

**AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF XHOSA
SPEAKING WOMEN IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

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DECLARATION

The author hereby declares that this whole mini thesis, unless specifically declared in the text is her own work.

September, 2005

Signed: _____

B. NGOMA



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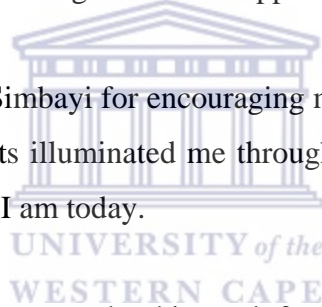
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ABSTRACT

The problem of abusive relationships has attracted national attention in South Africa. Historically South Africa has a strongly entrenched patriarchal system, which gives men proprietary rights over women. Traditional and cultural values as means of resolving conflict are critical in shaping and perpetuating violence of men toward women. A woman's social status is believed to be derived by her relative position to a man that is as daughter, wife, girlfriend or mother of his children. One solution to ending the abuse and leading violence free lives would be to leave the relationship. While this is a possible solution it should be noted that in order for women to leave it requires enormous restructuring of material, physical and social relations. A qualitative feminist research methodology was used with a convenience sample of 8 women who agreed to participate in the study. In depth interviews were conducted with the participants to explore the perceptions and experiences of Xhosa women in abusive relationships. The participants resided in Khayelitsha, Phillipi and Langa. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 45 minutes, were audio taped and transcribed. In view of the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher employed thematic analysis. Women mentioned their experiences of abuse and discussed their help seeking strategies. A number of themes that emerged from the study suggested clearly women's perceptions and experiences to remain in their abusive relationships. These themes relate to commitment, staying because of children, cultural beliefs (lobola), economic dependence and lack of social support. It also emerged from the discussions with women that the emotional and structural support that these women received from the NGO played a huge role. The most important finding from the study was that change occurred as a result of abuse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Overview	1
1.2	Rationale for the study	3
1.3	Synopsis of the study	7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Overview	8
2.2	Domestic Violence Act	10
2.3	Defining Abuse	13
2.3.1	Physical abuse	15
2.3.2	Emotional abuse	15
2.3.3	Sexual abuse	16
2.4	Context of woman abuse	16
2.4.1	Culture, race and class	20
2.4.2	Resistance and negotiations	22
2.5	Factors influencing women's decision to stay	25
2.5.1	Psychological entrapment	25
2.5.2	Economic dependence	26
2.5.3	Staying because of the children	27
2.5.4	Lack of knowledge and access to help	28
2.5.5	The underlying of the abusive partner	29
2.5.6	Lack of perceived social support	29
2.5.7	Relationship commitment	30



2.5.8	Adaptation to violence	31
2.6	Why women stay	31
2.7	Theoretical perspectives on woman abuse	34
2.7.1	Psychodynamic theories	35
2.7.2	Social learning theories	36
2.7.3	Feminist theories	36
2.7.3.1	A feminist critique of abuse	37
2.8	Impact of abuse on women	38
2.9	Conclusion	41

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

3.1	Methodological framework	42
3.2	Aims and objectives	47
3.3	Participants	47
3.4	Instruments	48
3.4.1	Semi structured interviews	48
3.4.2	Procedure	49
3.5	Data analysis	50
3.5.1	Organising the data	54
3.5.2	Generating categories, themes and patterns	55
3.5.3	Testing the emergent patterns and categories	55
3.5.4	Searching for alternative explanations	56
3.5.5	Writing the report	56
3.6	The researchers' self reflexive issues	56
3.7	Ethical issues	58



CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1	Introduction	59
4.2	Themes Emerging	60
4.2.1	Economic dependence	60
4.2.1.1	Economic deprivation and control	60

4.2.2	Cultural beliefs	63
4.2.3	Staying because of the children	66
4.2.4	Commitment	68
4.2.5	Social support	70
4.3	Women's help seeking strategies	71
4.3.1	Religion	72
4.3.2	Personal resources	73
4.3.3	Psychological services	73
4.3.4	Family	75
4.3.5	Legal information	76
4.3.6	Appointments	77
4.3.7	Accessibility and affordability	77
4.3.8	Confidence and self esteem	78
4.4	Impact of abuse	79

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1	Summary of findings	81
5.2	Recommendations	82
5.3	Limitations of the study	83
5.4	Conclusion	83

REFERENCES	84
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APPENDICES

- A. Letter of Consent
- B. Interview guide
- C. Participants transcripts

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 OVERVIEW

Woman abuse is endemic in most societies cutting across racial, cultural and economic development lines. According to Hoff (1990) the focus on violence against women has increased in prominence in the literature. A significant aspect of the historical context of abuse is the silence that surrounded it. This silence signalled the belief that abuse was a private affair between partners. The affirmation that a 'man's home is his castle' is invariably tied to this belief system. The shame and stigma that have been attached to this problem, coupled with cultural and social acceptance, have contributed to the invisibility of this problem (Mullender, 1996).

Prior to the 1970's the problem was viewed by both the general public and the helping professions as a private self-generated misfortune requiring individual and not social change (Pfoutz & Renz, 1981). Angless (1988) states that even though the women's movement has been in existence for centuries their efforts only contributed in the early 1970s to the recognition of the problem. Mullender (1996) states that abuse is now clearly recognised as one of the major universal ways in which women are subjected to discrimination while men retain power, domination and privilege.

In the United States of America, 2.3 million women are severely assaulted by their spouses and 1300 are killed each year (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). They state that 20% of women treated in hospital emergency rooms have been abused and have found that approximately 25% of pregnant women in relationships have been abused. Lawrence (1984) states that violence against women in South Africa is a serious and extensive problem although it is often under reported. There is a paucity of research on the

social problem of woman abuse in South Africa. However, studies reveal that 50-60% of marital relationships involve violence and abuse (Adams, 1987). Difficulties in obtaining prevalence data have been exacerbated by lack of resources to confront the problem of woman and also the fragile relationship between the police and the community (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). South African organisations working with abused women have attempted to estimate the scope of such violence by extrapolating from their caseloads and surveys. Rape Crisis estimated that one in every three women is assaulted by their male partners. All other organisations for woman abuse estimated that a partner abuses approximately one in four women and also women are regularly assaulted by an intimate partner. In Soweto it was found that one in three women attending a clinic for any reason had been battered at some time by a husband or boyfriend (Rape Crisis, 1992).



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The results of two surveys in the Cape Town metropolitan and adjacent rural areas carried out in 1990-1991/2 showed that violence in the home not necessarily between spouses or partners represented a third of all interpersonal violence (Human Rights Watch, 1995). In both surveys, while men were in general twice as likely as women to be injured in a violent assault outside the home, in the home men and women were affected almost equally. It is further stated that the most likely place for a woman to be abused is at home. Significantly, these women, four times as many women as men treated for assault related injuries in the home had been assaulted by a partner (Human Rights Watch, 1995). A similar or even worse pattern has been found in other African countries. Forty two percent of women interviewed in a district of Kenya reported that they were beaten by their husbands and it was estimated that over 50% of women in Tanzania are physically abused (Watts, Oscan, & Wim, 1995).

The first question that comes to mind when talking about abuse is: 'why does she remain in this abusive relationship? Why doesn't she leave?' This question, which we can't seem to stop asking, is not a real question. It does call for an answer but it also makes a judgement. This question transforms an immense social problem into a personal transaction and at the same time pins responsibility squarely on the victim. Woman abuse is widespread in South Africa and as elsewhere occurs in all socio-economic, religious and cultural groups (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This high incident suggests that abuse is not an individual problem but rather a severe social disorder.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

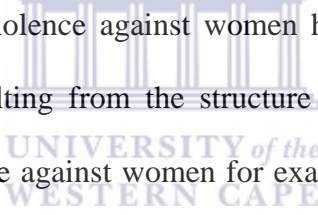
My opinion in this area is that woman abuse within Xhosa speaking women required investigation. There are lots of women and girls who have endured abusive relationships for lengthy periods of time and my interest was to find out why they decide to remain in these relationships. Gugulethu and Langa townships in the Western Cape were created during apartheid as a result of the Group Areas Act. People from formerly cohesive communities were relocated and dispersed away from the city centre and the more affluent suburbs. Contrary to the goals of development, problems began to emerge soon after residents moved to the new areas. These townships were not fully developed as industrial centres and most residents had to travel long distances for employment opportunities. The unfamiliarity of these areas amongst residents resulted in a lack of community cohesiveness. Khayelitsha, next to Mitchell's Plain, was introduced in 1983. All these areas were beset with similar problems created by the apartheid policies of the time.

Woman abuse by men is recognised as a major social problem, which affects thousands of women worldwide (Buckenham, 1999). There is overwhelming evidence shown by research that the majority of the victims are women themselves (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This is considered a major health and human rights issue. In Xhosa culture abuse can be described as taking place within an ideological context that views the family or household as a private domain within which conflict should be contained and settled without outside interference. Social workers and counsellors in organisation such as NICRO, Ilitha Labantu and Rape Crisis in the Western Cape report the description of abuse to be commonplace among their women clients. This study has explored these issues as not much research has been conducted on Xhosa speaking women. This study has also provided Xhosa speaking women with an opportunity to voice their opinions and has also provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore these women's experiences of abuse.



Various factors associated with abusive relationships and an attempt to describe Xhosa women's reluctance to leave the abusive relationship had been explored. Statistics in the area of abuse in Xhosa speaking women are also difficult to establish largely because of underreporting (Vogelman, 1990). This is due to factors such as the acceptance of such violence as normative by these women and authorities, the lack of shame these women experience in describing assaults particularly of a sexual nature, economic dependence on abusers, the fear of future reprisals and the difficulty in obtaining convictions (Rape Crisis, 1992).

Woman abuse has been a universal problem for many centuries but only in the 20th century has it become recognised as a severe social problem. The high incidence of woman abuse in South Africa indicates the severity of this social problem in our country. Approximately 450 cases of violence against women are reported every month in Cape Town according to statistics compiled by the National Institute for Crime and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO, 1998). The existing literature on abuse appears to be focused on the effectiveness of interventions. Violence occurs across all cultures and abuse against women is commonly reported in the mass media. It is argued however that certain cultures are more patriarchal and condone violence more than others do. In South Africa women's powerlessness is deeply entrenched across cultures, classes and communities (Rape Crisis, 1992).



Literature also reveals that violence against women has been regarded by feminist writing and activism as resulting from the structure and hierarchy of societies of which women are part. Abuse against women for example has been identified as an expression of patriarchy and related to women's social standing (Mashishi, 2000). In a patriarchal social structure women are seen as 'second class' citizens. Consequently, the phenomenon of abuse against women is more common in societies based on gross inequalities and discrimination (Mashishi, 2000).

In most societies, including the Xhosa speaking society, the ideas of peace, security and harmony are still strongly associated with the institution of the family, so that it has been exceedingly difficult to deal with the fact that many people are horribly abused within the home. The present social context is marked by increasing levels of

violence, which impinge on the family particularly on women. It is with this awareness that abuse needs to be addressed at all levels.

The types of abuse, which Xhosa speaking women face in the home, are the same as those faced by women the world over. They include verbal abuse, in which they are humiliated and degraded verbally by their partners, emotional abuse, in which they are threatened, for example with violence, economic deprivation or with the withholding of access to their children and physical which takes many forms, ranging from restriction on freedom of movement, to hitting, choking, burning, stabbing and even the use of electric shocks. In the worst cases violence against women by their partners results in death. A study of inquests into the death of women in the Johannesburg magisterial district during 1994 found that 29% of them were related to homicide. Of the homicide, 10 women were killed by their partners and in another 2 cases the partner was the main suspect (Rape Crisis, 1992).



What is certain is that South African Xhosa speaking women living in one of the most violent countries in the world are disproportionately likely to be victims of violence. . The aim of the study was to explore a group of Xhosa women's perceptions and experiences of why they remain in abusive relationships. There is a heightened awareness of the seriousness related to the problem of abuse, which is linked to the overall levels of violence especially in the South African context. This means that many social agencies have to address the existence of woman abuse as well as the needs of abused women. Currently there is a paucity of literature regarding the experiences of Black South African women, particularly Xhosa speaking women. It is hoped that the research will be used to assist and support these women.

1.3 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

Chapter two introduces the main theoretical areas considered in this study. It explores the information on the incidence of woman abuse, various definitions relating to woman abuse and the theories of woman abuse. It also focuses on the factors on why women remain in abusive relationships.

Chapter three deals with the methodology used in this study. Qualitative Methods were utilised in the study. The chapter describes the research instrument, the participants and the process of data analysis.

Chapter four documents the findings and chapter five provides an analysis and interpretation of data and provides the conclusion and summarises the main findings of the study. The focus of this chapter is on thematic patterns that emerged during data analysis and highlights similarities and differences in the perceptions and experiences of women. The use of qualitative thematic analysis of data provides a comprehensive examination of the data and links the findings to relevant literature. This chapter also attempts to reflect on the process of data gathering and presentation used in the study, in particular the role and influence of the researcher.

Chapter five explores some of the limitations and suggests some of the implications for future intervention models dealing with abused women.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

History reflects the enormous magnitude of the problem of violence against women. For centuries patriarchal norms dominated and women were considered to be the property of their husbands. Some postulate that woman abuse has its roots in Roman law, which permitted a husband to kill his wife if she committed a variety of offences (Stacey, Hazelwood & Shupe, 1994). English Common law gave husbands the right to beat their wives with any 'reasonable instrument'. These laws were maintained throughout Europe and America until the late 1800's when a few states rescinded this 'right'. Domestic assaults continued and were termed 'domestic disputes'. They were considered to be nuisance behaviour, not criminal. As a result they were not seriously in the criminal justice system until the past ten years when a variety of statutes were developed which specifically protect people from domestic abuse.

Household research on violence against women is regarded as difficult. Many women are reluctant to disclose abuse because of perceptions of shame, fear of blame or reluctance to be disloyal to their partners. In understanding the origins of intimate partner violence, Heise's (1998) ecological framework has recently assumed prominence. Based on review of mainly, but not exclusively, north American literature, it premises that abuse results from an interplay of personal, situational and socio cultural factors at different levels of the social environment. Heise (1998) seeks to present the factors, which are predictive at each level of the social ecology. At an individual level, factors

include being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence in the home, having an absent or rejecting father. At the level of the family or relationship factors include, use of alcohol, male control of wealth and decision making in the family and marital conflict. At a community level factors include, poverty and unemployment, social isolation of the woman and male participation in delinquent peer associations. Lastly at a societal level factors, include male ownership of women, ideas masculinity linked to aggression and dominance, rigid gender roles, acceptance of interpersonal violence and acceptance of interpersonal violence and acceptance of physical chastisement.

According to Wilson (1997) most people do not clearly understand the word abuse. Visions of broken bones and black eyes are the generally held impressions; certainly these severe physical indicators are signs of abuse. Abuse encompasses physical attacks, emotional, verbal, sexual and economic abuse (De Sousa, 1991). Abuse tends to bring to mind the stereotypical uneducated, unemployed, working class man hitting his wife mercilessly. It is often said that men who abuse their partners do so because they experienced battering in their homes as children. There seems to be a correlation between childhood experience of abuse and adulthood practice of violence against women, however this does not account for all abusive men (De Sousa, 1991). The victims, like their abusive partners come from different educational backgrounds, class, occupations, ages and racial groups. Easy access to private health care and legal resources is among the reasons why woman abuse is hidden amongst the upper classed of society. In contrast to this, abuse may be more frequently recorded among the poor

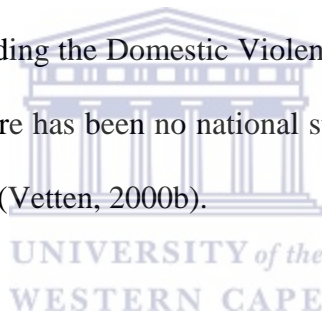
because women in this social-economic stratum are more likely to be known to social service agencies (Stewart, 1994).

2.2 THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

Gender has not been a major issue of public concern in South Africa with the history of racial oppression and violence. Violence against women has only recently become a form of social and public discourse. The post apartheid government has addressed the issue of the quality of South African women's lives (Vetten, 2000b), the issue of violence against women started receiving attention along with transformative measure to address the problem (Fedler, Motara & Webster, 2000; Vetten, 2000b).

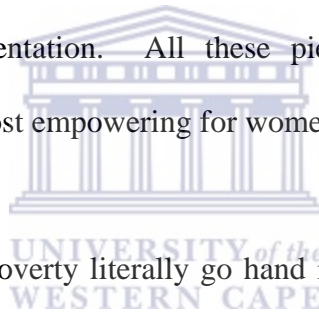
In 1993 the Prevention of Family Violence Act (113 of 1993) was passed to permit women to apply for an interdict to stop abuse by their partners (Vetten, 2000b). The Prevention of Family Violence Act did not address violence by partners who are not cohabiting and same sex partners. Further the act did not address verbal and emotional abuse as a form of domestic violence (Human Rights Watch, 1995). These problems led to subsequent revisions and the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (116 of 1998). The act provides a definition of domestic violence which includes emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, entry into the home without the complainant's permission and any other abusive, controlling behaviour (Vetten, 2000a)

In terms of the Act, women (or any other person experiencing domestic violence) may apply for a protection order to stop the abuse. Furthermore the courts and police have specific duties and responsibilities to enforce the protection order. Court officials are compelled to inform the woman of her rights in terms of the Act. Police officers have greater duties and responsibilities which include informing a woman of her rights, assisting her with alternative shelter and medical attention and retrieving her clothing or personal belongings. Police officers are also obliged to arrest the abuser if he has committed an act of violence or violated the protection order. It is clear that the act attempts to protect the rights of victims of domestic violence by providing adequate assistance and terms of responsibilities. However, there has been a lack in the training of law enforcement officials regarding the Domestic Violence Act. Although many training initiatives have taken place, there has been no national strategy co-ordinating all training initiatives and problems persist (Vetten, 2000b).



For example, police officers are trained around enforcing the Act and fulfilling their duties and responsibilities but ongoing training projects addressing perhaps stereotypes or challenging their attitudes about women and domestic violence are difficult to implement without financial support or large-scale government strategies. Moreover, the scarcity of shelters as alternative places of accommodation for women (especially in Cape Town) makes it more difficult for police to carry out their duties in terms of the Domestic Violence Act. In South Africa there are not enough shelters for abused women (Park, Peter & De Sa, 2000). Although there have been important legal advances there is much room for improvement in the provision of comprehensive services for abused women.

