

# The church and the management of gender based violence in Mutoko, Zimbabwe

Blessing Musodza<sup>1</sup>, Barbra Mapuranga<sup>2\*</sup> and Oswald Dumba<sup>3</sup>

1. Zimbabwe Open University, Mashonaland East Region
2. Zimbabwe Open University, Mashonaland East Region
3. Zimbabwe Human Rights, Harare

## Abstract

This study focused on the role of the church in the management and resolution of Gender Based Violence in Mutoko District. The study sample consisted of one hundred (100) respondents including church leaders, elders and lay members purposively selected from the two main church groups namely the Denominational and the Pentecostal. The study concluded that, the church was doing more awareness and advocacy of Gender Based Violence in the church than in the community, more rehabilitation activities for victims of Gender Based Violence in the church than in the community and refers more perpetrators of Gender Based Violence in the community for legal advice and to the police than for perpetrators in the church. The study however recommend that, the church should do more Gender Based Violence awareness and advocacy campaigns in the community, more rehabilitation activities for victims of Gender Based Violence in the community and refer perpetrators of Gender Based Violence that are in the church for legal advice and to the police.

**Key words:** church, women, violence, gender, management

## 1. Background of the study

The general increase in the tearing apart of family relationships, divorce cases among married couples, cases of domestic violence among other practices that were creating instability in different societies raised more questions than solutions in most Southern African countries. In Zimbabwe, the government through the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in consultation with other stakeholders established the Domestic Violence Act. The legislation is used by the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) to deal with such issues as sexual, physical, emotional or psychological among other forms of abuse affecting men, women and children. Yet domestic violence is on the increase. According to Tracy (2006:586), "A lot of men have also suffered gender-based violence but most of them have just not come out in the open for fear of embarrassment."

On behaviour and attitude change, the church was believed to be very instrumental although Rogers (2003:195) observed that, "it is possible to say that the Church has helped to create conditions conducive to the provocation of domestic violence in societies around the globe." For this study towards effectively resolving issues of gender based violence, teachings by different leaders and pastors among others were believed to act as tools in fighting the problem. Church leaders like pastors, elders among others were perceived as role models in the society and lead lives emulated by many followers of these denominations. The church was seen as that which made people change their behaviour based on Biblical teachings alongside with the fore stated instruments and statutes relevant in addressing gender based violence. Such teachings supported the view that God created men and women to be companions that complement one another not only for eternal life but for the good of others and achieve the highest good in the society as in accordance with the feminists among other ethical perspectives (Bonevac, 2010:55).

## 2. Statement of the problem

Despite the effort and contributions by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, Regional bodies, statutes and instruments, Civic Society organisations and the government statutes and efforts in reducing gender based violence in the society, these cases are on the increase especially in most rural areas in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the role of the church in the resolution of cases of gender based violence.

## 3. Research Questions

- To what extent does the church create awareness on gender based violence in the church and in the society?
- What are the activities being done by the church in preventing gender based violence in the church and in the society?
- How is the church resolving cases of gender based violence in the church and in the society?
- What is the role of the church in rehabilitating victims and perpetrators of gender based violence in the church and in the society?

## 4. Review of related literature

Gender-based violence involves men and women with women usually, but not always, being the victim. It stems from unequal power relationships within families, communities and states. Population Reference Bureau, (2001:3) defines gender based violence as a collection of violent deeds that are committed against a person's will, such as discrimination against men, women and girls, denial of: access to resources, control over resources, decision making, exploitation, sexual violence, forced and early marriages, harmful traditional practices, undesirable submission and subjection to decisions made by cultural leaders, family members or religious leaders, physical and psychological torture and rejection among others. Gender Based Violence arises from the patriarchal system which since time immemorial, has exerted control over women's lives (World March of Women, 2000). Violence is generally directed specifically against women for diverse reasons, and affects them disproportionately. It has become even more pronounced in conflict and post-conflict states of Africa including

Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan, (UNIFEM, 2005: 6).

