and secular rituals which are rooted in their diverse ontological beliefs and cosmologies, they attach much importance to these traditional practices (Oliver, 2000). Ritual practices are recognised as important sources of comfort, strength, meaning, self-renewal and connectedness. Beliefs are often connected to the lands and traditional homes that people occupy or have come from, and some may include sacred mountains, waters, forests, stories, songs, plants, traditional medicines, dances and symbols to embrace their cultures and appease their ancestors. African people may also use spirituality to overcome despair and cope with oppression and violent relationships. They may utilise spirituality to celebrate who they are, what they know and believe and to give thanks for their triumphs and good fortune that they have experienced in life (Saleebey, 2002). They may also believe that when situations are threatening and violent that the spirit of their ancestors are angry and through these spiritual beliefs may have to consult a traditional doctor "isangoma" to request direction and connection and treatment that may assist in their threatening situations. Consequently, for many Africans, preservation of indigenous culture, language, religious freedom, traditional healing practices, self-determination, spiritual beliefs, ceremonies and

practices were and remain a major defense against all sources of evil, misfortune, violence and others (Richie, 2000).

The social service professional and other human service workers should therefore try to embrace, be aware of and understand these issues and the cultural background of African women. They should also expect not to be prioritised at times as the first line or source of help and defense amongst African women in violent partner relationships. They may not even be consulted and the standard practice may be to rely on informal helpers and traditional systems. Effective intervention and empowerment processes to assist these women could mean a need for a collaborative relationship between the social service professional and informal helping systems within the communities (Saleebey, 2002).

4.4   EMPOWERMENT AS INTERVENTION APPROACH

Empowerment may be the key helping aspect in the lives of women in partner relationships and there has been considerable controversy surrounding the concept of empowerment, that is, what is meant by empowerment. It has further been questioned whether it is possible for social service providers and helpers to empower others. If so, how can this be achieved in terms of skills and resources that may be required and is it the responsibility of social workers and agency expertise to facilitate this role or not (Clark, 2000).

However, according to Smale, Tuson, Biehal and Marsh (1993) empowerment involves practitioners having to reinvent their practice and their focus on particular problems and solutions. Empowerment may also be used to describe service users being given meaningful choices and valuable options in order to gain control over their lives and their circumstances. This process may also involve addressing the impact of inequalities, oppression and discrimination (O'Sullivan, 1999; Thompson, 1997).

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2001), empowerment has been defined as self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capacity of fighting for one's own rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening and capacity building. Additionally, Zastrow (2004:431) defines empowerment as "…the process of helping individuals, families, groups and communities increase their personal,

interpersonal, socioeconomic, and political strength and influence towards improving their circumstances".

Griffen (2005) argues that from a feminist or gender perspective the term "power" means "adding to women's power". The notion of power becomes controversial in this context as it permits the possibility that power and dominance can operate through consent and compliance as well as through coercion and conflict. However, Griffen (2005) defines power as having control, having a voice that needs to be listened to, being able to define and create from a woman's perspective, being able to influence social choices and decisions that affect the whole society. Power may also mean to be recognised and respected as an equal citizen and a human being that can make a meaningful contribution in the society. Therefore, if African women have to be empowered, rules, norms and practices of the society have to create an environment that will allow them to voluntarily make choices in their lives and have a range of alternatives that will improve their lives (Narayan, 2002).

Yet, despite these debates, Gutierrez (1990) identifies changes that could be sought through the process of empowerment. These could occur on the individual, interpersonal and institutional levels, where a person could manage to develop a sense of personal power, an ability to affect others, and an ability to work with others to change social institutions. Through empowerment a person could move from a position of apathy and despair towards a sense of personal power that may involve the following:

- Increasing self-efficacy, meaning, moving from the state of reacting to events to taking action;
- Developing group consciousness;
- Reducing self-blame; and
- Assuming personal responsibility for change.

Furthermore, the social service practitioner, to enable an achievement of this transition or change, needs to provide practical assistance that may involve following an intervention process such as:

- Accepting the client's definition of the problem;
- Identifying and building upon the clients existing strengths;
- Engaging in a power analysis of the client's situation;

- Teaching of specific skills; and

- Mobilising resources and advocating for clients (Gutierrez, 1990:151-152).

However, according to Taylor-Browne (2001) ending a partner relationship is a process and before one can contemplate it one needs the space and opportunity to define and identify the violence within the woman's life. She also needs to attach and allocate the responsibility to the abuser for perpetuating violence and reassess the relationship in the light of whether it can be sustained or whether she needs to leave. Since separation is not a panacea, leaving a violent partner can mean taking risks that involve material, social and emotional costs. Ensuring access to services may require individual differences in terms of preferred solutions. It may also require criminal and civil justice processes that are more effective with the presence of support and advocacy. The breakdown of resettlement is usually linked to the absence of support and empowerment strategies. The following are some of the empowerment strategies that have been identified that could play a vital role in the life of women in abusive partner relationships:

4.4.1   The Mills Power Model

Mills (1998, 1999) distinguishes two types of power, namely, personal power and legal power that victims and survivors of violent relationships could use to prevent or stop violence.

4.4.1.1   Personal power

According to Mills (1998) personal power can be conceptualised as a person's perceived control over economic and social resources. Personal power can further be defined as the abused woman's sense of control when dealing with others including the abusive partner. The woman has to perceive herself as having a level of independence through having some form of employment and earned income. It has also been indicated that employed women who have an income within their intimate and abusive relationships had stronger perceptions of independence compared to unemployed women (Miller, Knudsen & Copenhaver, 1999).

Therefore, these women would be less likely to experience repeated acts of violence following police intervention as control over resources may empower victims to prevent repeated violence (Jasinski, 2001a). Being employed outside the home is a social resource whereas income advantage is an economic resource. Employed women in principle have access to information

and to social resources such as friendships or networks at a higher level compared to those that are unemployed. An income advantage may also grant a woman greater control or access to financial or economic resources of a household (Jasinski, 2001b; 2001c).

4.4.1.2 *Legal power*

According to Mills (1999) legal power can be defined as a form of empowerment that responds to police intervention and could be enhanced by effective legal intervention. These may incorporate the individual's requirements and preferences for victim empowerment by appropriate police and prosecutorial responses to prevent revictimisation.

Mills (1998) defines legal power as the victims' perceptions of their role in the court process. A domestic violence victim can have "power by alliance" by forming a partnership with a legal actor, a police officer or a prosecuting attorney who may convey some respect and a concern for the safety of the victim. This form of alliance can be a powerful resource that victims can utilise to prevent violence. When the woman threatens to call an ally who has the power of the state to assist in response to a criminal code violation, this could have a greater deterrent effect compared to the threat to call a stranger or a friend. In addition, an ally in criminal justice can also provide information and connections to a network of social service providers.

Legal power when used by victims of abusive partners can prevent reoccurring violence and may also contribute to an arrest or other forms of police intervention. Legal power may represent the woman's perceived ability to control criminal justice decisions and their consequences. This may be irrespective of whether the suspect was arrested or not. Legal power increases when the police take legal actions that correspond to the victim's preferences. However, one is aware that a victim's subjective responses to police intervention may relate to her perceptions of legal power as those that were satisfied with what the police did, perceived themselves to be in control of the violent situation and experienced a greater perception of personal safety (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001).

Weis (2001) concurs that the availability and use of Police Safe Street Units could provide instant counselling, follow up investigations and could provide legal and personal power to abused women. Arrests and intensive probation can be used to prevent recidivistic domestic violence and criminal behaviour. Nevertheless, it has been noted that African women and the poor are more

likely to be victimised and may be much more likely to be trapped in abusive relationships and households. Moreover, police arrests and court actions affect a disproportionate number of African women relative to their representation in the rainbow nation of South Africa and elsewhere or even in the population of criminal offenders. African women similar to African American women in comparison to white women are much less likely to call the police to arrest domestic violence suspects or to use court procedures to stop the violence, due to deeply institutionalised race solidarity (Campbell, 1998). Furthermore, gender entrapment theory highlights that dual exposure to racism and sexism also contributes to African women's vulnerability to domestic violence. The physical and emotional consequence of violence within the home also discourages women from reaching outside to social service providers that may be presumed to be racist. Instead, many African women are empowered by their relationships with friends and family to control behaviours within their intimate relationships. However, white women are far more likely than African women, to "deal silently with their secret" of domestic violence. They probably work to maintain the conception of the good family life and "good husband" (Lee, Thompson & Mechanic, 2002).

Maxwell *et al.* (2001) mention that the arrest of perpetrators of violence on partner relationships at times results in the escalation of violence. However, it has been found that most suspects, regardless of the type of police intervention experience shame as a result of arrest, either at work or in their communities. Consequently they are less likely to reoffend. However, those violent partners who have non-conforming social and psychological attributes are less likely to be deterred by arrests (Maxwell *et al.*, 2001).

There have also been extensive discourses challenging any attempt to reach definitive conclusions from some of the studies that state that the victim has the most to gain or perhaps even lose from the arrests of their partners. It seems that there is a dire need for publication of the victims' experiences; their interaction and their voices are needed. However, based on an experiment, Mills (1998) concludes that there is a need for uniformity and mandatory programmes such as mandatory arrest of all domestic violence suspects, as no-drop prosecution at times fails to stop violence and protect the victims. Women in abusive relationships are initially controlled and abused by their partners and can also be victimised once again by a "one

size fits all" legal response that does not consider the unique person's needs to survive episodes of abuse (Stephen & Sinden, 2000).

4.4.2   Empowerment and the criminal justice system

The criminal justice system as a legal actor can be an effective resource for victims of abuse by forming working partnerships and alliances with the abused women. These linkages may empower them to recognise that each person is a unique individual who faces cultural, economic, family and emotional circumstances that can increase or decrease the probability of recurring violence. Police arrests, safe shelters and user friendly prosecution programmes may be the preferred form of empowerment and solutions for domestic violence problems worldwide. However, African women may be unwilling to turn to safe shelters because they are perceived to be "not culturally friendly". Other victims may refuse to call police to avoid turning their partners over to a criminal justice system that they perceive as discriminating against African women (Nelson, 2002).

African women in abusive relationships can be empowered by the police and other socio-legal practitioners who may recognise the circumstances that are familiar and perhaps peculiar to the individual African victim and her community encounter. Olivier (2000) recognises the limits of a "one size fits all" model and urges the development of prevention and intervention programmes that are based on African popular culture. The author cites successful programmes that focus on culture-specific radio campaigns, gospel music, and African icons in public service announcements. However, some advocates may argue that only the urban areas with the most diverse populations and available resources can afford the culturally diverse programmes that are needed to respond to the various types of domestic violence victims in South Africa and elsewhere. In this regard it should be noted that Olivier (2000) reminds advocates that not all intervention programmes can afford to ignore gender neutrality and culture-specific empowerment interventions to address issues of violence.

Furthermore, Miller (2002) affirms that cultural and social resources can empower women to talk and disclose shared problems, thus protecting women from the dangers of isolation. Shared accounts, financial resources or earned income can protect and empower women by making them agents of social control within an intimate relationship. Legal alliances can enhance perceptions

of safety and trust. Although "every woman" can be a victim of violence according to the slogan, the explanation of gender violence can fail to address race and class differences and may be insufficient to explain problems of some African women who may be poor, homeless and may not have the opportunity to avoid or leave abusive relationships (Dobash, Dobash, Canavagh & Lewis, 2000).

4.5   SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

There are various social welfare services that could be offered to assist women in violent partner relationships, such as the following.

4.5.1   Career counselling for battered women

Although the literature on women battering has grown, little attention has been given to the longer-term impact of partner abuse on battered women's career development, vocational and educational well-being. Many social service providers who serve abused women provide valuable information about employment opportunities, such as job training and less on vocational programmes (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Battered women may also perceive career barriers and career decision-making prohibited by batterers resulting to self-efficacy as a problem. They also need immediate financial resources when they contemplate or actually leave an abusive partner. Short-term employment may shift focus from the developmental nature of career and educational interests. Pursuit of these career interests may contribute to a string of complex barriers that abused women face after leaving an abusive relationship. Research also indicates that these longer-term opportunities may be essential for women to provide for their family's needs without the abusers' contributions, to achieve economic independence and ultimately leave abusive situations permanently (Brown, Reddy, Fountain, Johnson & Dichiser, 2000).

Furthermore, Chronister and McWhirter (2003) emphasise that women living in abusive relationships are often isolated by perpetrators in such a way that they become "hostages" in their own homes and may be cut off from their community networks. Consequently, opportunities to attempt and succeed with many educational or career-related programmes might seriously be restricted and sabotaged. Similarly, physical isolation and financial limitations may reduce the chances of the abused women being exposed to role models or even peers who are engaged in educational and career pursuits. The accessibility of role models and supportive community

networks for African women and women with disabilities may even be fewer. The criticism, blame and systematic denigration that typically accompany abusive relationships may contribute and lead to verbal persuasion and convictions that the woman is incompetent and can never succeed in school or in career areas of interest. She may be called stupid, crazy and incapable by the abuser. She may also experience feelings of fear, anxiety, nervousness and depression and may be subjected to repeated and sometimes permanently debilitating physical injuries and may receive medical attention because of physical and sexual assaults during the course of the abuse. In all, the survivors' efficacy relating to keeping a job, performing job tasks, accomplishing educational and training goals or performing successfully in any setting may be minimal (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003).

Additionally, Sullivan and Bybee (1999) state that leaving an abusive relationship may be dangerous and women may receive little support from their families and communities. The reason could be that leaving a violent partner relationship is not tolerated and considered shameful and a violation of family values. African women may also feel a sense of racial loyalty, and a lack of culturally appropriate social services may also contribute to women's perception of limited support options. Shortages in funding, space and staff in domestic violence shelters and advocacy centres may be particularly limited for African women and may compound the problem. Domestic violence shelters that attend to career development may often provide information about resources and possible supports. However, battered women may feel overwhelmed by violence, by the culture of shame and may fail to use the resources that are identified.

Public policy may poorly inform societies, may not be well publicised and may have a limiting effect on women in abusive relationships. Consequently, battered women may not make effective use of the services of police officers, court officials and social service providers (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000).

4.5.1.1 *Empowerment principles for career counselling*

Career counselling for the empowerment of women in abusive relationships may require counsellors to facilitate critical reflection and awareness of power dynamics at work in battered women's lives; facilitate the ability of these women to recognise, enhance and make use of skills

and resources that they have; and ultimately facilitate the ability of these women to contribute to the empowerment of others. Empowerment may be defined as the process by which people, organisations, or groups who are marginalised may become aware of the dynamics at work in their own life context (McWhirter, 2001). They may need to develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives which they may exercise without infringing on the rights of others and these may coincide with actively supporting the empowerment of others in their communities (McWhirter, Rasheed & Crothers, 2000).

Chronister and McWhirter (2003) suggest that when empowerment occurs there should be "collaboration" between the counsellor and the battered woman. This may be characterised by mutual definition of the problems and the construction of goals, as well as collaborative and flexible strategies for change. The fear, lack of trust, and self-doubt that may result from the abuse may require the counsellor to attend closely to the counselling dynamics that are supportive of the woman's voice and encouragement for her to participate in counselling without pressure. Using a collaborative approach, the counsellor may have to take an egalitarian stance without minimising the expertise that she or he brings to the relationship. Collaboration in this context is not inconsistent with the provision of specific information, stating overt values or being directive. It may mean that differences in experiences, resources and perspectives are used in the counselling relationship rather than denied. There may also be signs of failure to form collaborative relationships that the counsellor may have to deal with. These may include the client's lack of interest, silence and confusion over goals and steps that need to be followed to achieve goals (McWhirter, 2001).

It is also important that the abused woman's life circumstances including her "educational and career concerns be understood in a context" that includes culture, family structure, religious or spiritual beliefs, economic situation, quality and depth of support networks and the characteristics of the surrounding community. This may include law enforcement sensitivity to domestic violence and the local opportunity structure relating to employment and education. Paying attention to the context also allows counsellors to balance more effectively the battered women's short-term needs with long-term career and educational planning. Although women in shelters and elsewhere usually choose jobs that are immediately available the counsellors may assist them by exploring their career and educational interests. In this way longer-term plans may be created

and pursued when the circumstances are safer and finance viable and ready (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003).

The counsellor may also have to "recognise the skills, resources and experiences" that abused women possess that may contribute to achieving the counselling goals as well as develop new skills. Some women who are homemakers may need assistance in deconstructing and identifying the skills involved in conducting their daily activities in an oppressive context. Through identification of client competence, the abused woman may be provided with a fuller picture of her performance attainments, as well as encouragement or social persuasion by the counsellor. This effort may increase the aspiration of the woman to increase her education and work-related self-efficacy expectations. It is likely that the woman may attempt and persist in new behaviours, new skills for specific tasks, and also attempt to further her educational and career goals. Self-efficacy expectations can also be influenced by performance attainments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physiological responses (McWhirter *et al.*, 2000).

Career counsellors working with women in abusive relationships may assist them to identify prior performance accomplishments; construct sequential "experiments" that provide them with opportunities to experience success in relevant skills domains for example, basic computer skills can be taught and then upon mastery, progress could be made to more advanced skills as the confidence of the woman increases. The counsellor can also increase opportunities for learning from models with whom the client can identify, including the participation in support groups with other survivors of domestic violence. By increasing the woman's exposure to sources of positive feedback and encouragement through friends, support group members, the new sources of community, the woman may be provided with constructive strategies for managing and reducing the physiological symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression and pain (McWhirter *et al.*, 2000).

4.5.1.2 *Empowerment and critical introspection*

Ashcraft (2000) mentions that it is through these career counselling efforts that the woman may be able to consciously examine her ability and critically analyse the abusive relationship and see herself as an actor in the relationship rather than solely as an individual who is acted upon. Furthermore, McWhirter (1997) describes critical consciousness as a dual process that involves power analysis or increased battered women's awareness of the dynamics of power operating in

their lives. This may include a critical reflection which may contribute to the awareness of how women themselves could influence, respond to and transform those dynamics. Understanding the dynamics and extent of abuse and the influences of racism, heterosexism, sexism and classism on the woman's goals, opportunities and perceptions of competence may all be part of power analysis (McWhirter, 2001). Engagement in power analysis and critical power reflection may clarify the barriers and supports present in the abused woman's context. According to Ashcraft (2001) this process may decrease self-blame and attributes of inability that are prevalent in battered women. The career counsellor role lays a foundation for the woman to critically and consciously reassess and "revision" the present and future possibilities and facilitates the transformation from a victim to survivor identity (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002).

4.6   THE USE OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The battered woman may frequently experience extensive isolation and may resist making contact with others because of feelings of shame, worthlessness and hopelessness. Through facilitating the woman's participation in support groups that share common interests, spiritual affiliation or bonds of kinship, the counsellor can provide validation of roles and identity, physical, emotional and social support and opportunities for belonging. Meeting other women in abusive relationships could be a prominent step towards moving from isolation to community participation by being actively involved in the initiatives to combat violence against women. This can greatly facilitate the growth of critical consciousness. With respect to social cognitive constructs, the community can be utilised as a source of information, a place where one could try new behaviours, obtain verbal encouragement and intensive learning from others. There are also various role models and mentors in the community that may play a prominent role in the lives of the abused women; these are discussed below.

4.6.1   A domestic violence survivors' forum

Humphrey and Thiara (2002) note that while ideas about the participation of domestic violence users are theorised by both the service providers and the women's activist movements, it has been noted with interest that there have been innovatory methods of participation that are presently being tried out and used nationally and internationally. These include the women's focus groups, and the active involvement of Women's Aid and other local women's organisations. In the United Kingdom, for instance, there are structured procedures to represent abused women and to

act as a conduit for information exchange. Special initiatives may also be put into place on a one-off basis such as internet consultation. This pioneer consultation type was carried out for instance in 2000 by Women's Aid in collaboration with the Hansard Society in the United Kingdom (Bossey & Coleman, 2000).

Mullender and Hague (2000) maintain that in liaison with activist groups, political and feminist community theatre, art and poetry can have an empowering effect that could contribute to raising the voices of abused women. Although a domestic violence survivors forum could be different, there could be survivors groups, focus groups or advisory groups. There may also be support groups that can set aside time once a month or so, to look at and comment on the work of the domestic violence forums and services in the area, as one part of their interaction. In other cases, the group may be convened to comment on abused women's needs, on which services are required and on the progress in combating domestic violence in the area in question. These initiatives could probably be firmly embedded in the strategic commitments of the local authority, municipality or agencies concerned with abuse in partner relationships (Millender & Hague, 2001).

The commitment of the forum is to incorporate the kind of service provided, users' views and work done. Honest feedback also needs to be conducted by a skilled, committed facilitator who is trusted by both the users and existing helping structures. For instance, according to Hague and Malos (2005) the Phoenix Group in London commented on and produced reports and recommendations on services provided in the area of women abuse. Policy changes were then made based on their recommendations. These included the production of videos and training packs, policy input on the usefulness of specific legal remedies, on the needs of black and ethnic communities and on public awareness. Included were strategies on how to address and develop work with male perpetrators, work that needs to be done in the education system, and the development of a comprehensive domestic violence prevention training pack for use in schools (Taylor-Browne, 2001).

As put forward by Hague (2005), within an environment of mutual assistance these groups could empower both the users and social service providers about issues of cultural difference and the stigmatisation effects of experiencing abuse, in a meaningful and careful way. Through these forums, the survivors will work towards equality with some sort of emancipator vision to guide

them, and accept a real responsibility for change. In such situations, the abused women will be empowered and increased confidence and self-respect may be possible (Aries, Hague & Mullender, 2002).

4.6.2   Role models and mentorship

When facilitating connections with role models and mentors in women's career and academic environments, the counsellor may provide personal contacts on school campuses and job sites (Ashcraft, 2000, 2001). These may cultivate the development of self-advocacy skills and of a social support network, and the connections may provide women with a series of opportunities for performance attainments, assertive learning and positive verbal persuasion and motivation. In addition, Parsons (2001) states that it is through effective facilitation of women's connections with various community role models, leaders and mentors that the counsellor may be able to inculcate the awareness of local community and work related organisations, support groups, community action committees and other channels of collective efforts. The value of using women's natural support networks is inestimable and community interventions may also be of value for the counsellors to facilitate their clients' career development efforts (Brown *et al.*, 2000).

According to Blustein (2001), the empowerment model also encourages the counsellor to address the exo-system, that is, public policy processes and decisions, and the micro-system, that is, society's social blueprint such as values, gender roles and race relations' influences that perpetuate abuse in partner relationships. These may be obtained by engaging individual and collective resources to challenge and transform the systems and structures that oppress, rather than provide peaceful and responsible citizenship. Counselling for empowerment requires therefore, that the counsellor develop abused women's awareness of social, political and economic barriers to growth and autonomy experiences that accompany women abuse (Hayashimo, 2001). It is therefore imperative that career counsellors who work with battered women be informed about domestic violence legislations, and the national and state laws and policies that have a direct bearing on this serious problem of abuse. They should also participate in efforts that strengthen communication between shelters and law enforcement agencies.

According to Fassinger (2001) and Flojo (2001) prevention strategies should also be integrated with the goals that are common to the professions that provide career counselling. It is important that knowledge of the economic, health, and occupational outcomes associated with domestic violence and other social ills be represented in social action at individual, national and community levels. It must also be practised with individual battered women in their communities while at the same time transforming communities to sustain the empowerment of battered women (Gragg, 2001).

4.7   EMPOWERMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is also a need to economically empower women in violent relationships and this can be done through entrepreneurship programmes. However, Moser (1991) mentions that the understanding of the status of women in Southern African countries shifted from the welfare approach in the 1960s to the equity and anti-poverty approaches of the 1970s, to the efficiency and empowerment approaches of the 1980s and 1990s. The welfare approach similar to the structural-functionalist paradigm assigned motherhood as an imperative role for women and men had an opportunity to focus on success in the public sphere. The equity concerns were relegated around women's role in income-generating activities. They were also concerned with the legal reforms that were institutionalised in many African states addressing women's position in marriage law, property ownership and voting rights. Torres (2001) states that fighting poverty is still a major concern especially with respect to women's access to capital, small business loans and access to mortgage bonds and other vital resources. There is also a need to increase women's productivity as a valued asset in southern nations. Empowerment therefore in this context, can be defined as giving women the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources (Kubiak, Siefert & Boyd, 2004).