South Africa at the highest policy level has on the other hand committed itself to the elimination of gender violence. The preamble to the Domestic Violence Act no. 116 of 1998 makes clear this intention as it sets this legislation out as providing victims with maximum protection. However research is of the opinion that a legislative change alone is futile, as it requires the backing of both resources and political will to make a significant impact. Combrinck (1998) maintains that although the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 is progressive, its success can only be determined by its implementation. She goes further by saying that it is of fundamental importance to monitor the implementation of this legislation by reflecting on whether Domestic Violence Act has changed the reality of women through increased access to criminal justice system and support service after implementation. All these pieces of legislation are viewed internationally as among the most empowering for women of any race in the world.



Violence against women and poverty literally go hand in hand. It is unfortunately true that a high proportion of all women in South Africa suffer an inordinate number of beatings, rape and emotional abuse (Callaghan, Hamber & Takura, 1997). These authors go further by stating that economic vulnerability limits women's chances to change their situation when confronted with violence. Poverty stricken women and particularly those in rural areas, are often financially dependent, have limited access to employment and are unsupported mothers who must fulfil the role of caregiver. As a result they have few alternatives and options if they wish to leave a violent or abusive situation. On top of this in most impoverished areas in South Africa, women have limited access to health, education, social, psychological and legal services. A range of factors has contributed to

high level of violence or abuse against women in poor areas. These factors include transience of the population, over crowding, disrupted family life, a mentality of dependence and the socialised acceptance of violence as a way to solve problems (Callaghan, Hamber & Takura, 1997).

Dobash and Dobash (1979) state that men who abuse their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society namely aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination and they are using physical force to enforce their dominance. For one to be called a man they should be strong, powerful and independent. One should be tough in order to deal with any difficulty coming their way to use power or force and never be regarded as a coward. Because of cultural and traditional perceptions and or beliefs men are expected to constantly strive for others if necessary to be competitive and determined to get what they want even though they are succeeding. They are not expected to act like girls for example they are not supposed to cry even when they get hurt amongst others. This basically proves that socialisation, tradition and culture encourages and promotes abuse of women in the home in the sense that men are expected to fight even if they are aware of failure.

2.3 DEFINING ABUSE

Angless and Machonachie (1996) state that abuse is a very difficult phenomenon to define as it covers a wide range of actions. It has a subjective component in that women may define themselves as 'abused' at different stages of abuse. Strauss (1988) on the other hand states that abuse may be regarded as a consequence of an inequality of power

within a relationship. It is a pattern of coercive control that takes on many forms of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse. The violence has a purpose in that it allows the abuser, usually a man, to dominate and control his partner. Thus, the violence in turn acts as a means to instil feelings of subordination in women. Adams (1987) defines abuse as a controlled pattern involving intimidation and pressure, withholding of financial or emotional support, issuance of ultimatums and accusations and employment of children as confederates against the woman

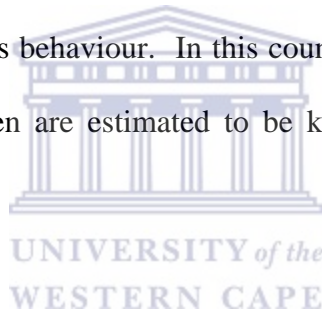
Abuse is an intermittent pattern of interaction occurring repeatedly which results in pain and loss and has the ability to deconstruct the woman's presence, self-respect and sense of self. It is generally accepted that this includes a range of abusive and controlling behaviours and that most abused women experience multiple types of abuse ranging from physical, psychological, verbal, economic to sexual violence (Bograd, 1999). Abuse may involve being kicked, punched or beaten, marital rape, isolation, controlling the woman's actions whom she sees as and where she goes, intimidation and threats and restriction of or complete withdrawal financial support.

The causes of abuse have preoccupied social scientists for several decades. There are various kinds of abuse and the most familiar form of abuse men inflict on their female partners is physical abuse. Its causes may include being slapped, punched, kicked, choked, and pinched and having limbs broken (Strauss, 1988). Abuse is increasingly being recognised as a public health problem and associated with injuries and a wide range of other mental and physical health problems (Heise, Ellsberg & Gottemoeller, 1999).

Wilson goes further by stating that physical abuse is any use of size, strength, or presence to hurt or to control someone else.

2.3.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse is a prominent feature of sexual relationships from the start of dating during teenage years (Wood, Maforah & Jewkes, 1998). Forms of abuse have been described as lying on a continuum between slapping, ‘persuading’ a woman to have sex, threatening to beat, hitting with sticks or other objects, pushing, assaulting with fists, violent rape, stabbing with a knife or shooting (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). Although some of these behaviours are clearly more dangerous than others all show a lack of respect and an attempt to control the other’s behaviour. In this country of approximately 40 million people, as many as five women are estimated to be killed each week by an intimate partner (Vetten, 1995).



2.3.2 Emotional abuse

This refers to a wide range of psychological forms of control and undermining of a woman, by her partner. It can take the form of humiliating name-calling, as well as isolation from family, friends and possible sources of protection. The abuser may treat the woman as if she has no emotional needs and is only there to serve his needs (Mullender, 1996). Wilson (1997) states that emotional abuse involves repeated hurtful exchanges with a disregard for the partner's feelings. While some emotional abusive relationships do not involve physical abuse, all physical abusive relationships contain

some emotional abuse. This type of abuse is more than name-calling. One of the dangers of this type of abuse is that it is frequently subtle and insidious.

2.3.3 Sexual abuse

This includes sex or rape by the abuser, or threats of violence if the woman refuses to have sex (Mullender, 1996). Wilson (1997) states that sexual abuse is any behaviour meant to control, manipulate, humiliate or demean another person. According to Schornstein (1997) abuse episodes are recurrent and become more frequent and severe over time. The abuse often takes place in the privacy of the home, the “haven of safety”. Yet the home may be the most dangerous and violent place for women. Schornstein (1997) further states that woman abuse is a systematic pattern of abusive behaviours, occurring over a period of time that may become more frequent and severe, and are done for the purpose of domination and/or control. Such episodes are part of a complex, continuing pattern of behaviour of which the abuse is but only one dynamic.

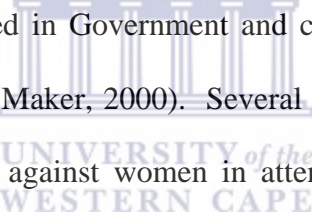
2.4 CONTEXT OF WOMAN ABUSE

According to Simpson (1992) aggression is most displaced to the home environment. The expression of frustration and aggression in the home is easily facilitated by the isolation of this ‘private area from the public eye and the public scrutiny’. It is within this isolation and the privacy of the domestic environment that frustrated and helpless men symbolically reassert their control within that one area in which they still traditionally hold power within heterosexual relationships and within the family. Simpson further states that the victims of this aggression are usually the weaker members

of the society that is women, children and the elderly over whom men can most easily reassert their control. The statistics which have been mentioned are not exhaustive but are just indicators of this issues. In these kinds of situations the victims are often too vulnerable to the power of their tormentors to take action themselves, neighbours on the other hand very willingly look away, police claim they cannot intervene in domestic issues.

Abuse and violence against women have been with us for the duration of recorded history. Such abuse appears to be a virtually universal phenomenon. This abuse seems to be related to women's general status and value in particular communities (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). However, discussion of 'endemic' violence conveys the premise that such violence is widespread, common and deeply entrenched in most societies, which is certainly the case in the South African context. So prevalent and widely tolerated is such violence that it has come to be perceived almost as normative and to a large extent accepted rather than challenged. The abuse of women by male partners is a feature of patriarchal gender relations under conditions of broader societal violence. Taking the definition of patriarchy, where males 'inherit' material goods and social prerogatives, combined with the fact that the family is not only a breeding ground for violence but also the primary environment where socialisation occurs, it is no surprise that unequal gender power relationships are thus perpetuated through the interaction of patriarchy and socialisation. In South Africa, as in many other countries world wide, woman abuse is regarded as a pervasive social problem as it occurs across all socio-economic and racial groups (Vogelman, 1990).

South African society is very violent. Decades of apartheid State sponsored violence and reactive community insurrection, have been meticulously described in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1998) and have contributed to a situation in which for many people physical violence is the first line strategy for resolving conflict and gaining ascendancy. Woman abuse in this country can be viewed against the socio-political background of apartheid, race, class and gender relations (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). The brutality of this system has serious implications for the social conditions of South Africa's advantaged and disadvantaged people and has contributed to ill health, hardship poverty and had divided families, the very conditions under which abuse flourishes (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe & Thompson, 1992).



Gender based violence is viewed in Government and civil society as a major problem (Usdin, Christofides, Malepe & Maker, 2000). Several authors have argued that violent practices are deployed by men against women in attempts to maintain particular self images and social evaluations in the face of real or imagined threats i.e. to prove that they are 'real' men and their women are under their control (Wood & Jewkes, 1998). Abuse against women reflects the general culture of violence, which is endemic in South African society and which tends to normalise violence and affirms its role as a pseudo conflict resolution tactic. This is cause for concern to all South Africans. If women are to contribute seriously to nation building and the reconstruction and reconciliation of the new South Africa, the problem of woman abuse must be confronted (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991).

Women's relative powerlessness in the home is deeply entrenched across a variety of cultures and communities in South Africa. If we wish to see the prevalence of this phenomenon decrease these norms and traditions needs to be challenged by the broader South African society. The feature of devaluing the female through violence is crucial in the understanding of dynamics of violent interactions in the domestic setting (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). It is the thread, which patriarchy, sexism and inequality in gender relations weave through all violent interactions between men and women

Theorists have begun to focus on class and race (Callaghan, Hamber & Takura, 1997; Mama, 1996; McCloskey, 1996; McKendy, 1997; Miles-Doan, 1998; Reid, 1993; Tieffenthaler & Farmer, 2000), culture (Abraham, 2000; Haj-Yahia, 2000; Kozu, 1999; Lui, 1999; McWirther, 1999; Perilla, Bakeman & Norris, 1994; Walker, 1999; Zaman, 1999), sexuality (Shefer, Strebel & Foster, 2000; Wilkinson & Krizinger, 1993) and other forms of oppression impacting upon women's lives as there has been a shift from the analysis of patriarchy as the only source of women's oppression. The recent work on violence and gender has developed recognition in the saliency of multiple sites of power and oppression. Bograd (1999) discussed sexual orientation, class and race and gender showing how a lack of attention to these constructs colt in the invisibility of certain victims of violence. She recognised that single factor explanations do not account for the multiple sites of power and oppression impacting on women's lives.

The following section will review the broader context of violence against women by examining the confluence of race, class, sexuality and other forms of difference informed by a feminist analysis.

2.4.1 Culture, race and class

Psychological theories highlighted some important issues faced by abused women that is why it is necessary to study the psychological effects of violence in the lives of women (Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997) but the preoccupation with psychiatric labels and psychopathology as the only way to describe women's experiences is ultimately flawed. Psychological theories should be interweaved with social and cultural explanations of violence. Sikhitha (1997) indicates that a woman may stay in an abusive relationship for fear of being alone or without a partner. Social and cultural norms prescribe that at a certain age women should be married and the social stigma attached to divorce may restrict the possibilities of leaving abusive partners.

An analysis of the socio-political and historical context is also important in the theorising of woman abuse. McWetherter (1999) states that in societies that have experienced large scale state sponsored violence for example apartheid in South Africa there is an increased tolerance for the use of violence as a means of maintaining authority and control. In these societies the use of violence against women particularly may become normalised. In South Africa there was an ethnographic study conducted by Dangor, Hoff & Scott (1996) interviewing 37 health clinic employees, church members, community workers, students and professionals. The participants in this study commented on the relationship

between the oppressive system of apartheid and violence against women. Within the authoritarian and violent system of apartheid women were particularly vulnerable with black women experiencing multiple forms of oppression based on gender, race and culture. The emphasis here is on the importance of the socio political and historical context of violence against women.

In South Africa with the reality of poverty and racism, many women from underprivileged communities have limited options and support. According to Callaghan, Hamber and Takura (1997) women who are living in disadvantaged conditions are at increased risk of violence. They also indicate that the relationship between poverty and violence is not a direct one but poverty should be considered when attempting to understand violence against women. Poor women often have limited access to social and institutional support may be financially dependent on their spouses and therefore lack the alternatives to leaving a violent relationship. The lack of institutional support is sometimes evident in the effectiveness of police when assisting women with problems of violence in their relationships. In South Africa, only 4% of women who sought help from police said they would return to them for help (NICRO, 1998). Constraints faced by women attempting to leave violent relationships were discussed by Maconachie, Angless and van Zyl (1993). These include lack of social and economic support with all the women in their sample indicating that having nowhere to go was a major reason for not leaving the abuser. Women's options and choices are clearly limited in the social sphere by a lack of social and institutional support.

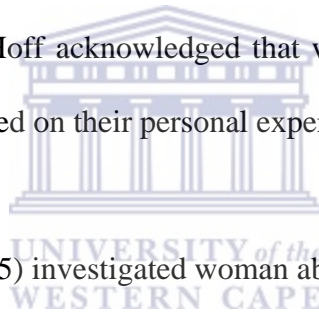
In South Africa, Jacobs and Suleman (1999) examined the prevalence and patterns of woman abuse in women who presented at Mitchell's Plein Community Health Clinic. They found that of 103 cases of abuse in the sample only 31 were documented in the medical records. In addition, health care workers did not directly enquire about women's experiences of violence from intimate partners. Blumberg, Swartz and Roper, (1996) found similar patterns of poor detection at Alexandra Health Clinic in Johannesburg. These findings have led to an acknowledgement of the inefficiency of the health sector to identify and assist women who have been abused.

Hanmer (1996) suggests that women's attempts to deal with violence involve personal strategies as well as cultural boundaries. Women's cultural strategies are filtered through boundaries set by culture, religion, education, class and language. The decision to leave or stay with an abusive partner is therefore negotiated within a set of boundaries and women negotiate and resituate themselves within and across cultural boundaries.

2.4.2 Resistance and Negotiation

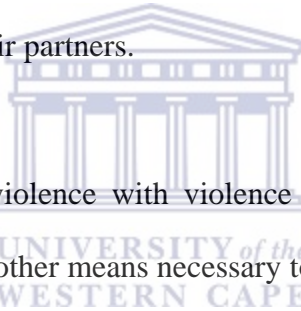
This section deals on the studies focussing on the strategies women employ to resist violence from their partners. It will review literature focussing on women as survivors rather than victims recognising their active strategies and negotiations. Browne (1997) states that women have been described as survivors who experience excessive trauma as a result of the abuse but who also use strategies to resist the abuse from their partners.

Hoff (1990) conducted an in-depth study starting from the premise that abused women are survivors rather than victims. She explored women's experiences of violence and distress while taking into account broader social and cultural issues. She suggested that the consideration of why women stay should involve an interaction between the meanings women attach to their experiences, the social and cultural context, women's social networks and practical realities of women's lives. She found that all the women in her study expressed and channelled anger towards their abusive partners. This finding contradicts traditional views of abused women as passive and accepting of the abuse. She recognised that leaving an abusive partner is a process and she attempted to follow the nine participants through this process. The decisions and options for each woman were somewhat different and Hoff acknowledged that women were able to manage the violence and make decision based on their personal experiences.



In South Africa, Waldman (1995) investigated woman abuse on two farms in the Western Cape showing how these farms were characterised by male dominance exercised by the farmers and the male farm labourers. The farmers and the male labourers controlled most aspects of women's lives including their labour and sexuality. High levels of violence were also characteristic of gender relations on the farms. The illustration by Waldman is how women on these farms employed strategies to resist male control to a certain degree. Some of these women resisted male control in their decisions to remain single by being economically independent. Another example was the use of contraception without their partners' knowledge. This study illustrates that women even those in oppressive situations were able to make active choices governing their own lives.

In Baker's qualitative study (1997) the emphasis was on the level of agency of women in abusive relationships. The study is initiated from the premise that a new cultural script urged women to leave abusive partners, maintain restraining orders and co-operate with the police. She illustrated how women employed active reasoning strategies and resisted this dominant cultural script from a prospective participant observer from a shelter through her analysis of interview and archival data. In this study many women chose to stay in the relationship, ignored or lifted restraining orders and refused to call or co-operate with the police. These issues were mediated by decisions of fear of emotional connections to partners, economic dependence, children, harassment from partners and lack of institutional support. Baker's study contextualises issues that influenced women's decision to leave or stay with their partners.



Women who attempt to fight violence with violence realised that this may result in further danger and will resort to other means necessary to deal with the abuse. Campbell, Miller, Cardwell and Belknap (1994) provided an example of how women's strategies were sometimes successful. In their sample women's attempts to stop the violence resulted in either cessation of violence or termination of the relationship. Fleury (2000) showed that ending the relationship does not necessarily end the violence and that women may often be at greater risk of violence from their partners after leaving. This reviewed research shows how leaving an abusive partner involves a process of negotiating that occurs over time. The leaving may be psychological or physical and allows women to evaluate and negotiate alternatives to staying with an abusive partner.

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S DECISION TO STAY

It is often difficult to understand why women remain in abusive relationships (Sullivan, Tan, Basta, Rumpitz & Davidson, 1992). There may be economic, social and emotional factors that operate to lead the abused woman to stay with her partner. Some of these factors include being reared to believe that real fulfilment comes from being a wife and a mother, encouragement by family and counsellors to stay in the relationship, feelings of inadequacy in providing the resources for the needs of their children. It may take several years and temporary separations before the woman is able to leave this dysfunctional relationship permanently (Sullivan Tan, Basta, Rumpitz & Davidson, 1992). Research has shown that the primary factors restraining women from leaving abusive relationships include the following:

2.5.1 Psychological entrapment

Psychological entrapment refers to a decision making process whereby individuals escalate their commitment to a previously chosen failing cause of action in order to justify or make good on prior investments (Strube, 1988). Initially, the woman exerts efforts to make the relationship work but in most abusive relationships these efforts fail and the abuse continues. Feeling compelled to justify these efforts the woman continues to try and make the relationship work in the belief that if she tries hard enough her efforts will succeed (Strube, 1988). Walker (1999) contends that conditions like anxiety, poor problem solving skills, fear and depression render abused women psychologically trapped.

