

“WHEN MEN BEAT WOMEN”: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
LITERARY PRESENTATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN THE
ANTHOLOGY *WE MUST CHOOSE LIFE* (2008) BY ELIZABETH IKHAXAS (Ed.)

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence is a global problem of great concern. This thesis is a critical examination of the literary presentation of gender-based violence in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) by Elizabeth IKhaxas (Ed). The study is framed within the paradigm of “when men beat women” which examines male on female violence as a form of gender-based violence in Namibia as presented in the selected literary anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Largely a desktop study, the thesis is qualitative in nature and employs a content analysis approach to analyse the selected pieces within the anthology. The textual analysis was informed by three theoretical frameworks, namely, Ecofeminism (d'Eaubonne, 1974), Trauma (Caruth, 1996) and Resilience (Rutter, 1987). Ecofeminism examines the suffering of women from the dominant influence of a male-oriented society. Trauma Theory explores a person’s emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual’s sense and the standards by which one evaluates society, while Resilience Theory emphasises the strengths that one has, rather than one’s vulnerability, through exploring the coping strategies. The study revealed that gender roles, norms and assumptions form a repository of the techniques of violence and acceptance of violence. In this respect, specific forms of abuse of women have been identified as gender-based violence with the level of acceptability. It was further observed that some Namibian women have long-standing abusive relationships due to over-dependence on the perpetrators of violence for socio-economic support, fear of the perpetrators’ reprisals, as well as conformity to cultural and religious practices. Based on the findings, the study recommends further investigation of gender roles and relationship problems, in particular, gender-based violence. Further studies to encourage men to write an anthology that examines gender-based violence against men in society, and empowers women to be actively involved in the development of a violence-free environment are still green areas for research.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the fallen hero my late father, Erastus Esura Nauyoma and the heroine my late mother Aili Konata Nauyoma. To my children, Evelyn Chova Nauyoma, Benjamin Sipangera Nauyoma and Ivanna Nangura Nauyoma, this is for you.

DECLARATION

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Oiva Sikwaya Nauyoma

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Date

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by giving a general overview. It presents the study's orientation which gives literary views on gender-based violence as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), edited by Elizabeth IKhaxas. In addition, the chapter describes the background of the study, statement of the problem, and states the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the significance of the study, the limitations and the delimitations of the study are also presented in the chapter.

1.2 Background of the study

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to forms of violence against women which include psychological violence, traditional practices such as forced marriages, physical violence, as well as sexual violence (Tamwa, 2013). Radford and Hester (2006) further define GBV as the coercive control of an adult by an intimate partner, involving physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse. The Namibia Gender Analysis (NGA) (2017) indicates that 50% of the women are mostly affected by domestic violence. The National Planning Commission (NPC) reported Namibia to be leading in grave human rights violations against women in its Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) (2011) and also confirmed that 50% of the women are affected. According to IKhaxas (2008), Namibian men are mostly the perpetrators of the violent acts and hideous crimes against women.

Puri (2010) indicates that even though the violence had always been part of the Namibian society, violence against women reached alarming levels in the early 2000s. Currently, Namibia is facing the worst kind of GBV perpetrated by intimate partners in relationships. The

former President of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba expressed great concern over the continual loss of women's lives due to GBV. Reflecting on this violent behaviour, he asks, "Have we turned into animals? What kind of society am I leading as a President?" (Ikela, 2014).

Given this background, this study investigates the literary presentations of "when men beat women" in Namibia as a form of GBV against women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) comprises short stories and poems by Namibian women on culture, violence, HIV and Aids. It represents the voices of women in agony, pain and defeat caused by GBV experienced in their homes, families and communities in Namibia. The women's voices transform their silence into language and action as expounded in the anthology.

As such, GBV could be perceived as both the exercising of tilted power relations and the heightening of gender inequalities. It is arguable that the violence that men unleash is aimed at silencing women in their quest for equal rights, thus, limiting women from accessing opportunities and resources (Puri, 2010). The USAID (2010) reveals that GBV is not an isolated problem or a side component of Namibian life, rather, it is a widespread, tragic, and daily problem that touches and impacts almost everyone's life in some way. According to Tamwa (2013), a significant number of Namibian women suffer from emotional and psychological violence, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, physical violence, and socio-economic violence as well as sexual violence such as rape and sexual harassment.