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993 defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats such acts as coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in private and public life.

Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) elaborates that violence against women includes sexual, physical, and psychological violence in the;

- family such as battering, sexual abuse of children, female genital mutilation/cutting and rape;
- community such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation, trafficking and forced prostitution; and
- state such as poorly drafted or unenforceable laws for violence against women, law enforcement agents who violate women, the lack of facilities and education for prevention and treatment of women exposed to violence, the sanctioning and reinforcement of unequal gender relations. The state's indifference and neglect in creating opportunities and entitlements for women in regard to employment, education, participation and access to social services also perpetuates gender-based violence.

Many gender based conflicts exist as a result of gender roles among other factors in accordance with the Feminist theory. (Maggie, 1997) Under this perspective, issues of patriarchy, discrimination, stereotyping especially on women are covered. Gender roles can change depending on age, class, religion, ethnicity, race and location. Many gender roles are linked to sex roles in which there are duties and responsibilities specifically for men while others are for women like breast feeding and giving birth. These usually lead to gender stereotyping that attributes certain traits and behaviours and privileges by virtue of their sex. On the issue of patriarchy system, Dodo and Mateura (2011:43) posit that, "The dominancy of the patriarchy society and also an increase in the poverty in general also makes vulnerable people to be more vulnerable than they were before."

The feminist's theory on the other hand highlighted oppressive character of structural inequality based on gender. For feminists, gender itself is a social construction of male and female identified with unequal social value. Upon this view says, "the system of patriarchy, a system of male dominance, conditions women psychologically into accepting a secondary status by embracing a process of sex - role stereotyping" Glenn (1987) cited in Oyekanmi (1997:09)

Musasa Project pamphlet (2003:07) supports this notion by saying, Stereotypes influence society's attitudes towards men and women in different ways to include the way how people behave as they may want to live up to what the society expects and afraid to challenge these stereotypes. These stereotypes may lead to differences or conflicts of different magnitude between men and women due to access, control and benefits of resources. Such resources include land, farming equipment, household property, money to name a few.

In some societies, access, control and benefits of these resources as well as power tend to favour men or women instead of both as advocated by the feminist perspective on gender equality and equity. Upon the fore stated notion, Chapter 2 section 17.1.c of the Zimbabwean New Constitution reads, "The state must promote full gender balance in the Zimbabwean society, and in particular- the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men."

The above view goes hand in glove with goal number 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which calls for gender equality through women empowerment. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 1 on equality states that: All human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Due to cultural relativism, the UDHR cannot therefore represent the moralities of all cultures and this also marks differences in realisation of violence of different nature to include gender. Some societies enact these among other statutes to safeguard some individual groups' interests but generally for the creation of a more harmonious co-existence in the society. In doing so, these societies do not believe and reflect their actions against different forms of violence to include domestic and gender based violence (Winter, 1969).

Violence generally is the destructive application of physical force against property or people and can cover systems of domination and oppression. It occurs in and around every home, family and society at large by individuals or as a group resulting in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women or men whether occurring in the public or private life. This categorisation does appreciate the importance of the individual, of personality and of subjective factors even in collective behaviour and their dynamics in accordance with Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory (Mwamwenda, 1994). In Zimbabwe, 51% of women find it acceptable to be beaten by their husbands (Musasa Project pamphlet, 1996).

For personality and moral societal up-bringing, religion plays a fundamental role. Most of the actions by people in a society are regulated by the ethics of that particular society and mainly evaluated in accordance with religious values like the importance and value for life. The Functionalist perspective on religion states that sacred things are considered superior in dignity and power to profane things and in this sense Durkheim argues that religion leads to and reinforces collective conscience, social order, social control, social solidarity and cooperation (Ritzer, 2004). Based on this view, the church under the umbrella of religion provides the guidelines for human action and standards against which man's conduct can be conducted. The same view has been shared by Bonevac (2010:11) who propounds that the first principle in practical reason is one founded on the notion of good; namely, that good is what all things seek. Under this note actions that bring common good should take precedent over those that do not and at the same time find attention and support as advocated by the Divine Command Theory which also supports the operations of rules and guidelines by the church like The Ten Commandments for the moral good of justice in absolutist terms.