Globally, control of capital is the key component of women's empowerment and the participation of women in the open labour market forms part of the empowerment process. However, women's status in the private sphere of home and family within their respective communities and the perceptions of self-awareness are significant. One would also suggest that psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-respect and autonomy linked with the striving for and achievement of economic independence may all embrace the definition of the empowerment of women. In

addition a woman may only be able to perceive herself empowered when she has a clear sense of identity, respect and self-perception (Osirim, 1998b).

4.8   ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

One of the most important sources for empowering women is the establishment of social networks and participation in indigenous, grassroots, community-based organisations and any other organisations that address women's needs. Through these linkages women will be assisted to benefit in personal growth, increase self-esteem that may be made possible by strength in numbers and the realisation of their material and non-material goals. One example of an NGO in Zimbabwe and in South Africa is Women in Business (WIB) and its role is to provide support to women's small business enterprises. Through the association and government involvement women in abusive relationships and in general may be empowered by gaining imports needed for their businesses; an area in which women usually experience severe structural blockage.

These organisations could establish national conferences and seminars to provide training in financial planning, management and accounting. Furthermore, women, especially poor and low-income women, as well as a strengthened civil society could be empowered in income-generating projects while others could be concerned with women's strategic gender needs and human rights. Granting of business loans to low-income entrepreneurs should be encouraged and possibly an establishment of and affiliation to Women's World Banking and Women's Finance Trust. Women may also be assisted by micro-entrepreneurs with small shops, knitting, crocheting activities, poultry enterprises and some non-traditional fields such as brick-making, that are prevalent in African societies. These organisations could also provide business skills and management training workshops for women (Osirim, 2001).

4.9   WOMEN ADVOCACY GROUPS

With respect to human rights, Women's Lawyers Associations and Advocacy groups should consciously and vigorously raise awareness campaigns both nationally and internationally on legal matters pertaining to issues of rape and violence against women and children. For instance, under Zimbabwean customary law, women are juveniles and therefore only men can inherit from their fathers' estates and the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982 does not apply to customary law. However, the Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association through concerted efforts has assisted

women to use the reformed Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982 which indicates that women were no longer legal minors, but were majority citizens with men (Kwinjeh, 1999).

In South Africa there have been actions to assist women to be aware, informed about and utilise the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, to prevent and combat issues of violence against them (Vetten, 2005).

4.10   SELF-HELP GROUPS AS AN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

Grassroots and/or community based organisations are designed to meet the needs of women from the communities in which they are based. They are sometimes organised around indigenous cultural practices. In sub-Saharan Africa, these associations are usually created by community based organisations mostly for African women under conditions of economic crisis, structural adjustment and dire experiences of decline in their standards of living over the decades (Osirim, 1998a). One of the most successful grassroots organisations is the "rotating credit association" or rotating savings association or rounds. In the Xhosa language these self-help groups may be called "umgalelo" or "umasiphekisane" and others. These groups are prevalent in South Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and certain parts of East Asia, and are referred to by different names such as "esusu" in West Africa. These rotating credit schemes are an indigenous knowledge system through which people are empowered to join hands to save money and help one another to meet credit needs. They also incorporate and consist of a group of people coming together to save a mutually agreed upon amount of money on a predetermined day at regular intervals. The money realised after collection is usually given on a rotating basis to a member of the group and the process is repeated until everyone in the group has had a turn. This is also referred to as "rounds" where each member has to wait her turn to receive the specified amount. Usually there maybe be ten members per group, and the rounds may start in February until November to effect the payment. Members may be required to either save the money or buy household items as needed. Members may also be expected to come on the following month and show documented proof of the savings or item bought (Gabiana, 1990).

Osirim (1998a) observes that it has been through this process that many African women have managed to overcome some of the structural blockages such as inability to gain access to credit from banks, and a need for collateral and assets in their own names, as the "round" may provide

them with the much needed capital. The large payments from these rotating credit associations have also been the major source of capital in keeping market vending activities going even when there is increase in costs of inputs and decline in sales.

Furthermore, rounds as a source of empowerment may assist market vendors even in cases where they are unlikely to possess the collateral, social capital, experience or educational attainment to make them appear in any way creditworthy to any established commercial bank. They also impose a savings discipline on their members who might otherwise need to use their daily earnings to meet immediate household needs. In addition, money saved in these associations is usually safe and easily accessible to its members. The banking system in South Africa has recognised these self-help groups and has allowed them to open savings schemes within the banking system. These are some of the forms of empowerment that contribute toward women's economic self-sufficiency and economic independence as they can be engaged themselves as women in making decisions independently of their male partners for instance, on the use of profit on their money. Through the use of these associations women strengthen their social capital in their networks with other women whether as a member of a "round" in a market place or as a member of a loan committee for a financial trust (Osirim, 1998a).

4.11   EMPOWERMENT, WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

Musasa Project Trust (1998) states that due to the contemporary challenges posed by the high rates of HIV/AIDS, NGOs such as the Musasa Project Trust in Zimbabwe, Masimanyane Women Support and Crisis Centre in South Africa and many others are committed to working with grassroots women on issues of gender violence. Staff members and counsellors of these organisations communicate with local political and religious leaders, informing them about the gravity of the problem. Linkages with other prevention programmes assist in sharing information and providing a healthy environment for open discussions about gender violence and health risk issues. In addition a radio show called "Women/Madzimayi" in Zimbabwe included the personal testimonies of women who have been victimised by their male partners. Precisely because of this programme personal issues that cut across gender violence, class and ethnic lines hit too "close to home" as it raised important themes that challenged local cultural practices and patriarchal hegemony in Zimbabwe. The production of more radio shows that include the testimonies of the abused women may assist to establish listening clubs that could reach even women in rural areas.

The Project has also been publishing Musasa News twice a year. It informs women about their mission and their ongoing programmes. The newsletter includes personal stories of the abused and provides some explanation of the complexity of their situations to encourage other women to seek help and to empower themselves. The Musasa Project is among the NGOs committed to assisting grassroots women in their struggles against violence in partner relationships (Musasa Project Trust, 1998).

4.12　EMPOWERMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Non-governmental organisations that exist within communities can play a prominent role in an effort to combat violence against women, as women in violent relationships face severe challenges including the massive increase in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, there are some women's organisations at grassroots level serving as models for addressing social welfare issues, human rights concerns and advancing the empowerment of the status of African women in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Osirim (2001) there are several different types of non-governmental organisations and a distinction is to be made between the national women's organisations and grassroots associations that play a significant role in African women's lives.

The establishment of many women's organisations at the national level is not directly linked to government, but may sometimes be state affiliated and/or recipients of state funding. The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) and the Musasa Project Trust are amongst these non-governmental organisations that are concerned about the status of African women and the overall state of Southern Africa and internationally. The social welfare and empowerment aims of these organisations will be discussed against the background of the United Nation's (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women and the non-governmental Organisations (NGO) Forum in Beijing and Huairou, China, respectively. It is arguably these efforts and conferences that empowered many black African women in many ways and distinguished them from other UN conferences on women (Osirim, 1998b; Osirim, 2001).

Furthermore, through the empowerment of women by these organisations and associations, women's consciousness was raised about issues significant to their well-being, which may include vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infections. This may also assist battered women in the process

of decision-making and networking. Their self-esteem may be enhanced and women in violent partner relationships may be able to realise skills that could inform their decision on whether to leave abusive relationships or to stay. Although some of the African women in abusive relationships live in poverty, there is also evidence that they can work hard, have dignity and many in this process have empowered themselves. They may be regarded as agents of change and not helpless victims in this instance. Through these NGOs, and as stated in the Platform for Action, areas of concern were raised concerning issues of poverty alleviation, equal access to education, health, HIV/AIDS issues, end of violence against women, economic structures, power and decision-making, human rights and the girl child. In addition, through telling their stories poor and rural women in general extend their empowerment by giving "voice" to issues that confront them (Kubiak *et al.,* 2004).

According to Parsons (2001), through the process of being vocal, they inform others of their struggles and hardships and demonstrate courage in speaking about them. Over time women speaking collectively about issues of partner violence, patriarchy, HIV/AIDS, restricted access to resources such as education, shelters, and the unresponsive legal system might lead the way to further social action. This may ultimately result in changes of attitude, modification of anti-social behaviours and in embracing laws and social policies that meet the needs of women. In addition, the ability of individuals to gain mastery over their violent relationship is considered empowerment. However, for empowerment to be effective it may have to embrace the historical, social, or political context in which the individual is embedded (Kubiak *et al.,* 2004).

4.13   EMPOWERMENT SOCIAL SERVICES OFFERED BY PRACTITIONERS

The fundamental premise in social work practice is that human beings are always engaged in a continuous process of becoming, growing, learning and experiencing some influences in the world. Hence, people's life chances or opportunities to grow and develop to the fullest may be delimited by a number of intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional and social factors. The role of social service practitioners is to take intervention and empowerment actions that are meant to improve and change the life situation of an individual in some meaningful way (McDermott & Garofalo, 2002).

According to Trevethick (2000) social service practitioners play a prominent role in assisting women in violent partner relationships. They are guided by their ethical professional expectations to empower clients through skills training. Social workers are also bound by principles that include treating a person with dignity and worth, instilling self-determination and adherence to confidentiality and others. What follows is a mix of social services and related principles grouped together, chosen because they play a significant role in the lives of women who have been exposed to violent partner relationships. The following social services will be discussed in detail as they contribute positively to battered women's lives.

4.13.1 Support groups as social service

Social service providers have to create an environment for empowering their clients through the formation of support groups. Parsons (2001) defines a support group as an environment in which clients share the same common problem of being abused, interact with others, support, share a feeling of safety and acceptance, feel validated, and have interdependence. Usually safety becomes the major human need that is critical for abused women whose safety is at risk either physically or emotionally. The women in support groups usually join with others in a safe environment where they could share the experiences of abuse that may be devaluing and demoralising them. Through these groups women obtain an opportunity to end their isolation, interact with others, "reach outside themselves" and find others who are as frustrated and angry as they are. They also find common ground with others, and this may facilitate acceptance, trust, being nurtured, encouraged and challenged (Trevethick, 2000). Appreciating one another becomes a healing process for the abused women as they hug each other, discuss pertinent problems, get advice and are listened to when they need to talk. The social service practitioner may be viewed by the members as a primary consultant, a case worker and a social group worker to the group as there social change tactics will be provided. The social service practitioner may be viewed as "being there for them" and listening when the abused women need her or him (Parsons, 2001). During the support group meetings and casework the following techniques and principles could be used.

4.13.1.1 Principle of acceptance

According to Gutierrez, Parson and Cox (1998) women in violent relationships need to feel accepted, as this to them may mean feeling understood, not judged, able to be themselves, to

reveal themselves and let their guards down, to stop pretending to the wider community that they are not being abused. The role of the social worker is to accept the client as she is, be non-judgmental and assist the client to break the isolation and silence. This may also assist the woman to outwardly acknowledge her personal weaknesses, flaws or secrets, and shame that is usually associated with conditions of abuse and oppression (Parsons, 2001).

4.13.1.2 *Principle of validation*

Validation can be defined as confirmation, being heard, and not being regarded as "crazy" when the women in the support groups share their abusive experiences (Trevethick, 2000). The role of the social service practitioner is to assist these women to share mutually their painful experiences and create a feeling of safety, as will happen when in contact with others who have also experienced pain. Through this sharing exercise, the painful experience may become "normalised" and this may assist the woman to trust her own personal perceptions again. Empowerment in this regard may mean that the social worker has to act as a catalyst, identify strengths, and provide support and validation (Parsons, 2001; Trevethick, 2000).

4.13.1.3 *Principle of interdependence*

Mutual dependence is defined by Trevethick (2000), as assuming responsibility for the well-being of one another, collective support, mutual aid, and problem solving. The role of a social worker is to foster a new level of responsibility by assisting battered women to acknowledge their isolated social situation of abuse. Empowerment for these women may mean having to exercise their voice, be listened to, be heard and to respond to and interact with others who share the same experience, and gain strength in being in an interdependent relationship with others.

Cox and Parsons (2000) note that the social service practitioner has decision-making responsibilities with the role to support, challenge, make the woman aware of her own feelings, not let her be afraid and inculcate faith that she will overcome her ordeal. Providing information regarding resources, laws, new skills and behaviours, such as how to make appointments, set up meetings, power to make decisions, and to learn how to resolve conflicts without violence may be empowering to the women. Through group interaction, the woman may become more assertive, try out new skills such as being proactive, take risks in decision-making, and have confidence in her ability to interact with others. The social service practitioners' objective may

ultimately be to become facilitators, mentors and role models to these women who may also become role models not only to themselves but to others (Shera & Wells, 1999).

4.13.2 Mediation as a social service

There has been a debate about the use of mediation in cases of battered women in partner relationships. However, Flynn (2005) points out that there is lack of evidence that at all times legal intervention provides any better control and solution for the abused couple. Furthermore, the adversarial process may contribute to the escalation of violence where the conflict may reinforce the power and control differential and the win or lose aspects of the relationship (Mine, 2004; Roberts, 2000). Another argument is that mediation reinforces the discriminatory and oppressive view that domestic violence is a private matter and therefore the assault is an act committed against an individual rather than a society as a whole (Imbrogno & Imbrogno, 2000). However, mediation could be utilised in cases where the women have provided free and informed consent to be part of the process. This begs the question of whether it is possible for women in abusive relationships, who have financial and emotional problems, to give the necessary consent for the mediation process.

Nevertheless, Taylor (2002) indicates that through mediation the impact of violence in partner relationships can be minimised as the emphasis will be on relationships rather than criminality, and on needs rather than rights. Through this effort abuse may be perceived as a relational rather than a criminal problem, depending on the extent of abuse of the woman (Greatbatch & Dingwall, 1999). Critics of mediation in cases of abuse also argue that the perpetrators need to be confronted with the reality of their abusive behaviour through court adjudication and the offender must be sanctioned which may clearly not be the case in family mediation. However, Mulroney (2003) acknowledges the argument around the pervasive and hidden nature of abuse in partner relationships, and yet suggests that at times the high numbers of reported incidents that come to social worker agencies may indicate a minimal level of violence. It is therefore through the mediation process that the mediator may be able to identify patterns of abuse and violence incidences that create or compound the conflicts that warrant mediation. Empowerment may also be achieved through the mediation process rather than via the legal alternative (Tishler, Bartholomae, Katz & Landry-Meyer, 2004).

Additionally, mediation may provide a supportive and empowering environment for women who may have been stripped of their identity, dignity and self-esteem (Milne, 2004). Mediation may also assist victims of abusive partner relationships to confront their partners within an environment that is collegial, and this may be empowering as the woman may no longer feel obligated or willing to subordinate her needs to the batterers. Furthermore, mediation may serve as a positive experience for both parties as it may encourage and may enable violent partners to learn alternative ways of asserting their interests. Mediation may also assist couples who may be capable of and wish to establish a new, more distant but civil relationship especially in cases of continuing their role as parents. Although supporters of mediation do not regard it as therapy, however, the therapeutic aspect of it is to help women in abusive relationships and their partners to learn to be cooperative decision makers (Charlesworth, Turner & Foreman, 2000).

In addition Charlesworth *et al*. (2000) mention that the key aspect to mediation that involves women in abusive partner relationships is to undertake an initial comprehensive assessment that may be inclusive of objectives to identify the extent of abuse. Screening procedures may permit the mediator to determine whether mediation is the service of choice and whether parties engage in mediation voluntarily. The parties must have a choice in the matter of mediation and this may be empowering to the abused. In keeping with this, parties should be kept apart while the decision is being made to mediate, and this will ensure that intimidation does not affect the decision. Mediators must also ascertain that parties have a full understanding of their decision to be involved in mediation, and are making informed choices to be part of the mediation process (Lee, 2001).

In addition, clear ground rules should be established which are binding to both parties involved and the mediator has to carefully try to balance power between the woman and the abuser. In cases where the abuser denies the allegation of abuse and no consensus can be reached the mediation should be terminated, because the rules of conduct cannot be established (Lang, 2004).

Milne (2004) states that techniques that may be used during this process may include the use of caucuses, co-mediation, supportive third parties and the use of short-term agreements. Through the use of caucuses the mediator can meet the parties separately and privately. This may allow the mediator to keep track of the victim of abuse to ascertain whether the process is working and that the woman is not being influenced by the threat of further abuse. Male/female co-mediation may

be considered as a useful option and techniques for balancing power and supporting a female victim of violence. The supportive third party should be restricted to professionals and should not include family and friends as their presence may jeopardise the situation and may inflame the dispute.

Furthermore, Flynn (2005) asserts that mediation may also assist short-term agreements to be put in place and follow-up sessions may be used to assess any need for modification of the agreements. In cases of violence one-off mediation sessions are not recommended because of the risk that the abused may be exposed to further battery. The mediator should closely monitor the process, and the practitioners' skills are needed to work effectively with the woman and her partner. The fundamental principle in mediation is good training in the dynamics of violence in partner relationships, neutrality and an effort to be unbiased on the part of the mediator. Each case must be treated as being unique and dismissing the use of mediation in some cases of abuse within relationships may be questionable (Taylor, 2002).

4.13.3 Advocacy and empowerment as social service

Victim advocacy is one of the most established, and still growing, parts of the criminal justice responses by social service practitioners to violence in partner relationships. The non-profit community organisations such as women's centres and shelters that originate in the grassroots battered women's movements and other welfare agencies may provide various types of assistance to abused women. Advocacy in this context may be described as "the stewards of this infrastructure (of community services) as they direct, guide, and support battered women while confronting and challenging obstacles to their safety" (Shepard, 1999:115).

In abusive relationships, victim advocacy may operate at individual and institutional levels. At individual level, social service practitioners may play the role of advocate by helping a woman to gain a better understanding of her options and on how to negotiate the legal system. This may also include helping the victim to obtain access to important resources such as housing, financial assistance, counselling, information and referral, meeting needs for shelter, clothing food parcels, education and others (Pence & Shepard, 1999). Institutional advocacy may entail working to change institutional practices or policies that work against the needs of battered women. This may include activities such as lobbying legislatures, working with the criminal justice agencies at

a local level or even providing training sessions for battered women on law enforcement issues such as the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, by helping the woman to obtain a protection order, and others (Vetten, 2005).

Although both at individual and institutional level advocacy may be linked to the idea of empowering battered women, the meaning and the ultimate goal of empowerment differ at the two levels. For instance, at individual level there is a therapeutic need for empowerment to be conceptualised as enabling people to master their environments and achieve self-determination. In addition the practitioner may empower the woman towards the achievement of feeling her personal influence in the world, that is, taking an active stance towards problems and fighting against her own oppression (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh & Winstock, 2000).

At institutional level, the practitioner should try to ensure that the legal processes are informed by the needs and experiences of abused women as their cases are processed. However, institutional advocacy may also focus on how the state should deal with men who beat women, regardless of the desires of an individual woman who is the victim of an individual man. Empowerment by social service practitioners means "the ability to give the abused woman the knowledge option available to her, educating her about her options and then letting her make the decision" (Lamb, 2001). The role of the advocate is to be available to speak on behalf of the victims who are unwilling or unable to do so.

McDermott and Garafalo (2004) emphasise that empowerment may further include giving choice back to victims, when it has been taken away by their batterers. The role of the advocate is also to advise the client about the variety of services available for both victims and offenders. The victim's advocate may also have to come to terms with the realisation that some women in abusive relationships may want to remain in relationships with their abusers. Empowerment for these women may entail ensuring their safety by helping them to develop safety plans in times of abuse. Further, advocates who work within the criminal justice system and are responsible to their employers' mission to arrest or prosecute, are more likely to try and guide decisions of battered women. Whereas social workers in other helping agencies may have to be more directive in counselling battered women than other advocates (Peled *et al*., 2000).

Shepard (1999) adds that some of the abused women may suffer unintended negative consequences through advocacy in circumstances where there are changes in law and practice in the criminal justice system. These may include dual arrests, victims being forced to participate in proceedings, having other affected systems like child welfare intrude in their lives and in some instances, victims being mandated to attend support groups. The woman's partner may also threaten to kill her if the case goes to court and the prosecutor may refuse to let her drop the case. Thus, the social service practitioners should always be aware of situations and unintended harm that may arise through changes in victim advocacy (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999).

Hoyle and Sanders (2000) also indicate that some battered women may refuse or be reluctant for the abusers to be arrested and prosecuted, despite the good intentions of practitioners for mandatory or presumptive arrest laws and practices. Some may prefer to resolve the incidents without an arrest, others do not call the police (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1996).

Hoyle and Sanders (2000) argue that the most common reason may be that the assailant may prevent the woman from calling, a phone may not be available, or the matter is perceived to be private, thinking that the police may not help, being afraid for their physical safety or the safety of the children or other negative consequences such as losing housing and economic support. However, others may support calling the police to assist in the immediate abusive situation but may not necessarily want the abuser to be arrested. Social service practitioners should therefore be aware that the complainant at times does not want to break up the relationship or the family. She may hope to avoid retaliation that might come with prosecution and feelings that sanctions imposed would be inappropriate or undesirable. The woman may also be dependent on the income of the batterer or may not want their children to witness their fathers' arrest. Some battered women may file charges but later request them to be dropped as a power move and a way to bargain for what they want, such as custody and or cessation of violence (Felders, 2001).

However, the social service practitioners have to try and ascertain the victims' safety checks. The social service practitioner could leave a business card and urge the woman to call if she has problems of abuse (Weissberg, 2000). In addition, the practitioners may also need to be aware that if empowerment means self-determination or letting the woman make decisions, the victim has to be conceived as having agency and choices. However, there is also a need for critical examination of practitioners on advocacy from the victim's perspective and a more thorough

understanding of the mix of positive and negative feelings of the abused and the effects that may be produced by advocacy within the framework of empowerment (Lawless, 2001).

4.13.4 Crisis hotlines as social service

In addition to a variety of preventive and educational services directed to women in violent relationships and the community at large, social service practitioners may provide crisis hotlines and counselling. These agencies may also be staffed by auxiliary social workers, para-professionals, volunteers and professionals who have received intensive training in crisis intervention and the legal procedures for acquiring an order of protection. Some agencies operate a telephone crisis hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Abused women, families, friends and significant others may utilise this resource, may communicate with the advocates about their abusive experiences and may obtain information and resources to address specific issues pertaining to their immediate needs. An interdisciplinary team, possibly including registered social service providers and other staff, could provide counselling services for women and children who have experienced gender violence. Social service practitioners could also provide peer counselling, community and school-based prevention and outreach services as well as batterer intervention programmes (Bennett, Riger, Schewe, Howard & Wasco, 2004).

4.13.5 Counselling services as social service

Social welfare agencies have also expanded their services to include counselling services that provide women and their children with a chance to address the impact of violence on their lives. The structure and content of counselling services vary from agency to agency. For instance within a feminist and social service model of care, cognitive restructuring therapy, assertive communication, problem-solving therapy can be provided. Furthermore, body awareness, vocational counselling, education about women issues, and gender socialisation, can be included. In addition, self-esteem building may include dealing with anxiety, depression, hostility, assertiveness, and social support, locus of control, coping abilities and self-efficacy. In addition, concrete plan development may include safety plans that may be developed. Trauma counselling and therapy and grief-resolution-oriented counselling play a significant empowerment role to abused women. However, a common part of the domestic counselling programmes is the exploration of abuse from the perspective of power, control and gender inequality (Riger, Bennett, Wasco, Schewe, Frothman & Carnacho, 2002).

4.13.6 Shelters as social service

Shelters are a critical feature of services for battered women as they offer refuge for these women and children during the crisis stage of abuse (Taylor-Browne, 2001). They also provide time for these women to think, weigh their options and alternatives on how to begin to rebuild their lives with social, legal and medical assistance, and their safety if needed. Shelters and advocacy play a significant role in the lives of the abused and may be more helpful as they provide prompt services to women. Furthermore, a shelter stay can reduce the frequency and intensity of new violence. Campbell and Martin (2001) also state that after two weeks of living at a shelter women were less depressed and more hopeful and could think more clearly about their future plans concerning their abusive relationship. It is therefore necessary for social service practitioners to instill skills in these women as some may still suffer from internalised oppression (Weisz, 1999).