This study derives much influence from scholars like Asasira (2013); Kamaya (2018) and Matsi (2018) who argue that in recent years GBV has continually affected a significant number of the Namibian women. Hence, this study sought to confirm the alarming empirical evidence to the claims that women in Namibia are vulnerable to GBV in the homes, families and communities

at large. It further sought to explore the different GBV manifestations and shed more light on the life experiences of the victims.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The study investigated the literary presentations of “when men beat women” in Namibia as a form of Gender - Based Violence (GBV) against women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008, which is a current challenge in Namibia. The aim of this study was to critically examine GBV as represented by the testimonies in the short stories and poems of the Namibian women who have been violated. It also explored the causes of GBV as illustrated in the women’s stories and poems. The lack of adequate gender roles, norms and assumptions form a repository of the techniques of violence and acceptance of violence. Particular forms of abuses to women have been identified as gender-based violence with the level of acceptability in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The United States Agency for International Development (UNAIDS) (2013) indicates that more than one-third of Namibian men feel that beating wives is justifiable. Tjitemisa (2014) observes that Namibia has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the entire Southern African Development Community region

Multiple studies have been done on GBV. For instance, Asasira (2013) related gender-based violence and women’s economic empowerment in Nyakayojo sub-county, Mbarara district in Uganda. Another study by Chatora (2013) looked at the role of gender-based violence in HIV transmission among women in Lusaka – Zambia. Kamaya (2018) concentrated on exploring male and female voices in reporting gender-based violence in the Namibian media. Klaasen’s (2018) study addressed a feminist pastoral approach to gender-based violence in intimate partner relationships within marriage while Shigwedha’s (2018) study centred on women’s experiences and coping strategies towards domestic violence. Given the above examples, it

would seem the “when men beat women” studies in Namibia have not been given widespread attention from the perspective of GBV in literary discourses. Hence, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining GBV in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study sought to:

- 1.1.1 Examine the causes of gender-based violence against women as presented in the selected literary anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008);
- 1.1.2 Investigate the implications of the gender-based violence on women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008); and
- 1.1.3 Explore the transformation of victims in reconstructing their lives and hope for a better future.

1.4 Significance of the study

The outcome of this study might contribute to the growing knowledge base of Namibian literature. Thus, the findings of the study may sensitise the Namibian society on the prevention of gender-based violence, as well as the human rights amongst women and men. The results of this study would determine whether women are still seen but not heard by men in GBV cases. Furthermore, the study might provide useful guidelines to law enforcement agents and the legal fraternity on how they can assist female Namibians affected by gender-based violence. The data presented in this study could also serve as a tool to raise awareness amongst the youth to respect and treat everyone with dignity in their communities.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The study focused only on the short stories and poems written by women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), edited by Elizabeth IKhaxas, thus the results may not reflect a holistic picture of gender-based violence in Namibia. In addition, the present study was restricted to

the coverage of “when men beat women” as a form of gender-based violence in Namibia; hence the result cannot be extrapolated as similar to other countries. Moreover, the study used materials that were accessible to the researcher and only available in the public domain.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study confined itself to ‘when men beat women’ as a form of gender-based violence in the anthology *We Must Choose Life (2008)*, edited by IKhaxas. The results may not necessarily apply to other literary texts with similar themes. The study was couched within three theories, namely, Ecofeminism Theory (d'Eaubonne, 1974), Trauma Theory (Caruth, 1996) and Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987).

1.7 Outline of the chapters

This study has five chapters of which Chapter One is the introduction comprising the background information, statement of the research problem, objectives, the significance of this study, limitation and delimitation of the study. Chapter Two presents the literature review on what other researchers have done on similar topics, as well as the study’s guiding conceptual frameworks. Chapter Three describes the methodology explaining how the study was conducted. It presents the study’s research design, the types of data sources used in the study, as well as the types of data analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected for this study. Chapter Five presents the discussions based on the results of the study and compares these to similar studies. This final chapter also presents the conclusion and recommendations.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the introduction, background of the study as well as the statement of the problem. Furthermore, the chapter presents the research objectives, the significance of the study as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter Two examines literature

on GBV. The chapter also provides the location of the study as well as the conceptual framework and the theoretical perspectives employed in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature to locate the current study within the broader discourse of gender based violence as represented in the select text. It also describes the theoretical framework guiding the study. According to Creswell (2009), literature review means to look again, review and reflect on reports of what others have done in a related area. In addition, Given (2008) explains that literature review is a process of gathering information from primary and secondary sources and documenting it. Plooy (2007) further states that literature review is a structured and comprehensive survey of scholars' publications in a similar issue under research. Thus, literature review is a description of scholarly articles, summary and critical evaluation of the published work in a particular research area (Creswell, 2012). This means in a literature review, the study is organised into sub-headings, relevant scholarly studies and information within the framework of the literature review. As such, the focus of the literature review chapter in the current study is to summarise and synthesise the arguments and ideas of others. Creswell (2012) states that a good review might also contain information drawn from conference papers, books, and government documents. The other main aim of the literature review is to identify gaps in existing scholarship related to the subject under study.