Although different institutions and organisations take up a leading role against gender based violence, according to the social judgement theory in terms of compliance and obedience by the general public on behavioural and attitudinal change,

there is need for active participation from the society at large to include those affected and do away with the the “culture of silence” being practiced in some homes where victims of abuse are warned not to talk about their experience (Zulu, 2013).

#### **4.1 The Role of the Church on Gender Based Violence.**

The church proclaims the moral order of the human universe and this moral order is based upon the dignity of every human being which flows out of the fact that everyone is created in the image of God from which the word of love and peace is perpetuated as peace is a gift of God. The church is believed to have a binding, connecting and a uniting force (Byrne, 1988) that also is very instrumental in the management and resolution of Gender Based Violence since the issue of humanity is a reflection of God’s love and expectation on human kind.

Upon the above said view, the then Vice President of Zimbabwe Joyce Mujuru once said, ‘The church is one social institution where there is no discrimination based on political affiliation or socio-economic backgrounds. The role of the church is bringing people together as a family.’

The church as an institution has the duty of uniting people from all walks of life under the spirit of oneness. Different church groups compliment government efforts in preaching about peace from the family up to the society at large. Peace, unity and justice tend to important elements in the society. Upon this sentiment, Shonhiwa (2012:14) writes, ‘In the tradition of the Catholic Church morals, people find principles related to personal justice, of distributive justice in the relationship with others, and also in the relationship with the international justice as regards to the relationship between families, societies and countries’.

Some people believe that the church today provides a hidden haven for Gender Based Violence and condone it by misunderstanding and misinterpreting the Bible. This sentiment has been shared by Holm (1994: xii) who states with regards to the church that “the position of women was higher at an earlier period in their history than it later became.” The church through the dictates of its religious leaders is believed to opine on how women should behave, dress and participate as well as the belief of men having the right to make decisions for women in the society. Although there are such beliefs, the church is being viewed as that which can bring positive results in curbing gender violence and perpetuate peace and harmony among spouses and families at large as supported by the story of creation that portray Eve as a suitable companion for Adam not as a servant to be manipulated for personal gains.

Since religious leaders and communities play a vital role in identifying key health and social issues in their broader communities and often lead positive, faith-based responses to such issues, they are crucial partners in addressing GBV and HIV, (Fleischman, 2002). They have a religious mandate to effect a change in communities and may lobby policymakers and governments in their own areas and as policymakers also within their own institutions; they are likely to give support to GBV activities if they are actively engaged at every level.

With reference, to 1 Peter 3:1-7, “a woman is supposed to submit to her husband and the husband should love his wife.” Under this notion, the church today however uses this verse as a single phase point, to suppress women and to destine their position in the society. In actual sense, submissiveness in the Bible encourages a woman to be obedient, humble, willing, loyal, respectful, and loving and have compassion for her husband. In the same way the husband should love, respect and take care of his wife. It means, that for this to happen both the wife and the husband should understand their roles and duties and be able to apply and abide by them with due respect for each other. Otherwise failure of one party to recognize his or her responsibility would create a barrier, the barrier conceives conflict, conflict gives birth to Domestic Violence then Domestic Violence graduates to Gender Based Violence. The centre points of this verse are for both the man and woman to love, respect, and care for and appreciate each other. Submissiveness in this case does not mean that a woman should tolerate ill treatment against her will (Alsdurf and Alsdurf, 1989).