4.14 EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS OF ABUSED WOMEN

Social workers also have an obligation to empower their clients on the individual and at the interpersonal level in order to develop their sense of personal power, an ability to affect others and also to foster an ability to work with others to change oppressive social institutions. Empowerment in this regard means assisting women in abusive relationships to move from a state of apathy and despair to a sense of self-efficacy that includes moving from reacting to painful events of battery to taking action. The social worker has to have a working agreement or contract with these women to develop some specific skills and the following can be mentioned:

4.14.1 Communication and negotiating skills

Trevethick (2000) notes that the practitioner has to foster good communication skills in battered women which could enable them to negotiate some form of agreement and understanding when violence and disagreements occur within the intimate partner relationship. Through negotiation, the practitioner and woman may be able to reach some form of common agreement in terms of how she understands her problem of abuse and how this can be overcome. An atmosphere of shared decision-making and collaboration between the woman and practitioner should prevail. Negotiation may also assist the client to shift in her understanding and perceptions of violent

episodes, the position and the belief system she holds and to reach a consensus on how to find a solution to the problem.

The woman can also be empowered on how to mobilise and negotiate resources in welfare and other organisations, for instance, a battered woman can be skilled in how to navigate the criminal justice system to obtain a protection order. She also has to be skilled in how to withstand rejection and failure as resilience, determination and skills of persuasion are perceived to be the main indicators of a successful negotiator (Trevethick, 2000:145).

4.14.2 Networking skills

Trevethick (2000) indicates that formal networks like the planned formal social group works, and informal natural networks such as carers within communities that assist others, family, friends and neighbours have a significant impact on the lives of abused women. These should also be treated with ethnic sensitivity and the practitioner should be aware of the cultural context and explanations that are dominant, for instance, in Xhosa culture to be able to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of African women in violent relationships. The practitioner's role is to acknowledge these resources and utilise networks and apply group work skills to assist families identified as experiencing a crisis and work together with their network as an agent of change.

Through problem-solving network meetings and debates, the practitioner may be able to include formal and informal structures within the community to unravel the role played by each person in that system. To identify the prominent roles of each role player may be empowering to the abused. The client may further be empowered with mediation, advocating and organising skills on how to construct new networks, to sustain or change her existing networks (Coulshed & Orme, 1998).

4.14.3 Assertiveness skills training

A violent partner relationship is most of the time accompanied by a continuous feeling of defeat and low self-esteem, oppression and exploitation, that may make abused women feel powerless and unable to protect themselves from repeated battery. The practitioner may encourage these women to challenge self-pity, fears, anxiety and self-defeating statements and inculcate in them self confident, positive views that are full of hope for the future (Taylor-Browne, 2001).

Assertiveness training may be required to teach abused women to stand up for themselves without being aggressive, threatening, punishing, manipulative, over-controlling and undermining or demeaning other people. The practitioner may have to draw on the learning theory and other cognitive-behaviourist approaches, that may include modelling, rehearsal and operant reinforcement. Through this training the women may be able to identify gaps and replace submissiveness with assertiveness and self-denying statements with feelings of encouragement and positive boldness to move on with a violence-free life style (Trevithick, 2000).

4.15   CONCLUSION

In this chapter the Eurocentric and Afrocentric approaches were discussed to highlight some of the perceptions and strengths of women in abusive partner relationships. Some of the empowering intervention approaches and techniques were deliberated. The criminal justice system as a resource to battered women was discussed. Entrepreneurship and social networks that may include community participation was dealt with. Social welfare services for abused women that include principles, roles and skills that could be offered to battered women were presented.

Although there are many kinds of empowering skills that could be provided to women in violent partner relationships, being confrontative and challenging, dealing with hostility, aggression and violence in a most meaningful and positive, rewarding manner is a salient empowering tactic that social workers could impart to these women.

The research design and methodology used in this study will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will discuss major components of the study, including the research design, research methodology, ethical considerations, sampling procedure, and tools of data collection, analysis of data and limitations of the study.

The other factors regarding the background to the study, are the aim and objectives of the study which were discussed in chapter 1, as well as literature review chapters that were discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

The study was conducted in two phases and the researcher utilised an interpretive approach to establish a coherent and inclusive account of events and cultures from the point of view of those being researched (Neuman, 2000).

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be defined as a strategic framework for action, as plans that guide the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in such a way that there will be a combination of the research questions and the implementation of the research (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). A research design therefore provides a plan that specifies how the research is to be executed in such a way that it answers the research questions. It may also involve multiple decisions about the way data will be collected and analysed. It also ensures that the final report answers the initial research question (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

This research utilised a qualitative approach using exploratory design (Neuman, 2003), the objective being:

- To explore a relatively unknown area;
- To employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research;
- To gain insights into the phenomena;
- To generate speculative insights, new questions and hypotheses; and
- To determine priorities for future research (Babbie, 2001).

Through the exploratory research design, the researcher was able to build and focus on general ideas, to be explored at a later stage (Robson, 2002). The qualitative approach also provided a means to study human experience and have access to the clients' meaning, systems, frame of reference, personal beliefs, cognitive schemes, values, cultural realities and personal motivations. It has also been through the use of this approach that holistic, open-ended, individualistic, ideographic and process oriented insights were developed to discover subjective human reality. Some of the major personal constructs, unique world view and contexts of the participants were discovered (Franklin & Jordan, 1995).

The researcher was not concerned with the causality or testing a hypothesis which is in line with qualitative research. However, due to feminist movements and advocacy women's groups in South Africa and internationally, women's experiences of men's violence is highlighted, moving from an unjustifiable and unspeakable reality to a conceptualised social problem (Collins, 2000).

Limited research has been conducted on perceptions and experiences of abuse among African women in South Africa. Therefore an exploratory research design was found to be more appropriate to utilise as its purpose is to ask questions and assess the phenomena in a new light (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

5.3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants in the real world may sometimes find themselves inadvertently involved in situations they cannot control. They may also be misled about the true nature of the study or may find themselves in situations that cause stress and anxiety. Or, participants in a research study may tend to be reactive in an unpredictable manner by supplying inaccurate information, or refusing to be interviewed by researchers (Robson, 2002).

In order to safeguard against this and avoid deception, stress, and the like, and to balance the participants' right to privacy, dignity and self-determination, the researcher has to consider ethical aspects when working with research participants (Creswell, 2003). Ethics in this study refers to rules of conduct that one needs to conform to as a code or set of principles (Glicken, 2003). The main purpose of ethical research planning has to do with protecting the welfare and the rights of the research participants.

5.3.1   Ethical considerations

The Ethics Committee of the University of Stellenbosch granted ethical clearance for the study and the researcher was initially introduced by intermediaries to the interviewees. The Director and Manager of Ilitha Community Psychological Centre at Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown introduced the researcher to the student social worker on field work placement and to three lay counsellors. They in turn assisted by way of introducing the researcher to the interviewees. Bulmer and Warwick (2000) state that the role of the intermediary or gatekeeper is to provide the most suitable analogy for the interviewer.

This worked well, as the women in violent partner relationships felt at ease to talk about their perceptions and experiences in their abusive relationships.

5.3.2   Ethical principles

Three ethical principles served as a guide to the researcher. These are:

5.3.2.1   *Autonomy*

This principle required the researcher to respect the autonomy of all the people who were participating in the research study, with the researcher having to address issues such as voluntary participation and informed consent. The freedom of the participant to withdraw from the research at any time and the participants' right to anonymity by the use of pseudonyms, was guaranteed. This tends to inculcate willingness to talk and share their perceptions and experiences of abuse to a woman researcher even if they had initial anxieties about the purpose of the research. The intermediary's role and initial presence also assisted in forming a trusting relationship and rapport (Thyer, 2001).

5.3.2.2   *Nonmaleficence*

The second principle the researcher adhered to was to inform the participants that the research study would not place them at any potential risk or any other form of harm. This was done by having the lay counsellors present and a registered social work student who could offer immediate counselling should the need arise. This was also to safeguard the participant from any emotional distress on sharing her painful ordeal.

5.3.3 Beneficence

The researcher informed the participants that the study might generate empowerment techniques that could be of benefit to women in violent relationships. The participants were also told that they would be informed about the results of the study through the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre they were utilising as a source of support (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

5.4 ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH

There are various ethical considerations that the researcher had to adhere to when conducting this study and the following can be mentioned.

5.4.1 Consent

Obtaining the consent of participants is one of the fundamental practices that the researcher had to adhere to and this was obtained by explaining to the participants the objectives of the study and what it entailed. At the onset, the researcher decided to explain in detail the topic of the interview. A full non-technical and clear explanation was given of the role and tasks expected of them so that they could make an informed choice to participate in the research voluntarily. After all explanations were completed the researcher requested the participants to complete consent forms (Annexure C) that contained the same information that was expatiated on and that also ensured confidentiality. During this period privacy, confidentiality, and a non-condemnatory attitude prevailed and this became an important aspect in providing a framework for trust. It is within this framework that the participants managed to confront in a fundamental way pertinent issues that were deep, personally threatening and potentially painful to them (Mesatywa, 1999; Mesatywa, 2008).

5.4.2 Confidentiality

The consent forms that were signed by the participants also ensured that participants were informed about the parameters of confidentiality of the information derived from them. They were also informed that the research was for an academic study with a potential to be published. Participants were also informed that their personal identities would be protected by the use of pseudonyms and that the data would be tape recorded, stored and released as a final document.

5.4.3   Privacy

The interviews were conducted in the participant's own home setting as sometimes the location of the interview may cause the participant to feel rather uncomfortable. In one case, the researcher had to send the children on an errand and also requested them to play outside to ensure privacy (Bulmer & Warwick, 2000).

5.4.4   Competence

Suitably trained and registered professionals should be requested to collaborate and provide appropriate support during the research process. The support could involve emotional and psychological counselling services (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

The researcher therefore ensured that after each interview, including the focus group interviews, a competent lay counsellor and a registered Social Work student was within reach. This was to ensure that therapeutic support was readily available to the participants.

The researcher conducted one-off interviews. Lee (1993) states that respondents usually do not fear a one-off interview, due to the fact that their paths were not likely ever to cross again with that of the interviewer. In addition, a friendly female interviewer, walking into the participant's situation, with time to listen and with guarantees of confidentiality, made it easy to get women in abusive partner relationships to talk. This may also have added to essential trust and anonymity. The fact that the researcher was viewed as a stranger may also have contributed to a reception of most surprising openness – confidence which at times had the character of being confessional. The researcher was also aware that such information would probably be carefully withheld from a more closely related person, and that a one-off interview could also be a disadvantage as the researcher was unlikely to be used later as a source of support. Nevertheless, the researcher found it difficult to resolve the competing debates and claims of single versus repeated interviewing. The researcher is also of the opinion that by providing warmth and acceptance and by treating the participants with dignity and the worth they deserved, assisted in forming a rapport with the women in these abusive relationships. Through this endeavour, meaningful insights that would empower and encourage the abused to speak out about the abusive relationship were attainable.

One-off focus group interviews were conducted as the researcher wished to further explore and gain a better insight into the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships.

5.5   THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The term sample implies the existence of a population or universe of which the sample is a smaller section or a set of individuals selected from a population (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003: 465).

The population is a term that sets boundaries on the study unit. It may consist of people that represent all the measurements of interest to the researcher. The population therefore, is a total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

The population in this study was therefore made up of all abused women who were utilising the services of Ilitha Community Psychological Centre at Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown.

5.5.1   The sample

This study used non-probability sampling as the researcher did not know the population size or the members of the population at the centre (Neuman, 2000). The purposive method of sampling was also convenient for the researcher (De Vos *et al*., 2005). Twenty African women in violent partner relationships as subjects to be interviewed were found in the same site, namely the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre. The researcher also added five participants for the focus group. The African women selected for the study were registered at and receiving assistance and support from the centre.

The researcher is also aware that, although the findings of this study would contribute to a body of knowledge on abused women, the sampling method and the number of subjects used may have restricted the researcher from obtaining more information on the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships.

Nevertheless, this study enabled the researcher to gain meaningful insights from the perspective of the abused women. The study was also able to find out that the respondents in this study

explained, justified and interpreted their accounts of violence differently even within a framework of similar trends (De Vos *et al*., 2005).

5.6   THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The type of measurement used in this study for the collection of data, comprised in-depth interviews, which could be defined as conversations with a purpose. The purpose was not to get answers to questions or to test a hypothesis or to evaluate as the term implies (Henning, 2004). The study was based on a desire to understand the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships and the meaning they ascribe to that experience. Data gathering was conducted in two phases and two Interview schedules (Annexure A & B) designed by the researcher were based on the literature review and were not tested. This is in line with the deductive method that was used. The interviews were tape-recorded in Xhosa as the language of the participants, and later transcribed and translated into English.

During the June 2007 phase, one-off individual interviews were conducted. The interview schedule consisted of four main themes with prompts that were later utilised for an in-depth analysis. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Schurink (1998) refer to in-depth interviews as an interactional situation, as social interactions in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a number of selves; and the relationship between the researcher and the participants is fluid, flexible and changing but always jointly constructed. The following four main themes featured:

a)   Personal details

b)   History of partner violence and the actual nature of the violent incidents

c)   Nature of social support and empowerment services offered by the community psychological service centre

d)   Other available formal and informal resources and potential services that could be offered to women in violent partner relationships.

During June 2008, phase 2, a one-off focus group interview was conducted. The focus group was made up of five other African women in violent partner relationships, and the interview schedule had the following themes:

a)   Personal details

b)   Perceptions and experiences of abuse

c) Nature of abuse

d) The meaning and impact of the act of abuse

e) Perceptions of abuse and need for services

f) Social service practitioners' empowering services.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and the questions were in Xhosa to ensure that the participants understood the questions. The participants' home was agreed upon as a setting as it was quiet and could provide privacy, comfort and a non-threatening environment and was also easily accessible.

After introductory pleasantries, the researcher confirmed again the general purpose of the research and the role that the interview would play in the research study. The estimated time required for the interview was agreed upon and the fact that the information was to be treated confidentially was reiterated. It was also explained that responses would be tape-recorded and permission for the tape recording was sought. The participants who had signed consent forms prior to the interviews were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time, should they experience any misgivings. Additionally, their responses and permission were recorded at the beginning of the interview. Lay counsellors and a registered Social Work student were readily available as a referral and source of a support system.

Each interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed. The tape recorder allowed for a more complete record than notes taken during the interview and it also allowed the researcher to concentrate on how the interview was proceeding and gave a sense of direction (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). Transcripts of recorded talk gave detailed transcripts of the conversation and this also assisted the researcher to overcome the tendency of transcribers to "tidy up" the "messy" features of natural conversation. The interview schedules and detailed transcriptions are included in an annexure and provide a detailed description of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships. The tapes were also transcribed for close analysis (De Vos *et al.*, 2005; Mesatywa, 1999).

The researcher transcribed and translated all twenty interviews and those of the focus group to ensure and maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

The Xhosa Dictionary Project Coordinator and the African Languages Department at Fort Hare University assisted the researcher with the translation into English of certain Xhosa concepts transcribed from tape-recordings, as, at times, the researcher encountered difficulties in interpreting and translating some of the Xhosa concepts into English.

5.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data, and it contributes to a grounded theory (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Following Creswell (1998), when beginning the data analysis, the researcher read the transcripts in their entirety several times, absorbing the details and trying to make sense of the interview as a whole. After this the researcher organised the material according to a single theme or concept derived from all the interviews (Patton, 2002). Data collected from the interviews were collated, and organised into themes that ranged from the general to the specific. The variables that were analysed were the participants' reasons for the emergence of violence in the relationships, and their reasons for staying in the abusive relationship, the forms of assistance that were useful and those that were not, and also the empowerment strategies and the role of the social service practitioners when addressing abusive partner relationships.

This process assisted with reaching the findings. In addition, following the model of "Verstehen", the meaning of a written text was established through putting together the context of the text's creation. The researcher was thus able to recreate the meaning of the responses from the perspective of African women in abusive partner relationship. The knowledge of the socio-historical and linguistic context in which the researcher operated, was significant to an understanding of the women's perceptions and experiences. Thus, "the meaning of human creations, words, actions and experiences can only be ascertained in relation to the contexts in which they occur" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The interview schedule was conceptualised in such a manner that responses could be elicited as narrative descriptions. Keeping in line with qualitative data, the analysis focused on shared themes and understanding (De Vos *et al*., 2005). With tape-recorded interviews, the researcher was able to analyse the exact words that were used. Although analysis can be defined as the

resolution of a complex whole into parts, the key principle of the interpretive analysis used in this study, was to place real-life events and phenomena into some kind of perspective. The researcher also wanted finally to present compelling accounts of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships, that would be recognised as true, but also help to view the phenomenon from a new perspective. The eventual interpretation presented an indication of the manner in which the events were understood, as a process of resolution, and it was relatively easily accomplished as an existing theory was used as a frame of reference. An interpretive approach was applied and the data in this study were eventually interpreted with an existing theory as a frame of reference. Literature control was also used as a means of testing the trustworthiness of the study (Thyer, 2001).

5.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations within the study were noted at various levels, and can be summarised as follows:

- The researcher had to travel to Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown for data collection. Various areas of this township had to be traversed in order to interview the participants. The participants were all utilising the services at the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre. At times it was difficult to meet the costs of travelling to the homes of the respondents.

- The Xhosa culture that socialises one into shyness, made it difficult for the researcher to probe deeper into the experiences of abuse, as this could be interpreted as a sign of being "disrespectful or curious". Xhosa culture is one of "not asking too many questions" and of showing respect, "intlonipho". This means that showing curiosity about other people's affairs may not be acceptable.

- The researcher mostly used terminology like "sisi, mama" meaning Sister/Sus, Mom/Mother when addressing the participants. This is a sign of respect and acknowledging the age difference between the researcher and the participants. This is acceptable in Xhosa culture. This also entrenched "black sisterhood" as both the researcher and the participants are black.

- The presence of a lay counsellor and registered social work student, though negotiated prior to the interviews, may have contributed to the respondents feeling unsure about the protection of their identities. However, the researcher had an obligation to protect the

confidences disclosed and emotions aroused and expressed. A lay counsellor gave support after each interview.

- Conducting interviews in the participants' home settings also had a disadvantage as some of the participants were panicking about the possibility of their partners arriving while the interview was in progress. The children, at times, would seek the attention of the participant in the middle of the interview.

- The researcher also had to wait until late and early evenings to conduct interviews as some of the women had jobs.

- The one-off character of the interview in this study also had a disadvantage as the researcher could not be utilised as a source of assistance and support to the participants.

- The sample of twenty participants for individual interviews and five participants for a focus group was not fully representative of the total population of African women in violent partner relationships. The interview schedules could not be tested beforehand, as they dealt with a sensitive topic. The process was however refined as the interviews continued. Nevertheless, this is in line with qualitative research. Because the sample was not fully representative, the findings cannot be generalised, but could be utilised for further research.

- The researcher is also of the opinion that service providers to people in abusive relationships could have been included as participants, which would have made it easier for the researcher to understand some of the empowerment needs that the survivors required. However, this could be an area for further research.

- The sample could have been enlarged if the researcher had had time and resources or funds to ensure "validity". The translation and transcribing of the interviews were time-consuming and expensive as the researcher did not have funding to cover the costs in terms of buying the equipment necessary to conduct this research efficiently.

- It was also interesting to note that some concepts such as nature and meaning of abuse when translated from Xhosa to English had different connotations. This could be a question of semantics and it became apparent when analysing the data.

- It could also have been interesting to check the type of marriages that African women had, in terms or traditional marriages of "ukuthwala", or customary marriages, so as to

have a better understanding whether these marriages are based on the view that Xhosa law perpetuates violence.

5.9   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher reported on methods utilised for collecting data. The study being qualitative and exploratory, utilised in-depth interviews with a sample of twenty African black women in violent partner relationships and with an additional five African black women who were in the same predicament for the focus group. An interview schedule (Annexure A) was used for the face to face interviews. Additionally, an interview schedule (Annexure B) was used for the one group meeting for focus group interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts, which were in Xhosa, were translated into English.

Lastly, in spite of problems encountered, the experience of studying African women in violent partner relationships was not only a humbling privilege but also an honor as their sharing of their inner and painful experiences was enriching.

The following chapter will deal with data analysis and discussion of findings based on the research methodology that was dealt with in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

AFRICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENT PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews and discusses four major themes emerging from the one-off twenty participants' interviews and five major themes emerging from a one-off focus group interview conducted with the five additional participants, and how these themes relate to the literature. De Vos *et al*. (2005) state that themes provide an explanation for how or why things happen and they also offer descriptions of how people do or should behave.

The primary goal of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships. One of the objectives was to identify the various informal and formal systems and empowerment services that are available and could be of value to assist Xhosa women in violent partner relationships. Formal systems (professional) and informal systems (social and personal network) assist women in violent partner relationships, through various social, legal and counselling services. It is through these kinds of services that an individual can be assisted and empowered to make a decision based on an informed choice. The goal of the focus group as part of the study was to further highlight the nature, the meaning, the impact and the traditional cultural practices and how they are linked to violence in partner relationships.

Data were analysed using an interpretive approach and triangulation for both individual and focus group interviews, that is, per theme as was explained in chapter 1. This chapter deals with the analysis and discussion of the research findings as derived from the in-depth interviews and the focus group interview. The findings are responses of participants to the interview schedules and are attached as Annexure A and B; the findings will be triangulated to obtain a better understanding of the phenomena of abuse.

Participants were purposely chosen to represent Xhosa-speaking African women in the Eastern Cape. All twenty-five participants were selected from Ilitha Community Psychological Services

Centre at Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown and the Director of the centre was utilised as an intermediary. The African women selected for the study were in abusive partner relationships and had been receiving assistance and support from the centre.

The researcher used pseudonyms for the participants to preserve their anonymity. The use of pseudonyms is in line with the research and social work ethics that require protection of confidentiality, anonymity and protection of the identity of participants (De Vos *et al.*, 2005; Thyer, 2001).

During phase 1, one-off individual interviews were conducted with twenty participants and in phase 2 one focus-group interview was done with five participants. The session of the focus group interview was conducted after the individual interviews to explore the findings. The findings that are presented are based on the two phases and will be triangulated. The contents of the interview schedules guided the process on the discussion of findings.

6.2   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study is characterised by personal biographical details as presented by the participants during the interviews that were conducted. The matrix is listed in Table 6.1(a) to present the data on individual interviews.

6.2.1   Personal details of participants involved in individual interviews

Participants were requested to provide their personal details.

Participants were purposely chosen from Ilitha Community Psychological Centre at Ezibeleni Township near Queenstown. All twenty participants were Xhosa-speaking African women who have experienced violence in partner relationships. Personal details of participants will be presented according to age, marital status, employment status and number of children. Table 6.1(a) shows that the participants who took part in the study were between 25 and 58 years old. Their partners' ages ranged from 33 to 60.

TABLE 6.1(a): Personal details

Partici-pants	Pseudonym	Age	Partner-age	Marital status	Number of children	Employment	Partner-employment
1	Kholeka	26	33	Cohabitating	0	Unemployed	Shop-fitter
2	Nontobeko	31	48	Married	3	Unemployed	Employed
3	Nombuyiselo	45	48	Married	2	Employed	Employed
4	Thobeka	31	40	Cohabitating	3	Unemployed	Employed
5	Ntsebe	58	60	Married	2	Unemployed	Pensioner
6	Akhona	25	35	Married	2	Unemployed	Employed
7	Mandisa	32	45	Married	1	Part-time	Employed
8	Nomatham-sanqa	35	46	Married	5	Employed	Employed
9	Nozolile	50	58	Married	2	Employed	Employed
10	Phumeza	38	42	Married	3	Employed	Employed
11	Noluntu	32	36	Married	2	Unemployed	Employed
12	Nokhaya	37	45	Married	3	Employed	Part-time
13	Nomsa	32	40	Cohabitating	1	Part-time	Employed
14	Nomava	37	43	Married	4	Employed	Employed
15	Nozuko	27	35	Married	2	Part-time	Employed
16	Aviwe	30	35	Married	2	Unemployed	Employed
17	Pindiwe	30	35	Married	0	Unemployed	Employed
18	Nomalungisa	35	40	Married	2	Unemployed	Employed
19	Ayanda	26	28	Cohabitating	2	Unemployed	Employed
20	Busisiwe	40	46	Cohabitating	2	Unemployed	Employed

The majority (15 or 75%) of the participants were married, whilst (5 or 25%) were cohabitating. Bent-Goodley (2001) mentions that cohabitating rather than married partners were at an increased risk of both domestic violence and homicides. Goldblatt (2003) concurs with findings claiming that cohabitation places African women in violent partner relationships in a vulnerable situation compared with married women. This is because they do not hold the status of daughters-in-law which would traditionally enable them to call upon husbands' families to intervene in their

relationship. A male cohabitant may not be deterred from using physical violence as there is no threat of losing ilobola when a relationship breaks down; there is of course no payment of ilobola for cohabitants. Goldblatt (2003) is not in favour of cohabitation and indicates that unmarried women who support families either because they are divorced or have never married should also have access to communal land, a state of affairs prevalent in African societies. Section 4(3) of the Communal Land Rights Act, No 11 of 2004 provides that a woman is entitled to the same legally secure tenure rights in or to land and benefits from the land as is a man. Furthermore, no law community or other rule, practice or usage may discriminate against any person on the ground of the gender of such a person.