Barnett, Miller-Perrini and Perrini (1997) have hypothesised that in unusual instances, violence can actually increase a woman's attachment to her abusive mate. Some say that an abused woman can form a traumatic bond to a man who alternately assaults and rewards her with love and attention. Extreme abuse intermittency in combination with other dynamic factors such as power differences does contribute to long-term feelings of attachment (Barnett, Miller-Perrini & Perrini, 1997).

2.5.2 Economic dependence

It is commonly believed that leaving the abusive partner will condemn women and children to a life of economic hardship due to the lack of financial support from the estranged partner. In fact studies cite economic dependence as the primary reason that abused women remain with their abusers (Barnett, Miller-Perrini & Perrini, 1997). Many women have no jobs, sometimes through the imposed decision of their husbands. The majority of those who do work, like the majority of all women in South Africa, earn considerably less than the men with whom they live, although economics do not determine the abuse (Miller, 1996). Vetten (1995) agrees that women typically earn less than men, experience greater rates of unemployment, are concentrated in the lowest paying sectors of the job market and are over represented amongst the poor of South African society. As a result finding a man and then sticking to him is often as much a matter of economic necessity as it is a romantic choice. In fact a number of abused women earn high salaries as professionals and business executives. Vogelmann (1990) believes that perhaps the most fundamental constraint that South African women face is their economic dependence on men. Their material dependence creates a situation of

powerlessness that is most clearly demonstrated in conventional marriage. One consequence of this dependence is the perception by men that women and their children are in some sense owned by them and take on the identity of property involving a degree of objectification.

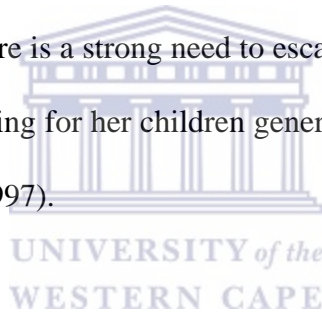
For poor women divorce or ending of the relationship may represent the difference between scraping by and destitution. However, the income of the average abused woman alone would put her in such financial straits that she has little choice, especially when children are involved. Her options therefore limit her to stay in the abusive relationship (Miller, 1996). In addition women often also cite problems such as finding alternative accommodation for their families (Hyden, 1994).

2.5.3 Staying because of the children

Many Xhosa speaking women in South Africa believe that they should stay in their marriages because lobola was paid for them (Volgeman & Eagle 1991). As this includes children, they also believe that keeping their marriage together for the sake of the children would also prevent them from leaving the relationship. The social stigma attached to a failed marriage contributes heavily to this situation (Hyden, 1994). Miller (1996) states that society has long instilled the idea that unless children are raised by two parents, they will grow up somehow warped. He further states that mothers as a result often suffer prolonged abuse for what they explain as 'the good of my children'. Married women stay with their abusive husbands because it is expected of them. It is believed that the woman has failed in her duty as wife if the marriage disintegrates.

Unaware of her child's stressful ambivalence, an earnest mother may work hard to sustain her child's relationship with the father, keeping his image shining even in the face of abuse, all for the good of the children (Miller, 1996). When women stay in abusive relationships for the sake of their children not only don't they provide 'the best for their children' but they often subject them to abuse as well.

Faulkner (1997) states that many, if not most women who are victims of abuse are not financially independent to take care of their own children. This may be because the abuser frequently tries to alienate their wives/partners from outside forces. Giving them control over the victim without the interference of those who try to get the abused woman out of the situation. Even if there is a strong need to escape the violent episodes the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing for her children generally supersede the mother's need for her own safety (Faulkner, 1997).



2.5.4 Lack of knowledge and access to help

In the past several years in South Africa woman abuse has emerged as a widespread and serious social and criminal justice problem calling for concerted action from a range of state, non governmental organisation and communities (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1995). The Prevention of Family Violence Act (1993) was passed as a preventative action in legislating criminal warrants of arrest of partners against whom interdicts are issued and legislating that men can be liable for conviction for abuse of his wife/partner. Even though the Prevention of Family Violence Act aims to serve as a buffer for victims

of family violence, it very seldom succeeds in providing protection to individuals in grave danger (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1995).

Despite community campaigns to inform women of the issues of abuse, many women still lack the knowledge to enable them to take advantage of their legal rights, such as applying for a protection order (interdict) and maintenance (financial support) from their partners. Even when they are aware of such services, especially historically advantaged women may experience problems in obtaining the proper access due to language difficulties, inappropriate responses from service providers (such as officials and the police force) or living in isolated rural areas (Hyden, 1994).

2.5.5 The underlying fear of the abusive partner

Another reason why women remain in abusive relationships is their fear of increased abuse if they should leave. Since an abused woman spends most of her days anticipating her partner's next move, she is alert to the dangers her leaving would impose. One of the possibilities she fears is whether he will continue to harm her or the children if she leaves. The threats an abuser 'holds over her head' while she lives with him loom more ominous if she should leave (Miller, 1996).

2.5.6 Lack of perceived social support

It is mostly believed that abused women who leave their spouses may not receive sufficient social support to offset their losses (Sherpherd, 1990). Nurius, Furrey and Berliner (1992) noted that friends tend to support an abused woman by encouraging her

to tolerate the abuse rather than by ending the relationship. In addition abused women may need more social support to restore their faith in people. Overall the perceived lack of support, both personal and social, tends to impede abused women's attempts to leave (Tan, Basta, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995).

Society has a habit of shutting its eyes to problems that make it cringe. People openly confront issues like dishonest politicians, street crime, drugs etc with outrage. They feel secure to discuss and debate these issues because although they loom large they don't belong to them as individually, they belong to society. In its protective blindness society offers little help to the abused woman who without a home, a job and child care cannot escape. What these women need are the resources and social support that would enable them to become more independent and leave the abusers (Miller 1996).



2.5.7 Relationship commitment

One of the reasons abused women remain in these relationships is to honour their relationship commitments. Society praises marital partners who are committed to a relationship and criticises those who give up too easily (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997). Frisch and MacKenzie (1991) have argued that both abusive and non-abusive couples devise plausible reasons for preserving unhappy relationships. They may believe that they can make the relationship better. They may feel legally bound together. Alternatively they may want to avoid hurting their partner or may want to protect their children and parents. Believing that they should stay together no matter what is significantly related to abused women's decision to stay. Bauserman and Arias (1992)

states that abused women's commitment is related to their level of failed investment. That is abused women will stay and work hard to make the relationship work to justify the time and effort already expended on the relationship.

2.5.8 Adaptation to violence

Another reason that abused women remain with abusers is that they have learned to make numerous accommodations to their abusive relationships. A prerequisite to learning how to live with an abusive person is finding a way to make his violence acceptable. Dutton-Douglas (1991) states that basic psychological defence mechanisms of rationalisation achieve this goal. By denying that their mates harmed them or even intended to abuse women can negate the danger they confront.

Another way to deal with violence is to assign blame to oneself. A common attribution made by abused women about themselves is that they somehow provoked the violence or that they should have been able to prevent it by changing their own behaviour (Kaner, Bulik & Sullivan, 1993; Overholser & Moll, 1990).

2.6 WHY WOMEN STAY

Why women remain in abusive relationships is so complex and misunderstood that few abused can articulate the cognitive reasons themselves. The facets of abuse are common across cultures. Much of the research on why women stay has been done overseas in Western & Northern countries. Even in this country research has been done on women who may have 'voice' generally and more privileged women. Not so much has been

done on Xhosa speaking women. The traditional values prevailing in all sections of Black communities reinforce the attitude that a woman is a private affair and to complain exhibit disloyalty. Abused women often want only the abuse to end not the relationship and are therefore reluctant to take course to official channels of redress, which often increase the likelihood of estrangement (Vogelman, 1990).

One of the most remarkable features of gender-based violence in South Africa to an outsider is that, with certain boundaries of severity the society is extremely tolerant of it (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). Xhosa speaking women often tolerate abuse even when they are not financially dependent on the relationship, and in a way in which being known to be violent seems to carry little stigmas and hardly interferes with a man's ability to get another partner (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). This widespread tolerance reflects both ideas that the use of violence is often 'normal', inevitable and ideas about gender, which legitimate the use of force by men in establishing hierarchical control over women. In Xhosa speaking society, control of women by men is very prominent. Wood and Jewkes (2001) explain that recent ethnographic research amongst Xhosa youth in the Eastern Cape suggests that not only are young men expected to control their girlfriends, but also the ability to do so is a central feature of ideas about 'successful' youth masculinity. The writings on gender oppression by historians of the 19th century reflect such ideas, suggesting that they may have deep cultural roots. At the time the control of women by men was then central to the structure and functioning of African homesteads (Burman, 1990).

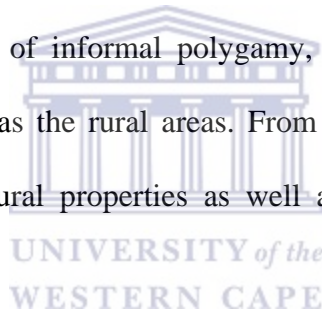
Although there is no suggestion that abuse is regarded positively, it appeared to be widely accepted as 'normal', by girls/women when they fail to leave their or stigmatise abusive men, by boys and older men who continued to deploy it as part of their behaviour, by parents in not protecting their daughters and advising their sons, by community elders in their legitimising 'boys will be boys' description of normal 'boyish' behaviour by members of police force who actively discouraged prosecution by their own admission advising couples to resolve their difficulties in private. (Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

The connection between abuse and poverty are complex in Xhosa speaking societies. The role of control of women and abuse in male peer group positioning must be understood within the context of the limited number of other recreational opportunities available to poor township and rural background (Simpson, 1992). Poverty influences the ability of women to protect themselves from risk of abuse in multiple ways. In relationships of dependency women find it very difficult to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and very often have to tolerate abuse. These dynamics also reduce the ability of women to apply ostracism as a community based sanction against abusive men. (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka, & Schrieber, 1999)

Socialisation into gender roles that produce male domination, male violence and female subordination remains a powerful weapon in some of the Xhosa speaking households. It is still acceptable for men to behave possessively toward their partners and to demand domestic labour. The belief in the sanctity of the family is still valued and produces an

unwillingness to intervene in family affairs that helps create a context in which abuse can still occur without punishment (Hamby & Gray-Little, 1997).

Some South African traditional and cultural practices such as lobola or polygamy may also contribute to women's risks of being abused (Pieterse, 2000). This also applies to some Xhosa speaking men that they may interpret the practice of lobola or bride wealth to mean that their wives are now their property, to do as they please because they have been paid for. Women in these situations may thus have less power in sexual decision-making and are not permitted to refuse their husbands sex. There is obviously no recognition of marital rape within very traditional societies. The migrant labour system has also encouraged a system of informal polygamy, with some men having female partners both in town as well as the rural areas. From men's perspective, this enables them to maintain both their rural properties as well as satisfy their need for sexual partnership (Ulin, 1992).



2.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMAN ABUSE

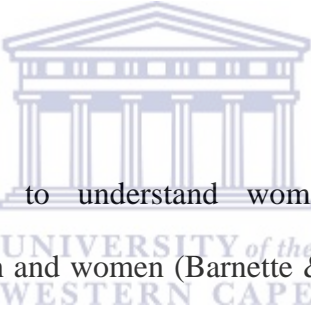
Various theorists have suggested some possible explanations for spousal abuse; the researcher has chosen to focus on the following:

- Psychodynamic theories where the focus is on personality characteristics of the perpetrators and the victim.
- Social learning theories where the focus is on the mechanisms whereby family members may influence one another to perform violent behaviours through modelling, reinforcement and coercion

- Feminist theories where the origins of abuse include stereotyping and patriarchal values.

2.7.1 Psychodynamic Theories

Psychodynamic theories state that the personality factors of the abuser or victim are the main determinant of violence (Watts, 1976). Historically, early small-scale research initially reported that abuse occurred rarely and mostly involved mentally disturbed men and women. Perpetrators were seen to suffer from poor ego development, insecurity or lack of control and abused women were seen as having personality disorders and are described as having masochistic tendencies or pathologically provocative behaviour (Cook, 1984).



Psychodynamic theories seek to understand woman abuse through examining characteristics of individual men and women (Barnette & La Violette, 1993). They also excuse the abuser as “sick’ and in need of emotional help. Abuse is viewed as dependent on some personal abnormality, detaching the man from his mind and his mind from his actions. Psychodynamic researchers focus on personality traits, internal defence systems and the presence of mental illnesses or psychopathology (Barnette & La Violette, 1993). Yet the search for psychological causal factors or distinct personality configurations associated with woman abuse have not proven very useful. Not all abusive men have psychopathological traits, while not all women may become victims of their partner’s abuse.

2.7.2 Social Learning Theories

These theories emphasise mechanisms whereby family members may influence one another to perform violent behaviours through modelling, reinforcement and coercion. They argue that being violent is a learned behaviour. One of the most consistent findings regarding etiological characteristics of abuse is the intergenerational transmission of violence through modelling (Mullender, 1996). Social learning theorists argue that violence is not an inherent psychopathological trait but rather a feature that has been learned in the immediate growing up environment. Once men have been violent towards their partners, it increases the likelihood for this to occur again. This theory takes the responsibility for the violence away from the abusive partner and justifies his actions. Clearly not all men who had violent experiences become abusive partners. This theory is cyclical and is often perpetuated by folk wisdom and personal impressions.



2.7.3 Feminist Theories

The feminist perspective emphasises the significance of family and social patriarchy. A substantial number of male actions, values and beliefs are micro social expressions of broader patriarchal forces. This means that the problem is not one in which individual men simply all happen to suffer from the same psychopathology or weak ego (Hansen & Harway, 1993). Rather, they all live in the same society and the individual male is partially a reflection of the values and beliefs that are expressed by the broader society. It is argued that these broader forces are patriarchal (Hansen & Harway, 1993). Structurally, patriarchy is a hierarchical social organisation in which males have more power and privilege than females. The ideology of patriarchy provides a political and

social rationale for itself. Both men and women come to believe that it is 'natural' and 'right' that women be in inferior positions. Men feel completely supported in excluding women and up to a point feel that their exclusion is correct (De Keseredy & Swartz, 1993). To someone (male or female) who believes completely in the ideology of patriarchy the concept of equal rights or women's liberation is a difficult topic.

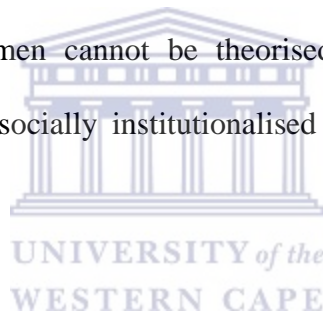
The subsystem of social patriarchy often called familial patriarchy refers to male control in domestic or intimate settings. Yllo and Bograd (1988) argue that one variant cannot be fully understood without reference to the other. Still when dealing with violence within intimate relationships a number of feminists suggest that specific attention should be given to familial patriarchy because that is the specific domain or setting where the violence is taking place. Feminist theory challenges the cultural ideal of the family as a peaceful haven in a heartless world (Yllo & Bograd, 1988). As woman abuse continues to be viewed as a common dimension of normal life, feminists have taken the initiative to draw empirical and theoretical links between the personal and political issues, which lead to new understandings regarding abuse.

2.7.3.1 A feminist critique of abuse

Feminist theorists (largely within the radical school) view the social institutions of marriage and family as the contexts that promote and maintain men's use of violence against women (Bograd, 1990). Some theorists assert that because women and girls are often victimised within the family it is the most dangerous and violent institution in society (Duffy, 1995). It has come to the fore that women are more likely to be violently

attacked in their homes by someone they know than by a stranger. The recognition of female victimisation within the family and society provides a justification for a gendered analysis of woman abuse.

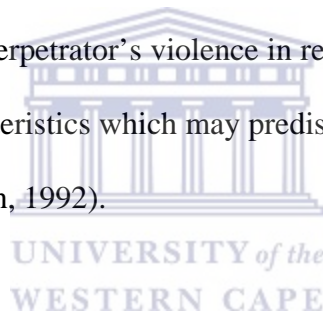
Feminist theories of violence against women recognise that intimate relationships are not always safe for women since they are more likely to be victimised within the family. Thus, it is acknowledged that the family is not randomly violent but that the violence is directed at women in particular. Hence, feminists propose a critique of the ideology of the family and male authority by recognising how women are oppressed within this context and why women are the likely victims of violence in families (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Violence against women cannot be theorised without acknowledging male privilege and historically and socially institutionalised relations of power (Angless & Maconachie, 1996).



2.8 IMPACT OF ABUSE ON WOMEN

Ammerman and Herson (1990) state that there is widespread agreement on the deleterious and pervasive effects of abuse, which requires various therapeutic treatments. Long-term effects of abuse are insidious and the consequences of abuse are social, psychological, medical and legal. Legal consequences of abuse range from homicide of the victim, the perpetrator or both to removal of children, legal separation or divorce. Medical consequences on the other hand range from bruising and serious injury such as concussion or broken bones, to premature death.

Herman (1992) states that the symptoms of depression, anxiety or somatic complaints that survivors of ongoing abuse experience are not the same as 'ordinary' depression, somatic disorders or anxiety. Even the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which includes experiencing diffuse anxiety, intrusive recollections of traumatic events and deadening of affective response, is inadequate. The symptom profile in women who are victims of severe violence is far more complex. Herman (1992) found that violence increases psychological dysfunction and abused women present with many psychiatric symptoms, which have frequently led to the misdiagnosis of personality disorders, anxiety disorders or somatic disorders. This diagnostic mislabeling appears to have resulted from a tendency to blame the victim of abuse. Furthermore researchers have attempted to explain the perpetrator's violence in relation to the victim's personality traits, that is by viewing characteristics which may predispose a woman to get involved in an abusive relationship (Herman, 1992).