The true teaching of Christianity is that humans are created in the image and likeness of God, who is love. People exemplify Christ through loving themselves and others, not through enduring the abuse of a partner. “No one is superior to the other. Therefore, no one should be discriminated against based on religion, race, sex or political affiliation.” said Vice President Mujuru. Sunday Mail 19-25 (2013, 02)

#### **4.2 Promotion of positive behavioural practices.**

The church can make disciples from all corners of the world through teaching them to observe what God has commanded such as respect and love for one another, leading a merciful life, helping one another in times of need, tolerance, forgiveness, truthfulness among other values. (Matthew 28:19-20). It is through the church that social order in the family and society at large can be enhanced with God being the architect through the church and the human race being the project. The church’s organisational culture shapes people and leads the way towards a peaceful society at large. The church’s organisational cultural awareness, (LeBaron and Grundison, 1993) leads members whom are the in group and even the outer group to apply the Platinum Rule in place of the Golden Rule. Rather than the maxim “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” the Platinum Rule advises: “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.”

Due to the respect given to church leaders like pastors, church ministers, Reverends, Bishops among others by the society, they are likely to receive much respect also on what they teach and say (Neill, 2009). These church leaders do have great influence in their followers’ behaviour and at the same time their followers need to be identified with their organisational culture and church groups’ styles of operations as postulated by (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) Social identity theory.

Gender based violence can be as a result of infidelity among family members thereby leading in these members either male or female having extra marital affairs. While most churches condemn sex outside marriage, sex is still a major source of conflict in most marriages especially that from extra marital affairs, few church leaders talk about it willingly. Majority of church leaders have a reservation when it comes to counselling couples in such matters and will always find reasons to suppress it in the name of preserving the marriage bonds either in the name of “what God has put together no one should put asunder.”(Mark 10:1-12) or submissiveness, because women are in most cases the first victims.

#### 4.3 Guidance and Counselling

The rights and interests of victims of serious human rights to include those of gender based violence continue to be overlooked and ignored in many societies to include Zimbabwe. Numerous victims continue to suffer in silence. In this respect, guidance and counselling should be incorporated in any attempts of addressing the problems (Ritchie, 2000). Counselling according to Musingafi, Dumbu, Mupa and Chaminuka (2011: 168) “is a process of facilitating healing through genuine dialogue with clients.” It can be viewed as a way of working with individuals and with relationships which may be developmental, crisis support, guiding or problem solving.

In many forms of gender based violence cases, women and children fall victims. Under such scenarios, post-reconstruction strategies need to be taken aboard to address mental and psychosocial disorders sustained during the conflict. Musingafi et al, (2011: 169) upon this view posit that counselling is aimed at, ‘Empowering affected communities to recognise signs and symptoms of mental and psychological distress. These may be at the individual level- such as lack of sleep, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, alcoholism, teenage pregnancies and school drop outs’.

Due to their sensitive neurological system, children are more susceptible to shocks to their developmental process as a result of violent and traumatic events. Supportive counselling is especially beneficial for those experiencing symptoms of anxiety, post traumatic symptoms, insomnia or depression. Psychological first aid strategies by the church members like pastors, elders among other qualified personnel can be used for children, adolescents, parents or guardians who have experienced atrocities during conflicts. (Gladding, 2000). Through guidance and counselling, the victims and the perpetrators (Chaplain, 1990) begin to own, cope and deal with their problems willingly. They develop some trust and may know how to express their feelings.

#### 4.4 Promotion of social justice.

Social justice is exercised within a society, particularly as it is applied to and among the various social classes of the society. A just society is one based upon the principles of equality and solidarity; which pedagogy also maintains that a socially just society both understands and values human rights as well as recognising the dignity of every human being and achieving peaceful resolution of disputes Armstrong et al, (1993:14).

The constitution of the International Labour Organisation according to Shonhiwa (2012: 14) affirms that “Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.” The Fifth Conference of the Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians held in Cape Verde in 2002 decided to consider the discussion on the issue of gender-based violence as a development priority: its impact on African women and its impact on African society (UNFPA, 2004). Furthermore, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action treat social justice as a purpose of the human rights education, (UN- OCHA, 2004). Under this view, the foundational principle of all Catholic Social Teaching is the sanctity of all human life and the inherent dignity of every human person, from conception to natural death. The church has to speak out on social issues in order to teach correct social principles and ensure family and societal harmony by advocating and teaching on equal access to the benefits of their society between women, men, spouses and families that act as one among other sources of gender based violence.