Almost all of the participants (18 or 80%) had children with numbers ranging from one child to five with the exception of two (20%) who did not have children. Tshesane (2001) postulates that children observe and witness family violence either directly or indirectly, consequently it later becomes a learned behaviour through role modelling in the family.

Just over half of the participants (11 or 55%) were unemployed; some participants (6 or 30%) were employed while a few (3 or 15%) worked part-time. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) state that unemployment or part-time employment has been associated with increased rates of domestic violence, a statement supported by these findings. It has also been noted that domestic violence among racial groups is attributable in part to poverty, and traditional cultural values encourage maintenance of male-dominated relationships (Bell & Matis, 2000). Findings citing poverty and unemployment are supportive of this literature.

During the second phase of the study a focus group interview was done in addition to the individual interviews to clarify aspects that were not clear and to explore themes in greater depth for a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships. Five other African women in abusive relationships who were receiving assistance and support from Ilitha Community Psychological Centre were involved in the focus group.

The discussion of the findings will utilise the framework structure of the interview schedule. The same headings as in the interview schedule will be used in this chapter.

6.2.2 Personal details of members of focus group

Participants were requested to provide their personal details. The matrix in Table 6.1(b) is listed to present the data.

TABLE 6.1(b): Personal details

Participants	Pseudonym	Age	Partner-age	Marital status	Number of children	Employed	Partner-employment
1	Noloyiso	44	53	Married	3	Unemployed	Employed
2	Babalwa	25	33	Cohabitating	1	Employed	Employed
3	Sive	35	40	Married	4	Employed	Unemployed
4	Nolulamo	38	45	Married	2	Employed	Employed
5	Nontsapho	45	50	Married	3	Employed	Unemployed

Table 6.1(b) shows that the ages of participants ranged from 25 to 45 and one participant was 25 years old; another one was 35; one 38; one 44 and one 45 years old respectively. Most of the participants (4 or 95%) were married and only one participant (1 or 5%) was cohabitating. All participants (5 or 100%) had children that ranged from one child to four children. Four of the participants (95%) were employed while one (5%) was unemployed.

Jacobs and Jewkes (2002) claim that female unemployment or underemployment particularly in rural areas coupled with lack of references restricts many women's ability to leave abusive relationships.

These findings from the second phase concur with those that were presented in the first phase as they all indicate that African women who were either married or cohabitating were prone to violence. However, those that are cohabitating are less protected by traditional practices like the payment of ilobola. Those women who were either underemployed or unemployed may sustain a violent partner relationship due to socio-economic factors. However, findings reveal that most of these women were married and this may imply that traditional practice based on the institution of marriage may not necessarily prohibit abuse.

6.2.3 Themes and sub-themes

The following four themes: history of violence; meaning and impact of abuse; kinds of services received and kinds of empowerment services required emerged from the findings based on the individual interviews.

6.2.3.1 Theme 1: History of violence

The first theme is presented as follows:

TABLE 6.2: Perceptions and experiences on the history of violence

Theme 1: History of violence	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Factors that triggered abuse	• Alcohol abuse • Extra-marital affair • Peer pressure

Participants were asked what triggered abuse.

A discussion of the history of violence will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.2.

• **Alcohol abuse**

Some participants (4 or 40%) said that their partner would start a fight due to alcohol abuse. Four (95%) of the focus group participants reiterated that abuse most of the time happened when their partners were under the influence of liquor or were drunk. In the words of one of the participants:

My husband drinks alcohol, and has extra-marital affairs. At times he comes home under the influence of liquor and he would start a fight with me and the children, arguments will follow and he would start to beat me.

Barnett, Perrin and Perrin (2005) emphasise that alcohol consumption contributes to uninhibited behaviour and this may cause harm not only to the abused, but also to other persons. Abrahams *et al*. (1999) also indicated in a study undertaken in Cape Town that men admitted that alcohol contributed to violent behaviour and that rape was most likely to occur when women refused to have sex with them when they were drunk. According to Caetano, Schafer and Cunrad (2001) in

an overview study carried out on intimate partner violence, men were probably drunk when violence occurred in approximately 45% of the cases.

According to some of the focus group participants (4 or 95%) alcohol abuse can also feature both as a trigger and justification for abuse. These findings are in line with literature listing reasons provided for battery. While men were under the influence of alcohol, abuse largely centred on the control women tried to exercise. In some cases alcohol abuse exacerbates an already explosive situation (Parenzee & Smythe, 2003). At other times men's insecurities and controlling strategies can be intensified by their own perceived need to attempt to control their female partner's sexual behaviour. Jealousy and sexual infidelities can reflect attempts by violent partners to present themselves as "macho" in public (Morojele *et al*., 2006). Attempts may include acts of aggression, boasting to peers about their ability to control female partners and retaliation in cases where the women wanted to question the abusers' acts of misbehaviour or wanted to leave the violent relationship (Morrell, 2001).

In addition, Parry, Pluddenmann, Steyn, Bradshaw, Norman and Laubsher (2005) correlate aggression in families with alcohol consumption. Underlying this view is the opinion that the effects of alcohol on the central nervous system release inhibitions by depressing the brain functioning or suppressing the super-ego function, thereby allowing the expression of rage (Kaufman, 2001).

Furthermore, in traditionally male dominated societies there is a link between alcohol abuse and violence. Consequently, perceptions of masculinity relating to drinking and violence as masculine or "macho" are accommodated and accepted in some societies (Raj & Silverman, 2002). This perception is reinforced by broader societal norms about what is appropriate behaviour for women. Feeding into this problem is the presence and accessibility of shebeens and taverns that sell liquor to African communities; some of them are illegally established but accepted or tolerated in the communities (Morojele *et al*., 2004; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003).

According to Blacklock (2001) some researchers still query the cause and effect of the relationship between alcohol abuse and male violence by stating that when male partners quit substance abuse it does not necessarily mean that they will stop battery. However, abuse terminates when men do not benefit from this behaviour and cannot get away with it.

- **Extra-marital affairs**

In another category of responses, a quarter (5 or 25%) of participants identified infidelity or extra-marital affairs as triggering violence in partner relationships. All the participants (5 or 100%) of the focus group mentioned that infidelity and refusal to use a condom by their partners also placed them at risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Some of the participants said:

- *My husband always comes back home drunk especially during weekends and he will whine about everything and also about the fact that I'm not good enough for him and will boast about his girlfriend and how charming she is. Arguments would follow and we would be shouting at each other and he would start to insult, threaten and beat me in front of the children.*

- *My partner has an extramarital affair and at one point I fought with his girlfriend but he still refuses to use a condom and he would beat me and accuse me of infidelity if I insist on the use of a condom. He claims that he can never be infected by HIV/AIDS and that as an African man, he is immune to the disease.*

These narratives of participants show that alcohol induced violence seems to be a feature of some of the participants' relationships. Shisana and Simbaya (2002) point out that the use of alcohol, as well as having multiple sexual partners, has been increasingly recognised as a major determinant of sexual risk behaviour that results in battery. It has also been noted that promiscuous behaviour and multiple partner relationships indirectly contribute to HIV transmission in sub-Saharan countries (Fritz, Woelk, Bassett, McFarland, Routh, Tobaiwa & Stall, 2002).

The findings of this study are supported by Vetten (2007) who claims that the consequences of domestic violence may be fatal for women in an abusive and controlling relationship, being twice as likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS as women in non-violent relationships. Muthien (2004) also mentions that rural female victims of domestic violence incur a greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. This is because of their inability to negotiate safe sexual practices with their partners.

- **Peer pressure**

Three (15%) participants mentioned that peer pressure and the bad influence of friends trigger abuse because partners at times stay out until late or do not come back home as they are out having fun with friends; the resultant arguments when they get home lead to abuse. All participants (100%) in the focus group interview mentioned that peer pressure on their partners to prove their masculinity to friends is rife, and abuse can be used as a tactic in this regard. One participant mentioned the following:

- *My partner has the tendency of not coming back home and would not sleep in the house. He spends most of his time with friends who have a bad influence on him and he conforms to peer pressure. When I confront him about this behaviour he becomes rude and this leads to an argument.*

Kim (2000) explains that in some African societies women are not allowed to question their partners' infidelity, and extra-marital affairs are most of the time socially acceptable. Lack of cooperation from some women in accepting infidelity may contribute to abuse (Bowman, 1999).

Some men may perceive having casual sexual relationships as an exciting adventure that is pleasurable, recreational and risky and to have such a relationship may seem to be a pivotal part of masculine identity and peer pressure (Morojele *et al*., 2006).

6.2.3.2   *Theme 2: Nature of abuse*

The following sub-themes emerged from theme 2: nature of abuse is discussed as follows:

TABLE 6.3: Nature of abuse experienced

Theme 2: Nature of abuse	
Sub-themes	**Categories**
Physical abuse	- Beating - Forced sex
Verbal and psychological abuse	- Verbal insults - Oppressive and controlling behaviour
Economic abuse	- Refusing to give money - Giving too little money

A discussion on the nature of abuse experienced by the African women in violent relationships will be presented according to the sub-themes and categories as outlined in Table 6.3. The findings are based on the individual interviews and the focus group interview.

Both participants from the individual and focus group interviews experienced the following:

- **Physical abuse**

A majority (18 or 80%) of participants from both the first and second phase of interviews (4 or 95%) referred to physical abuse as a form of battery. Some explained that they endured kicking, slapping, hitting, and knife-stabbing, beating with a stick and knobkerrie, whipping and pulling of hair. The participants of the focus group (4 or 95%) also mentioned physical beatings prevailing in their partner relationships and they endured and regarded it as a form of punishment when they had transgressed the authority of their partners. Some of the experiences are cited as follows:

- *.... He beat me and used a sewing needle to make drawings on my skin with the needle. He even wrote his name on one of my breasts. He told me that he wanted any other man to see that he owns me and I belong to him. He told me that there is no other man that would want me.*

- *He kicks, slaps and sometimes uses a knobkerrie and he also beats the children when they cry during abuse. He broke my arm and also took my son and threw him by the scruff of the neck, and banged his head against the wall and he fainted. It was in school that the teacher noticed that his arm was broken.*

These findings correspond with a finding by Kim (2002) linking physical abuse with terms such as punishment or discipline. Those men who were able to discipline their female partners were received with some form of approval by their communities. These men also claim that they maintain order in the home by beating their partners. Physical assault or threat of physical harm, intended to cause physical injuries, and other manipulative exercises may be used. These may include a weapon or physical attack to control a partner (Hotaling & Buzawa, 2001).

- **Forced sex**

Some participants (3 or 15%) mentioned forced sex as another form of physical abuse that they endured and of the focus group participants 4 (or 95%) stated that it was difficult to report forced sex that they endured to somebody else as it was taboo for African women to divulge and talk about sex openly to another person, including relatives. Some of the participants said:

- *He forces himself on me and would have sex with me even if I have not consented to it, he refuses to use protected sex or condoms and he doesn't care how I feel.*

- *I can't report and talk about the sex matters as my husband has a right to have sex with me when he wants to and I can never discuss it with my family. My in-laws will be angry with me as in my culture you don't speak publicly about sex matters as that is a very private matter. Even neighbours are not supposed to know about such a problem.*

Forced sex is often a form of rape or sexual assault. This view is supported by Londt (2004) who adds that some abusers use sexual violence as a form of intimidation and to cause harm to the victims. They may be pressured and coerced to perform humiliating, painful and degrading sexual activities. Some perpetrators may refuse to wear condoms despite the fact that they engage in high risk sex with multiple partners. Women in abusive relationships who endure sexual assault may suffer from physical, emotional, and mental abuse and their social well-being may be affected profoundly. Some may suffer genital and other bodily injuries due to the force used in rape (Christofides *et al*., 2003). The findings in this study also support Hotaling and Buzawa (2001) who cite sexual assaults as a common component of domestic violence.

The findings of the study also concur with Moser and Clark's (2001) statement that silence about sex matters is locked into loss and cultural differences which emphasise that women who have been raped should not talk publicly about their experiences, as they will lose even more, such as privacy, or maybe respect. If a woman speaks out she may destroy her own possibilities of a positive future. In African families there is also a culture of not discussing sexual matters with your own family. Adding to the trauma of speaking out is the custom in several indigenous South African cultures, that the words that describe the genitals may not be mentioned in front of adults. In more ways than one, it is easier to keep silent (Moser & Clark, 2001). The literature also suggests that it is difficult for a woman to find a voice on her own behalf and in order not to contaminate relationships with personal grief or suffering. Women seem to be unable to talk even

among themselves about what they experienced. The violation of the body, and therefore of the self, becomes locked in and it is only the woman herself who is aware of the inner vibrations which do not vanish but always well up as a frenzy of fear (Moser & Clark, 2004).

- **Verbal and psychological abuse**

Some participants (15 or 75%) involved in the individual interviews explained verbal and psychological abuse as emotional abuse. These participants identified verbal and psychological abuse as a manifestation of verbal insults. This was reiterated by the focus group (5 or 100%) participants who also cited verbal insults as one type of abuse they experienced. Eight (40%) individual participants and 5 (or 100%) experienced an oppressive and controlling attitude from their partners. Some of the women experienced humiliation in the presence of friends, family, children, and girl friends, blame shifting, accusations of extra-marital affairs and undermining their integrity.

Participants said:

- *…he emotionally abuses me about the fact that I could not bear children and humiliates me in front of friends and it was then that my husband told me that whether I liked it or not he was going to go outside our marriage have children.*
- *…he humiliates and verbally insults me every time and likes to show off about me in front of my children, friends and relatives. He is very oppressive and controlling and he calls me names and says I'm useless, stupid, not able to control money and make people look down on me.*

Paymar (2000:83) confirms that psychological and emotional abuse is linked to controlling behaviour by one's partner. Emotional abuse is also perceived as a powerful weapon that contributes to pain, it depersonalises the victim and increases power for the abuser. Abusive partners almost always utter dehumanising comments before assaulting their partners.

According to the South African Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, psychological abuse refers to a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a complainant. This may include repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling, repeated threats to cause emotional pain, or the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy; these may lead to a serious invasion of the complainants' privacy, liberty, integrity and security (Vetten, 2005).

MacDougall (2000) reiterates that at times when spouses cause harm and death to partners through acts of violence, some men display no hint of remorse for their actions. Instead they blame their spouse for their acts of violence. Such discourse confirms that some men believe that it is acceptable to hit a woman and may justify their acts of abuse as "normal" which is a depiction of hegemonic values inherent in societies (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999). Consequently, the oppressed partner would internalise the image of the oppressor and may fear to leave an abusive relationship (Freire, 2002).

- **Economic abuse**

Participants describe economic abuse as finance-controlling behaviour and a form of domestic abuse. They were vocal about economic hardships that they experienced from their male partners. Some participants (12 or 60%) involved in the individual interviews and four (95%) of the participants in the focus group mentioned that their partners would refuse to give them money for family maintenance and household requirements. Other participants (7 or 30%) involved in the individual interviews and all the participants (5 or 100%) in the focus group mentioned that their partners gave them little money, but had money to buy liquor, share with friends in taverns and spend on girlfriends. The money received from their partners was inadequate to meet their needs and they did not know how much their partners earned. Participants' narratives were as follows:

- *My husband never gave me money instead he would open the grocery cupboards himself and check what was not there and he would go and buy groceries on his own irrespective of whether these were the kinds of things I wanted or not. He spent most of his money on alcohol.*

- *He used most of his money to buy liquor and it would be hard for me to get adequate money to pay for necessities of the house and for the children. Sometimes I could get money from relatives.*

Ponton (2002) agrees that economic abuse can be explained as a form of abuse that is exerted by male partners on women where they have control of the finances and allocate funds to female partners at their discretion. Furthermore, financial abuse is viewed as a structural constraint that inculcates financial dependence of women on their male partners. Consequently, abused women may find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Some batterers also ensure economic dependence by denying women direct access to money and forbidding them to work outside the

home, or harass them at work to a point where they end up being fired (Melbin *et al*., 2003). Paymar (2000) adds that the person who is in control of the finances usually has more authority in a relationship compared to a person who does not have any source of income, as the study indicates.

6.2.3.3   Theme 3: Meaning of abuse

In both phase 1 and 2 respectively, all participants provided a variety of opinions on the meaning of abuse and Table 6.4 presents the sub-theme and related categories.

TABLE 6.4: **The meaning of abuse**

Theme 3: Meaning of abuse	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Feelings and experience	- Degrading - Lack of love - Feeling trapped - Humiliation - Poverty

A discussion of the meaning of abuse will be based on findings from both individual and focus group interviews to contribute to an in-depth understanding of abuse. The categories relating to their feelings and experience will now be discussed.

- **Degrading**

All participants (20 or 100%) mentioned that abuse was degrading and that one was in constant fear of one's life. This was confirmed by all participants (5 or 100%) of the focus group who stated that abuse made a person lose her self-value, and the respect from society. In the words of one of the participants:

- *I have been in constant fear of being violated and the experience and meaning of abuse is degrading, being oppressed, assaulted and labelled as a useless person, who is stupid, worthless, undermined who has no integrity all.*

- *It is degrading but I love him and he always looks sorry afterwards and I believe he will change. To me it means he dominates me because I come from a poor family background and he punishes me when he feels I transgressed.*

Literature concurs with these findings as it states that virtually all counts of abuse are degrading and there is anticipation of male partner violence that leaves women in much greater fear and with injuries in situations of domestic violence (Moffit, Robins & Caspi, 2001).

- **Lack of care and love**

Three quarters (15 or 75%) of participants stated that violence in partner relationships meant that there was a lack of love and care, love had diminished, or their partners hardly had time to show love and care for the family. However, some participants experienced contriteness from their partners after the abuse. In some cases, their partner would ask for forgiveness. Some focus group members (4 or 95%) mentioned that although they did love their partners, there was lack of love and care on their partners' side as they abused and then asked for forgiveness almost all the time. Participants cited the following:

- *Abuse means that my partner does not care nor love me. People around me look down on me because of the insults and humiliation that he directs at me. He beats me today and later calls for forgiveness and claims that he loves me!*

- *…he doesn't love me any more, he claims that he still loves me but I provoke him into anger and he always asks for forgiveness. My family and friends see me as a useless person because of his utterances when battery occurs.*

Budlender (2002) mentions that some men abuse their partners and would plead for forgiveness in the aftermath only to start the cycle of violence yet again. Some of these men do have quality time with their families to show love and care, but they would rather spend money on entertainment, leaving women and young children destitute, this is indicated by the findings of this study (Budlender, 2002).

- **Feeling trapped**

All participants (20 or 100%) in the interviews felt trapped in their abusive relationships due to family circumstances of having minor children, of dependence on their male partners as providers

and for shelter. All the focus group participants (5 or 100%) mentioned that unsupportive families in their ordeal made them feel trapped in their circumstances.

- *To me it means he abuses me because I don't have a family home to go to and I'm poor and destitute so I feel trapped because I have children. He is the main income provider and dominates me because he has power and money and I am unemployed.*

- *The act of violence humiliates me and I'm trapped and bullied by my partner as he has more power but I endure because of my children as I am poor and need financial support from him.*

Since women need economic resources to escape or leave abusive relationships, African rural women's extreme poverty will generally make them feel more trapped and vulnerable to domestic violence (Artz, 1999b). Wojcicki (2001) adds that women in violent domestic situations may react emotionally to their experiences, and they may often feel trapped and paralysed and unable to act to defend themselves or their children (Ambrosino *et al*., 2005).

- **Humiliation**

All the participants (20 or 100%) in the individual interviews and all of the focus group participants (5 or 100%) claimed that abuse was humiliating because their children and community members usually witnessed the abuse. Five participants (100%) from the focus group also mentioned that humiliation prevailed in their experiences of abuse as some friends and community members would witness the abuse.

- *It is humiliating but family expectations, poverty and male domination makes you to stay and endure because of the children.*

- *My husband shouts and beats me in front of my children and at times in the presence of his friend, and to me it's humiliating. The pain of humiliation is more than the actual violent act because the next day you are too ashamed to even face the reaction of your neighbours, let alone your own children.*

Walker (2000) mentions that women caught up in domestic violence may be humiliated by the act of abuse, and may learn to become passive as a way of coping with their violent spouse and may have been conditioned to believe that they were powerless to get out of the violent situation.

- **Poverty**

All participants (20 or 100%) in the individual interviews claimed that coming from a poor family background meant that their partners could batter them because it was difficult for them to leave with their children as their family members were poor and could not accommodate them. This was also pointed out by all (5 or 100%) of the participants in the focus group who also emphasised that poor family backgrounds made them prone to partner abuse, and that they had to endure as they could not afford alternative accommodation and being further impoverished. Some of the participants' utterances were:

- *This means if I leave him I will lose everything that I've worked for as I have spent a lot of money building this house and I have bought almost everything. To me it means that should I leave, my children won't have any other place to stay and we can become destitute and poor. He doesn't care about how I feel and is using his power and authority all the time, he is domineering.*

- *Poverty, and not having a supportive family makes me a target of violence and my in-laws always blame me and make my situation worse as they like to gossip and lie about me and this creates fights between myself and my husband.*

- *You know when you come from poor family situations; your husband can take advantage of you just like my husband does. He knows I have children that need a home and I have worked hard to improve my house. I even use sexual charms to persuade him not to abuse me and when I need money I would do anything he asks me even if it's sex, just for the sake of survival.*

These findings concur with Wojcicki's (2001) statement that the precarious, poor social and economic circumstances under which African women live in rural areas may contribute to their vulnerability to violent partner relationships and may limit their ability to escape it. Some women in rural areas usually do not own their homes; they may be unable to protect themselves from eviction by abusive partners as evidence shows that police may be reluctant to evict male perpetrators of violence from homes which they own.

Findings support those by Morrell (2001) who attests that poverty, mind-numbing boredom, lack of work opportunities or prospects for advancement become vehicles for loss of respect and vulnerability to battery. According to Wojcicki (2001) shortage of paid employment for women

in rural areas contributes to their general dependency on remittances from husbands and other family members and these issues make them prone to abusive circumstances. Women who are poor and lack other economic resources may also sometimes resort to sexual relationships in exchange for financial support. It is therefore likely that some of the women who are in violent partner relationships may at times not feel entitled to use legal strategies to escape violence. Very poor families may also not have the resources to accommodate or help victims of domestic violence. The woman may not be entitled to any assets except for personal property and the fact that customary law makes no provision for spousal or child maintenance after divorce, meaning that abusive partners will have no obligation to provide economic support to their ex-wives. Moreover, Bennett (2004) states that the "phuthuma custom" whereby the husband negotiates payment of compensation for mistreating the wife may expose women to continued abuse. When African women leave an abusive relationship they may be forced or coerced to return to their partners as their impoverished fathers and families have been compensated.

It has also been noted that domestic violence among ethnic racial groups is attributable in part to poverty, and traditional cultural values encourage maintenance of male-dominated relationships (Bell & Matis, 2000). Findings citing poverty, unemployment and male domination are supportive of this literature.

Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) also state that the discrepancy between employment and income places a woman at risk and when a woman earns more than the male partner, some men may feel psychologically threatened and some may use violence to reassert power in their relationship. Findings concur with the literature which states that the precarious social and economic conditions under which some African rural women live may contribute to their vulnerability to domestic violence and may limit their ability to escape it (Nhlapho, 1990).