Survivors of abusive relationships may experience alterations in affect regulations, which may involve feelings of depression, suicide, self-injury or difficulty expressing and controlling anger (Walker, 1984). When abused, the victim feel demeaned and receives a message of worthlessness, which may lead to depression. This is described by Hansen & Harway (1993) as another survival and coping mechanism, as expressing anger about violence may precipitate additional violence. The abused woman may suffer a loss of identity. Isolation deprives her of all social support, loss of family and friends and this may reinforce dependency on the abuser. Tiffit (1993) states possessiveness and controlling her contact with the outside world enables the abuser to enforce his definition

of reality on her and leads her to question her own perceptions and judgments. The abused woman becomes embarrassed by the abuse inflicted upon them and withdraws from support. This leads to deterioration in self-confidence and increase in fear, anxiety and confusion. The woman finds it difficult to trust others. She receives negative information from the abuser and it becomes part of her self-image. This can result in low self-esteem, emotional emptiness, and fears for her children, guilt, anger, lack of communication with others, lack of assertiveness and hostility.

Follingstad, Neckerman and Vormbrock (1988) found that many abused women develop a variety of coping mechanisms, which also affect their decision to remain in the abusive relationships. One major coping mechanism is to understand why the abuse happens. This often is explained through rationalisations such as self-blame, externalising the blame, denial of the severity of her injury, denial of practical options and enduring the violence due to religious beliefs or desires to assist the abuser in overcoming his problem. When violence occurs it results in feelings of shock, disbelief and confusion. The emotional damage affects the person's normal perceptions of herself and her ability to cope with life (Tifft, 1993).

The impact of abuse on children and extended family members has become an important focus of attention for both researchers and interventions. Mullender (1996) states that many children frequently witness violence directed at their mothers by their partners as it is difficult to conceal the abuse or prevent children being scared and confused by it.

Dobash and Dobash (1979) found that 30% of domestic violence occurred in the presence of children.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was on understanding perceptions and experiences of Xhosa speaking women in abusive relationships with a feminist framework. It is clear from the discussion above that abuse has multiple and a severe impact on women and their family. Therefore there is a need for effective intervention in order to address this serious issue.



CHAPTER THREE

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employed a feminist qualitative framework. The foundation of qualitative research is built upon ascertaining respondents' meaning and definitions to their world therefore stressing the socially constructed nature of reality. The assumption here is that the researcher is interested in learning about the participant's world. The aim is to try and understand the content and complexity of these meanings rather than take some measure of frequency (Harre, Smith & van Langenhoven, 1995). This involves the researcher engaging in an interpretative relationship with the participants, which may be in the form of beliefs and constructs that are made manifest or suggested by the participant's talk. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that in qualitative research, constructs are meaningful words that can be analysed in their own right in order to gain a greater understanding of a given concept. They go further by stating that qualitative data are more likely to lead to unexpected findings and help the researcher to go beyond initial preconceptions.

According to Ferreira and Puth (1990), qualitative research is essentially exploratory and the researcher therefore embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than of verification. This methodology allows the researcher to study selected issues in detail and in depth. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) state that qualitative methods focus on experiential status of participants and their perceptions of a situation. The meaning and subjective definition of social reality are constructed and experienced by those involved. Language is not seen as a reflection of the truth but rather as a means to construct reality.

The role of the researcher is described as involving all research coming to us through the active and central involvement of the researcher, who interprets and construes what is going on. Researchers have discussed the issue of representation when carrying out feminist research in the South African context (Bonnin, 1995; Lund, 1991).

A feminist research framework together with qualitative concepts acknowledges that scientifically objective, 'positivist' and value free research is not possible to attain (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Knowledge is viewed as emerging out of a specific cultural, historical and social interest. Feminist researchers and other critical researchers emphasise that objectivity neglects the humanness of the researcher and the research participants. It ignores the behaviour of the researcher and is therefore non-reflexive (Stanley & Wise, 1983). Feminist researchers advocate research for women as opposed to traditional research on women. This attempts to account for women needs and aims to improve women's lives in one way or another.

Qualitative investigations are concerned with the nature of the social phenomena under investigation (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). They will thus occupy themselves with the 'features, nature and character of phenomena as interaction, situations, grouping, problems, etc and with the similarities, differences and (causal) relationships between elements of such phenomena.

Bryman (1993) identify three features of qualitative research. Firstly, is that qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key

research instrument. The research goes to the setting under study because it is concerned with the context of the study. Secondly, qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Thirdly, qualitative research is concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.

According to others such as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) this implies that 'the gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, that specifies a set of questions that are examined in specific ways. This supports what is mentioned earlier by Bryman (1993) that the researcher is the most important instrument in the research. Through dialogue between the researcher and the participants, all notions of the neutral researcher and pure objectivity are dispelled. On the part of the researcher, this would however necessitate diligent reflexivity (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Qualitative researchers therefore need to be reflective of their own values and interpretations that they bring to the study and the role or influence that they have on the context. It is often on this underlying assumption that qualitative research is criticised as being biased, unreliable not valid etc.

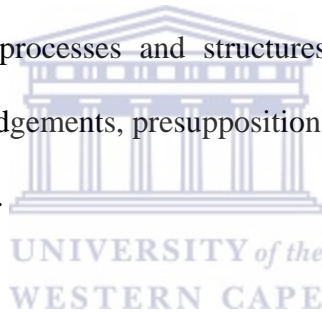
Smaling (1992) states that qualitative research can be characterised on the basis of four aspects of empirical research. These are nature or preconception of the object of the study, method of data collection, method of data analysis and the research design. Firstly, the object of the study is the world as defined or experienced by the participants in the study. Secondly, methods of data collection are open and flexible.

According to Walker (1985) qualitative methods yield large volumes of exceedingly rich data obtained from a limited number of individuals. Qualitative data collection methods include the use of photography, interviews group and/or individual, observation, field notes, projective techniques (example the Roscharch technique), life stories etc (Bryman, 1993; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Regarding data analysis, Smaling (1992) states that this method does not include a representation of an empirical system in a numerical mathematical system for the purpose of reasoning analytically within this mathematical system. Various qualitative data analysis methods can be mentioned for example thematic analysis, discourse analysis and content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lastly qualitative design implies an interactive, cyclical relationship between data collection and analysis. These two processes alternate continuously and influence each other. Smaling (1992) goes further by stating that in this manner it is possible to select data, which has relevance for the analysis, and that one can stop gathering information when the data does not add new information with regard to the research problem. This stance is however not without critique.

Qualitative methodology has a number of advantages that have been highlighted. However these methods have been criticized for being subjective and not scientifically valid or reliable. Some authors argue that qualitative research challenges the scientific objectivity of quantitative research and suggest other methods of addressing validity and reliability. It has been stated by qualitative researchers that because the researcher plays a key role in the research process, the research cannot be objective (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Whilst it falls outside the scope of this study to go into

lengthy explanations about why qualitative research is scientific it is important to mention that other researchers have claimed qualitative research to be objective, reliable and valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mouton & Marais, 1990).

The decision to use a qualitative methodology has also been influenced by qualitative researchers that point out that qualitative methods permit a considerable amount of flexibility (Griffin, 1986). Griffin (1986) reflects on how the use of qualitative methods created the space for her to look at more sensitive issues such as sexuality and domestic violence. Van Manen (1979) points out that qualitative data with its emphasis on people's lived experiences is fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings of people, place on the events, processes and structures of their lives. That is their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and connecting these meanings to the social world around them.



Billig (1978) highlights another reason for my opting to use qualitative methodology. He argues that in his study of contemporary British Fascism a quantitative approach would only have revealed the surface characteristics of that group's ideology. I think the same can be argued for this study. A quantitative methodology would have provided a wider scope regarding the experiences and perceptions of women remaining in abusive relationships, but would not have furnished the researcher with the depth of information gathered in this study.

Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, (1994) further provided the support for

using the chosen method,

Qualitative research recognises a complex and dynamic social world. It involves researcher's active engagement with participants and acknowledges that understanding is constructed and that multiple realities exist. It is the theory generating, inductive, aiming to gain valid knowledge and understanding by illuminating the nature and quality of people's experiences. The developing theory is thus firmly and richly grounded in personal experiences rather than a reflection of the researcher's a priori framework. In this way insight is gained to the meanings people attach to their experiences. (p. 61).

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The proposed aim and objective of the study was to:

- To explore the perceptions and experiences of Xhosa speaking women in abusive relationships.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS

The women who took part in this study were 8 Xhosa speaking women, who were in abusive relationships. Participants were recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study from Ilitha Labantu an NGO in 3 of the black Communities in the Western Cape working with abused women. The research was exploratory in nature and provided the women with an opportunity to voice their opinions and would provide the researcher with the opportunity to explore women's experiences of abuse (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

3.4 INSTRUMENTS

3.4.1 Semi Structured Interviews

The instruments used for this study were semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). Semi structured interviews facilitated rapport and also allowed for a greater flexibility of coverage enabling the interviewer to enter novel areas (Harre, Smith & van Langehoven, 1995). They provided the opportunity to pose questions in an open-ended manner as the researcher aims to elicit responses of an introspective nature. The reason for this method of data collection was that the nature of the research problem requires an exploratory analysis of participants' opinions. It was also chosen as a method of data collection because it is flexible and participants' ideas guide the process and it is thus empowering. It facilitated gathering information about how participants think and feel individually. It could also be used to uncover and understand what lies behind social psychological phenomena about which little is as yet known. It also provided context bound information, which lead to patterns that might help explain a phenomenon (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994).

3.5 PROCEDURE

During the study the researcher was accountable to Ilitha Labantu an NGO in 3 of the black Communities in the Western Cape working with abused women at all times. Firstly, this involved meeting with the director of the organisation where the researcher presented the aims and objectives of the study and requested the permission to conduct the study. Authorisation to conduct the interviews was obtained from the director, including access to facilities (use of their library). She assigned the researcher to the

counsellors who identified the participants for her. The participants were contacted telephonically and a convenient time and day was arranged with them to come to the organisation to take part in the interviews that were going to be conducted there. The researcher then delivered an invitation with a covering letter explaining the study to all the selected participants. This invited them to the interviews that were going to take place at the organisation for about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

On arrival the participant was introduced to the researcher and the nature and purpose of the study was explained to her. The participant was assured of the right to withdraw at any time of the process if she feels. Anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed. The interviews were conducted in Xhosa as this was the participant's mother tongue. The interviews were recorded on audiotape with the participants' knowledge and consent. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the advantage of recording the interview as opposed to taking written notes is that one has a complete record and statement in the interviewee's own words which avoids subsequent disputes. It also allowed the researcher to engage in discussion without interruption or distraction. The researcher was quite aware that the process of transcription and translation influences meaning, and she assures that care has been taken to make them as accurate as possible by transcribing them verbatim and translate them from English to Xhosa

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

'The most serious difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that the methods of analysis are not well formulated' (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The above statement centres on the main criticism launched against qualitative research by the practitioners of quantitative research. Analysis guidelines, or lack thereof, have left qualitative researchers reeling under fire from the canons of credibility and validity. Patton (1990) believes that the root of the problem lies in the fact that qualitative research generates massive amounts of data. He says, 'I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volume of information with which they will find themselves confronted with when data collection has ended. Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that it is a lack of a clearly defined social reality that does not warrant the development of systematic methodological guidelines. Furthermore, Bertrand, Brown and Ward observe that the're:

"...Is minimal explanation of just what the analyst does and writes down? It is unclear why so little steps have been written on the mechanics of the final steps of the research. Perhaps some consider that the procedure is self evident and worthy of only the briefest mention. Others may feel that the techniques are not scientific enough to merit elaboration. A third reason may be that given the degree of insight and intuition necessary to the analysis of qualitative data, the question of how to approach the data is seen as the prerogative of the researcher" (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 104).

However besides these apparent obstacles, it must be said that recent texts have begun to address the problem of analysis more vigorously. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) effectively display matrix and network analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) have more effectively described grounded theory methods. Furthermore, inductive analysis by Patton (1990), discourse analysis by Potter and Wetherall 1992, and template analysis by Crabtree and Miller (1992) have all emerged as well as respected field methods.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state that there is a variety of techniques because there are different questions that need to be addressed and different versions of social reality that

can be elaborated. In agreement, Punch (1998) believes that the variety and the resultant diversity in the emergent approaches stress the point that there is no single right approach for analysing qualitative data.

The first step in the analysis process is to have the interviews transcribed (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). This involves a word for word transcription from the audiotapes, coupled with field notes. Since non-verbal communication gestures and behaviours are not affected in the transcript it is necessary to supplement the transcripts with notes made during the interview. Data from the tapes was transcribed verbatim and was translated from Xhosa to English. The process of transcription and translation influences meaning, care was taken to make them as accurate as possible. Data was analysed for general and specific themes and direct quotations were used to illustrate the emerging views. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that it is a relatively natural and a simple process to identify patterns but the researcher must guard against trying to cover too many topics in depth. Categories were not regarded as mutually exclusive and thus a number of quotations were applicable to more than one theme.

The process of data analysis involved becoming familiar with the material and identifying themes and patterns. The selection of themes was based on the transcriptions, the aims of the study and reading of related literature. The transcripts were read several times and were coded according to these themes. Sentences, phrases and paragraph were marked copied from the text and then grouped together in themes.

In view of the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher employed thematic analysis. According to Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), thematic analysis is a useful way of coherently organising interview material in relation to specific research questions. It allows for an empathetic understanding of women's experiences of staying in an abusive relationship. Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996), state that the themes consider the big ideas of the respondent's data as well as the information units and categories. The researcher's role is to identify the themes and determine the extent to which categories support these themes.

Patton (1990) states that interpretation involves attaching significance to what was found, offering explanation, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and data irregularities. Cresswell (1994) insists on an interpretation that advances from a theoretical framework consistent with the assumption of an inductive qualitative design. In agreement, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that a conceptual framework explains either graphically or in narrative forms the main dimensions to be studied. Furthermore they add that the interpretation or qualitative data should occur within a specific context.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that this method of analysis allows for systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, synthesising and interpreting the descriptive data. This according to these authors involves concurrent flow of activity, reduction of data into specific categories or themes through a process of selecting,

focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transferring data. Thematic analysis also helps establish common and divergent themes which participants express.

These two authors also believe that identifying themes, recurring ideas or language and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavour. The resultant patterns, categories and emergent themes culminate into the development of the findings. However, it is significant to note that the strength of the emergent findings would ultimately depend not only on effective data analysis procedures but also on effective interpretation.

The analytic procedures adopted in the present study were based on Marshall & Rossman's (1989) non-linear model for analysing qualitative data. These authors caution against using data analysing schemes that 'often filter out the unusual, the serendipitous. They propose a model that achieves a balance between efficiency considerations and design/analytic flexibility.

The model proposed by Marshall and Rossman (1989) sets out five modes of activity and they would be explicated below:

- Organising the data,
- Generating categories, themes and patterns,
- Testing the emergent categories and patterns against the data,
- Searching for alternative explanations of the data

- Writing the report

3.5.1 Organising the data

From the outset it should be said that the interviews were conducted in Xhosa as this was all the women's mother tongue. The taped interviews were then firstly transcribed verbatim and then translated to English. This was all in preparation for data analysis. The organising of data entails repeated reading of the interviews that forces the researcher to become familiar with it. During the process the researcher also noted the ideas and discussions that came to mind.

Two women during the interviews were not outspoken for one reason or another, the researcher associated this behaviour to the topic at hand as this was a very sensitive topic and some might not be comfortable to speak about their experiences to a stranger. In analysing the transcripts therefore the researcher sometimes relied on the reflections of content made during the interview, which were more audible than the actual spoken words of the participant. The principal reason that makes this acceptable is the reflections by the researcher attempts to stay with and remain faithful if not to the actual words then to the ideas of the participant.

3.5.2 Generating categories, themes and patterns

Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that this phase involves a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention of the data and openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life. The researcher was then required to continuously question the data and reflect on the conceptual framework on which the study is built. The text was then coded in an attempt to transform the data. Data was scrutinised for patterns of similarities and differences. Words representing themes were assigned to various segments of the texts. During this phase the researcher made memo relating to the specific emergent themes.

Several themes emerged during this phase and they revolve around various thematic areas namely; cultural beliefs, economic dependence, social support, commitment to the marriage.



3.5.3 Testing the emergent categories and patterns

The researcher during this phase evaluated the plausibility of these patterns and categories through testing them against data and also the existing literature on woman abuse discussed in chapter two. This entailed critique of the categories searching for alternative patterns and linkages in the data. Marshall and Rossman (1989) recommends this process and further suggest that the researcher maintains a certain degree of scepticism and willingness that the participants in the study may have ensured a particular presentation of themselves. The researcher adhered to this.

3.5.4 Searching for alternative explanations

Marshall and Rossman (1989) stress that during this phase the researcher must search for other plausible explanations for the data and the linkages among them. There was assurance from the researcher that the patterns used received rigorous scrutiny and she is satisfied with the final analysis presentation.

3.5.5 Writing the report

In this process the researcher becomes an active participant in the research process. Marshall and Rossman (1989) argued that this phase of report writing is not a separate process from the analytic process.

3.6 THE RESEARCHER'S SELF REFLEXIVE ISSUES

Reflexivity is crucial in the analysis as the researcher has to be aware of her own experiences in the process and the impact on the research process (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Reflexivity ensures that the researcher accounts for the way in which she experiences both the research process and phenomena under consideration. As the researcher enters the lives of the participants, she impacts upon the experience of the research. Thus, it is important for the researcher to self reflect, evaluate her own experiences and incorporate them into the work rather than remain artificially outside the research process. It is also important to be sensitised to issues of women since the researcher might be seen as an intruder wanting to know the experiences of participants concerning the issue (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

This section focuses on my own experiences and perceptions during the research process, given the significance of reflexivity in qualitative research. The discussion looks at the notes and the journal that I kept at the end of each interview. During the interviews some of the women were articulate than the others. This was a factor that I was aware of as some of the dynamics that I was going to encounter from the women.

As a result of this I was forced to probe to get the information from them. Even though I was conducting the interviews in their mother tongue this may still be related to the fact that I was an outsider invading their privacy wanting them to open up to me. I was then compelled to probe as I was trying to get information from them.

All the women that I interviewed had similar background both professionally and socially. Those who were more articulate didn't have a higher educational background than those who were quiet and shy. The less articulate seemed to say less about what was really happening with their husbands. The emphasis on the reasons on their perceptions felt into economic dependence, staying because of the children and cultural beliefs.