The United Methodist Church, Catholic Church, Anglican among others in Zimbabwe are taking leading positions in mobilising, facilitating and advocating for social equality, fiscal fairness among other values. The church is taking a lead in promoting social mobilization for the purpose of creating Gender awareness, and to foster positive attitude and behaviour change based on Biblical teaching necessary for the maintenance of gender equity (Tracy, 2006).

The church also takes the lead to make the world know that, all people have a right to a life without violence by preaching the true Gospel of love and transformation. It teaches the Gospel which shuns bad cultural practices, discrimination, immorality, social injustices and that God established with the people a covenant of peace, (Shonhiwa, 2012: 33). The church preaches the Gospel that leads people to recognize and accept God’s value, irrespective of sex, religion and culture. If people can understand this value, then their actions will also value the lives of others.

#### 4.5 How the Church Creates Awareness on Gender Based Violence.

People need to be informed and educated much on Gender Based Violence and ways of reducing it. Intervention programmes by the church among other partners need to be taken aboard if Gender Based Violence is to be effectively addressed, (Palitza, 2010).

Pastors among other church leaders should be seen taking a leading role in creating awareness on Gender Based Violence in places where some cultural practices are detouring advances against this disaster. At school, children should be taught that violence is wrong. The church in partnership with Women supporting organizations like Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) among others should be invited to talk at schools or workplaces about gender based violence and educate people on how they can be involved to reduce it and unlock avenues that discourage some cultural practices that subjugate women and their roles and rights in the society that include bargaining powers over safe sexual issues with proper condom use, (SA/AIDS, 2007). Letters among other publications on domestic violence should also be made to the television, the local radio and newspapers.

Any serious attempt to combat gender-based violence must espouse a cultural and human right approach. Supporting this notion is the UNFPA, (2005: 15) which reads, ‘Whilst promoting women’s reproductive rights, collaboration with religious and traditional leaders should be ensured, so as to anchor these universal principles in the local context and ensure community ownership of these human rights’.

For the general public to be informed on the issues that govern their day to day lives to include gender based violence and other human rights, media is vital for democracy as they are also primary information sources and storytellers. Dodo and Mateura, (2011: 70) on the importance of open media state that people should:

- Have access to information, advice and analysis to enable them to know their personal rights,
- Have access to wide range of information, interpretation and debate on areas that involve public political choices and be able to register criticism,
- Able to recognise themselves and their aspirations.

Where participation by the people is emphasized then communication contributes to the development of cultural identity. A culture that is violent free, a culture that respects human dignity, rights and social justice. Communication must, therefore, start where the real problems and needs exist, that is among the masses. To a large extent the people have not been able to address their problems due to lack of real participation in development strategies ostensibly set to solve their problems (Melkote, 1991). Reinforcing this position is to get people to participate, (Fuglesang 1992); one to include the church has to recognize their capacities to participate. There are several means of promoting participation and awareness creation by the church among which dramas, dances, songs and music, written letters to the radio and newspapers bearing news on gender based violence and how it is affecting families and the communities at large.

Upon creation of awareness on gender based violence, The Zimbabwe National Gender Based Violence Strategy, (2012-2015:13) states that: 'Acknowledging the widespread nature of the problem can also contribute to reducing survivor's isolation and creating an environment conducive to broad changes. Behaviour change strategies can contribute to shifting of gender based violence'.

The Zimbabwe National Gender Based Violence Strategy, (ibid) further notes that the church should create public awareness campaigns directed towards both men and women to enable greater awareness of their legal and human rights, of the importance of women's economic empowerment and the economic costs of the absence of women's contribution to the labour force as a result of violence, the legal consequences of abusive behaviour, as well as the impact of Gender Based Violence currently taking place in their homes, society and on future generations.