6.2.3.4   Theme 4: Impact of abuse

The impact of abuse on African women in violent partner relationships will be briefly outlined in Table 6.5 with the inclusion of participants' responses. A review of literature will follow.

TABLE 6.5: **Impact of abuse**

Theme 4: Impact of abuse	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Impact of abuse	• Anger • Depression • Isolation • Hopelessness and helplessness

A discussion of the impact of abuse on African women in partner relationships will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.5. Subsequent to that, a literature review will be provided.

• **Feelings**

The first category indicated that all (20 or 100%) participants were angered about the use of violence in their partner relationships, while the second category showed that participants (12 or 60%) were suffering from depression. They mentioned that when in a violent relationship, one becomes depressed by the incidences of abuse. In the third category of respondents, 8 (40%) isolated themselves from society due to shame. All participants (5 or 100%) involved in the focus group felt hopeless and helpless by the abuse. One participant responded as follows:

   • *I am isolated from my family as he controls my movements. My self-esteem is very low and I am depressed. I'm in a hopeless and helpless situation. Relatives and friends are gossiping about my situation and are laughing at me.*

Campbell (1998) confirms that women are reluctant to voluntarily disclose abuse. Some women often receive dangerous societal messages in the home and in the media that portray male violence and control as a normal part of a loving relationship. These myths are internalised and exacerbate the understanding and underpinning of abusive behaviour in society. They also perpetuate the perception that women in abusive relationships are responsible for their victimisation. This in a way absolves the abuser, as well as society at large, of responsibility and immobilises abused women from seeking assistance. They are trapped into feeling guilty, helpless, hopeless, isolated, shamed and confused. The findings of this study also concur with Shamai (2000) who mentions that the impact of partner abuse is more likely to result in greater

psychological damage and victims may become emotionally traumatised. This may result in depression, low self-esteem, and in general emotional malaise that may include chronic mental health problems and posttraumatic stress disorder.

6.2.3.5 *Theme 5: African practices*

In this section, the influence of African practices relating to women in violent partner relationships will be elaborated on and Table 6.6 will briefly outline participants' responses after which literature will be provided.

TABLE 6.6: Perceptions and experiences of traditional and African cultural practices

Theme 5: African practices	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Influence of tradition and culture	• Male domination • Head of household • Secrecy • Culture • Customary rituals • ilobola practice • Ubuntu • Traditional healer

A discussion of African practices will be presented according to the sub-theme and influence of tradition and culture-related categories as outlined in Table 6.6. A summary and discussion of the phase 2 focus group interview will follow. Substantive literature will also be presented.

• **Male domination**

All participants (20 or 100%) viewed the Xhosa culture as contributing to male domination which was entrenched by socialisation, as young girls are told to respect and obey their husbands. Four participants (95%) in the focus group were dominated by males.

The following narratives were communicated by the participants:

- *Socialisation has educated us to allow the male to dominate, to look upon the man as the head of family who has control in the home and must be respected. But I also think traditionally men have more power and authority compared to me as a woman to exert his demands, even those demands I cannot fulfil.*

Mqeke (2003) states that culture with a "macho" concept of masculinity which includes dominance, toughness or male honour was found to prevail in high levels in cases of abuse against women. The patriarchy system that is dominant in African culture in particular also entrenches traditional and cultural practices that contribute to the root causes of women abuse (Randall, 2003). Hence the findings of the study indicate that men as head of families are dominating to prove their power, entrench authority and to enforce respect and recognition. Their decisions are final and cannot be challenged by their female partners. This is usually acceptable in many African societies.

- **Head of household**

Another category of the traditional African culture relates to the experience of 18 (90%) participants, who regarded their partners as the head of the household. Some participants (3 or 60%) in the focus group stated that their male partners have all the power and authority and their decisions are final in whatever is discussed. One participant said:

- *Yes, tradition socialises us to accept that men are head of households. They have power and are on us and … they are our "gods". Consequently they oppress us because we are told to obey and respect them even if they do not deserve it.*

However, in contrast with some of the claims Mqeke (2003) points out that violence against women has long been identified and disapprobated in Xhosa law. This indicates that the husband, although he is regarded as the head of a household, cannot do as he "pleases" with his wife or abuse her. This also contravenes the principle of Xhosa law which states that women should not be abused. To substantiate this principle, there is an old Xhosa maxim which says "induku ayi namzi", meaning, there can be no peace or harmony where brute force (stick) rules a home. Should the husband ill-treat the wife, the in-laws and elders would also speak to and counsel the couple. The Xhosas believe that they can sort out their own problems amongst themselves

without recourse to the justice system. Should the abuse continue, the wife may leave the husband for her maiden home and the husband would be fined a bull, goat or a cow. The wife may further be "telekwa", meaning her family may retain her and refuse to let her go back to her husband until the matter has been satisfactorily resolved.

In living Xhosa law, women are encouraged to seek police protection and lay a criminal charge against their partners especially in situations where the woman is severely injured. If the matter has been handled in a traditional court, the court of appeal is the magistrate court. The perception that Xhosa law perpetuates violence against women is misplaced as the act of partner abuse has never been sanctioned by Xhosa law (Mshunqane, 2007).

- **Secrecy**

Another category of response of the sub-theme relates to seventeen (85%) participants who confirmed that they were socialised into keeping abuse and whatever happened in a household as a family secret. Three (60%) participants involved in the focus group would discuss their experiences of abuse with other family members such as relatives and in-laws in trying to find a solution to their experiences. The following are some of the participants' remarks:

- *At home I was told to endure the abusive relationship as marriage is never easy. It is also not nice and acceptable that after you are married away to end your relationship and come back to your parents' house. You are told by your parents that family matters should be kept as a family secret and you cannot talk about your abuse matter to other people who are not family. I don't have any other alternative but to stay.*

According to Livingstone (2002) family secrets were referred to in cases where battery in a home or intimate relationship was continuous and the victim, including family members, do not divulge it or only report it in worst-case scenarios. Secrecy was connected with social standing within the community as the family would be shamed should knowledge of the abuse be divulged to other people.

Nason-Clark (2004) concurs with the findings that shame is felt in many cases on the issue of abuse in partner relationships hence it is still kept private and secret. In addition some women may find it difficult to leave a violent partner relationship as this will tarnish the family name as they are recognised and acknowledged as victims of abuse (Smullans, 2001).

- **Culture**

Eight (40%) of the participants doubted that culture contributed to male abuse, but seventeen (85%) of the participants felt that they were confined to these abusive situations because they had no alternative accommodation. Three (15%) of the participants did not believe Xhosa culture contributed to abusive behaviour. However, all five (100%) of the focus group participants perceived culture as perpetuating partner abuse. One participant remarked:

- *Yes, it's African culture that makes us prone to abuse because even parents used to go through the same situation and could not leave an abusive relationship because they did not want to disgrace the family name and never did anything.*

Ojacor (2005) agrees with the findings that domestic violence has been rooted in a social and cultural context and public attitudes that prescribe what is or is not acceptable in intimate relationships and these values are entrenched in social and cultural norms. These public attitudes shape the social environment in which the victims of abuse are caught and these may either perpetuate or reduce the levels of domestic violence against women in our societies (Gracia & Herrero, 2006).

While three quarters of the participants (15 or 75%) in the first phase in this study highlighted specific problems which indicated the misuse and misinterpretation of cultural traditions, this was reinforced by three participants of the focus group. Londt (2004) refers to a Population Report that noted that although culture can aggravate women's vulnerability, it also serves as a creative resource for intervention. These may include traditional cultural practices such as public shaming and others that could be mobilised as resources to confront abusive partner relationships.

- **Customary rituals**

In this category 15 participants (75%) mentioned that some forms of traditional practices such as customary rituals made them prone to abuse, as their partners would force them to work and be involved in the customary process irrespective of whether they wanted to or not. Some participants (2 or 40%) of the focus group mentioned that they were beaten by their partners when they refused to take part in family customary rituals. One participant said:

- *Traditional belief and practices like customary rituals make me prone to abuse as they contravene my Christian beliefs as born again. I seem not to be cooperative as I refuse to be part of these ceremonies and this leads to battery.*

For the purpose of this study customary rituals are considered part of an African culture that encompasses specific beliefs, values, world views, behavioural norms and social expectations. This may include brewing of African beer, and traditional ceremonial functions that entail slaughtering of a goat or cow or sheep depending on the main purpose of the ceremony. Customary rituals may provide direction, purpose and meaning to life in a particular ethnic group and are goal directed (Giesbrecht & Sevcik, 2000).

- **Ilobola practice**

Most participants (19 or 90%) spoke extensively about their perceptions of ilobola as not supposed to contribute to violence in partner relationships. Ten (50%) of the participants stated that ilobola practices contributed to their battery as their partner mentioned that they have a right to do whatever they want to their women as they owned them through the payment of ilobola. This was reflected in the response of the participants (5 or 100%) in the focus group who also perceived ilobola tradition as a compromising factor to tolerance of abuse. They mentioned that partners always reminded them about the amount of ilobola payment whenever they were abusive.

These were some of the comments of the participants:

- *He thinks he owns me as he paid ilobola; he thinks he has a right as he has bought me.*
- *I was socialised in situations to believe that the fate of a girl is in marriage and that we should endure even if it is painful as ilobola payment is also a proof that I belong to my husband.*

According to Dr Nokuzola Mndende (Mail & Guardian, April 13-20, 2006:19) ilobola is based on relation building between two families. This is for the protection of children that will be born of a relationship that is based on either traditional or civil marriages. She further argues that there is a misconception that women are sold through the payment of lobola and feminists never mention that the bride has to bring certain possessions from her own homestead to the new home

and the in-laws (ukwambesa). In addition, in pre-colonial Africa there were clearly defined gender roles that prescribed what a man was and could do, and what a woman was and could do.

Milne (2004) purports that both patriarchal and matriarchal societies had, and some still have today, specific gender defined hierarchy and gender roles that assist to justify customs invoking the sanctions of ancestors. Ilobola may be one of the cultural practices that may encourage gender relations and stereotypes, leading to gender violence and abuse of cultural norms and standard practices.

Johnson-Latham (2005) attests that culture, tradition and attitudes are often interpreted by men. Men compared to women are allocated different roles exceeding their biological roles. Consequently, they enjoy different rights such as to chastity, ownership, inheritance, education, careers and others. Hence, at times, men are not afraid of losing their honour compared to losing their power, prestige and their position of superiority and the privileges that go with it (Imbrogno & Imbrogno, 2000). This statement is confirmed by the findings of this study that suggest ilobola as interpreted by men, "conveniently so", as a bride-price to buy a woman instead of building family relationships between the two families. The interpretation results in ownership of women by men, which may lead to battery.

Furthermore, the findings concur with Bennett (2004) who mentions that traditional African marriages and relationships are patriarchal and forge the issue of tolerance of abuse by women and societies. Bennett (2004) adds that central to the formation of a customary marriage is the payment of ilobola by the husband's family to the family of the bride. Traditionally families negotiate for the ilobola which should be paid in cattle and other livestock. Its function is to "compensate" the wife's family for raising and educating her; it transfers her productive capacity to her husband's family; it protects wives; husbands who ill-treat their wives may forfeit ilobola and the in-laws may be inclined to treat a woman for whom they had paid ilobola, well. Like other customary institutions nowadays, ilobola is generally paid in cash rather than cattle. The ilobola is now usually not retained by the wife's family, but is spent to meet economic needs. The steady "inflation" in the amount paid for ilobola has made it difficult for some people to marry and this has increased cohabitation. A further trend is for grooms themselves rather than their families to pay ilobola for their marriages. These changed practices around ilobola potentially increase women's vulnerability to abuse and decrease their ability to resist or flee battering

circumstances. Since men rather than their families pay ilobola, and because payment is in cash, men sometimes "justify" their rights to abuse wives by claiming that they "paid" for them. If people believe that men are entitled to abuse their wives because of the payment of ilobola, wives will tend to accept partner abuse and traditional courts will not assist them unless their families can return the ilobola (Bennett, 2004).

- **Ubuntu**

In this category the majority of the participants (18 or 90%) mentioned the lack of empathy in their communities. This was reinforced by the participants in the focus group (3 or 90%) who claimed that traditionally Ubuntu is suppose to prevail in African societies, but family and community support seem to have diminished in cases of women in violent partner relationships. One participant remarked:

- *Traditionally we are supposed to help each other, but things have changed. There is lack of empathy and Ubuntu has been lessened. People don't give full support any more and family support is rare and it takes them a long time before they can even intervene due to communication protocols that one needs to follow when one is in a violent partner relationship.*

According to Kastern and Illa (2005), Ubuntu is equated with empathy, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display towards one another. Ubuntu reflects an African view on community and is embedded in customs, institutions and traditions (Karsten & Illa, 2004). Ubuntu is not synonymous with either Western individualism or collectivism but is an expression of an African life view of the world that is entrenched in its own person, culture and society and it is difficult to define in a Western context (Sanders, 1999; Shutte, 1993). Additionally, Ubuntu is an imperative directive for human conduct and is enacted in African day to day actions, feelings and thinking.

This view is in contrast with the narratives of the participants who stated that Ubuntu has and is diminishing among African societies. However, the African community as a social entity is constantly under construction and it attempts to shape indigenous social and political institutions which will be able to develop African nations and African civil societies (Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999).

Findings of the study also suggest that social behaviours like sharing, seeking consensus and interdependency as culturally expected and as embedded in Ubuntu are dwindling in social relations within African societies, meaning that the social fabric that has been holding together African societies may be threatened and needs to be revitalised (Falola, 2003).

- **Traditional healer**

Two of the participants (10%) in the individual interviews mentioned that they had sought traditional expertise as they believed that they had been bewitched. Four participants (80%) from the focus group obtained traditional medicine from the traditional healers. One participant stated:

- *Witchcraft practice is a traditional belief that can make you have an unhappy and abusive relationship. At times you have to go to a traditional healer called "isangoma". You spend a lot of money and the traditional healer may tell you where the problem lies but they always give you "muti", that is, traditional medicine that doesn't work as abuse continues.*

According to Cloete and Naude (1991) the Xhosa and Zulu indigenous value system and beliefs distinguish between a soothsayer (isangoma/igqirha), a medicine man or herbalist (inyanga/ixhwele) and a sorcerer (umthakathi). Findings support literature that states that umthakathi is the one who is feared and condemned, in some instances immediately, when abuse emerges in a relationship. A person engaged in witchcraft uses magical potions or calls upon supernatural forces to harm others, for instances, the husband is bewitched to hurt the wife or abuse her .The belief is that witchcraft is a despicable notion, recognised as a force that can be in control of the world, and it reflects a low level of ability for abstract thought. However, the sangoma and inyanga are persons that provide traditional medical services with or without the use of herbs, can diagnose illness, can predict events and are respected members of the community (Labuschagne, 1990).

6.2.3.6 Theme 6: Communication

Participants were questioned about whether their partners communicated with them on issues pertaining to the household and listened to and respected their opinions. Their responses are briefly outlined in Table 6.7, followed by literature.

TABLE 6.7: Experiences on communication

Theme 6: Communication	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Negative communication	• Ignored • Disregard woman's views

Discussion on communication will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.7. A summary of the phase 2 focus group interview, will subsequently be discussed. Substantive literature will also be presented.

• **Ignored**

Most participants (15 or 75%) in this category were listened to and could share their opinions but some (5 or 25%) of the participants' views were ignored and disregarded. All participants (5 or 100%) from the focus group mentioned that their partners would ignore their suggestions in family matters. One participant said:

- *…he does listen to my views and we discuss family issues very well, but at times he just ignores me or disregards some of my advice and decisions and would rather take advice from his friends and relatives.*

These findings concur with statements by Matthews and Abrahams (2001) that due to lack of communication and power relations that are patriarchal, women find themselves trapped in situations where they have no voice to the extent of being unable to negotiate even sexual practices.

• **Disregard woman's views**

Some participants (12 or 60%) claimed that their partners indicated that they could not accept a woman's views and that the authority of the man had to be accepted. All participants (5 or 100%) from the focus group mentioned that their partners disregarded their views on family issues.
One of the participants said:

- *…he does not listen to any of my views as he likes to say that he cannot accept the views of a woman and as a woman I should obey the authority of the man. If he listens to me it would appear as if I am in control and has power over him.*

Further, findings are on par with literature which states that underlying the notion of "men in control" is also the hierarchical factor of "ownership of women" who cannot voice their opinions. This is a reflection of a patriarchal discourse that has been institutionalised in traditional practices (Morrell, 2001).

6.2.3.7   *Theme 7: Period to seek help*

Participants were questioned about how long it took them to seek help. The period for seeking help ranged from six months to seventeen years. While most participants (14 or 70%) explained that they were afraid that their partners would be arrested, some participants (18 or 90%) felt too ashamed to disclose the abuse. Sixteen (80%) of the participants were scared of rejection and 18 (or 90%) participants feared retaliation by family members and partners. The focus group mentioned that it took all participants about five to six years to seek assistance as they were scared of retaliation from their families.

Some participants said:

- *It took me some time, I think more than ten years to seek help because I thought things were not so bad. But after I got beaten and was admitted to a hospital, on discharge I decided to report the abuse to the police.*
- *It took me six months, I was scared and also thought that my partner loves me, but when he does all these painful things to me, I don't think he does.*

Jewkes *et al*. (1999) confirm that under-reporting such as is demonstrated by the above findings is one of the problems in cases of battery. Hence, the escalating incidence of abuse in relationships is hidden and the data available only reflect the "tip of the iceberg".

Additionally, literature concurs with findings that a social environment that accepts or even supports domestic violence in some situations contributes to creating a climate of tolerance that makes it easier for perpetrators to persist with their violent behaviour. Consequently, this makes it more difficult for women to disclose violence in abusive relationships and seek help (Gracia & Herrero, 2006).

6.2.3.8   Theme 8: Kinds of services received

The following sub-themes emerged from the central theme and are discussed below.

TABLE 6.8: Kinds of services they received

Theme 8: Kinds of services received	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Knowledge about Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre	• Informal systems • Friends • Neighbours

Discussions about how the participants came to know about the existence of Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre as it is usually not publicised will be presented according to the sub-themes and categories as outlined in Table 6.8. Descriptions of the participants' responses will follow and supporting literature will be presented.

• **Knowledge about Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre**

Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre is a registered non-profit organisation that addresses poverty-related issues, family violence and offers HIV/AIDS programmes. This is also a project that involves survivors of abusive partner relationships as service users. It is facilitated carefully with the mission to build towards equality with some sort of emancipatory vision to guide the endeavour and offers real possibility for change.

Through the centre the women involved may gain a lot, starting from confidence building, self-respect, diversity and differences in cultural issues with the involvement of ethnic African women (Hague, 2005). Campbell (1998) emphasises that help must be available and the women must be knowledgeable about the availability of this resource and how to gain access to it. The findings concur with the above statement, as abused women were able to utilise the services of the centre after being informed of its existence.

Furthermore, shelters, crisis and support centres such as Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre may provide housing and programmes that offer counselling, support groups,

safety planning and various forms of practical assistance that may include transportation, telephone contacts, referrals to other agencies, limited advocacy and others.

- **Informal systems**

Half (10 or 50%) of the participants had received information about the centre and the kinds of services offered from friends. Some participants (10 or 50%) were advised by neighbours. In another category of the focus group all participants got the information about the centre from their friends (5 or 100%). This is illustrated by some of the participants' responses:

- *I was advised by a friend about the centre and the kind of service they provide.*
- *My friend and my neighbour advised me to seek help from Ilitha Centre.*
- *I got the information about the centre from a friend who was also receiving some assistance from Ilitha Centre".*

Informal networks like friends, relatives and neighbours may play an important role as a source of information, support and assistance to the abused, as supported by the findings (Melbin *et al.*, 2003).

6.2.3.9 *Theme 9: Kinds of services received from the centre*

Participants were asked about the kinds of services they received from the centre. Their responses are presented according to the following categories as indicated in Table 6.9, after which literature will be provided.

TABLE 6.9: Kinds of services received from the centre

Theme 9: Kinds of services received	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Kinds of services received from the centre	- Counselling - Advice - Partner warning - Mediation - Referral - Women's rights - Support groups

Discussion on the kinds of services received from the centre will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.9. A summary and discussion of the phase 2 focus group interview will follow. A literature review will also be presented.

- **Counselling**

The first category indicates that all participants (20 or 100%) claimed to have received some form of counselling from the centre. Five participants (100%) from the focus group also stated that they were receiving counselling from the centre. One participant said:

- *I'm receiving counselling from the centre and have also joined the support group and this has assisted me a lot to gain back my self-esteem and self-respect.*

Findings concur with Trevethick (2000) who suggests that counselling and communication skills should form part of empowering of clients who find themselves in abusive situations and stressful relationships.

- **Advice**

The second category of responses indicated that all participants (20 or 100%) received advice on how to go about resolving their abusive relationships. In another category most participants (18 or 90%) were advised to seek assistance from the police, to apply for a court interdict and protection order. Some of the participants (10 or 50%) were also advised to sue their partners for child support. In the focus group participants (5 or 100%) were advised to seek assistance from the social workers. One participant said:

- *At the centre I was advised to seek help from the police. When I went to the charge office, my partner was arrested, but I had to dismiss the case as he persuaded me to do so and he promised me that he loves me and the children and will not be abusive again.*

Campbell (1998) concurs with the findings and repeats that a private setting like the centre in this case, may play a prominent role in the life of a woman in an abusive relationship as screening questions will be conducted privately away from the woman's partner, family or friends. Confidentiality and support are assured and intervention may entail a personal support system and safety plan in the event that the abuse escalates. Providing information, consciousness-raising

and referrals to shelter services and other community and legal resources are major roles played by the centre.

- **Partner warning**

In the third category some of the participants (12 or 60%) also claimed that their partners received warnings for their misbehaviour. Five participants in the focus group (100%) stated that their partners were warned at the centre and were told that if abuse continued their cases will be referred to the police for an arrest. One of the participants said:

- *When I went to the centre the counsellor called my partner to the office and gave him a warning. I was also told that should the beatings continue they will take me to the police station for a provision of a court interdict.*

Christofides *et al*. (2003) mention that in most cases men who abuse or rape their female partners, may just receive a warning instead of being arrested as is expected by the battered women.

- **Mediation**

In the fourth category some participants (15 or 75%) were provided with mediation. All participants in the focus group received mediation. This can be noted from some of the participants' remarks:

- *Both of us were called to the centre and when I was asked to relate the abuse, the lay counsellor also gave my husband a chance to explain why he was beating me. It was through this process of sharing our differences that I could see that he regretted the violent acts and promised that he would attend an anger management workshop.*

Taylor (2002) indicates that through mediation the impact of violence in partner relationships can be minimised as the emphasis will be on relationships rather than criminality, and on needs rather than rights.

- **Referral**

Some of the participants (12 or 60%) in the fifth category were referred to the hospital for medical attention. They suffered from injuries caused by stabbings and beatings. Four of the

participants from the focus group were also referred for medical care due to body pains and broken bones. One participant said:

- *He kicked me so severely, and I was screaming for his mercy whilst my children were watching and also crying. He was banging my head against the wall until I fainted, and I suffered a bruised body and a broken arm.*

Jacobs and Jewkes (2002) also mention that comprehensive health care professionals working in primary care settings can be of assistance in providing complete and repeated assessment and intervention for the problem of abuse in intimate relationships. The philosophy of primary prevention is that of exposing potential and actual health problems that result from battery and to identify people at risk for these problems by using screening and education to empower the abused women.

In the same category, all of the participants (20 or 100%) and (5 or 100%) participants of the focus group were referred to the social service practitioners for further assistance. Two participants attested:

- *When I told the social worker how my husband beat and kicked me in front of friends and my children, she gave so much support. Immediately I felt better by merely sharing my experiences within a warm environment with a person who listened to me in a non-judgmental way.*
- *The social worker called my partner and reprimanded him for his alcohol abuse and violent abuse and told him that should he continue the matter will be referred to the police for his arrest.*

Interviews with the women in abusive relationships tally with the literature, which attests that most women need professional practitioners that listen to them in a non-judgmental way and simultaneously offer many services that will help women make their own choices about which services to accept and be treated with respect (Melbin *et al*., 2003).