Another issue that came up during all the interviews with the participants is the service that Ilitha Labantu made them what they are today. They all agreed that for them to be still remaining with their spouses is because of the help that they received from the organisation. I understood this as the shift from what was happening to what would be happening for them in future. That is to remain with their spouses under any circumstances.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

Research involving human participants need to be conducted within the parameters of ethical propriety. Considerations should be given to fairness, openness of purpose, disclosure of methods, the ends for which the research is conducted, a respect for the integrity of the individual, the obligation of the researcher to guarantee individual privacy and informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntary in the research activity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). No individual should be asked to participate in any research that may lead to a sense of self-denigration, embarrassment or a violation of ethical or moral principles.

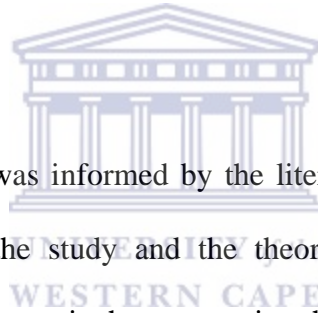
This research abided by the standards stated above. Participants in this study were informed of the aims and objectives of the study. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and informed consent was obtained from participants. Confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed and maintained. All the women were calm during the interview. Findings and feedback of the study were shared with the participants and the staff of Ilitha Labantu.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed report of the results of the current study utilizing the thematic analysis method. For the qualitative researcher the rich detail of human experience that is uncovered must be effectively conveyed. This process requires “weaving descriptions, speaker’s words, fieldnotes quotations and their own interpretations into a rich and believable description narrative” that enables the participants to have access to the interpretations made by the researcher (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).



The discussion of the themes was informed by the literature reviewed, the aims of the research which have guided the study and the theoretical frameworks identified in Chapter Two. Of particular interest is the manner in which these themes have emerged. The discussion encompasses the range of responses among participants in each thematic area. The participants’ reflection around why women remain in abusive relations revolves around several thematic areas. Many of the themes overlap and the categories that follow are by no means rigid or exclusive as experiences and perceptions were interlinked and were often represented in more than one category.

4.2 THEMES EMERGING

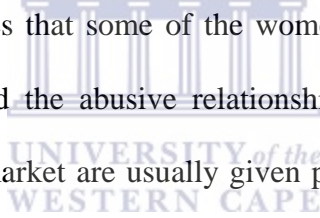
4.2.1 Economic dependence

The question of why women stay in abusive relationships has often been the focus of investigation (Sikhitha, 1997). Many reasons have been offered as to why women experience difficulties leaving these relationships. The reason most often cited is that women stay because they are financially dependent of their spouse (Strube, 1988; Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). These inequalities are a reflection of the social arena where women are constructed as subordinates and practices are instituted in order to maintain women's economic dependence upon men. In South Africa there are vast income disparities between women and men, particularly black women (Budlender, 1998). For example, 66% of African women who are self-employed earn less than R500.00 per month compared to 16% of men in the same category (Budlender, 1998). Economic dependence or control is further compounded by race and class, which in addition functions to further disempower women. The definition of economic abuse adopted in this study includes, 'any coercive act or limitation placed on an individual that has adverse economic implications on the woman and/or her dependents' (Vetten, 1999).

4.2.1.1 Economic deprivation and control

Poverty affects woman abuse with poor women being more likely to experience violence from their partners (Tiefenthaler & Farmer, 2000). Economic deprivation increases an abuser's control over a woman thereby constraining her options for leaving an abusive situation. Women in this study experienced multiple forms of economic deprivation including specific tactics aimed at exerting economic power.

Some of the women in this study were completely reliant on their partners for financial support. They described how their partners' economic control forced them to overlook their personal needs and sometimes their basic survival needs. A woman with a baby was having problems in sometimes buying things of her own and it was sometimes even difficult to buy things for the baby because the father was asking why they were not lasting for a long time. Such dependence is what McKay (1994) refers to as subordination. However those women who were employed were poorly paid doing part time jobs except for one who held a professional type of work which would not allow real economic independence. The participants could be viewed as subordinate at least in terms of economic independence.



However research also indicates that some of the women, although they were in some form of employment, sustained the abusive relationship. McKay (1994) argues that women who enter the labour market are usually given poorly paid, part-time low status job. It is therefore assumed that this tendency leads to financial dependence of women on their partners, as they are marginal wage earners who also provide free services as housewives. Due to low levels of education some of these women in the study are unable to get better paying jobs. The low wage, which they earn, does not enable them to be financially independent. The roles that men and women are expected to fulfill in society also play a part in creating the potential for male violence against women.

Relationships where one partner is economically dependent upon the other can be unequal. This is even more so when one person is granted authority over the other in

terms of household and financial decision-making. Economic dependence upon a man may limit the options available to the abused woman to leave him or the situations. This came out of the following statements:

‘The major obstacle that is preventing me to leave my husband is that I am unemployed.’

It is very difficult for me leave because as I’m not working I also have nowhere to go this is what is really keeping me with him.’

‘I am illiterate and can’t find work so this is the reason why I’m still with him even though he is not treating me okay. He supports me financially’.

‘Ever since we got married in 1971 he is the one who is working and he’s still doing that and I rely on him financially.’

Women typically earn less than men, experience greater rates of unemployment, are concentrated in the lowest paying sectors of the job market and are over represented amongst the poor South African society. As a result finding a man and then sticking to him is often as much a matter of economic necessity as it is a romantic choice (Vetten, 1995).

The house that I’m staying in is his and he is the one who earns more than I do.’

‘I am always without a job and he is the one who’s always been providing the family with everything.’

‘I come from the Eastern Cape he’s been here for quite a long time and I’m still without a job to keep me going so he is the provider for the family financially’.

‘I really cannot leave him as he’s looking after the children and me. He’s the one who’s bringing the money to the house’.

It is commonly believed that leaving an abusive husband will condemn women and their children to a life of economic hardship due to the lack of financial support from the

estranged partner. Studies cite economic dependence as the primary reason that abused women remain with their abusive partners.

‘The only reason that I’m still staying with my partner is because of the financial support that he is providing for the entire family.’

‘Even though he is abusive towards me he supports me financially. I would sometimes think the reason he is abusive is because he supports me with everything’.

‘He doesn’t want me to become stranded with anything and he thinks as the head of the house he is the only one who is supposed to be looking after everyone at home’.

‘I was in the Eastern Cape for quite some time and my husband was already here in Cape Town and then one day I decided to come here in Cape Town to stay with him. This decision came from the fact that I was not working and would always wait for him to send us money, as the whole family is dependent on him. When I arrived here things were so bad he was really ignoring the fact that I was around he was not speaking with me. He would always say to his friends that he doesn’t see any point me coming to stay with him and he thinks it has created a lot of problems I just think he was having an affair and I was just blocking his way because he would sometimes not come back home and I would be left on my own with out food for days’.

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4.2.2 Cultural beliefs

A significant theme, which emerged from the data, was that most of them remain in their abusive relationships because their partners/husbands paid lobola for them. This statement fully concurred with what is stated in the literature. Some South African Xhosa speaking women may feel obliged to remain with their abusive husbands by their traditional and cultural practices because they paid lobola. Some men may reinterpret the practice of lobola to mean that their wives are now their property, to do as they please because they have been ‘paid’ for. Women may thus feel less power in decision-making

and are not permitted to refuse their husbands sex for example. This is reiterated in the following statements:

‘The reason why I’m still with my husband is because my husband paid lobola for me. If I decide to leave he would want to have his money paid back to him by me or my family of which I cannot do that as I’m not working’.

‘When I got married I was told by the elders to stick to my husband under any circumstances because he has worked very hard for me this means he paid lobola for me. The elders told me that a man would sometimes lifts his hand to his wife meaning beat his wife but that doesn’t mean I should come home it simply means that nobody should know about this as it is between the two of us’.

‘I got married in 1971, that was a very long time ago as I’m not working I would not be able to pay back the lobola that was paid for me’.

‘Even though he is abusing me I’m supposed to stay and serve with all his needs as he paid lobola when we got married. The elders said a man beating his wife means nothing in their culture, what should happen is that the wife should respect her husband at all times’.

‘I would be a disgrace to the whole of my family if can leave my husband because they all respect him and he is looking after the children and me’.


In South Africa cultural notions of women as the weaker sex and of women as property result in a patriarchal attitude that women are owned by men. These cultures are structured along patriarchal lines, emphasising the gender role stereotypes of women as passive homemakers, and men as breadwinners. This is outlined by the following statements:

‘When I got married I was told to obey my husband at all times. I was told to cook and look after him at all times and not to ask him about his whereabouts’.

‘I was told that he is the head of the family and no one else, he will take care of me and my children and that whatever I need I must speak to him first.’

‘Even though he is an abusive husband he is the head and breadwinner of the family and I have to obey him always.’

The feminist theory around the abuse of women by men was seen to be largely rooted in biological sex differences. These biologically determined sex differences were held to take expression in a masculinity characterized by dominance, competitiveness, assertiveness, aggression and sexual appetite and a femininity characterized by passivity, dependence, irrationality, emotionality, masochism and contradictory qualities of seductiveness and modesty (Richardson, 1996). Vetten and Bhana (2001) state that the notion that men are entitled to conjugal rights left some women feeling obliged to have sex with their husbands because sex was their duty. A refusal indicated 'frigidity' which then justified the partner's use of force to obtain sex. Some women also saw marital rape as obligatory sex required to pay their husbands back for the food and shelter provided for them and their children. The statements below fully concur with what the literature says.



'My husband always feels that because he paid lobola for me he can do anything he wants meaning sex. Whenever he feels like having sex with me he doesn't negotiate he just do it. I've been trying to talk sense to him about this but he doesn't want to listen to me. The worst part of it is that he has raped a teenage girl from our area. He says he's done that because I always refuse having sex with him when he wants to do it of which this is a lie. I've decided to stay with him regardless of this issue, as I'm worried that people from our community might kill him for what he's done if he's on his own. The worst part of this is that he doesn't even attempt in looking for a job as we have a small baby to look after'.

'I've been threatening my husband that I am going to move out of our bedroom because I realized that he wanted me to have sex with him only when he is in the mood. He also doesn't want to wear a condom because he's sleeping out a lot and doesn't want to answer to any questions about his where about. I'm just scared that if I continue sleeping with him without a condom I might end up having sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS'.

'I moved out of the bedroom because I didn't want to respond to what all the [mfitshimfitshi] nonsense that he always tells when he is in the foul mood'.

The still common custom of lobola exchange in many African marriages is a process negotiated by men around women's values as assets to the family and may have proprietary implications for how a husband perceives his wife. According to Ramphele (1997) the family is still a major sphere in which the domination of men is secured at the expense of women. Each family is a site for individual men to oppress women in their own particular way. Thus husbands and male partners often perceive it as their right to use violence against their women as a form of discipline or as a way of venting frustration. In many cases dependent women also view such behaviour as legitimate because husbands have paid lobola. All of the above are some of the main reasons that abused women decide to stay with their abusive husbands.

4.2.3 Staying because of the children

The other theme that emerged from this study is that these women remain in their abusive relationships because of their children. They believe that keeping their marriage together for the sake of the children would also prevent them from leaving the relationship. These statements below reiterate this:

‘You know what, if it was only me in this relationship without the children I could be long gone by now.’

‘My two children play a very significant role in both me and my husband's life. They know what is happening between me and their father but they would always beg me not to leave their father alone. My son is the one who will always come to me and ask me to give his father another chance, he will speak to him not to be so abusive towards me’.

‘Because I always tell my children what kind of father their father is they would beg me not to leave him as this will be seen by their friends as coming out of single parents. They said they don't want that to happen to them. They would prefer that their mother and father stay together’.

Miller (1996) states that society has long instilled the idea that unless children are raised by two parents, they will grow up somehow warped. He further states that mothers as a result often suffer prolonged abuse for what they explain as ‘the good of my children.’ Literature reveals it is believed that abused women stay with their abusive husbands because it is expected of them. It is also believed the woman has failed in her duty as wife if the marriage disintegrates.

All of the above statements from the participants fully echo what the literature says about remaining in an abusive relationship because of the children. It seems many Xhosa speaking women in South Africa believe that they should remain with their husbands because of their children. They also believe that keeping their marriage together for the sake of the children would prevent them from leaving the relationship. The social stigma attached to a failed marriage contributes heavily to this situation (Hyden, 1994).

‘I grew up not having a relationship with my father and I don’t want that to happen to my children’.

I can cope with the abuse that is happening at home but I don’t want to deprive my children the right to be staying together with their father. He really gets along well with my children’.

‘If I can tell my children that I am leaving their father I know they would want to remain behind with him as he provides for everything that they need [educationally and financially].

Rosen and Bird (1996) state that another related aspect of men’s gender worldwide view is their uneasiness about their abilities to fulfill their roles. Although they are very clear about what a man’s role and a woman’s role should be in a relationship, their ability to

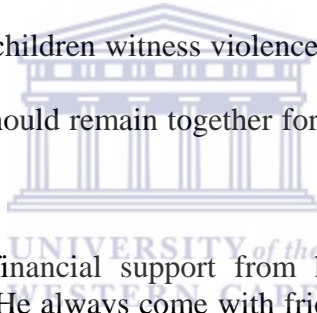
protect and provide are questionable. The statements below echo the same views regarding this.

‘In our home the role of protector and provider for my children still rely heavily on me because I don’t want my children to suffer because of their irresponsible father. They are the main reason that I’m still with him anyway’.

‘Even though my children were exposed to all the abuse that is happening between their father, and me I feel that if I can leave him that can have negative connotations to them. This is what I don’t like to happen to them at all’.

‘I really don’t know why I’m still with him but I guess it is because of my children. Even though they are aware of what is happening between the two of us. My son once said to me that he doesn’t like the way his father is treating me but still believes that leaving him won’t be a good idea I must just ignore him because if I leave it will be strange for all of them’.

For some reasons even though children witness violence or abuse between adults in their homes strongly feel that they should remain together for their sake as well. This is from the following statements.



‘I’m not getting any financial support from the husband to run the day-to-day activities in the house. He always come with friends and sometimes his relatives and finish all the grocery in the house. In so much that I’ve decided to pretend as always not having money and will keep every cent that I have for me and my children as they are the only reason that I’m still under same the roof with him. What I do these days is to buy food when I’m going to prepare and would make it a point that nothing is left behind for him’.

4.2.4 Commitment

Another theme that emerged from the participants was commitment towards their marriages. Barnett, Miller-Perrin and Perrin (1997) state that one of the reasons abused women remain is to honour their relationship commitments. Society praises marital partners who are committed to a relationship and criticizes those who give up too easily.

‘I worked very hard to make my marriage work. I was committed to my marriage vows and I saw my marriage as a sacred institution. I just don’t like seeing my husband arrested for being physically abusive to me’.

‘I would really feel sorry for him if I would decide to leave my husband because I’m just thinking how he would be a nobody as he is relying on me for everything. He doesn’t have a stable job and I’m just thinking if I can leave him he would become a skoli [meaning a nobody] and that I guess would not be a nice thing to see. You see even though he is abusive he depends on me as I’m the provider in this house. I guess I’m still with him because we got involved at a very young age and we grew up together that is why I am so attached to him. I know this might not make sense to you’.

It is stated in the literature that couples believing that they should remain together no matter what is significantly related to abused women’s decision to stay. Bauserman and Arias (1992) state that abused women’s commitment is related to their level of failed investment, that is abused women will stay and work hard to make relationship work to justify the time and effort already expended on the relationship.

‘I sometimes blame myself for the reactions of my husband if I obey what ever he says to me everything becomes right in our house. I just told myself that I will be committed to my marriage and then nothing wrong is going to happen’.

‘As long as my mother remained with her husband I’ve told myself that I will also make my marriage work and be committed to it until the end. My mother used to tell me that I must not think that these things were not happening in their times but because they were committed to their marriages they survived everything that they went through. I guess this is what is still keeping me in my marriage as well.

‘I think as long as I’m showing my husband that I will never go away it shows that I am really committed to the relationship that I have with him’.

4.2.5 Social support

Many authors have noted the importance of social support to alleviate stress throughout one’s life cycle (Kaplan, Cassel & Gore, 1977). Hence social support is viewed as intrinsic to the human condition. Some of the women who participated in the study

voiced out that they didn't receive support from their families and friends during these abusive episodes in their households.

The husband's family could also play a very direct role in colluding in the abuse. Two respondents described how their husbands' family either passively witnessed the abuse or blatantly encouraged it. One respondent described how she was afraid to report the abuse to the police, as she was afraid that her sister in law would harm her.

'You know that you can't go any where to talk to because no one is on your side. That is the most destroying pain that I've ever experienced not being supported by my family when I was in such a pain'.

'No one is on your side and no one cares about your feelings. This was the case for me when I reported my husband to my in laws. They said I was lying he would do anything like that'.

'Some are judgmental especially those from the husband side they would make you feel useless". They would just tell you to stand by your man and tolerate what he's doing to you'.

'Some wouldn't even listen to what you are telling them and they would just leave you on your own'.

Participants stated what social isolation is doing to them. Not being able to communicate, to share personal problems and see other people more especially other women was really putting more strain in everything they are faced with. This is evident when women said:

'Being isolated is really putting strain in everything that I do. I always thought it was best if I was going to report my husband to my in-laws than my family but I was wrong as they told me that I deserve whatever treatment my husband was giving me'. My sister in-laws told me never to come and report what my husband is doing to me as they are not interested'.

‘There is no channel of support from the people I thought were my friends and family. They would tell me to go and solve my problems with my husband who is the culprit here’.

As discussed in the literature review, that friends tend to support an abused woman by encouraging her to tolerate the abuse than by ending the relationship (Nurius, Furrey & Berliner, 1992). It is mostly believed that abused women who leave their spouses may not receive sufficient social support to offset their losses (Shepherd, 1990). Abused women really need more social support to restore their faith in people. The perceived lack of support, both personal and social tends to impede abused women’s attempts to leave (Tan, Basta, Sullivan & Davidson, 1995).