#### **4.6 Strategies Employed by the Church in resolving cases of Gender Based Violence.**

Cases of Gender Based Violence are of great concern in the society and therefore need to be treated as a matter of urgency before more deaths, divorces among married couples, mental casualties, school drop outs among other devastating effects to the social fabric of the society, (Musasa Project, 2003). Prevention is better than cure.

The church should get out of the sleeping slumber, take the lead to speak out and make the world know that, all people have a right to a life without violence by preaching the true Gospel of love and transformation, a Gospel which shuns bad cultural practices, discrimination, immorality and social injustices. As the guardians of the religious texts, religious leaders are best placed to guide and influence their communities. The church (Brown and Parker, 2001, cited in Tracy, 2006: 282) should preach the Gospel that leads people to recognize and accept God's value, irrespective of sex, religion and culture. If people can understand this value, then their actions will also value the lives of others.

Advocacy is one among other activities by the church in reducing and preventing gender based violence. This can be through encouraging law enforcement agents like the police, traditional leaders, members of the general public among others for enforcing zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women and girls by creating an environment in which there is non- tolerance of gender based violence. The church (Rogers, 2003) has to lobby, strengthen and forge commitment through campaigns for the reform and implementation of laws allowing women to inherit land and property, access to education and health care.

The National Gender Based Violence Strategy, (2012-2015: 13) upon preventing gender based violence states; 'Creating an enabling environment will require individuals and community behaviour change which includes raising overall community awareness, mobilising community based efforts, providing support for evidence-based advocacy and conducting mass media campaigns that improve knowledge, attitude and practices of community members'.

In order to achieve this, the church can organise meetings and workshops with the local leadership of religious, political and traditional circles where such issues of gender based violence are discussed. Such gatherings should be attended by men, women and the youth, (Strom, 1986).

The church initiates collaboration between community leaders, traditional elders, local authorities and schools to create greater understanding of the link between Gender Based Violence and poverty.

The church, (UNFPA. 2004: 15) has to intensify its advocacy operations against gender based violence by calling for greater male involvement as they are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence suffered by women and for equal representation of women and men in all activities in the public sphere to create public awareness of women's contribution to society and ensure women's input in decision-making.

As an Institution, the church should participate at all levels by lobbying for the inclusion of gender and empowerment strategies in the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs) and for gender-sensitive national budgets in all sectors to develop and ensure that national policies and programs are Gender responsive. This means that, the church should (Rogers 2003) plays a role in liaising with other actors to identify key Gender inequality concerns and recommend best interventions to address this concern.

The church takes a leading role in capacity enhancement in collaboration with other stakeholders in the communities and the society at large. Some of the capacity enhancement programmes according to Musasa Project, (2003: 21) are aimed at developing skills in self-confidence, self-esteem, communication, conflict resolution and negotiation for social transformation by identifying critical issues, finding innovative solutions and planning to take action. These programmes can be done through peace building workshops and training.

The goal is to empower women and girls to take charge of their own development as such, the attainment of peace in the families is not merely an instructional problem but rather one that requires the subtle elements of cultural change, (Utne,1988).

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace holds peace building workshops, meetings and seminars with

different organs like Salvation Army, Presbyterian Church of Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Assembly of God in Africa among others all according to Tom, Makamure and Chimininge (2011: 169) “Encourage people to live their lives in greater awareness of Christian justice to act justly to each other on individual basis and to work for a more just society.”

The church in a bid to mitigate and resolve most of conflicts that are gender oriented may include supporting gender mainstreaming programmes, women empowerment through facilitating women’s access to and control of resources like land, farming equipment, household property, money to name a few. UNIFEM, (2005: 10) proposes for gender sensitive budgeting at every level of governance to allow participation by both men and women on equal basis in developmental issues at the family and society at large. Such approaches are handy in reducing women dependence on men.

Resource mobilisation and partnership in spearheading women empowerment programmes can also be used by the church in dealing with gender based violence in communities like Mutoko through facilitating women’s access to concessionary loans for different project loans among other intervention programmes to address feminisation of poverty. UNIFEM, (ibid: 11).