Findings indicate and support the above statement that it is through the centre that women were able to receive comprehensive and professional advice, and being referred for medical attention after suffering physical injuries.

- **Women's rights**

In the sixth category some of the participants (18 or 90%) were informed about their rights as women. All participants in one category of the focus group were also informed about their rights and the legislation that could be of assistance to them. One participant said:

- *I thought he had a right to beat me if I have done wrong, but at the centre they explained that this was battery and I have a right to be protected by the law and the constitution. I was really stunned. I thought that I belonged to him and as a woman I had to please him and if I have made a mistake or displeased him he had a right to punish me.*

Murray (2001) emphasises that the South African Bill of Rights as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa entrenches women's rights to gender equality, protection from physical and psychological harm and integrity. South Africa has both international and constitutional obligations to eradicate violence against women. Some of the obligations are entrenched in the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, which aims to provide quick, effective and accessible legal remedies to issues of domestic violence (Vetten, 2005).

- **Support groups**

The seventh category mentions that most of the participants (18 or 90%) joined support groups that comprised other women who shared similar experiences of abuse. All participants (5 or 100%) were part of the support group and appreciated the regular meetings they were attending. One of the participants responded:

- *I have also joined a support group and we meet regularly at the centre. I'm now part of the support group and I can feel my self-esteem is better now.*

This is in line with documentation stating that the strength of the support groups contributes to individual and collective empowerment of women in abusive relationships. Hague (2005) points out that these groups may also be convened specifically to comment on abused women's needs, on what services are required and on progress in efforts to combat women battery within their own specific locality.

6.2.3.10   Theme 10: Social networks

Participants were asked about who from their social networks gave them support when they experienced violence in partner relationships. Table 6.10 briefly outlines participants' responses after which literature will be provided.

TABLE 6.10: Social networks

Theme 10: Social networks	
Sub-theme	**Categories**
Nature of networks	• Neighbours • Relatives • Traditional healers

A discussion on social networks will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.10. A summary of the phase 2 focus group interview will follow and be discussed. A literature control will also be presented.

For this study networks include family, friends, clergy, employers, self-help groups and anyone else who may be significant to the woman or, one might say, "those you count on". In this case a social network member refers to anyone the woman could significantly relate to and who could actually or potentially be called on for assistance when abuse occurs. This tallies with the consumer-centred model that states that resource and support mobilisation should be consumer-driven rather than service provider-driven or by prescribed professionals. This means that the women in abusive relationships should guide the process of the services they receive and that their natural support networks be involved in the advocacy process (Melbin *et al*., 2003).

• **Neighbours**

In this category some of the participants (16 or 80%) claimed that their neighbours were of assistance during battery as they provided overnight accommodation for the women and children affected. Four (80%) of the participants from the focus group stated that their neighbours had saved their lives in this way. This can be noted from one of the participants' remarks:

- *It was in the middle of the night when neighbours heard me screaming as my partner was kicking and beating me up. My neighbours came rushing in and asked the children to open the door and one of them, who was a close friend immediately took me with the children to her house for sanctuary. We spent the night with that family and in a way they saved my life.*

Ojacor (2005) states that family, neighbours, friends, co-workers and even acquaintances are a significant part of the social environment. They may act as potential guardians whose support and interventions are valued by the victims of abuse. This view is also held by the participants who appreciated the sacrifice and assistance that they received from friends, neighbours and significant others. However, one is aware that the assistance may also be based on public perceptions of the unacceptability of all or certain types of abusive incidents (Gracia & Herrero, 2006).

- **Relatives**

Some of the participants (12 or 60%) in this category claimed that their immediate families and relatives would assist them by intervening and mediating between the two parties, whereas three (60%) of the participants from the focus group mentioned that their relatives mediated on their behalf during the abuse. However, two participants mentioned that their relatives took sides with their partner and aggravated the abuse. Participants said:

- *I usually talk to my relatives and share my abusive situation and I usually feel better after that.*
- *My in-laws assisted me by reprimanding my husband and the matter was also settled through a family meeting.*
- *My abusive situation worsened due to the interference from my in-laws who always blame me for not obeying my husband; anyway, they never liked me and would have preferred that my husband to have married somebody else.*

These findings correspond with literature that state that although the abused women may find it difficult to discuss the violent incidents with family members, when they ultimately manage to divulge the problem they need to be encouraged to talk, and be listened to (Albright, 2004).

- **Traditional healers**

Some participants (5 or 25%) involved in the individual interviews had sought assistance from traditional healers and three (60%) participants from the focus group stated that they were assisted by traditional healers. Some of the participants made the following comments;

- *As an African woman when confronted with family problems like health and abuse, the first thing you think of is that you are bewitched or have the wrath of the ancestors. The first place I went to was to visit a traditional healer so as to hear where the problem lies, to seek advice and get traditional medicine to appease the bad spirit.*

- *I knew that something was wrong in my relationship as my partner used to be a loving person. The change in his personality and his aggressive behaviour was caused by witchcraft that was done by his girlfriend and I had to go to the traditional healer to get medication to do away with the evil spirit that befell us.*

It is also significant that Ojacor (2005) notes that in some African societies when disruption in a relationship results in abuse, illness, misfortune and untimely death of a family member, it may be attributed to a breach of taboo, the gods and ancestral anger, witchcraft, sorcery or natural causes. These notions may further warrant seeking the resources of African traditional healing (Madu, Baguma & Pritz, 1999). Findings indicate that in African societies it is common practice that when misfortune happens in the family, be it death, illness and battery, witchcraft and the ancestral role may be acknowledged and embraced.

6.2.3.11   Theme 11: Professional services rendered

Participants were asked about the kind of professional help that they sought when they experienced violence in partner relationships. Table 6.11 briefly outlines participants' responses.

A discussion on professional services rendered will be presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.11. A summary of the phase 2 focus group interview will then be discussed. Substantive literature will also be presented.

TABLE 6.11: Professional services rendered

Theme 11: Social networks	
Sub-theme: Profession and service providers	**Categories**
Social workers	• Counselling • Support groups • Child maintenance
Clinic and hospital doctors and nursing staff	• Medical care
Police	• Arrests
Magistrates	• Interim orders • Court interdicts • Protection orders

- **Counselling**

Twenty (100%) participants claimed to have gone to social workers and received counselling. Participants' description of the role of a social worker was positively associated with mediation by seventeen (85%) participants. Five (100%) of the participants in the focus group attested that they received support and counselling from the social workers and one (5%) who was referred by the school was also counselled. One participant said:

- *When I went to the social worker, I was warmly welcomed and as I was relating the story of my abuse, the social worker was empathic, supportive and empowered me on how to resolve my problem.*

Trevethick (2000) states that counselling is the practice of enhancing clients' knowledge and skills and it may either be called therapy or casework. Its aim is to develop emotional acceptance and growth and be linked to personal resources. Findings concur that the counselling that was offered was concerned with addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with the crisis, working through feelings or inner conflicts and improving relationships

with others. The counsellors' role is to facilitate the client's work in a manner that respects the client's values, personal resources and capacity for self-determination.

Buzawa and Buzawa (2003) agree with findings in this category because five focus group participants (100%) stated that integrated victim support and victim advocacy programmes may assist the abused women in coping with the residual effects of encouraging self-doubt, post-traumatic stress disorder, basic inability to make decisions and may provide them with knowledge of the available resources to assist them to navigate the criminal justice system as alluded to by some of the participants.

Moffit *et al*. (2001) attest that victims and survivors of partner abuse described being satisfied with the services they received during battery as these have assisted them to understand their ordeal, the process and the belief that their safety was improved, and their belief that they are more likely to achieve their goals than had services not been provided. This was also highlighted by narratives of the participants in this study.

- **Support groups**

In this category eighteen participants (90%) were involved in support groups in the welfare agency and all of these participants valued the support that they received from these groups. All participants from the focus group mentioned that most of the assistance and information on how to deal with the abuse, they got through their respective support groups. One participant said:

- *I was really scared to talk about my problems to strangers, but in the support group I got so much information about parenting, and I was encouraged, guided, and the continuous support has made me a strong person.*

According to Trevethick (2000) support is one of the most important words used within social work. It may imply almost anything from offering assistance, backing, sustenance, validation, care, concern and love. The findings in this category suggest that participants valued the emotional and social support they received from the support groups. Through these groups the participants were provided with appropriate back-up during their stressful or crisis situation, talked through the problems, encouraged to cope and to keep going in the presence of empathic listeners and a social worker. The social agency needs to provide ongoing emotional and social

support with adequate back-up in the form of sound, structured supervision and peer and agency support.

- **Child maintenance**

Five participants (25%) claimed to have been advised to apply for maintenance for their children with the assistance of the social worker. However, some of the participants (19 or 95%) indicated their reluctance to apply for child maintenance as they feared that their partners might interpret such act as setting them up to be arrested. This was also highlighted by all (5 or 100%) of the focus group participants who felt that this may threaten or even lead to separation or divorce. This can be illustrated by some of the participants' remarks:

- *My partner refuses to contribute money for the maintenance of our children because we are not married and this has led to most of our arguments and abuse.*

- *My husband does not want to support the children or even pay school fees and buy food, as a result we fight a lot when I ask for money for the maintenance of the children but I also fear to apply for child support because he may think I want him now to be arrested and he may leave or divorce me.*

The South African Children's Act, No 38 of 2005 gives more recognition to the rights of children to know and to be cared for by both biological parents irrespective of whether or not the parents are or were married. The Act facilitates the best interests of the child through provision of joint parental responsibility agreements and parenting plans. Unmarried biological fathers are enabled to be centrally involved in the care and protection of their children. The fathers who are living together in a permanent life partnership and have consented to be identified as the father or paid damages under customary law are also liable to contribute to the child's upbringing and maintenance under Section 21(1) of The Children's Act, No 38 of 2005 (September, 2008).

Bennett (2004) agrees with findings that women may be reluctant to leave abusive relationships due to their inability to provide for their children. There is evidence that indicates a high rate of default amongst men who do not see the need to pay maintenance in addition to the ilobola paid in respect of their marriages and "ukuhlawula" paid in respect of girls who become pregnant out of wedlock. Nevertheless, the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act, s 8(3) customary rules that the wife has a right to divorce based on serious maltreatment by a partner. The Family

Advocate's role is to focus on the best interests of the children of either civil or customary marriages. The court could also alleviate the economic pressure to remain in a battering relationship by providing an order for the distribution of spousal assets and spousal maintenance in terms of the Act. No provision in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act specifically enables High Courts and Family Courts to make orders and decisions about the return of ilobola.

- **Medical care**

Some participants (15 or 75%) were referred to the local clinic for medical care as they suffered from various illnesses due to battery. Some of the participants (12 or 65%) sought help from the hospital doctors and nursing staff and were treated for broken bones, hypertension, stress, depression and other related somatic disorders. Five focus group participants (100%) also mentioned that they suffered medical complaints that were incapacitating and stressful. Some of the participants stated:

- *I was admitted to the hospital as my arm was broken when my husband kicked and beat me with a knobkerrie.*
- *I'm hypertensive and diabetic and the doctor has told me that this is as a result of continuous abuse and stress.*

These findings are supported by WHO (2002) statement that some women suffer from health problems such as, hypertension, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that require screening, and medication due to problems of violence against women (Campbell, 1998). According to WHO (2002) women in abusive relationships are at risk of a range of health problems that may include broken bones, pregnancy, pregnancy-related problems, sexually transmitted infections, mental health problems that may include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties and may attempt suicide. The findings are also on par with the literature that attests that women in violent partner relationships may suffer from battered women syndrome which manifests in a pattern of psychological and behavioural symptoms that may include medical complaints, psycho-social problems, mental health problems and post-traumatic stress (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003).

- **Police**

More than half of the participants (12 or 65%) sought assistance from the police. Half of the participants (10 or 50%) claimed that some members of the police refused to assist them and arrest their abusive partners when they reported the contraventions of protection orders and court interdicts. Other participants (10 or 50%) claimed that some police officers told the women that they did not want to be involved in private family matters. The focus group participants (4 or 80%) received assistance from the police and their partners were reprimanded. One participant from the focus group whose partner was arrested decided to withdraw the case. Three participants said:

- *Although it took some time for me to get help from the police as they claimed that they are reluctant to meddle into the private affairs of families, ultimately they assisted me with the arrest as my life was at risk.*
- *The police gave my husband a warning but when I went again to report my child's broken arm and bruises on my body, they arrested him immediately.*
- *My husband was arrested by the police because I was badly hurt but I had to withdraw the case due to pressure from my in-laws and also by the fact that he was the sole breadwinner and we would go hungry if he did not have any source of income.*

These narratives suggest that some women in violent partner relationships do seek police assistance, but at times their partners are not arrested as they expected but are warned. The literature concurs with these findings as it states that many battered women do not go to the police because they anticipate that their perpetrators may not be punished, referred to court or obtain in a guilty verdict (Christofides *et al*., 2003).

These findings also correspond with Matthews and Abrahams (2001) who refer to reports on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, No 118 of 1998, indicating that the police are frequently described as un-cooperative, and quick to suggest that the applicant for the interdict is making too much fuss about the incident of battery (Artz, 2003a; Bennett, 2005).

- **Magistrates**

In this category participants (10 or 50%) got help from the magistrate in the form of a court interdict and a protection order. However, some participants (5 or 25%) claimed that their

partners disregarded the protection order. Three participants from the focus group were issued a protection order by the magistrate. Two participants mentioned:

- *I was referred to the magistrate for a court interdict and protection order and since then, my partner is scared to abuse me, as he was told that he would be arrested should he beat me again.*

- *I had an interim order but now I have a protection order that is supposed to assist me against the abuse, but at times my husband disregards it as he slaps me when we have an argument. I can also say that he now mostly verbally insults me and I feel I cannot prove to the magistrate that he is still abusive as I do not have scars or bruises!*

Vetten (2005) points out that there are still problems with the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998. The protection order is supposed to be a legal document that prohibits the use of violence against women. However, there are still indications that some men do not adhere to it and this is exacerbated by the reluctance of the law enforcement agencies to carry out immediate arrests.

6.2.3.12   Theme 12: Kinds of empowerment services required

Participants were asked about the kinds of empowerment services that they required when they experienced violence in partner relationships. Table 6.12 briefly outlines participants' responses.

TABLE 6.12: Kinds of empowerment services required

Theme 12: Kinds of empowerment services required	
Sub-theme: Nature of services	**Categories**
Church Marriage guidance Traditional African practices Community participation Legal remedies Gender issues Safety nets	• Pastoral services • Pre-marital and post-marital counselling • Ilobola tradition • Awareness campaigns • Rights of women and legislation • Gender role expectations • Shelters

Discussion on the kind of services required is presented according to the sub-theme and categories as outlined in Table 6.12. A summary of the phase 2 focus group interview will follow and be discussed. A literature control will also be done.

- **Pastoral services**

In this category some of the participants (16 or 80%) believed that prayer to God through church ministry could be of assistance. The participants (5 or 100%) from the focus group also expressed the view that the church should be an active participant in issues of women and child abuse by preaching and having sermons addressing such issues. Participants mentioned the following:

- *There is power in prayer, the church and mothers union can empower us by preaching and be vocal about issues of partner abuse and spiritually we may find peace within ourselves.*

- *We could be empowered through church sermons and bible studies that address issues of violence in partner relationships; in this way even our partners will receive spiritual repenting and fulfilment.*

With reference to the church offering some guidance and pastoral counselling, findings agree that the role of the church would be of assistance in curbing battery of women and children. However, it has been documented that some clergy often find themselves torn between the ideology of family preservation and the Christian traditional ideology that teaches that men must be treated with respect as heads and women should submit to their husbands' authority. Further, clergy may find it difficult to suggest the dissolution of a marriage in the event of abuse but would rather promote temporary separation followed by pastoral counselling and reconciliation. However, in some situations non-clerical counsellors could be of assistance to women in violent partner relationships (Nason-Clark, 2004).

Similarly, some writers found that clergy members who held more liberal theological views compared to the more conservative or traditional theologies, counselled female victims of abuse and findings attest to that (Rotunda, Williamson & Penfold, 2004).

- **Pre-marital and post-marital counselling**

In this category some of the participants (18 or 90%) in the first phase indicated that pre-marital and marital counselling would prepare couples and empower them to be able to communicate

their marital and relationship misunderstandings well. All participants (5 or 100%) from the focus group were of the opinion that African women should be provided with pre- and post-marital counselling. However, they also indicated that traditionally African women are called in by the elder women who have wisdom and do receive traditional post-marital counselling called "ukuyalwa" in the Xhosa language. However, there were indications from both groups that a more structured pre-marital and post-marital counselling would have more formalised implications. This process could also include education about family life, communication skills and how partners should take care of family. Participants stated:

- *I think we need to receive pre-marital before we get ourselves committed to our partners as this will empower us to understand each other and this may also improve communication skills and family life. The same should happen when we are married.*

- *Through marital counselling we can be empowered on how to live in harmony and how to take care of the family, how to settle our arguments through communication and how to appreciate and love each other.*

These findings agree with Trevethick (2000) that counselling and communication skills should form part of empowering clients who find themselves in abusive situations and stressful relationships.

- **Ilobola tradition**

In this category some participants (8 or 40%) mentioned that cohabitation should be discouraged and in cases where ilobola has not been paid, this becomes a disadvantage for those who are not married, from an African traditional view point. Many of the participants (18 or 80%) remarked that the marriage and tradition of ilobola must be encouraged as they believed it made male partners value their partners. All participants (5 or 100%) from the focus group did support the ilobola tradition but also mentioned that it was misused by their abusive partners. Both groups also mentioned that abusive partners would lose in terms of bride price whether in monetary or cattle form should the relationship be terminated. Participants' responses were as follows:

- *As an African woman, I believe that girl children should be empowered about issues around cohabitation as this places them at a disadvantage, to be abused by partners who have nothing to lose as they never paid ilobola. Marriage and ilobola payment at least*

guarantees that you will get assistance and be supported by your family when abuse occurs. This is not the case with me, as Ilobola was not paid.

- *I believe that the tradition of ilobola should be continued and as women we should be empowered to understand the context and meaning of ilobola from our traditional point of view. It's not about the bride price as interpreted by Western culture but is embedded in traditional values that protect us women in our marital life and when issues of abuse happen.*

Muthien (2004) agrees with the findings of this study that although there are many rules of official customary law like ilobola, some rules protect women and some render women vulnerable to domestic violence. Others prevent women from escaping abusive relationships and this may be caused by the changes in customs. Nevertheless, it has been noted, and confirmed by findings in this category, that cohabitation is negated in African culture. Mqeke (2003) says that there is also a contradictory statement about the issue of ilobola, as some women point out that changing social circumstances imply that ancient customs are no longer relevant. Some women challenge the rule which determine that ilobola for instance, should be paid to the fathers and not the mothers of brides. It is therefore more likely that in some instances women may challenge conservative official customary rules like ilobola payment and its effect around domestic violence in rural communities.

- **Awareness campaigns**

All participants (20 or 100%) mentioned that through awareness campaigns that address issues around partner violence, women may be empowered to be vocal about their abusive relationships. In this category all participants (5 or 100%) in the focus group stated that awareness campaign would play a pertinent role in empowering the communities about issues around violence against women.

Participants said:

- *We need to have awareness campaigns that will address issues of women abuse, and through these public debates we can be empowered to be vocal about our suffering and battery.*

- *Awareness campaigns can help us to know that the public is informed about domestic violence and we will be empowered to be vocal about our experiences of abuse and just to know you are not alone, there are other people who are in the same predicament.*

Schewe (2002) also uses the terms empowerment, risk reduction, and deterrence to describe some programmes that may assist women in abusive relationships and being at potential risk of assault, to increase protective factors and skills for self-defense. Awareness campaigns as suggested by the participants can foster social activism to end violence against women.

In addition this study wanted all the participants (25 or 100%) from both the individual and focus group interviews to view themselves as a service user group in their own right. They could also perceive themselves as part of the service user gender movement that is engaged in meaningful consultation with social service practitioners to diminish the traditional silence and stigmatisation surrounding victims of gender abuse (Aries *et al*., 2002). Voices in forums which also deal with land distribution will encourage those rural women who are perceived as "timid"; have low self-esteem and unwilling to challenge authority to be vocal about their ordeal. Through these awareness campaigns women may be informed about income generating programmes and court mandated counselling that could be of assistance and empowering to the abused women as indicated by the findings (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003).

- **Rights of women and legislation**

Most of the participants (18 or 80%) accepted that there was also a need to be educated about their own rights as women and be empowered about legal rights that may include the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998 and the process of application for court interdicts and protection orders. This issue on empowering women about the rights and legislation to curb abuse was further emphasised by all participants (5 or 100%) of the focus group. Participants cited the following:

- *It's about time that we should be empowered about the rights of women and also about our legal rights. We need to be taught about legislations, like the Domestic Violence Act and how it can assist us when we are abused. As rural women we lack this kind of information and we endure as we don't know that we have rights.*

- *I never knew that there was legislation that was protecting me when my partner abused me, I was not aware of court interdicts and protection orders. We really need to be empowered about such issues as we suffer due to ignorance and at times because we are uneducated and don't understand these legislations. They intimidate us instead of assisting us.*

Through the interviews, the need for legal representations for abused women and children was evident. The findings correspond with Hague (2005) who states that there is also a need in the legal arena for arrests, and advocacy for abused women and children. These may include policy input on the usefulness of specific legal remedies based on the needs of black and ethnic communities and on public awareness.

Nsibirwa (2001) attests that South Africa is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979 (CEDAW) which requires states to eliminate gender discrimination. Two General Recommendations specifically address the issue of domestic violence, and women's movements have been and still need to be more vocal about it as indicated by findings. Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa enjoins State Parties to modify the socio-cultural patterns of conduct of women and men with a view to obtain the elimination of harmful cultural and traditional practices as voiced in the findings. The African Charter and the South African Bill of Rights also contain several references to the obligation to eradicate violence against women.

- **Gender role expectations**

All of the participants (20 or 100%) and all of the focus group participants (5 or 100%) stated that male domination is rife among African societies and male partners have to conform to peer pressure to prove their manhood, power and authority by abusing women. Therefore, men and women should be educated and empowered about gender equality, gender stereotypes and role expectations that place women in compromising situations and make them prone to partner violence. Participants said:

- *African men are dominating and societies are receptive to this issue and they are encouraged by peers to prove the macho status. They need to be informed that they should*

be fully involved in all aspects of child-raising and household chores and this needs to be taught especially during childhood.

- *Boy children are supposed to be treated equally as girls and be given equal tasks and parents should encourage boys to be involved in house chores and do those tasks that were traditionally preserved for males only. Girls can do them too! The girls can become mechanics as much as boys can be chefs.*

Some research also suggests that men overestimate the extent to which their peers endorse gender stereo-type that affects men's attitudes and behaviours. It has also been documented that most men do experience role conflict as well as its negative psychological consequences and male peer pressure may increase the likelihood of sexual assault that may be associated with the tendency to over conform to perceived male gender role expectations (Kilmartin, 2001).

Evaluation studies suggest that separate gender groups could be used to empower women and men on issues of sexual assault prevention programmes, role playing and peer counselling, substance abuse prevention, and anger management. These programmes are designed to encourage open, honest discussion on gender violence and may develop themes on empathy for victims; learning how to achieve mutual, unforced consent in intimate relationships; teaching skills on family life issues; and understanding the cultural and socialisation issues that contribute to or assist in the problem of abuse (Schewe, 2002).

The literature reviewed states that research on services that abused women have found helpful and empowering, involves the need to incorporate the women's views in determining the type and degree of services to be offered. These women explained that usually mandated services and rules limit their freedom and may reinforce the "society message that they are inadequate". It is therefore, not just an issue of whether problems are solved or needs met, but rather the manner in which mobilisation of resources occurs that may be a prominent determinant of the empowerment of individuals and groups (Melbin *et al*., 2003). Hence in this study the voices of the participants were crucial to enable researchers to gain insight into what was perceived to be the empowering needs of women in abusive relationships.