4.3 WOMEN’S HELP SEEKING STRATEGIES

Even though these women decided to remain in their abusive relationships they described how they took actions to counter the abuse from their partners. For them being introduced to the agency was vital to their well being. A lot of the things that they couldn’t afford to do for themselves they were able to do after going to the NGO. This came out of the interviews that even though they mentioned the reasons why they were still with their abusive partners, the counselling sessions that they received from the counsellors have done a great deal in their lives. Below are the themes that emerged from them on what they have gained from the NGO.

4.3.1 Religion

The respondents described their religious beliefs and practices as a source of strength in their lives. One respondent expressed how these beliefs influenced her decisions about leaving her partner:

‘My pastor would always tell me that no matter what I must always try to keep my marriage together’.

‘I remember when I had a huge fight with my husband as I have been trying to avoid his abuse by not responding to all the rubbish he was saying. The other thing is that I was pregnant and wanted to concentrate on what was taking place inside of me. But that day it was the last straw he was shouting at me and when I was not responding to him he pushed me outside, because I was with my petticoat and nothing else he just pushed me outside and he took a knife and pointed to my face. I went to the pastor like that and he took me into his house and his wife gave me something to wear. I told him again what took place he told me that maybe there is something wrong with him I must give him time and pray to God as He is the only one who have answers to everything.’

Nozie’s experiences were similar in that her first help seeking behaviour was located within the religious sphere and she was persuaded to remain with her abusive partner. Studies have shown how religious institutional practices reinforce and sanctioned violence against women, by discouraging divorce and adhering to strict gender stereotypical roles (Govinden, 1997; Giesbrecht, & Sevick, 2000). It is important to recognize the duality of religion in providing valuable social support and encouragement but also in minimizing and denying abuse in the home.

4.3.2 Personal resources

The participants described how they took certain actions to counter the abuse from their partners. They avoided the escalation of verbally abusive attacks by not talking back or

leaving the situation. The following are the strategies that they employed in response to their partner's abuse.

‘When he starts with his attacks I decided to keep quiet as I realised that it doesn't help to get angry at that. This is because I realised that he becomes impossible when he is in that mood.

‘I decided to move out of our room for the sake of peace because each and every time I told him that I didn't like what he said or done he just didn't show any remorse in the wrong things that he was doing to me.

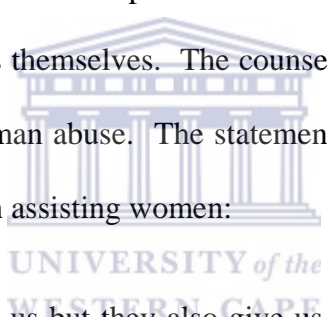
‘What I noticed is that when he starts his abuse either verbally or what I know that the next thing that is going to happen is the demand for sex and I just told myself that I won't have sex with him after saying all those nasty things about me in front of the children. I would go for up to two weeks without having sex with him and that frustrated him a lot.

‘At times when I was not saying anything back to my husband the abuse was not going any further.’

4.3.3 Psychological services

Westlund (1999) states that services of abusers are solely lacking in South Africa although the focus of assisting women is commendable, it may also serve to stigmatise women as those in need of psychological assistance, reflecting a preoccupation with the psychological states of abused women. Thus I concur with Vetten (2000b), who asserts that an exclusive focus on women as victims does not challenge the status quo and reinforces traditional stereotypes. Even though the psychological services are not regarded as sole means of assisting abused women the literature reveals that they can be a powerful method of intervention (Hoff, 1990). As women share their painful experiences with a counsellor they realise and understood their pain. From these meetings the women learn to form trusting relationships with them and on the other hand intense emotional support is obtained.

Wood and Middleman (1992) state that abused women who take part in this type of intervention have the opportunity and choice to listen, disclose their story, discuss or help others. This is an empowering and healing process for abused women who often have been isolated and disempowered. This is also echoed by Tutty, Birgwood and Rotherys (1993) large-scale study of support group for abused women found that, support groups were able to facilitate a number of improvements in areas such as feelings of belonging, self esteem and perceived stress. All the participants conveyed similar feelings. They mentioned that counselling had helped them re-evaluate their lives and have also provided companionship. The participants mentioned that for them going to the NGO was not only to share their problems or experiences with the counsellor but that they have learnt a lot from the counsellors themselves. The counsellors provided useful verbal and vital information regarding woman abuse. The statement below shows the vital role the psychological services played in assisting women:



‘They don’t only talk to us but they also give us the literature so we can go and read for ourselves.’ ‘The advices that they give and the information is very useful’ ‘If you go to their library you’ll get all the information that you want and that has been helpful for me’

Boonzaier (2002) states that in her experience with counseling abused women she had often come across anxieties and frustrations expressed by women that they just talk and were not advised on what to do. It seemed that many women she interviewed did not perceive any value in ongoing counseling and only presented for assistance at times of crisis, which may have been precipitated by violent attack. This is contrary to what I discovered from the women in this study. They perceived value in ongoing counseling as it is acknowledged that the aims of empowerment counseling (espoused by Ilitha

Labantu) are to make women aware of the options and to assist them in making decisions, however, sometimes this may not be adequate.

4.3.4 Family

In this study the family might be viewed as providing limited support to the respondents as their families always told the respondents that they should endure the hardship they were going through. That is why some of the respondents didn't want to burden them with their problems. The respondents mentioned earlier on that they were not getting support from their family and friends during their hard times until they came to this NGO they were able to relate to their friends and family very well. They realised that family played a significant role in either supporting women or minimising or collude in the abuse.



There are often sanctions against divorce and social institutions emphasise maintaining the family at all costs that is why the family is viewed as the basic unit of society. Lui (1999) states that in a village in rural China, divorced women suffer economically and face further discrimination through negative social attitudes. Thus, women often stay and endure abusive relationships. In this study women encountered similar experiences only after they seek for help in the NGO.

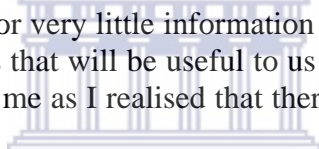
‘I think the reason why I was able to relate to my family was because I was now able to listen to what they were saying to me objectively and not subjectively because previously I knew that they were only going to take their son’s side without hearing what I was telling them.

‘For me I think it was a matter of telling them what was taking place so that they know and didn’t want to give them all the details

‘I was now able to go to my family and not talk about my problems but other things and they were surprised that I was no longer saying things about, this is because I made a decision to stay and no leave him and I was now able to deal with him’.

4.3.5 Legal information

Some of the women were unaware and confused about their legal rights such as obtaining a court interdict or what the Domestic Violence Act is all about. Most of them never thought of seeking a court interdict or protection orders. Some of them thought that doing that would not help them and might have increased the violence from their partners. Angless (1988) concurred with this statement stating that this is a common finding with abused women.



‘Some of us had got no or very little information about legalities. The counsellors explained all the options that will be useful to us in detail when in that situations. This was good news for me as I realised that there is something that is legal I can do to stop the abuse’.

‘I thought a person is only supposed to ask for a protection order only when the husband physically abuses her, that is why I never bothered to ask for one’.

The reasons for women’s reluctance to apply for the protection orders were multiple. One respondent said that a friend told her that applying for a protection order is a waste of time as the police always lose the file. The process also takes time she was told and she decided it was a waste of time. They did not want to send their husbands to jail as they were economically dependent on their partners and they did not have money to pay for that.

4.3.6 Appointments

Another issue that emerged from all the participants was the time that they get for appointments. They all fully concurred that if they made an appointment they would not wait up to a week without getting an appointment. They mentioned that for them this was well assuring that at least somebody would listen to what they have to say.

‘The first time I came to Ilitha labantu I was given an appointment in two days. The person I spoke to treated me with dignity and respect. When I came for my counselling session the counsellor herself was friendly and down to earth’.

‘The counsellor is always there for my counseling sessions. I know who to speak to when in need help urgently’.

‘Support from this organisation is always there whenever you need it because when I came here I had a huge problem because my husband was alleged to have raped a girl in the same area that was really bad for me so I needed somebody to talk to’.

‘The first appointment I had with my counselor I was asked to come with my husband. The counselor told me that there’s nothing she was going to say to me alone so I had to bring my husband along. Fortunately he agreed to come’.

4.3.7 Accessibility and Affordability

All the participants mentioned that Ilitha Labantu’s office is accessible to all of them in all the locations that they operate in. This NGO is in four black communities in Cape Town so it is easy for any one who wants help to get help to ask for one that is nearby.

‘A cousin of mine who knew about my situation told me about this NGO I discovered that it was really close to where I was staying. It was a walking distance and I didn’t have to use money to go there. When I told my husband that we have to go there together he thought it was far and was really surprised when I told him how close it was from our house’

‘Their office is easily accessible and also affordable to get to it. I just walk to the offices. The service that we receive is free but if anyone can afford to donate anything that she has it is greatly appreciated.’

'For me coming to this Ilitha Labantu has really been helpful as I am unemployed and struggling to get things working on my own, it is here that I got advised of how I can change my life without leaving my husband. I was not forced to do anything but was just shown and told the other ways of leaving life fully and not be thinking about things that will not positively contribute to my life'.

4.3.8 Confidence and self-esteem

An abused woman may experience a change in her feelings of security in her environment and her view of the world. Hoff (1990) states that an abused woman's self confidence and self esteem is eroded when she is suffering repeated episodes of violence and she may also experience a loss of identity. Literature review highlights one major impact suffered by abused women is loss of self-esteem (Dobash & Dobash, 1979)

'I remember when I first came to Ilitha Labantu my self esteem was low I was despondent and I just came here thinking that there was nothing anybody could do for me. My husband was so abusive and was always criticising everything that I do. When I arrived here the counselor told me that she was going to help me in making my own decisions about my life. That I promise has helped me in many ways. I can tell you that I am selling clothes that I have sewn myself and the business is booming because I am getting orders from all over Cape Town'. I am now focused and no longer thinking about my husband and how to leave him my self-esteem is up'.

'Ever since I started coming to this agency I know about a lot of things that I can do for my self. I was no longer communicating with my friends as I was afraid of being judged by them but I now know what I want to do and make it a point that I do that'.

'In this organisation we are taught about a lot of things that an abused woman can do in abusive relationships things that we were not aware of or things that we were ignoring to do. Things like getting a court interdict or lay charges of assault but because I don't want to do those things I have decided to focus on my self by taking care of myself and my health.

4.4 THE IMPACT OF ABUSE

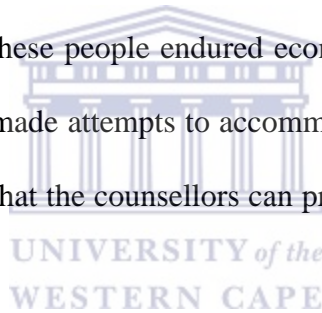
Women experienced a range of negative consequences as described in the literature. These included disturbances in sleeping and eating patterns, stress related symptoms such as hair loss, memory loss. Nozie and Nokhwezi describe their thoughts about suicide as a result of abuse:

- Nozie: You know, it affected me in a huge way, because suddenly everything changed and I am now face with this monster that I don't know. I - - don't know him anymore I am a piece of nothing to him. I was a zombie – I wanted to say something but nothing would come out of my mouth.
- Bulelwa: so you never really managed to deal with your feeling at that time?
- Nozie: I never expected this to happen. I was shocked
- Bulelwa: Were you angry at him?
- Nozie: I was angry in so much that one time I thought of just killing myself as I couldn't stand the pain of abuse anymore.
- Bulelwa: Have you thought about it?
- Nozie: I was just thinking if I was at home I could just go to the river and drown myself easy. I think if I was at home there are lots things that I could have ultimately have done, taking my life was one of them but I was just thinking about the baby I was carrying.
- Nokhwezi: For me I think if I was not a strong person I could have been dead by now. Imagine coming to stay with your husband and when you arrive you discover a totally different person from the one you know. But because I am strong and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ I managed to get through what was going within my relationship with my husband.

The above exchange shows some of the challenges of conducting research on sensitive issues. Nozie's disclosure of suicidal thoughts shows the depth of emotional consequences of a partner's violence and abuse. In Nokhwezi's case she described how over time she believed her partner's insulting remarks and verbal abuse. This she stated that until she came to Ilitha Labantu and met with other women did she realise that her partner was playing tricks on her emotionally.

4.5 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion a number of themes that emerged suggest clearly women's perceptions and experiences to remain in their abusive relationships. These themes relate to commitment, staying because of children lobola, economic dependence and lack of social support. Another group of themes that emerged from the discussions with women is the emotional and structural support that these women received from the NGO. This is where they were able to ventilate in an empathic environment and they were able to grow and gain insight into their problems. A person had to be in control of herself when she was thinking of approaching a helping NGO as this was not an easy task. It took a lot of courage and faith. The high level of poverty for people living in Gugulethu and surrounding areas is high and these people endured economic hardships. These women accessed this organisation and made attempts to accommodate the violence in their lives. Support and understanding is what the counsellors can provide so that a person can make good decisions about herself.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of Xhosa women in abusive relationships. Even though these women decided to remain in their abusive relationships they described how they took actions to counter the abuse from their partners. This study showed how women exercised *Ilitha Labantu* within the context of social structural constraints. Even though women may be seen as having limited options and choices, but they managed to negotiate these boundaries in their attempts to free themselves from abuse. Therefore the exercise of organisations like *Ilitha Labantu* is not an individual endeavor but it occurred within a particular socio cultural context that shaped the meaning of experience.



An important finding was that change occurred as a result of abuse. The literature suggests that the acknowledgement that change has occurred often provided the momentum for action to end the abuse (Mills, 1985; Kirkwood, 1993; Profit, 2000). Change occurred in the women's help seeking behaviors. When women started going to *Ilitha Labantu* they discovered things that they did not know about or things that they thought would be regarded as not done. By deciding to conform to and believe in gender stereotypical gender roles women decided to deal with the abuse and remain in it.

Poor women's options are limited since they often lack social and institutional support to end the abuse and their experiences of abuse are exacerbated by deprivation and poverty. The negative effects of violence were compounded by issues such as economic dependence and unemployment. Religion functioned as a social institution that assisted or impeded women's options in providing them with support against the abuse. All the women in this study highlighted the vital issue of economic abuse. The degree of women's experiences was also illustrated by showing how the effects of the partner's marital infidelity are a form of abuse. The option available to women was also negotiated with structural and material constraints. Some women were reluctant to call the police during the abusive periods. These were complicated by the presence of the children economic dependence and cultural beliefs.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

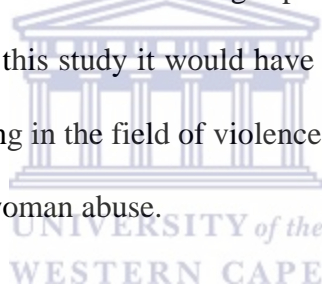
Women in this study decided to stay in their abusive relationship because they had sought help that was not adequate in assisting them to free themselves from the abuse. Another important finding that came out of this study was that the counseling service that they received from this NGO was helpful in that it enabled them to take informed decisions in everything to do with their lives. Ilitha Labantu according to these women was able to provide empathy and support for them. Programmes for women should be geared toward providing economic empowerment and increasing women's options in the formal employment sector.

Research such as this should inform services for women in order to redress the stereotypical depictions of abused women. Gondolf (1998) states that a clinical approach

would recognize and acknowledge women's strengths in their relationships. Abused women utilize a diversity of strategies in response to the brutality and nature of violence in their lives. A focus on the strengths of abused women allows clinicians to affirm women's potential and it avoids exposing women to secondary victimization by not accounting for the full range of their experiences (Gondolf, 1998).

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

In this study I was concerned with the experiences and perceptions of women in abusive relationships. It could have been helpful to provide a framework of different phases of their relationships. It would be interesting to explore the shift of their experiences over time and do further interviews with them that might provide a more comprehensive and in depth data in this regard. In this study it would have been interesting to interview the abusers and other people working in the field of violence against women to provide a rich data and views and context of woman abuse.



Research should focus on the construction of masculinity and its relation to violence against women. This would inform programmes for perpetrators of woman abuse which are sorely lacking in South Africa. Parks (2000) suggests that priority research areas should explore the incidence of woman abuse, the links between woman abuse and the programmes for abusers.

5.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of Xhosa women in abusive relationships. These were explored by attending women's experiences of abuse. Women

gave account of the reasons they are remaining in the relationships and spoke about their help seeking behaviour, which they said made a huge difference in their lives.

Although there is a belief that women are passive victims of abuse, the results of this study showed that even though they decided to remain with their abusive husbands/partner, they took control of their lives by seeking help for themselves in Ilitha Labantu thus taking in control of themselves.



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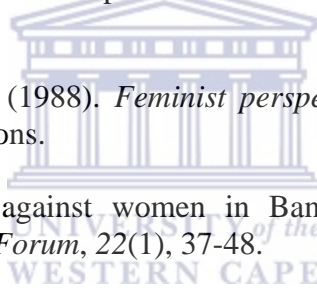
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Participant

I am a Masters student in the department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. I am currently conducting research on women's experiences and perceptions in abusive relationships. I am interested in why they remain in abusive relationships with their partners. This study will help professionals in the field to better understand the issues faced by abused women.

You will be requested to partake in an interview lasting 30-45 minutes to an 1hour. With your permission, the interviews will be audio taped to ensure that the information is recorded accurately. You may refuse to have the interview recorded and may request to switch off the tape at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed and will not be included in the report.

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time and your participation will in no way affect any future help that you may require from Ilitha Labantu.

Yours sincerely

BULELWA NGOMA

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topic guide

Can you tell me about the experiences of abuse you went through with your husband?

- How do you deal with the abuse when it happens?
- Why are you still together?
- How have you coped through this ordeal?

- What has helped you to cope?

-



Interview One - Counselor

The interview began with explaining the background and aims of the study and the ethical consideration. The respondent gave consent. The

Can you go through the experiences that you went through in your relationship with your husband or partner?

Oh this is a very long story because it started a long time ago. He started by hitting me, physically. At first I thought it was going to stop and I used to ignore it. The first time he did this to me was when I told him about his drinking habits. I told him that he must choose between liquor and me. The reason was because he always came home late and drunk. So each time I would shout at him and he would be annoyed and hit me back. At first it used to be a clap on the face and when I'm shouting at him I would make it a point that I was far away from him to avoid being clapped.