The above said view has been supported by Made and Matambanadzo, (1996: 94) who say: ‘The empowerment of women economically is important. Gender concerns are even worse when there is no money in the family. Without some means of earning an income, the choices available for most women remain so limited other than to be submissive to abusive relationships’.

Different church pastors and elders bring conflicting parties back together through the more traditional means of mediating, conciliating and arbitrating on inter-personal disputes. During the process of conciliation, conciliators do not impose or recommend solution. The conflicting parties are encouraged to establish alternative solutions to their problem and come up with an agreement mutually acceptable by both parties, (Salaam, 2000).

Still on family reunification and reintegration of the violence victims and perpetrators, the church through its leaders tends to be more successful in areas of family reunification basing on inculcated attitudes of forgiveness and reconciliation. Such reunification programmes by the church according to Musingafiet *al*, (2011: 37) are aimed at rebuilding the social fabric of families and the entire community ravaged by violence. The most important aspect in peace building is reconciliation. This element has been described by John Paul Lederach in Anike-Nweze, (2006: 9) as; ‘A meeting ground where truth and mercy have met, and where justice and peace have kissed. Thus, reconciliation involves all the four processes. It brings people together, allowing them to develop beyond the past to restore stable, peaceful and trusting relationship in the present’.

Gender based violence tear relations apart. Children are kept under orphanage hostages, live unbearable lives full of discomfort some in the streets and elsewhere due to parental divorces, deaths among other problems.

Different church groups take these children and give them care at different children’s homes. Some of the children who end up in streets are given counselling, rehabilitation and support through education (Page, 2008) which call for substantial amount of money to carry out the processes.

On peace education, the church underscores the fact that peaceful coexistence is an objective requirement for peaceful development and vice versa, (Udayakumar, 2006: 6). The church has to collaborate with community leaders, local authorities the police and schools to mobilise resources and Support community participation and collaboration in forming social transformation forums and support groups including those committed to combating Gender Based Violence (Merki, 1993). Gender based violence is like cancer, it needs early attention especially on children to address issues like fearfulness, anger or sense of guilty among the victims. Through support groups and collaboration, (Chaplain, 1990) the church is able to organise, direct, coordinate and monitor programmes with the aim of combating gender based violence in the society.

## 5. Research methodology and participants

The research study was a case study undertaken to gather the view of the participants on the role of the church in the resolution of Gender Based Violence. This study adopts the qualitative research methodology as its main approach of generating data. As a process, the approach enabled the researcher to understand a social or human problem basing on holistic picture, formed with words, reports details of researched and conducted in a natural setting. The total population to be studied in this case is Nyameni residents in Marondera. The total number of households in this suburb is about 400 and there are two government primary schools that mainly draw their clientele from this suburb. Forty participants were selected as sample.

## 6. Discussion

### To establish whether the Church is participating in creating awareness of Gender Based Violence

The majority of the participants indicated that they conducted awareness campaigns on Gender Based Violence while a few indicated that they were not conducting these campaigns at all. Most of these awareness campaigns were conducted at the churches and in the community while a few indicated that awareness campaigns were conducted in schools and colleges.

### To establish the action taken by the church in Preventing Gender Based Violence

These are some of the actions taken by the church in the prevention of Gender Based Violence:

- Counseling
- Prayers
- Workshops
- Advocacy
- Counseling
- Income generation projects

**To establish the activities taken by the church in the management and resolution of gender based violence in the society.**

The majority of the participants had witnessed people experiencing Gender Based Violence while a few indicated that they had not experience Gender Based Violence. The following are some of the activities taken by the church to resolve Gender Based Violence:

- reference to legal advisors,
- adjudication by church leaders and elders,
- prayers,
- counseling,
- reconciliation and mediation programs.