- **Shelters**

Twenty participants (100%) from the individual interviews including the five participants (100%) from the focus group mentioned that there is a need to establish more crisis centres and shelters for African women within various rural and semi-urban areas as these were very few. Participants' remarks are as follows:

- *I'm still trying to figure out on how to escape this violent situation but meanwhile I now fight back as there are no places where I can run to and be accommodated during abuse.*
- *I'm scared of him but I'm preparing on how to leave this relationship, I'm not yet ready as I'm still preparing for a safe way to leave and a safe place to stay with my children.*

These findings support McGee (2000) who states that the establishment of safety networks and shelters for accommodating women and children in abusive relationships results in the feeling of safety. This is important in their lives and can also be regarded as the foremost indispensable step toward any process of emotional healing from trauma or abuse and in particular for women and children whose experience has included fear, danger and insecurity at home as outlined by findings (McGee, 2000). The literature also suggests that when abused women feel that their safety and stability are eroded by fighting back as indicated by findings, their choices, decisions and capacity to provide for security for themselves and that of their children can be affected (Jaffe, Baker & Cunningham, 2004).

6.3   CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt extensively with data analysis and discussions based on findings of the experiences and perceptions of African women in violent partner relationships. The study has also included some of the utterances that came directly from the individual participants' interviews as well as those from the focus group interviews. Discussions of findings were substantiated by theory and this is in line with the interpretive approach and triangulation used for data analysis. The following chapter will provide the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.3   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study reflecting on the research problem, motivation and significance of the research as well as theoretical points of departure, goals and research questions. In chapter 2, 3 and 4 literature was reviewed extensively. Chapter 5 comprises an explanation of the research methodology and offers a comprehensive overview of the research approach and process, data collection and ethical considerations. Chapter 6 focused extensively on the actual research findings, well supported by relevant literature.

This chapter presents conclusions based on the findings of individual and focus group interviews as discussed in the previous chapter, and recommendations relating to empowering African women on how to deal with abuse in partner relationships. The chapter is concluded with a postulation and reflection on the limitation of the study and suggestions for future research.

7.4   FINDINGS RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW THEMES

The following are the twelve themes presented in Table 7.1. The results are based on the findings and each of these themes and related sub-themes will be discussed below.

TABLE 7.1: Themes and related sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
History of violence	• Factors that triggered abuse
Nature of abuse	• Physical abuse • Verbal and psychological abuse • Economic abuse
Meaning of abuse	• Feelings and experience
Impact of abuse	• Feelings
African practice	• Influence of tradition and culture
Communication Period to seek help Kinds of services received	• Negative communication
Kinds of services received from the centre	• Knowledge about Ilitha Community Psychological Services Centre • Kinds of services received from the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre
Social networks	• Nature of networks
Professional services rendered	• Social workers • Clinic and hospital doctors and nursing staff • Police • Magistrates
Kind of empowerment services required	• Nature of services

7.2.1 Exploration of African women's experiences and perceptions of abuse by their partners

To explore and define the problem of abuse by a partner from African women's experiences is imperative when exploring interventions and empowering solutions. In reviewing the relevant literature, a number of terms were used to describe abuse in partner relationship. These include gender based violence, family violence, wife battering, spouse abuse, marital abuse, women abuse, relationship and intimate abuse, and a host of others. For the purpose of this study and during deliberation, these terms have been used interchangeably. However, Masuku (2001) notes that most activists on gender based violence have sought to include all acts of violence that are perpetrated by men and that cause psychological, economic, social and physical harm to women because of male domination and women compromised and undermined gender status (Morrell, 2001).

7.2.1.1   Theme 1: History of violence

Participants both from the individual and focus groups understood violence in partner relationships as complex, continuously perpetrated male violence against women, embedded in a multi-faceted, oppressive and controlling manner. Participants in their experiences identified aspects of control and abusive behaviour psychological and emotional abuse, sexual rape, hitting with sticks, assaulting with fists, kicking, scarring with sewing needles and other objects. From their experiences these abusive acts occurred within the framework of a partner relationship. They also claimed that these acts of violence related to expressions of power based on the patriarchy system.

The experiences of participants from the focus group ranged from not being cared for, to being loved by their partners because of the abuse that was inflicted on them. Jealousy and suspicion prevailed in their relationships. Participants also perceived and defined battery as encompassing financial deprivations, being poor and unemployed; being threatened; physical beatings; sexual assaults and verbal insults. They also admitted that restrictions and restraints imposed by the partners, including how to spend money for household needs, was demeaning. They also had to seek approval if they wanted to leave the house to visit friends and relatives or do shopping. To them, this constituted abuse.

Participants explained that male domination and the patriarchy system that is prevalent in African societies exposed them to abuse. Cohabitation and payment of ilobola also made them vulnerable to battery. The women's impoverished background, lack of employment opportunities and economic hardships contribute to the careless attitude that their partners portray when they are abusive. Alcohol abuse and partner infidelity made them prone to abuse as their partner could not be reprimanded or questioned about their misbehaviour.

Murray (2001) expresses concern at the high level of domestic violence amongst African women where people are generally subjected to customary laws that place them at risk for abuse. This has not been limited to married couples but also occurs when people cohabit or have a child together. Budlender (2002) indicates that the precarious social and economic hardships and circumstances under which rural women live may contribute to their vulnerability to domestic violence and limit their ability to escape it. In addition, withholding financial resources from women may also qualify as economic abuse in terms of the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998. Plant (2006) is of the opinion that abuse within partner relationships tends to be acceptable socially and culturally hence some women viewed it as "normal" male behaviour that is bound to be kept as a family secret and creates a "conspiracy of silence".

Conclusions drawn from these findings were that:
- The patriarchy system prevalent in African societies subjected them to male domination that was restrictive and condescending in nature;
- Alcohol abuse by male partners at times contributed to arguments that led to verbal, emotional and physical violence;
- Economic deprivation and partner's lack of financial support formed part of an abusive behaviour pattern;
- Infidelity or extra-marital affairs left African women vulnerable to violent partner relationships.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions were:
- Male domination should be challenged by women's movements so as to address the issues of the patriarchy system;

- Infidelity and extra-marital relationships should be condemned in societies as they not only lead to arguments that end in violent episodes, but make women victims of sexually transmitted infections and of the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

- Women should also be trained in skills development programmes that would assist them to be marketable, employable or lead them to be self-employed. This will assist them in overcoming the issue of economic dependence that contributes to incidences of abuse.

7.2.1.2   Theme 2: Nature of abuse

The following are some of the kinds of abuse that both individual and focus group participants have emphasised as being specifically related to African women's experiences.

- **Psychological and verbal abuse**

Participants perceived violence in partner relationships as psychological and emotional control that was humiliating, emotionally degrading and fraught with verbal insults, social isolation and threats. The violent male partner would threaten the woman and demand that she ask his permission whenever she wanted to buy commodities needed in the household. Men also used anger tactics coupled with threats of violence when they were enforcing their power and authority in the home and these acts usually instigated acts of violence. They sent children to buy alcohol from neighbourhood taverns and this compromised discipline and ultimately brawls would lead to the children witnessing family violence.

The Domestic Violence Act, No 166 of 1998 in its broad definition of domestic violence includes a range of behaviours constituting physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; and any other controlling or abusive behaviour where such conduct harms or may cause imminent harm to safety, health or well-being of the abused (Vetten, 2005). MacDougall (2000) confirms that psychological and emotional abuse is amongst the prominent features of violence against women in partner relationship. Such forms of control may in some instances be entrenched by socialisation, cultural expectations and acceptability. Consequently, women in violent partner relationships may suffer from sporadic acts of reward and punishment that place the victim in a state of anguish, dependency, isolation and low self-esteem.

Schewe (2002) states that social isolation also becomes the pertinent feature of psychological abuse as the victim is barred from having direct or indirect contact with friends, acquaintances and family members. The perpetrator usually monitors the victim's movements and any contravention results in an abusive episode. Plant (2006) also concurs with the literature that these forms of abusive and controlling behaviour almost always precede or accompany physical abuse. Findings suggest that some of these abusive tactics are tolerated particularly in African societies due to cultural expectations and traditional practices.

Conclusions drawn from these findings indicate that:

- Women in violent partner relationships experience a wide range of abuse that includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse;
- Violent partners use various tactics to instigate battery and threats to frighten the women and verbal insults can be used;
- Abuse at times can also affect the discipline of children who from time to time witness their mothers being insulted and assaulted.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions are:

- Women in violent partner relationships should be vigilant about the manipulative tactics that could lead to battery and be vocal about the abuse;
- They should seek help from professional service practitioners to combat abuse;
- Abused women should inform professional service practitioners about the issue of their children who witness partner abuse;
- Professional service practitioners should assist and protect women in abusive relationships either by mediation or removal of women and children to shelters.

- **Economic abuse**

Participants also identified and linked economic abuse to financial control as another form of oppression, where the male partner exerts stringent financial control over the female partner. At times, money is spent on alcohol, girl friends and extra-marital affairs but the partner refuses to provide adequate finance for the woman to be able to fulfil household obligations, meet children's needs, and refuses to disclose how much he earns. Through financial control and economic dependence, some women may find themselves cash strapped. Consequently, this

prevents them from leaving an abusive relationship, and they fear retaliation that may result in physical abuse. One of the manipulative tactics used by their partners during a violent episode includes partners having separate bank accounts but with the males also demanding money from the women's bank accounts in order to buy alcohol.

Anderson and Umberson (2001) confirm that women at times may be prevented from seeking employment and earning an income, but they are also more likely to take greater economic responsibility. They can also function independently during economic disruptions when the partner becomes unemployed. Some men may also fail to fulfil their culturally expected roles as providers should there be a role reversal and their women become unemployed. In reality these men are also most likely to have money to buy alcohol and maintain a particular self-image and self-evaluations in the face of the peers and imagined threats to prove themselves as "men" in control of the situation (January, 2003). It is significant that these conclusions based on the findings tally with feminist views that male violence is about male domination, and power play is inculcated by patriarchal ideologies (Madu, 2001). Through financial control and economic dependence, some women may find themselves cash strapped. Consequently, this prevents them from leaving an abusive relationship, and they fear retaliation that may result in physical abuse. These findings support Anderson and Umberson (2001) who indicate that financial control is prevalent in violent partner relationships not only particularly among African women but among women in general.

Conclusions drawn from these findings indicate that:
- Women who are unemployed or under-employed suffer financial constraints as they lack adequate money to support themselves and their families;
- Men may also forcefully demand their women's money and this leads to abused women not having control over their finances;
- Money can also be used to buy alcohol for the abuser and he can send his own children to buy from taverns and expose them to such compromising environments.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions are:
- Women should be skilled in labour-related areas and enabled to participate in a viable labour market system;

- Women should be empowered on how to save money within the banking system;
- Abused women should seek help from social service practitioners who may advise them on child maintenance and child support grants.

- **Physical abuse and control**

A number of participants explained physical abuse and control as beating, kicking, slapping, hitting, forced and coerced sex as well as use of dangerous instruments to inflict injuries. One participant mentioned that her partner used a sharp sewing needle to design a tattoo with his name on her breast as a form of physical abuse and control.

Ponton (2002) points out that physical abuse may at times result in injuries, yet it may not always cause injuries that require medical treatment. Hence the degree of seriousness that can be ascribed to violence as a crime at times determines the extent to which battery is considered a crime.

However, Barnett *et al.* (2005) note that any use of weapons such as guns, belts, bottles, knives or ordinary household items, coupled with spitting, beatings and others, forms part of physical aggression and abusive behaviour that is inflicted on women in general irrespective of race. According to Morrell (2001) sexual abuse can be linked to physical abuse as it may include manipulation, threats and physical, forced sex which may be accompanied by humiliation, degrading and painful or unnatural sexual experiences. Some of the participants have experienced these kinds of sexual misbehaviours. However, sexual abuse is prevalent in all societies and women in violent partner relationships can be vulnerable to such ordeals.

Conclusions drawn from these findings indicate that:
- Women in violent partner relationships experience a wide range of abuse that includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse;
- Violent partners use various tactics to instigate battery and threats to frighten the women and verbal insults can be used;
- Men may also forcefully demand their women's money and this leads to a loss of control over their finances;
- Money can also be used to buy alcohol for the abuser and he may use his own children to buy from taverns and thus expose them to compromising environments;

- Abuse at times can also affect the discipline of children who from time to time witness their mothers being insulted and assaulted.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions are:
- Women in violent partner relationships should be vigilant about the manipulative tactics that could lead to battery and they should be vocal about the abuse;
- They should seek help from professional service practitioners to combat abuse;
- Abused women should inform professional service practitioners about the issue of their children who witness partner abuse;
- Professional service practitioners should assist and protect women in abusive relationships either by mediation or removal of women and children to shelters.

7.2.1.3   *Theme 3: Meaning of abuse*

Participants from both individual and the focus group interviews experienced a variety of negative feelings and experiences that were influenced by tradition and cultural practices. This is the discourse:

- **Feelings and experience**

The abuse meant that participants were being isolated due to male domination and the patriarchal system; the women felt trapped because they were destitute; helplessness and hopelessness due to unemployment; undermined, not cared for and not loved by their abusive partners. Their feelings and experiences can be summarised as follows:
- They felt heartbroken, sad, hopeless and had lost control of their love life;
- They were depressed, feared for their lives and those of the children;
- They loved, hated and feared their intimate partners;
- Shame, isolation from significant others and humiliation prevailed;
- Some were unemployed, under-employed, poor, had minimal education;
- Some feared to leave violent partner relationships because of destitution, reluctance to lose a home for the children and lacking an alternative place to stay.

Steady (2006) points out that low levels of education are prevalent in African countries as they are under-developed. However, the author acknowledges that the gender gap in education in

some countries worldwide is closing except in sub-Saharan countries where it remains wide. Due to lack of education most women are unemployed or under-employed and find it hard to be marketable, which makes it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships. Wilcox (2006) maintains that economic independence can be one of the solutions to decrease the level of abuse and poverty in the lives of abused women. One of the best aspects is social encouragement for the abused women to overcome their traumas and move on positively with their lives by building up skills that will assist them towards career action (Rao Gupter, 2000).

In conclusion:
- Participants suffer multi-faceted types of injuries.
- They experience humiliation and love disappointments from their intimate partners.
- They have mixed feelings of loving their partners, but hating the abuse that they inflict on them.
- Financial dependence on their male partners due to lack of education makes them less employable, and places them in a detrimental situation as they find it difficult to leave abusive relationships.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions were:
- Social service practitioners should develop supportive, empathic attitudes that are responsive to the needs of the abused women who may be unsure of what to do about their ordeal.
- Social service practitioners should offer training, skills development and ongoing support for female survivors of partner abuse to enable them to work confidently in their respective jobs.

7.2.1.4   Theme 4: The impact of abuse

As a result of the abuse the participants from both groups might be suffering from psychosomatic disorders that include stress, hypertension, diabetes, post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression. Some participants sustained broken bones and had to seek medical attention. Participants mentioned that they were incapacitated by a violent episode and some suffered from various somatic disorders such as, sleeplessness, palpitations and heart problems. Some participants had to spend days in bed unable to function and perform their duties including

household chores. Some had ailments that rendered them unable to go to work, losing part of their wages as a result. Some had to pay doctor's fees and medical bills as they had to seek professional help and were unable to function and carry on with their duties.

Walker (2000) mentions that victims of gender violence can suffer from various psychosomatic disorders and stress which may have financial implications.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions were:
- Health professionals should develop mechanisms and screening procedures that could be used to identify signs of distress and abuse in patients. These should be culturally sensitive procedures and any sign of violation should be connoted and reported to the police.
- Social service practitioners should also be knowledgeable about the different kinds of abuse that exist and should have the skills to deal with them.

7.2.1.5   *Theme 5: African practices*

Participants explained that abuse in partner relationships was related to gender, cultural practices and power issues that were entrenched by socialisation. Acts of violence were kept as family secrets, and not reported due to shame, social status, racial or familial loyalty, fear for own safety and arrest of one's partner. One participant perceived her abusive situation as a possible result of witchcraft and this is not peculiar in African traditional belief systems.

Participants were asked to name the belief systems that exist in African societies that might contribute to acts of violence in partner relationships. They cited traditional belief systems in African societies such as ancestor wrath and angry spirits that have to be appeased by customary rituals as they caused family disruptions such as abuse in family relationships. These angry ancestral spirits contribute to partner abuse as the men are unable to control their emotions due to them. Sorcery and witchcraft were also mentioned as a cause of violence and these could be invoked at times by girlfriends and relatives or community members to destroy a love relationship. The patriarchal system also entrenched male domination, where men have to show that they are in control and have power and authority over women by subjecting them to acts of violence.

Findings suggest that participants were of the opinion that when a man has paid ilobola it is culturally acceptable and right for him to impose punishment by beating or abusing the wife if she has transgressed. Men as head of families have power and authority and women have to accept abuse as a form of punishment for misbehaviour. Payment of ilobola is also misinterpreted as ownership and because of this, men may ill-treat their women because they feel they bought them from their families. Some participants mentioned that when men felt jealous it was acceptable for them to beat their women as they loved them.

Participants' responses to Ubuntu practice in African societies were that Ubuntu practice was diminishing; there was lack of compassion due to jealousy or stable relationships. Violence in partner relationships was treated as a private matter and societies did not want to be perceived as meddling in other people's affairs.

Muthien (2004) and Dunkle *et al*. (2003) point out that female victims of abuse run a greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases that may include HIV/AIDS because of an inability to negotiate safe sex practices with their partners. Male domination, multiple sex partners, infidelity and many rules of official customary law render women vulnerable to domestic violence or prevent them from escaping abusive relationships. However, there are also rules which protect them. Bennett (2004) mentioned that polygamy was not only tolerated but even approved and the validity of the African union depends most times on the payment of ilobola. Marriage is a private affair that requires no intervention by civil or religious authorities to give it a stamp of validity.

According to Women's International Network News (1999) some women who experienced abuse in South Africa have found themselves ostracised by their families and communities even though they had legal representation. African culture socialises one to a sense of "belonging", meaning "umntu ngumntu ngabantu"; a person is a person because of other people. This is a very significant statement in African culture that may be open to various interpretations. This philosophy of Ubuntu entrenches loyalty values but can also subject the abused to a conspiracy of silence about the abusive relationship.

Cooke and Ellis (2004) suggest that women must challenge some of the cultural patriarchal views that keep them trapped in abusive intimate relationships and this must be a continuous "struggle" that challenges gender stereotypes and the realities of unbalanced power relationships.

Conclusions drawn from these findings were that:

- Violence in partner relationships was denigrating;
- Abused women have a fair understanding that they are in abusive, oppressive and controlling relationships perpetuated by their intimate partners;
- Abused women find themselves trapped in violent relationships due to poverty and unemployment;
- Male domination that exists within patriarchal African societies contributes to violence in partner relationships;
- The interpretation of ilobola as payment to "buy" a woman leads to the ownership phenomenon which places women at risk of abuse;
- Some participants attached importance to the cultural practice of ilobola, but were also aware that it could be misrepresented as a bride-price that portrays women as bought commodities;
- They also highlighted that ilobola could be a deterrent to abuse as the male partner could fear to lose his partner and lose his ilobola payment;
- Those that were in cohabitation perceived themselves to be prone to partner abuse as ilobola was never paid and therefore they had no value for their partners, while their families were indifferent to their plight;
- Traditional belief systems that indicate that ancestral wrath and witchcraft contribute to abuse make women endure abuse and not report it as they see the act of violence as being caused by such phenomena;
- Infidelity, risky sexual behaviours, unprotected sex and jealousy by male partners lead to arguments and fights that end in violence and expose women to HIV/AIDS infections;
- Ubuntu has been highlighted as diminishing in African societies and this also exposes African women to continuous abuse as there is lack of protection and empathy for them.

Recommendations drawn from these responses are:

- Women in abusive partner relationships must be vocal about the abuse and break the conspiracy of silence that tends to prevail in these kinds of relationships;

- Families should socialise their children in a way that portrays and fosters gender equality;

- African society and all ethnic groups in South Africa should revisit cultures that are dehumanising and compromising the lives of women and children and all humankind;

- There should be a continuation of awareness and educational programmes that are directed to empowering communities about the realities of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The primary goal of the research was to explore the experiences and perceptions of African women in violent partner relationships. The meaning of abuse and its impact, the aftermath and how they deal with abuse, the kind of support and assistance they receive and their empowerment needs were highlighted.

It is concluded that:

- Findings consistent with the literature reviewed, reiterate that African women find themselves caught in a complex cycle of abuse that is characterised by male domination, cultural expectations that may include racial loyalties culminating in under-reporting of abuse, and keeping it as a family secret.

7.2.1.6   Theme 6: Communication

Some of the participants felt humiliated in front of their children, relatives and friends. They experienced love disappointments from their intimate partners who most of the time disregarded their opinions and advice because they were "women". Participants also feared possibility of imminent divorce and further violence should they report their abusive situation. Their partner would withhold economic support and they could either lose their homes or be evicted. Their families and communities would isolate them and label them as "sell-outs" as traditionally they are not expected to discuss family matters with "outsiders", who are the social service practitioners in this case.

Women's organisations working both locally and nationally on domestic violence have stated a commitment to raising the voices of survivors of abuse and their children as part of a political

project of insisting that the abuse of women be taken seriously (Mullender & Hague, 2001). Within this commitment, social service practitioners should consistently involve multi-disciplinary approaches and women who have themselves experienced abuse, and work collaboratively with women who have not, in order to build a concerted response to male violence (Taylor-Browne, 2001). Traditional silence, practices and stigmatisation that surround victims of gender abuse must be eliminated (Aries *et al.*, 2002).

Conclusions drawn from the findings were that:
- Women found it difficult to be vocal about their abuse and to seek assistance as they feared losing their homes and relationships;
- They suffered humiliation in front of their children, family, friends, colleagues and community. Their understanding was to endure the abuse as they were socialised that it was culturally acceptable for a male to enforce some form of discipline on a female partner whenever there was a transgression of family rules;
- They also explained that battery was kept a family secret and that it was based on gender power relations and authority that men have towards women;
- There was also a conspiracy of silence on the abuse that participants experienced due to fear of being ostracised by their intimate partners, family and community;
- Family secrecy around issues of enforced sex contributed to and perpetuated abuse as women felt it was improper to be vocal and report such acts of violence;
- Lack of support and empathy from families and communities placed women at risk as abuse was treated as a private matter and people did not want to be involved;
- It also seems that some women were reluctant to report the abuse due to customary laws that expected family matters be discussed within the confines of families instead of involving legal action.

Recommendations based on the conclusions are as follows:
- Skills training programmes should be established by social service practitioners to assist women in violent partner relationships to be marketable;
- Paid labour opportunities would assist them to become financially stable and alleviate poverty;

- Social service practitioners should empower the abused about their rights as women as this will help them to be vocal about their battery and be able to seek assistance;

- The legislations, policies and regulations regarding the domestic violence act should embrace the plight of women in abusive relationships.

7.2.1.7 *Theme 7: Period to seek help*

Participants were hesitant to promptly report the violence in partner relationships and they waited for long periods of time before seeking help. Some mentioned that fear for their safety and that of their children made them endure the abuse and not seek help. Some feared retaliation from family, friends and communities, some were unemployed, poor and under-employed and were dependent on their partners for shelter and financial support.

Collins (2000) states that most African women are torn between wanting to settle the abusive relationship by seeking help and fear of retaliation from family members and the community at large. Racial loyalty that requires African women to form solidarity with their male counterparts and not to be perceived as "sell-outs" to the legal system also places them in a compromising situation (Campbell, 1998).

Conclusions drawn from these findings were that:

- Women in abusive relationship may endure battery and may be reluctant to promptly seek help;

- African families may ostracise the woman for seeking help outside the ambits of the family as traditionally expected;

- Poor family home background may contribute to reluctance to seek help as there may be fear of losing the breadwinner and shelter for the children;

- Seeking help for abuse may imply that the partner may be arrested and this may contravene traditional African solidarity that states that a woman may not seek police arrest due to the legacy of racial oppression through historical police intervention and discriminatory practices.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions are:

- Economic hardships that prevail in African societies contribute to the perpetuation of abusive partner relationships;

- African traditional expectations and general cultural expectations may contribute to the vulnerability of battered women;

- The delay in seeking help may place women in perpetual abuse that may result in severe injuries or death.