His drinking really became a problem for me because he is not working and I am the only one who is providing food and doing everything for everybody here at home. I always asked him where he is getting the money to buy liquor and he would respond that it is none of my business as long as he is not buying it with my money. He is not working but he always comes back home drunk.

This created tensions at home between us. I was getting frustrated and the beatings became severe. They included clapping and kicking and he would also use fists when we are fighting.

When did the beatings become fights?

This started when I realised that it was no longer just claps on the face but kicks on the body and fists as well so I decided to fight back. After we have fought I would be so frustrated as this would leave me with scratches and blue eyes. I would be angry because these fights happened always over weekends because I always thought about what I am going to say to my colleagues about my appearance. At work I came up

with stories of what took place but I ran out of them, as this was a recurring thing. They also realised what was happening with me.

You know what, when he is sober he is a good man but the problem with him starts when he becomes drunk. The other frustrating thing for me was that these fights happened in front of the kids. At the beginning I was very cautious and would try for the kids not to notice that we are fighting but it got out of hand. I also wanted them to see how their father behaves when he is drunk. During the day when he is not around the house there is always peace in our house but the minute he comes in trouble would start.

To tell you the truth it started affecting me emotionally and physically I would always think about why he behaving this way. Even though I tried at work to pretend as if everything at home was okay it just became too much for me.

How did you recover?

I just told myself that I must focus on my work and not think about the other things. As I was listening and working with the women I think that was the most helpful thing because I could relate to the things that they were going through.

Can you share the reasons why you are still together with your husband?

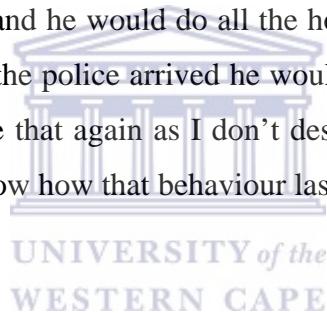
To tell you the honest truth it is because of my children. They play a huge role of why we are still together among other reasons. I think I have called police to intervene several times when we have these fights. I remember the other time that the police arrived he [husband] was drunk and I told them to take him away. My children didn't say a thing to me as they saw what happened between us. But as we were preparing to go to bed my son asked me if his father was coming back or not. I told him that he was not coming back I also told my son that I think it will do him good if he can be away from us for a night. My children didn't say a thing to me. The following day I went to the police station to take him out. I just wanted to teach him a lesson. He was okay for a while and I don't know what made him go back to the fighting, it is because he went back to drinking. When this happens I would remind him of where he spends his night

the other day. He always responded by saying that he is not scared of going there if I want to call the police I can go ahead but I must not forget that the police officers are his friends they will take him out.

One time my son heard me telling him that I was going to call the police and when the police arrived at our house he said there is really no use for me to call police as if he's a criminal he will try and speak to him himself. So the police officers had to go back. I told my husband that he must stop playing with my children's emotions because he knows that what he is doing to me is not acceptable.

How did he respond to this?

You know after every police encounter he would be sweet and a person would really not believe if I tell them what he's doing to me. He's a shy person who is nasty and unfriendly when he is drunk and he would do all the horrible things to me in front of the children. Each time after the police arrived he would be sorry and would promise that he will never behave like that again as I don't deserve what he's doing to me. I am telling you that I don't know how that behaviour lasts but I must say it doesn't last for a long time.



How do your children respond to his behaviour?

I think it affects them big time more especially my son as he is close to him. I think it has affected his work at school as well because his marks have dropped. My daughter I think understands what is happening and she can see the way her father behaves towards me. The other day we were talking and I asked them what they think is happening between me their father. My son told me that he knows what my father is doing to me is not good but I must also try and understand him too. 'He said mama I think you must not ask him questions that would make him angry just leave him alone'. He went further by saying that we all know that his father is a good person. My daughter said she doesn't like what her father is doing to me. I wanted to find out from them what they think is happening between us and how they feel about it. I think that was a good advise that I got from my son because this is exactly what I'm doing.

My two children play a very significant role in both me and my husband's life. They know what is happening between me and their father but they would always beg me not to leave their father alone more especially my son. He one who will always come to me and ask to give his father another chance, saying that he will ask him not to be abusive to me. When he starts doing his things or tries to make a fight I just keep quiet and I will move from our bedroom and go and sleep with my daughter and that he doesn't like. The other thing that I do is not to have sex with him if he misbehaves. Even though I always tell my children what kind of father their father is they would beg me no to leave as this will be seen by their friends as coming from single parents. They told me that they don't want that to happen to them. They would prefer their parents to be together. I was quite surprised by my daughter because I always thought she would be against me staying with her father but this is how she feels.

I am committed to this relationship I would really feel sorry for him if I would decide to leave my husband because I'm just thinking how he would be a nobody as he is relying on me for everything. He doesn't have a stable job and I'm thinking if I can leave him he would become a [skoli] meaning a nobody and that I guess would not be a nice thing to see. You see, even though he is abusive he depends on me as I'm the provider in this house. I guess I'm still with him because we got involved at a very young age and we grew up together that is why I am so attached to him I know this might me make sense to you Bulelwa. So I feel responsible for him in everything that he does. His family also rely on me to look after him in fact they know that I am looking after him. I think he is my partner for life. I think if I just continue ignoring him when he starts doing his things he will come right at the end and behave. When he starts doing his things a week can even pass without exchanging or talking to each though we are staying together and he doesn't like that and during that period I also don't give him sex. So far this is working for me.

The other thing is that as I am counsellor I don't want to say things to people that I am not doing.

What do you mean by that?

What I mean is that I have to remain clear to myself of what I want. What I want to tell you is that even though I am in an abusive relationship I want to remain there because of the things that I told you. But when it comes to my work I have to assist people on what they can do when they are in abusive relationships.

What exactly do you tell your clients?

The first thing that we do is to ask them to come with their partners so that both of them can go through this process together. Some partners would agree to come but others would just not come. We would then tell them about the things that they can do for example how to seek for help get an interdict, we also put them into groups so that they can meet other women who are in the same positions as they are, we also offer them counselling one on one and in groups when they are up to. We also have a library at work where there are books and pamphlets that talk about women abuse and how to get help when you are in that situation. The clients are allowed to take them to their homes so that they can show their friends and family members.

I think the women who are coming to this organisation have been assisted in their problems because some are bringing other women who also have the same problems. I think it's good that these kinds of organisations have been introduced so that everybody can be able to decide of what to do and also to make a choice of what she wants to do.

The other thing that I can mention is that by me working as a counsellor has also helped a lot because assisting these women with their problems also heals me at the same time because I can relate to what some of them are saying to me.

Have you ever thought of taking your husband to a counsellor?

R: Yes several times but he refused doing that and would always say it's of no use for him going to those people as he's going to change his behaviour. Some of the men still don't believe in talking about themselves or getting advice about their behaviours, as they don't see wrong in any thing that they do. The other thing is that they don't

want to be told about what is going through their homes more especially if it comes from a woman.

This was the first interview that I did and the respondent is a counsellor at the same organisation where I got all my respondents. She didn't want to say much about herself, as she knew that she was not going to leave her husband. She told me that she thinks that I should focus more on the clients and not her.



Interview 2 - Mamjwarha

Experiences that you went through with your husband

What I can tell you is that we are slaves of marriage because we have to abide to everything that is taking place in it. My husband doesn't care about a thing that is taking place in that house. But he still claims that we are married. What I can tell you is that we are now married in name only there's nothing that is still keeping us closer. I can't even tell you when this attitude started but I know it is how I feel and how I do things.

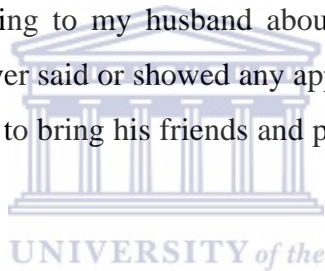
I think you know that if your partner is not supportive of what you are doing for both of you that is really depressing. There are several things that he does that I am not happy with and I think that is what I call abuse. He is hurting my feelings big time and I am emotionally not okay with everything that he does. This attitude began when he started sleeping out and would come back expecting me to play [lovey dovey] with him without explaining what is happening. I mean a person knows what he's up to and if he respects you he can even lie so that he can cover for the mistakes that he has done. My husband does not respect me that is all I can say to you.

He's got a girl friend that he is in love with and he behaves like a 16 year old. He likes women, he likes his friends more than he likes himself and he drinks a lot. If I can tell you, ever since I discovered that he's got women I moved out of our bedroom because I don't want to sleep with a person who fools around with other women. What if he brings me the diseases that he gets from his other women likes igcushuwa [STI] and AIDS? I never said anything to him. He would come back home from work very late or at the early hours of the next day and would make noise wanting everybody to give him attention. I am now sick and tired of running behind or in front of him doing things for him I just make it a point that our paths do not cross at all.

This is quite difficult as our house is not a mansion, as we cannot avoid bumping to each other now and again. We are from the Eastern Cape and we came here to work. The first person who arrived here in Cape Town is my husband and he said that I must come so that we can be together and now he behaves likes a schoolboy. I cannot tolerate booze and women and he knows very well but it's just that he disrespects me.

My husband is really not helpful at home he just is a pain. You know, ever since we came to Cape Town we are staying in a shack. We still have children who are at school and the older ones are still staying with us. So you'll find that there is just no space for all of us. My husband is not bothered by the situation also claiming that he doesn't have money and we do have a house back at home in the Eastern Cape. What I always tell him is that we spend most of our time here so we might as well build something here so that we can all be comfortable. I'm telling you that this just fell on deaf ears and up until I decided to start building something for children so that they also have a proper house like the other children.

I am domestic worker and you know that we don't earn much but I told myself that I'm going to do what I want to do only for my kids. My son the other day said to me that it is really embarrassing for him when they are bringing friends home, as there is no space. I never said anything to my husband about building the house as he is always not at home but he never said or showed any appreciation when he first saw it. The only thing that he does is to bring his friends and pretends as if he is the one who has done that.



I think the best thing that I have done for myself is not listen to him anymore and move out of our bedroom as I don't want to be disturbed when he is coming back from his friends. I also don't want to sleep with him anymore to have sex with him. I no longer enjoy it with him anymore because I would be thinking about all his bad things that he is doing to me. He likes pretending that there is nothing wrong happening between the two of us but my children know that things are not good between us. The other thing that I don't like that has become a habit is that he just doesn't want to buy groceries anymore and would just eat everything, bring his brothers at home and eat all the meat that is in the fridge. I would just wonder how his mind functions because he knows very well that he didn't buy anything but he's got the gust of just eating everything that he can. You know when you have a partner you must at least meet each other half way. In my case even though financially I am dependent but he does not assist me financially and I think that is also a strain in this relationship instead he destroys everything. If he had the decency of assisting me in everything that is happening for instance when the children go to him to ask for

money he would refer them to me and would tell them to come to me, as he doesn't have money. He always doesn't have money.

What do your children say about this?

My daughter said the other time she has stopped bothering her father because he always doesn't have money for her. That is not fair I asked him about that and he told me that he really doesn't have money. What he does with his money I wonder?

Why are you still together?

For me I can say it is because of cultural values and the children. I think I must maintain my marriage even though there is nothing left in it just because of these issues I have mentioned above. You know what these values bind you in a way. My parents are not here in Cape Town and my husband's parents are not here, it's only his brothers and some other relatives who are here for both of us. So when you have these kinds of issues you have to go and speak about them to the elders. I would be a disgrace to the whole family if I can leave him because they all respect him. The also think that he is looking after the children and me even though this is the opposite. When I got married I was told to obey him at all times and to look after him by cooking for him and not ask him about is whereabouts. Even though I am staying with him because of cultural values I don't agree with all the things I was told when I got married because really some do leave their husbands having been told all of these. The other thing that I don't like is to speak about my personal staff to some strangers and relatives who will talk about them to anyone who wants to listen. So what I've decided to do is to be the wife that I wanted to be even though my husband is not good to me in all respects.

I think I have got a strong personality in the sense that what I am going through with my husband is serious staff that a person can't solve it on her own. A person must get guidance or share with her close people. I have decided to stick to what I wanted that is marriage and forget about my husband's abusiveness.

The other reason is my children especially my two boys because my daughter just doesn't care about her father anymore. She told me that it would be better if her father could just leave us on our own as he just brings sorrow in our life and not joy. My

other boy once asked me why I was no longer sleeping in my room with his father and I told him that because he always arrives very late I got disturbed in my sleep and I have decided to move out. He looked at me and said he knows that his father is no longer looking after me but I must hang in there he is going through something and he will be the one I know. I ask him where does he get what he's talking about and he told me that he is a man that's is what goes through with men. I told my child that I hope he will not do this to his wife when he gets married because that is not a good way to take care of somebody that you care about.

A caring parent will always do everything for her children and for me if I was the only one in this relationship without the children I would be long gone by now. I'm not getting any financial support from my husband to run the day-to-day activities in the house. He would just come with friends and sometimes his relatives and finish all the groceries that is in the house. In so much that I've decided to pretend as always not having money and will keep every cent that I have for me and the my children as they are the only reason that I'm still under the same roof with him. What I do these days is to buy food when I'm going to prepare and would make it a pint that nothing is left behind for him and I think that satisfies me a lot. I believe this is what I have chosen to do for them to remain with their abusive father. He behaves like a young man and I am really not impressed. But I must say that things have changed ever since I started coming to this agency.

What do you mean by this?

If I was not introduced to this agency I might have been mad by now.

How come?

I am a member of umgalelo [a savings group]. We meet once a month we share about everything that goes on in our lives that is the good the difficulties and the bad. Sometime even when you have that platform it is difficult to open up to people that you don't know. This is how I felt at the beginning when I joined the group. As I was listening to the other women I realized that some of them are also going through quite a lot of things that they are not ashamed to share with their fellows. So one of the women told me that she was also going through a similar thing at her home and she was told about this agency. I didn't trust what she was telling me as you know that we

black people don't feel comfortable sharing our things with the people that we don't know or have never come across with. But this woman encouraged me to go and stop being hesitant. I was just thinking to my self that it was difficult for me to confide in the group of people that I was familiar with that I have managed to share things with them how was I now going to share my things with this stranger that I didn't know anything about. This woman gave me all the details about this agency and she said she doesn't want to seem as she is forcing me to go but would advise me to please go and see for my self.

What exactly happened?

I was introduced to a lot of things that I was not aware of. For instance I did not know about the Domestic Violence Act and court interdicts. I was really not aware of all the things that a person can do to prevent her from not abused by her partner. I give thanks to Ilitha Labantu for taking care of me. You know I am a person who talks a lot but ever since my husband started behaving badly I became withdrawn I was no longer that bold person but now I must say I am confident again. This is because the people that I was introduced to were also going through more or less the same difficulties that I was going through. I used to think that I was the only who was miserable in her house but I discovered that the world is full of abusive males.

What exactly is happening in this agency?

When I first arrived a counselor spoke to me but as the times went on I met with the women where we talk about all the things that might help us. We are kind of supporting each other to be able to go through with our daily lives. The other thing that I managed to do was to go to church. This I can say has helped me through a lot because I realized that I was not going to cope with all my burdens alone and with the help of this organisation I managed to go to church and got healed by Holy Spirit. I now know what abuse is all about as there is a library where we are able to read and equip ourselves with the knowledge. It is easy for all of us even those who can't read because it is in different languages even isiXhosa. The other thing that I like is that I am now more so close to my children and we are able to share about all that they are going through and that fulfills me a lot.

What else kept you together during this period?

The other thing is that I became very close to the Lord Jesus Christ. You know Bulelwa, it is said we must not only think about Him when things are rough but this is what we really do during these times. I grew up in church but from the savings group we really managed to keep each other strong by all means and prayer was also one of the things we do and still do. I didn't go to the priest for advice

Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you would like to add or say?

The only thing that I can say to you is that I feel so great having spoken to you about my situation and I am not ashamed for telling you that this is because at the beginning I was not going to be able to say all the things to you it was going to be difficult really. I must thank you for speaking to me.

Thank you so much for your time I value all the information that you have shared with me



Interview 3 - Gogo

The interview began with explaining the background and aims of the study and the ethical consideration. The respondent gave consent.

Can you go through the experiences that you went through in your relationship with your husband or partner?

Ohhh !!! It started a long time ago because I got married to him in 1971 I always thought it's how it supposed to be. My husband doesn't care for me he knows that I'm there at home as his wife but there is nothing that binds us together. He does his own things and doesn't even say a word to me. I accepted it but it has always been something that I was not okay with. My husband I can say is traditional he doesn't discuss anything with his wife or children and his wife must just do everything for him. That is not negotiable. He regards himself as the provider of the family so because he is doing everything for us we must abide to everything that he commands from us.

Mhhh.... my husband likes to belittle me in front of everybody and the children. I had to put up with that the first time I got married to him. Things like not saying when will he be coming back even if the child is ill I must wait for him to arrive to tell him, as I don't have money to take the child to the hospital. If I would go out and ask money from my friends or neighbours he will tell me that I will pay it myself. I would just wonder how that would happen, as I am not working. He never allowed me to work saying that there was no need for me to work, as he will be able to support the whole family as the head of the family. So I have to do everything, as he wants it done because he supports me financially and the house is his I mean he controls everything.

Why are you still with him?

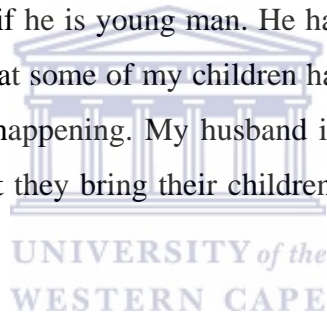
There are several reasons that I can give for that question. The first I can say is that I got married in 1971 and if I would want to leave my husband he would want his lobola back of which I am not in a position to pay it back as I am not working. I no

longer have parents and nobody at home would want to listen to whatever I would say about my husband. We both come from traditional families from Transkei [Eastern Cape]. People there still value their cultural beliefs. So because of that I am just not in the position to leave him it's like I am tied to him in a way.

The other reason is because I am dependent on him financially I am not employed I only wait for him to give me money to buy staff for the house and the children. I am illiterate and can't find work so this is the reason why I'm still with him even though he is not treating me okay, he supports me financially. He is the one who is the provider financially and I really depend on him.

How do your children respond to his behaviour?