**To find out if the church has any rehabilitation activities for victims of gender based violence in the society.**

The majority of the participants indicated that they had seen victims of Gender Based Violence in their churches while a few indicated that they had not seen victims of Gender Based Violence. The following are some of the rehabilitation activities done by the church to the victims of Gender Based Violence

- counselling
- prayers and
- formation of support groups
- giving food and clothes
- reconciliation and
- Reference to legal advisors.

## **7. Findings**

The majority of the participants were aged above 30 years being females who were married and completed secondary education. They belonged to the Pentecostal Church. From the worldwide research conducted by *SAfAIDS*, in the churches, there were more women than men between 18-30 years of age who were rushing to the church for divine intervention and support for their health, economic and social disorders like stigma and discrimination, unemployment, divorce, domestic disputes among other forms of violence affecting them (*SAfAIDS*, 2010).

From the findings of this research, it seems as though most married women of the age above 30 years are the ones most experiencing gender based violence resulting in the rushing to different church groups. From these findings again, men seem to be very few in these church groups which may lead in them being the major sources of gender based conflicts or even taking advantage of these situations in abusing women. Men in authority especially church leaders as in accordance with the provisions of Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) tend to abuse their powers by poorly drafting unenforceable laws and regulations that perpetuate gender based violence (Maggie, 1997).

The majority of the respondents indicated that they conducted awareness campaigns in Gender Based Violence and most of these campaigns were conducted at the churches. This finding is in support of what Shonhiwa, (2012:) found in his study that the church is taking a leading role in promoting social mobilization for the purpose of creating Gender awareness, and to foster positive attitude and behaviour change based on Biblical teachings (Tracy, 2006). UNFPA, (2005: 15) indicated that creating awareness in GBV is the most important activity in the control of GBV.

Although churches are taking a leading role in awareness campaigns against gender based violence, findings of this research indicate that there are also many cases of violence, by church members as perpetrators as well as victims in the church as also observed by Alsdurf and Alsdurf, (1989:33) who posit that, "Spousal abuse in most churches is very common among married and cohabiting African immigrants and the role religion plays in abuse is not only distressing, but also embarrassing."

The actions taken by the church in Preventing Gender Based Violence included Counseling, Prayers and Workshops (28%), Advocacy (26%), Counseling only (10%) and awareness campaigns, income generation projects and prayers (13%). Tracy (2006) also found out that in Zambia, The United Methodist Church, Catholic Church, Anglican among others are taking leading positions in mobilising, facilitating and advocating for social equality, fiscal fairness among other values. They are taking a lead in promoting social mobilization for the purpose of creating Gender awareness, and to foster positive attitude and behaviour change basically on Biblical teachings necessary for the maintenance of the church's status quo.

## **8. Conclusions**

This study based on the fore stated findings, had to come up with the following conclusions.

The church has done more awareness of Gender Based Violence than in the community and in schools and colleges. The church carried activities such as counselling, prayers and workshops, advocacy as well as income generating projects mostly to the church members than the society. The church also carried out different conflict resolution approaches for the church members who included counselling, prayers, mediation, arbitration, availing of food and clothes among others. These were mainly done to church members than the society. There were more rehabilitation activities for victims of Gender Based Violence in the church than in the community.

The activities done by the church for the victims included counselling, prayers and formation of support groups among others.

The church was referring more perpetrators of Gender Based Violence in the community for legal advice and to the police than for perpetrators in the church.

## 9. Recommendations

- The study recommends that the church should do more Gender Based Violence awareness campaigns in the community as it is doing in the church.
- The study also recommends for more rehabilitation activities for victims of Gender Based Violence in the community as is done in the church.
- The study however recommends for the church to refer perpetrators of Gender Based Violence that are in the church for legal advice and to the police as it is doing to those in the community.
- This study recommends for more training programmes in multi-faith approach to fuse in and sharing of ideas and approaches by the different groups.
- The study also recommends for the church to advocate more on equitable distribution of resources between men and women in and outside the church in order to reduce recurrence of more conflicts that are Gender Based.
- The study reveals that gaps still exist and it recommends that there be further research on effective approaches by the church in dealing with Gender Based Violence in the society at large.

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