7.2.1.8   *Theme 8: Kinds of services received*

The main findings under this theme can be summarised as follows:

- **Knowledge about the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre**

The Ilitha Community Psychological Centre is a non-profit organisation that provides assistance and other related services to women in violent partner relationships. Some of the participants learnt about Ilitha Community Psychological Centre from friends, relatives, neighbours, the centre newsletter and radio.

Narayan (2002) places emphasis on the importance of having access to information that pertains to opportunities and services for women to be enabled to exercise their rights and negotiate effectively.

Conclusions drawn from the findings are:
- The Ilitha Community Psychological Centre plays a significant role in its community in dealing with violent partner relationships;
- Social networks are a recognised resource that offer advice and support during the ordeal of battery;
- The media and published newsletters about community based organisations and their role in the community assist in directing the community to this resource.

Recommendations drawn from these conclusions are:
- Community based organisations should be established in rural areas and townships to cater for the needs of disadvantaged abused women;

- Friends, relatives, neighbours and the community at large must be encouraged by social service practitioners and political structures to be vigilant and supportive of African women in their plight within violent partner relationships;

- Radio and television programmes should continuously be vocal about abusive relationships and the need for women to seek assistance;

- Non-governmental organisations must continuously publicise their services as this information is of value to the communities.

7.2.1.9   Theme 9: Kinds of services received from the centre

Participants reported receiving mainly some form of counselling and mediation from the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre. Some received advice and were referred to social service practitioners and joined support groups, while others were referred to a clinic or hospital for medical care. Others were advised to seek pastoral counselling and some were referred to the police for police interventions. Some were referred to the magistrates for court interdicts, protection orders and child maintenance.

Kunfaa *et al*. (2002) mention that pastors play a significant role as a source of strength, as do prayer partners that connect the abused with the almighty God in times of distress. The pastor and the Christian Women's Fellowship provide psychological and spiritual counselling that may result in the healing of the whole person (Steady, 2006).

The conclusions drawn from the findings are as follows:
- A non-governmental organisation, or community based organisation can play a significant role by directing abused women to relevant resource centres;
- An integrated service delivery will benefit women in violent partner relationships.

Recommendations based on conclusions:
- The domestic forums and all relevant agencies need to build and strengthen joint responses that may include promotion of good practices and conduct preventative and educational work;
- The communities should be vocal about the issue of violence against women.

7.2.1.10   Theme 10: Social networks

Participants claimed to have received assistance from neighbours, friends, relatives and the community. However, there were concerns from the participants about the lack of support from their families when the abuse was reported. Various reasons were provided that ranged from the in-laws who meddled in the affairs of intimate partners, to mothers who advised their daughters to endure the battery as the grave of a woman is with her man. Cultural and traditional practices and expectations that influence women to keep abuse a family secret and the misinterpretation of the payment of ilobola that families use to keep the African woman trapped in an abusive relationship were highlighted and the need for these practices to be challenged was brought forward.

Sakala (1998) confirms that in Southern Africa, relatives, neighbours and friends at times may turn a blind eye to a woman's abusive situation. Consequently, guilt, embarrassment, humiliation and fear may push her into isolation with extreme lack of self-esteem. The woman may find herself in circumstances where she loses confidence in her capabilities to move herself out of the situation as she thinks no one will listen to her or believe and respect her. In analysing domestic violence against women, blame for the abuse is attributed to long-held beliefs that rural women have observed for generations as they watched their mothers, aunts, sisters, and significant others being battered. Ultimately, they grow up with a perception that it is an acceptable way to live.

7.2.1.11   Theme 11: Professional services rendered

Participants were asked to describe the services they received from the social service practitioners and the following were mentioned.

- **Social workers**

Participants mentioned that they received individual and couple counselling services and mediation, and were included in support groups by the social workers.

Zastrow (2004) suggests that social service practitioners should use group work network therapy to help abused women bring together their networks and form support groups that will encourage sharing of ideas and meaningful dialogues. African women in violent partner relationships should

also apply the rights strategy that embraces the full realisation of the diversity of women's circumstances and their human rights and fundamental freedom (Cooke & Ellis, 2004).

Conclusions drawn from the findings are as follows:
- Social workers, and other mental health workers should provide multi-disciplinary services for the benefit of the survivor of violent partner relationships;
- Social workers should employ their therapeutic and intervention strategies to curb violence in partner relationships.

Recommendations are based on the above conclusions:
- Social service practitioners should act to reduce barriers to self-determination for those who are unable to do so for themselves due to vulnerability, suppressive cultural issues, disability and dependence.
- Poverty eradication programmes and shelters should continuously be initiated by social workers and other stakeholders to assist abused women.

- **Clinic and hospital doctors and nursing staff**

Participants mentioned that they suffered from various disorders such as sleeplessness, post-traumatic stress, palpitations, heart problems, and chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. Some were sometimes incapacitated and had to spend days in bed either in hospital or at home and were unable to function or perform their duties including household chores. Some had broken bones and ailments that made them unable to go to work and caused them to lose part of their wages for having to take leave without pay. Some had to pay doctor's fees and medical bills as they had to seek professional help.

McQuoid-Mason *et al*. (2002) state that the Constitution of South Africa stipulates that everyone has the right of access to health care services, and health care practitioners are required to treat everyone who presents and qualifies for treatment. In the case of emergency medical treatment nobody may be turned away by either public or private facilities, according to Section 27(3) of the Constitution.

Conclusions drawn from these findings were:

- Violence in partner relationships could cause serious and permanent physiological damage to the victims;
- Abused women could lose their jobs and their wages might be affected due to incapacitation.

Recommendations made from these conclusions are as follows:

- Women should be more vocal about the violence in their partner relationships;
- The battered women should seek immediate medical care to avoid serious, permanent injuries, disfigurement or death.

- **Police**

Participants reflected on some of the obstacles and challenges they faced and these included delayed assistance from police and long waiting periods in offices and courts. The refusal of the police to assist in cases of intimate partner abuse and protection orders that were ignored and contravened by their partners placed the lives of the abused women at risk of further battery and possible death.

Vetten (2005) notes that police reluctance to assist victims of violent partner relationships is well documented and the hardships that rural women experience in accessing the criminal justice system act as a barrier to assistance.

The conclusion drawn from the findings is as follows:

- Some participants were disillusioned about the ambiguous role played by the police in cases of abuse and they also felt that their safety was compromised.

Recommendation made from the conclusion is as follows:

- The criminal justice system should be more sensitive to issues of partner abuse and should provide prompt responses to the incidence of violence.

- **Magistrates**

Participants mentioned that some of their partners were issued with warnings, court interdicts and protection orders. However, several participants were concerned about being divorced by their

partners and thus losing their home, while some were concerned about losing the financial support of their partners. Further, the communities may isolate the abused women for having sought help from the criminal justice system as traditionally they are not expected to discuss family matters and problems with "outsiders", the magistrate in this case.

Vetten (2005) states that magistrates play a pertinent role in combating violence against women and the absence of police stations and magistrates' courts in disadvantaged communities makes it difficult for them to receive immediate assistance. This places African women in violent partner relationships at risk of further battery and may at times result in fatalities.

Conclusions drawn from these findings are:

- Magistrates should take the plight of women more seriously and should continue to protect them through issuing the interim and protection orders to curb violence against them;
- Through a committed justice system and enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act, No 116 of 1998, abuse will diminish.

Recommendations based on the conclusion are:

- The legislations, policies and regulations regarding violence in partner relationships should embrace the plight of women in abusive relationships;
- Courts should be established in rural and disadvantaged communities as this can enable them to have reasonable 24-hour access for protection orders;
- Employment opportunities should be afforded to women in violent partner relationships as this can assist with income generation and economic independence.

7.2.1.12   *Theme 12: Kinds of empowerment services required*

The study sought to conceptualise the empowerment needs of African women in violent partner relationships. Participants stated that an integrated multi-disciplinary approach would be empowering, as every stakeholder and community structure would assist with public awareness campaigns about women abuse. The police should provide protection and empower battered women through the legislation and show them how to navigate the legal system. Social service practitioners should inform abused women about financial assistance programmes that may

include financial relief grants. Anger management programmes should be introduced and directed towards the abusers to empower them on how to handle relationships without violence. HIV/AIDS-related programmes should provide education to communities about the dangers of promiscuity, multi-partner relationships and the practice of safe sex and abstinence for the youth. Entrepreneurship and market-related skills will be empowering and create further job opportunities.

Kevane (2004) states that investment in education is a powerful survival strategy for women as low levels of education keep women uninformed of the new laws and policies. Most of all, women should organise and mobilise resources themselves to work together towards solving their problems and common interests (Saleebey, 2002).

Conclusions drawn from these findings are as follows:

- Domestic forums and all relevant role players and stakeholders need to strengthen joint responses and support for abused women;
- Good practices involving the constant review of policies and cultural practices to prevent battery should be promoted.

Recommendations based on the conclusions are:

- Skills training programmes should be established to equip abused women with marketable skills;
- Education and training in vocational and career guidance would assist women in partner relationships to gain access to employment opportunities that will provide them with financial resources and economic independence;
- Women in violent partner relationships need to be informed about their rights as human beings and above all as women. This information would help them navigate the criminal justice system and be knowledgeable about their legal rights;
- African women in rural and disadvantaged communities need to be taught about the Domestic Violence Act and what it entails;
- Girl and boy children, and women in general should be socialised to become zero tolerant of gender violence and to different stereo-typed gender roles that are entrenched by the traditional belief system;

- Male partners and African societies should be empowered on how to deal with male domination and traditional cultural issues that undermine the status of women in these societies;

- Traditional and professional pre-marital counselling sessions should be conducted to prepare couples in partner relations with communication skills, conflict management and resolution skills;

- Marriage counselling would prepare violent partners in relationships on how to handle love and family relationships;

- Women should be empowered on how to gain access to information about abuse and the availability of shelters and alternative housing that could be utilised as places of safety, should the need arise to leave a violent partner relationship;

- Pastors should deliver sermons that teach about the issues of domestic violence and through scripture readings, support systems, fellowship and prayers help participants receive spiritual healing that will empower them to live positively;

- There is still a need to establish a multi-disciplinary approach that provides comprehensive integrated programmes to support policies, procedures and practices that aim to empower abused women;

- Social service practitioners should assist community based and non-governmental organisations to establish more crisis centres and shelters that are culturally sensitive and specific to gender violence;

- The social service practitioners could provide therapy, conflict management skills, crisis intervention skills, negotiation skills, mediation skills, problem solving skills and communication skills.

However, while participants were urged to add their voices to what they felt would be empowering in their situation, it was interesting to note that many still wanted social service practitioners to assist them with alternative housing schemes and some form of employment. Participants also placed value on education and skills training programmes as they perceived them as ways to assist with career opportunities that could lead to lucrative employment opportunities. Participants suggested that there should be training programmes that may include all people to address gender inequality issues in society. It was also noted that social service

practitioners' intervention strategies play a pertinent role in family resilience and family preservation.

Participants emphasised that they have safety networks that they could utilise during abuse while fighting back at their abusive partners. Some indicated that they sometimes used a strategy of submission to prevent further victimisation. Participants also had escape plans in place should the abuse become intolerable.

Hague (2005) attests that individual empowerment for abused women and collective empowerment through the strength of support groups are beneficial to the abused. Empowerment can be achieved through the production of training packs and videos for both the perpetrators and the abused. There should be a policy input and public awareness on the usefulness of specific legal remedies for the needs of African women, women of other races and ethnic communities. Internet consultations, feminist community theatres, art and poetry can all contribute to strengthen the voices of abused women (Bossey & Coleman, 2000).

Conclusions drawn from the findings were that:
- Women in abusive relationships need a variety of empowering services that may include an integrated approach to curb violence;
- Women should be empowered by social service practitioners with entrepreneurships skills that will assist them to initiate small businesses;
- There is also a need for educational programmes that will help to inform African women from disadvantaged communities of their rights and available resources.

Recommendations based on the conclusions are:
- Social service practitioners, stakeholders, community leaders and communities at large have an obligation to make a joint effort to empower and assist women in violent partner relationships;
- Abusers and men in general should also be part of the joint diverse male and women's movements in an effort to confront issues of gender inequalities, traditional practices and be able to make an effort to stop the abuse of women in societies.
- Educational programmes such as dealing with anger and stress management must be made available by social service practitioners to curb violence in partner relationships;

- One-stop service centres should be established by the government and non-governmental organisations not only in urban areas but in rural areas and within marginalised communities to assist and empower women who are battered;

- The Department of Justice should develop more mobile legal clinics in rural communities to make access to the justice system available on a 24-hour basis. This will assist in securing the safety of women and children in times of battery.

7.3   CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY SELECTED FOR THIS STUDY

The researcher believes that the qualitative approach was the most appropriate tool to use because of the sensitivity of the phenomenon. The study was also exploratory in nature, as a result the researcher was enabled to gain a better insight into and understanding of the experiences and perceptions of African women in violent partner relationships. The in-depth face-to-face one-off interviews and the focus group interview were the most appropriate and effective tools to use when one considers the aim and objectives of the study. The results based on findings of the study were triangulated. The researcher was also generally knowledgeable about the methodology as it related in many ways to social work practice skills. The researcher remained focused and objective during the process and this is in line with the ethical expectations of the social work profession and social research. As a researcher it was a great privilege and honour to listen to the voices of African women sharing their painful and deeply personal experiences and perceptions of violent partner relationship. The researcher also feels blessed knowing that in sharing the deep-seated abusive episode, she was not only an active listener but that the process itself was therapeutic to the survivors.

The researcher is of the opinion that the population chosen for the purpose of this study and the sample site were appropriate, as this was a sensitive topic dealing with real, painful human narratives. The choice of purpose sampling served this study well as all respondents were victims and survivors of violent partner relationships and were Xhosa-speaking African women.

7.4   POSTULATION AND REFLECTION ON THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although there were limitations to the study as mentioned in previous chapters, one can cite the following reflections:

- Travelling to Ezibeleni Township to meet and conduct interviews with the women in violent partner relationships incurred costs but in hindsight it was worth it as it was also a healing process for the participants.

- Xhosa culture socialises one to be respectful and be reticent to ask certain questions on issues around sex or rape. It has empowered the researcher to gain an understanding of how culture can be used conveniently in manipulative ways even in situations where it was supposed to assist. As a result participants endured abuse and could not confront battery as it unfolded, as they were trapped and stayed passive, interpreting certain aspects of culture to the benefit of the perpetrator.

- Interviews were conducted in the home settings of the battered women involved, through disturbances in terms of noise and curious neighbours who came to see the "visitor", but it was also beneficial as the participants were relaxed and could even point out and identify some of the places where the abuse had occurred and what was broken, for example. This in a way assisted the participants to come to terms with some of the incidences and losses.

- The one-off interviews did not make it possible for the researcher to be approached for further therapeutic services but one could reflect that it made the researcher more focused, as she was a very attentive listener. It also served as acknowledgment of the participants for sharing their deeply personal issues.

- Although the sample consisted of African women and the findings could not be generalised to a wider population, the information gathered was from trustworthy sources, women who have gone through the ordeal. This made the study valid and reliable.

7.5   SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following are suggestions for further research, emanating from the study:

- An exploration of African customary marriages and their contribution to domestic violence.

- An investigation of multi-racial and gender based violence.

- A study of customary rules and the wife's right to divorce.
- An investigation of Ilobola tradition and its implications for child custody in cases of divorce.
- A study of male induction and prevention programmes towards the prevention of the abuse of women.
- A study of the development of domestic violence prevention training packs for the Social Work education system.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Letting the voices of African women in violent partner relationship be heard has been an ordeal but it has also been informative. It has provided an insight into some of the pertinent issues that these women had to grapple with in an attempt to find solutions for their plight.

The involvement of African women who have experienced violent partner relationships in advocacy programmes may be a complex and sensitive issue that needs a policy change and action. There is need for further research that may incorporate training, good practice guides and professional commitment directed at consciousness-raising on the issues discussed in this study, and may lead to positive change in an effective way.

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ANNEXURE A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Kindly be informed that the interview will be conducted with confidentiality, in a non-censorious environment. You will be informed about the results as a participant and as a research unit.

PERSONAL DETAILS	THEMES	PROMPTS
	Since we are meeting for the first time can you please tell me about yourself?	Age - woman. - man Marital status Employment Children Relationship
HISTORY OF PARTNER VIOLENCE AND THE ACTUAL NATURE OF THE VIOLENT INCIDENT	Can you please explain to me how long the battery has been going on?	Start Trigger
	What kind of physical abuse have you experienced?	Beatings Kicking Stabbing Rape
	Please tell me, have you ever experienced emotional abuse by your partner?	Insults Silence Disregard Humiliation
	Have you experienced a situation where your partner has not provided money to run the home and look after the children but has money for other things?	Financial problems Food Clothes Rent Medical care School fees Alcohol Girlfriends

	Please tell me has your partner ever intentionally humiliated you in front of family and friends?	Insults Jealousy Belittled Ridiculed Boasted about girlfriends
	Having gone through this abusive experience, how did you feel after each violent incident?	Aftermath Sad Angry Suicidal thoughts Heart painful Spirit low
	In your opinion do you think that it is culturally expected that as a woman you should obey your partner?	Cultural aspects Male domination Obedience Punishment Beating means love
	Is it culturally accepted that if a man pays lobola for his wife she must have sex when he wants it?	Owns Submissiveness
	Can you please tell me, does your partner discuss family issues, problems and respect your opinion?	Communication
	Having gone through these experiences, when did the actual battery stop?	Aftermath

Nature of social support and services offered by the Ilitha Community Psychological centre	Can you please tell me what kind of support did you need during the abuse?	Professional services Effectiveness Service for the batterer
	Since support centres are not usually publicized, tell me, how did you come to know about the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre?	Sources of information
	Tell me, how long did you endure abuse before seeking help?	Duration
	Please tell me about the Ilitha Community Psychological Centre, what kind of help did you get from them?	Legal system Magistrate Police Family Violence Act Welfare services Medical services Nursing services Psychological services Shelter
Other formal and informal services	What kind of help did you get from the courts?	Interdict Prosecution Arrest
	Can you please tell me, who gave you support from the community, during this threatening period?	Personal network Family Friends Neighbours Church

Kind of empowerment strategies	Can you please explain to me, what do you think can be done to improve services to battered women?	Social workers Police Church Culture Societies Employment Self-help Education Shelters Support centres

Thank you very much for sharing your experience with me. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

Thank you.

ANNEXURE B

FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Please be informed that this interview will be conducted with confidentiality and anonymity as pseudonyms will be used. This is a non-censorious environment and should you at any stage of the interview feel any form of discomfort you have a right not to respond to a question and also terminate the interview. You will also be informed about the results of the study through the centre.

THEME	QUESTIONS	PROMPTS
PERSONAL DETAILS	Can you please tell me about yourself?	Name Age Marital status Children Relationship
PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE	Please explain to me, what is your perception and definition of violence in partner relationships?	Threats Insults Financial constraints Restriction of movement Restriction of decision making Bank account Restrain money spending Disagreement on child discipline Forced sex
	Can you please tell me, as an African woman, what makes you prone to violence in partner relationships?	Cohabitation Culture Dominance Poverty Infidelity Substance abuse
NATURE OF ABUSE	In your opinion, what manipulative tactics does your partner use during a violent episode?	Threats of violence Verbal insults Use of dangerous weapon Withhold economic support
	Please tell me, what nature of abuse do you experience in your violent relationship?	Physical beating Emotional Financial

THE MEANING AND IMPACT OF THE ACT OF ABUSE	Can you please explain to me, what meaning do you attach to acts of violence/?	Trapped Family expectations Dominance Main household income Maintenance of household Dependence Destitute
	As an African woman, which belief systems exist about the cause of violence in partner relationships?	Attitudes Justification Traditional beliefs Traditional healers
	Do you think it is acceptable for a man to beat a woman in certain circumstances?	Traditional culture Patriarchy Lobola of women Status of women
	What do think, in your opinion are men's reasons for abusing their female partners?	Jealousy Possessiveness Obsession Power/boss Right Infidelity Substance abuse
	Please explain to me, do you think poverty contributes to the continuation of a violent relationship?	Housing problems Finance Transactional sex
	In your opinion, do you feel that forced sex by a male partner should be reported as act of violence?	Rape Coercion Right to sex Societal responses Under-reporting
	Please tell me, how do you relate abusive infidelity partner relationship to HIV epidemic?	Gender relations Risk Condom use HIV infection
	As an African woman, do you think there is lack of Ubuntu within the traditional practices?	Humaneness Family support Social network support Communication protocols

PERCEPTIONS OF ABUSE AND NEED FOR SERVICES	Did you at any stage of abuse need services of social service practitioners?	Health sector visits due to injury Financial support Shelter Police charge male partner Help with interdict Another home to go to Therapy Support group Report rape or attempted rape
	Please tell me, having been incapacitated by violent episodes, what other kinds of harm or distressing situations have you gone through?	Lost employment Time spent in bed Household chores affected Costs incurred
	Having experienced violence in partner relationships, what could be the impact if you reported or complained about this ordeal to social service practitioners?	Eviction Financial deprivation Isolation Infidelity Physical injuries Emotional abuse
	Please explain to me, as an African woman what can be done to overcome violence within partner relationships?	Traditional values Lobola Collective solidarity Poverty alleviation
SOCIAL SERVICE PRACTITIONERS' EMPOWERING SERVICES	What do you think should the social service practitioners provide to assist violent partner relationships?	Shelter Counsel Substance abuse treatment Anger management and training Income related services Risk assessment Safety plans Medical and domestic services Violence treatment

| | Please tell me what kind of strategies have you developed to prevent further abuse by your partner? | Self-defense
Retaliation
Submissiveness
Less communication
Coping strategies
Restraining order
Safety plans |
| | Is there anything else that you would like to add? | |

Thank you very much for your participation.

ANNEXURE C

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
_____

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN VIOLENT PARTNER-RELATIONSHIPS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by NONTANDO JENNIFER MESATYWA DPHIL (SOCIAL WORK) STUDENT, from the DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to a research thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have experienced an abusive partner-relationship and have utilised the services at Ilitha women's crisis centre, at Ezibeleni Township.

1.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of what African female victims of violent partner relationships are experiencing socially and emotionally and to explore how they can be empowered.

2.   PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
- Take part in an interview and share the experiences of being abused by the partner;
- To examine the kind of abuse that you experienced, the meaning and the impact of the act of abuse;
- The kind of services and assistance that you received from the formal and informal structures;
- To explore the kind of empowering services that one needs when in abusive partner relationships;
- To describe ways in which the social service practitioners or social workers could offer empowering services to African women in violent partner relationships.

A once-off one-on-one interview will be conducted for a period of about one and a half hours either at the centre or in your own home or any other location preferable to you.

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks for taking part in this study. However, should you feel any discomfort when relating the abusive episode the researcher will provide emotional support and counseling.

Please feel free to terminate the interview when the need arises.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Through this study as a respondent you will gain insight into empowering services that could assist in abusive partner relationships and what social service providers could offer to assist and empower African women who experience violent partner relationships.

The information gained from the study will contribute to the theoretical body of knowledge to Social Work and Social Science. Through dissemination and publication of thesis the society may benefit knowledge about the kind of resources that are in existence and the kind of empowering services they could offer assistance to women in abusive partner relationships.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no monetary payment involved to this study and no penalties should the respondent wish to withdraw participation or be withdrawn by the researcher.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms that will be used to safe guard confidentiality. The data will be stored at the Department of Social Work Stellenbosch University. The researcher, the university supervisor and research unit will have access to the content of the thesis and its findings and recommendations.

Since the interviews will be audio taped, the respondents will be afforded an opportunity to listen to the tapes immediately after completion of the entire interview. The researcher and supervisor will have access to the audio tapes which may be used for educational purpose. They will be erased after a period of five years.

Results of the study may be published and anonymity of the respondents will be assured as pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality and true identity of the respondents.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Supervisor Professor S Green.
[*Identify research personnel: Principal Investigator, Supervisor, Co-Investigator(s). Include day phone numbers and addresses for all listed individuals. For greater than minimal risk studies, include night/emergency phone numbers.*]

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Yu may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Professor S Green.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/   in *Xhosa* and *I am* in command of this language. [*I/   was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my/his/her*] satisfaction.
[*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.*] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____
Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____[*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [*his/her*] representative _____[*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

_____   _____
   Signature of Investigator   **Date**