My children are not impressed by their father's behaviour. We are all grown up but he still behaves like this. It's as if he is young man. He has never changed from being a traditional man in so much that some of my children have moved out of our house as they cannot tolerate what is happening. My husband is a controller. The problem is that the children have left but they bring their children to the house and I must look after them.



How does your husband respond to this?

He is their grandfather and he believes that he will take care of them as their parents don't have stable jobs. [She came to the interview with a very young baby on her back]. She couldn't stay for long as she has left the others on their own. In the house I don't make any major decisions I have to wait for my husband as he provides the shelter that we stay in he is the one making and taking decisions of the house. Where would I go if I can decide to leave him? I am telling you, nowhere.

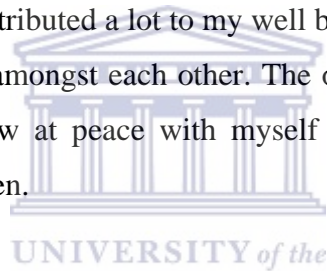
How did you come to know about Ilitha Labantu?

I got to know of it from the community. You people in the community talk about everything that is taking place around them. Even though I had never said anything to anyone as I was afraid my husband would say I am bad mouthing him even though he

is doing everything for us. I know what kind of a person he is he didn't want me to go and visit other women he only wanted me to look after the kids.

I then decided to go and visit the place on my own as I didn't trust anyone and didn't want anybody to what I was going through. At this age my child we are not even sleeping together as he says I have to look after the kids anytime of the night if there is need. But I must tell you my husband talks a lot especially when he is drunk. I have decided not to say anything to him infact I never said anything to him from the time we got married I respect him a lot. I have this thing that he is the head of the family as I was told the day we got married.

Ever since I came to Ilithat Labantu I can feel the change. I am no longer worried about things that I know will not take me any where as I have decided to remain with him no matter what he is does. Getting to know other women who are in similar situations like you I think contributed a lot to my well being. At least you can relate to all the things that you share amongst each other. The only thing I can say about this organisation is that I am now at peace with myself I don't feel lonely I am just looking after my grand children.



I am running out of time I'm thinking about the kids at home they are on their own. Thanks so much for talking to me.

Thank you so much Gogo for spending time with me this afternoon.

Interview 4 _Nomsa Phillipi

Can you tell about your experiences in your relationship?

I met my husband two years ago and we stayed together. I got pregnant during the process and my parents told me that there is nothing that they are going to do he must take care of both me and the unborn child. So we decided to go to the magistrate just to legalise our staying together. He then started paying lobola to my parents, just doing the right thing at the right time. When I met him I thought he was a good man and we were going to have a good time, as we were both still young. But I realised when time was going that he is not working as he claimed to do. He used to go out in the morning just like everybody who is going to work in the morning. He used not to have money always and would be asking for money from me even though he was quite aware that I am not working.

Why are still together?

I have this baby [referring to the baby on her back] and she needs to grow up with both her parents around. I thought that by staying together my husband would reform and be the man that he used to be. Besides he always reminds me that he paid lobola for me so he can do anything he wants to do meaning sex. Whenever he wants sex he doesn't negotiate he just do it. I've been trying to talk sense to him but he doesn't want to listen to me. The worst part is that he has raped a teenage girl from our area. He says he has done that because I always refuse having sex with him when he wants to do it which is a lie. I have decided to stay with him regardless of this issue as I'm worried people from our community might kill him for what he's done if he's on his own. The worst part is that he doesn't even attempt in looking for a job, as our baby is very young and need to be taken care of.

I grew up not having a relationship with my father and I don't want that to happen to my children. The only thing I keep telling myself is to obey him and be a good wife and everything will be okay in our house. I am just telling myself that I will be committed to my marriage and then nothing wrong will happen.

Because my parents didn't want me to get married to this man they believed he was not going to take care of me in a good way. It's difficult for to go to my mother and

tell her about what is taking place in my marriage. You know what I can't even go anywhere to talk to because no one is on your side. That is the most destroying pain I have ever experienced not being supported by my family and friends when I am in such a pain.

How did you get to know Ilitha Labantu?

I got to know about it from my neighbour, as she is also a member of the organisation. I am now a better person emotionally, as I now know how to handle and cope in this kind of situation. I didn't know anything about court interdict and domestic law and the procedures involved. I was also able to read about what woman abuse is all about and how to take care of myself. I now feel confident and able to look after myself. I am doing peace jobs so that I can be able to take care of my child.

Nomsa is a quiet person and didn't say much even after probing. The counsellor told me that she has improved from what she was in the beginning she is coming out and reaching to other people.



Interview Five_Nozie Phillipi

Can you tell me about your experiences and perceptions about woman abuse?

You are lucky to be speaking to me at this time because I might have been dead by now. My husband is a jealous person he doesn't want me to see speaking to other men. I am running a tavern at my place and it's where you meet these people and when you have got a business you just cannot be nasty to them you have to be friendly. This is what infuriates him and this is the person that I am and I can't change this as I'm bringing food to the table for the family. I started this business for quite some time now and it is doing very well but I think with his behaviour he is going push the customers away. He is also becoming nasty to the children and they don't know what to do and say to him anymore. I am not sure whether I should continue with the business or just close it down but I am thinking of the money it brings to the family if I can close it hell will break loose. He is not working and just drinking. My husband becomes jealous without a reason and I really cannot control that part of him. I guess it becomes worse when he has a lot of drink he becomes uncontrollable; I am worried his behaviour has nearly cost us the business because people could not relate to what he was doing in front of them. Some told him that they would not come until he straightens his acts. When he is in that mood he becomes really nasty.

Why are you still together?

When I got married I was told by the elders to stick to my husband under any circumstances because he has paid lobola. The elders told me that a man would sometimes lift his hand to his wife meaning beat his wife but this doesn't mean I should come home it simply means that nobody should know about this as it is between the two of us. I have told my husband that he doesn't have to beat me in front of the other people as they will talk because they have witnessed the act. He always tells me that he is the head of the family and he has the right to take care of everything in the house.

We still have young children who want to be around both their parents that is the other reason it is difficult to leave him. He is very nice to them and doesn't want them to know that he is a monster but they have seen him several times beating and

shouting at me without any reasons. I can cope with the abuse but I don't want to deprive my children the right to be staying with their father.

When you are in these kinds of situations you feel alone because people don't want to come between the two of you they don't know that you need them desperately. Some are judgemental especially the in laws and no one cares about your own feelings, I suppose that you have to take care yourself. This was the case for me when I reported this to my in laws they said I was lying he would never do anything like this. Even though they have heard about the people in the community

How did you get to know Ilitha Labantu?

I was introduced to Ilitha Labantu by a friend because she heard from the people who come to the tavern of what was happening to me. This got combined with going to church as my friend also said that it's where I should put my energies on just to focus on myself. As I was a churchgoer previously and because work commitment I was no longer able to go there anymore as I would have like to do. I remember when I had a huge fight with my husband as I have been trying to avoid his abuse by not responding to all the rubbish he was saying. The other thing is that I was pregnant and wanted to concentrate on what was taking place inside of me. But that day it was the last draw he was shouting at me and when I was not responding to him he pushed me outside, because I was with my petticoat and nothing else he just pushed me outside and he took a knife and pointed to my face. I went to the pastor like that and he took me into his house and his wife gave me something to wear. I told him again what took place he told me that maybe there is something wrong with him I must give him time and pray to God, as He is the only one who has answers to everything.

This is when I decided to focus on myself and nobody else. The pastor advised me to come to him to talk about this just to relieve it. He becomes impossible when he is in that mood so I decided to leave him alone and keep quiet. But it was difficult, as I really wanted to say something back to him so that he knows what he is doing is wrong but this was not taking me anywhere.

Things at Ilitha Labantu also improved you get to meet different people who are in the same situation as you and you are assigned a counsellor who'll be talking to you when you are there. The counsellors don't only talk to us they give us literature to read on our own. The information and advices that they give us are very useful, You also get a chance of going to their library where you'll get the information you are looking for that has been helpful to me.

Ever since I started coming to Ilitha Labantu I was able to relate to my family because I was now able to listen to what they were saying objectively and not subjectively because previously I knew that they were only going to take their son's side without listening to what I was telling them. The other thing I thought about is that a person is only supposed to ask for a protection order only when the husband physically abuse her that is why I never bothered to ask for one. Even though he ended abusing me physical I did nothing, as I was not aware of the procedures.

On top of all the advantages that this organisation have it is also easily accessible and the waiting list is not long at all you are assigned a counsellor who will be looking after you. When you come here you get to meet some other women and it's when we decided to meet on our own just to catch up and talk about this that are of importance to us and not focus on the abuse that we get from our partners. This has positive results

But I must tell you that the abuse that I got from husband was very bad the situation suddenly changed and there was no control.

What was really taking place in your mind during that time?

Nozie: You know, the affected me in a huge way, because suddenly everything changed and I am now face with this monster that I don't know. He has – I don't know him anymore I am a piece of nothing to him. I was a zombie – I could say a thing nothing came out of my mouth as

Bulelwa: so you never really managed to deal with your feeling at that time?

Nozie: I was angry in so much that one time I thought of just killing myself, as I couldn't stand the pain of abuse.

Bulelwa: Were you angry with him?

Nozie: I was angry in so much that one time I thought of just killing myself, as I couldn't stand the pain of abuse anymore.

Bulelwa: Have you thought about it?

Nozie: I was just thinking about it always and if I was at home [Eastern Cape] I could just go to the river and drown myself easy or would go to the bushes and do something that would appear as an accident. I think if I was at home there are lots things that I could ultimately have done, taking my life was one of them but I was just thinking about the baby I was carrying.

What does he think of you coming to Ilitha labantu?

At the beginning he didn't approve and I asked him to come for counselling as the counsellor suggested he told me that he will never be advised by a woman as she doesn't know how he runs his family. So I decided to keep away from him and focus on myself. Emotionally and spiritually I am becoming a better person and I have decided to go to church each and every Sunday and let him take care of the business the way he wants to. I now focus more on my children and myself just to have peace in the family.

Interview Six: Radie Langa

Can you tell about the experiences of abuse you went through?

....There's a lot that I'm still going through my husband beats me constantly and this started early on in our marriage. We have been married for six years now. I have just discovered about Ilitha Labantu and that is why you are able to speak to me. Previously I used to be at home. When you are in a situation like this you like keeping to your self. I have kept to myself the whole time because nobody believed me and they all told me that I must stick to my husband for cultural reasons. All men are the same if I leave my husband I must not expect to find somebody different from him.

When you are in this mess people judge your every movements. The society also is against divorce and I don't think I will divorce him, as he is the provider. I have only two children who are in primary school and I try to hide everything that is happening between me and their father. My husband is a well-respected person in the community and people don't believe that he can be this cruel.

Since coming to Ilitha Labantu there's a lot that I have learnt, the support group and individual session that I have with the counselor has improved what I have been going through. I am now able to read about abuse and take the readings home. The first time my husband saw a pamphlet about woman abuse he nearly killed me. He said these NGO are teaching us crap and I must just obey him and no else. I have decided not to let him know that I am attending the sessions. So I am still new and learning and have seen improvement already. By being with other people and talk about things not only about abuse but also things that are informative is rich, sharing ideas and other staff.

I wish you can come and speak to me after some other time so that you can understand what I am telling you I promise you I will be a totally different person. For now all I can say sharing your experiences with a professional person makes a huge change in your life if you are willing to go that route. This is all I can say for now thank you

Thank you

Comments:

The counselor told me that she was still new and had only four weeks but was just willing to say a few things to me. She didn't want to dwell much and asked me to stop the interview.



Interview 7 Nokhwezi – Langa

Can you tell me about the experiences of abuse you went through with your husband?

Mhh.. It has been a stressful experience for me. I never thought when I came to stay with my husband that I was going to create problems for our marriage. The minute I arrived he became a monster and he shut me out of his life. I really didn't understand as I felt I needed to be with him. At home ekoloni (eastern cape) I was doing nothing and I decided to come to Cape Town just for us to be together. It's been a year since I arrived. You know men have a strange way of expressing their feelings and they will never be upfront in things that they want. It's not as if I just got on the bus without informing him about my coming to stay with him this was discussed between the two of us and he agreed, and when I arrived he started acting strangely.

I could see that there was something bothering him and I thought it was work related issues in fact that is what he said to me when I asked him. He started coming home very late or not come at all. You can imagine you are new in the area and you don't have anybody to talk to. He would wake up in the morning and not say a word to me. There was just no talk between the two of us when I asked him he said he doesn't understand why I came to stay with it's as if I'm trying to spy on him or monitor his movements. This affected me emotionally because this is not what I expected to happen when I arrived in Cape Town. It went to an extent that he would go for a week without coming home, phoning to explain what the situation was or leave money for me to buy things for me to eat. I could sense that there was a woman involved in all of this.

I went to speak to one of his friend and told him about the situation at home. He was quite surprised and didn't understand how my husband could do such a thing to me. He promised to speak to him and I think that makes things even worse because he back shouting at me accusing me of telling people about our relationship. He told me plain out that he would go as he please as he doesn't understand why I left our home in the eastern cape. There was nothing I could do and this is when I decided to do

something as I could see that this might take time or forever. Even though it was difficult for me to speak to people about my situation.

You know when you are in that kind of situation you only think the world is laughing at you and that you are at fault.

Why are still together?

I guess it's God will I love my husband dearly and I was not willing to lose him to something that I don't know. A cousin of mine who knew about my situation told me about this NGO. I discovered that it was really close to I was staying. It was a walking distance and I didn't have to use money to go there. When I arrived here the counselor told me that there is nothing she can do without my husband. When you are in a difficult situation you forget about the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what I did because I was frustrated thinking of what was going to me if my husband leaves. He is the provider so if he left me I was going to have to look for work to survive.

I told my husband about Ilitha labantu and that the counsellor wanted to see both of us. He resisted in the beginning but ultimately agreed to come. I think what I appreciated most from him was to agree to come with me for counseling. Even though he was not convinced by what the counselor was saying he told her straight out that he won't be able to come again as he doesn't have a problem. The only person who seemed to have a problem was me and I have to come to the sessions.

Going to church was the other option I decided to take, as it was where I was emotionally happy.

What has been the impact of abuse to you?

For me I think if I was not a strong person I could have been dead by now. Imagine coming to stay with your husband and when you arrive you discover a totally different person from the one you know. But because I am strong and believe in the lord I managed to get through what was going within my relationship with my husband.

Ilitha Labantu has also been a source of inspiration to me as I was not aware of all the things that I learnt when I first came there. Before I came there I was afraid to socialize with other people I thought they were going to ignore me but I realised that a lot of women go through what I have been going through. My self-esteem is back as I can now talk openly about my experiences to anyone who wants to know about them. The other problem I think is because people are scare to talk about these issues and they end ending their lives as they think that they are the only ones going through such experiences.

I believed in my partner's insulting remarks and verbal abuse. Until she came to Ilitha Labantu and met with other women did I realise that my partner was playing tricks on me emotionally. This can destroy a person but I told myself that I was never going back to the eastern cape to allow him to do as he pleases. I always reminded him that we are still married and he better straighten his acts or else I am going to open a case against him. I was now trying to show him of all the things that I learnt from Ilitha Labantu. Even though he was still coming home late he made it a point that he would leave me with enough money so that I can take care of myself.

Coming to this NGO has helped me a lot as I was able to vent out my frustrations to a person who was willing to listen and give help where necessary. I recommend people who are going through series of abuse to come to any NGO dealing with abusive issues, as they will get a person who will listen to her and assist her in whatever way they can.

Do you have anything to say?

No and thank you for your time.

Thanks a lot as well for talking to me.

Interview 8: Nokwakha – Langa

Can you tell me about the experiences you went through in your relationship?

For me I won't be able to tell you what I went through but just to tell you that Ilitha labantu saved me. I was really going a rough patch and I never thought I would still be talking to people about my experiences but this NGO saved me. My husband is a taxi driver and he thought he owned me. I used to ask money from people even though they knew that I have a husband who is working. He used to beat me and I would wake up in hospital not knowing how I got there with blue eyes and staff. And I would still come with stories when people want to know what happened to me.

Why did you remain with him?

I think we are still together in name only as I am now doing things for myself and do not involve him. You know he thought he was the boss of the house but things have now changed. The only reason I can think of is because of cultural a belief that we have to abide to that is lobola. I wonder who came with that thing because really it can sometimes bind you if you allow it. I am still with him just to spite him so that he feels what he has been doing to me. Another reason is because we have a child together but I have told my child even though she is still young of all the things he has done to me. I want her to decide of what she wants to do with him. Financially I am now independent instead he now depends on me and I am not giving him any money just like he did when he wanted.

How have you cope with all of this?

Coming to Ilitha Labantu has been helpful. This NGO is easily accessible and also affordable to get to it. I just walk to the offices from my house. The service that we receive is free of charge but if anyone can afford to donate something it is greatly appreciated. I remember when I first came to Ilitha Labantu my self esteem was low I was despondent and I just came here thinking that there was nothing anybody could do for me. My husband was so abusive and was always criticisizing everything that I do. When I arrived here the counselor told me that she was going to help me in making my own decisions about my life. That I promise has helped me in many ways. I can tell you that I am selling clothes that I have sewn myself and the business

is booming because I am getting orders from all over Cape Town'. I am now focused and no longer thinking about my husband and how to leave him my self-esteem is up.

They don't only talk to us but they also give us the literature so we can go and read for ourselves. The advices that they give and the information is very useful. 'If you go to their library you'll get all the information that you want and that has been helpful for me'

This NGO has taught me to able to do things on my own and no longer rely on somebody else who might not want to help me if he doesn't want to. I am now a businesswoman who sells fruits and vegetables and from the profit that I made from that I was able to buy a sewing machine and now have 2 people who sew clothes for people and orders coming every month so the business I can say is booming. Coming to this NGO has boosted my self-esteem I am now well known for the work that I do and I have customers. You know when people are going home to the eastern cape they come to us and make orders so that they can bring staff for their families.

From the support groups we have formed in Ilitha Labantu I am able to speak and share about all the successes I have achieved because of this NGO.

There is a lot I can but I don't have time as I have to go to a support group meeting. I will not stop attending the support groups because things are going well for me. I want to show those who are new to the NGO how this has been helpful to our lives.

Thank you