The theoretical framework provides the foundations through which collected data is analysed and interpreted. Grand and Osanloo (2014) define the theoretical framework as a "blueprint" for the whole thesis enquiry since it acts as a guide for constructing and supporting the research. In addition, Eisenhart (1991) defines a theoretical framework as "a skeleton that trails research by relying on a formal theory fabricated from an existing and coherent description of certain phenomena and relationships" (p. 205).

Thus, the focus of this chapter is to review literature related to the concept “when men beat women” as a form of gender-based violence in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The literature review is categorised into subheadings that further develop the study’s argument, critique the existing knowledge base and gives the justification for doing this research. The theoretical framework is discussed to provide an analytical framework and to inform the gender-based issues raised in this study. To review the literature, the chapter is divided into subsections namely: Defining gender-based violence; Gender-based violence situation in Namibia, Forms of gender-based violence, the possible root causes and contributing factors to gender-based violence in Namibia, Implications of gender-based violence on Namibian women, coping strategies of women in Namibia as well as mapping the measures to curb gender-based violence.

2.2 Defining gender-based violence

Gender- based violence has been defined in diverse ways and alternatively considered as violence against women or domestic violence. However, the essence of all definitions is like an arrow pointing in the same direction since the definitions share similarities from local, national and international spheres. Hence, worldwide, the definitions and understandings of gender-based violence might be very consistent and inclusive.

The term “violence against women” applies to "all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or distress to women, including threats to such acts, intimidation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004, p. 3). Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably since in most cases violence is inflicted by men on women and girls thus, denying women their basic human rights

and fundamental freedoms (Tamwa, 2013). Furthermore, Theodora (2014) contents that “violence against women includes all acts of violence, that result in physical, sexual or psychological harm occurring to women either in public or in private life” (p. 9). Thus, violence against women is an expression of power inequalities and gender norms as expressed in *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Dunkle (2004) argues that gender-based violence is a key health risk for women globally.

The majority of survivors of GBV are women, young girls, and aged women. However, some men also suffer from GBV at the hands of women (UNAM Report, 2015). The UNAM Report (2015) further states that statistics from Namibia police show that the majority of people who report cases of GBV are women and children. The assumption is that men are reluctant to report GBV to the authorities because of fear of humiliation and the likelihood of facing ridicule from service providers. Hoogensen and Rottem (2011) define GBV as a state when a human's wellbeing or safety has been compromised. This type of violence includes, but is not limited to, any behaviour that may cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls which results in deprivation of liberty.

Gender-based violence, often used interchangeably with the term “violence against men and women”, must be understood in the context of structural inequalities between men and women (Bakker, 2014). Coomarswamy and Rajasingham (2010) further describe GBV as behaviour where women use threats to control men and men use violence to control women, a control to which men feel entitled and are supported by culture.

The term GBV has also been used to refer to any violence that is related to the socially ascribed roles of males and females (Sabao, 2013), such as violence against men that is informed by norms related to masculinities or violence against gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) individuals, which is informed by norms related to sexual identity (Findano, 2012).

The UNAIDS (2013) further explains that GBV is a form of discrimination that violates and impairs the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of survivors. Thus, GBV according to Findano (2012), is not a series of isolated events; it represents a system of certain behaviour that undermines the dignity, condition, and security of the victims and limits their participation in society. Findano (2012) further argues that GBV compromises the integrity, self-determination and protection of the victims, inhibits their participation in society and harms their health and well-being. Wife beating is often justified by men if for instance, the wife leaves home without the knowledge of the spouse, neglects the children, argues with husband, refuses to have sex with the husband, and burns food. This is reflected in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

2.3 Gender-based violence situation in Namibia

Namibia has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the entire Southern African Development Community Region (SADCR) (Tjitemisa, 2014). Over the years, this problem has received daily media coverage and has been the focus of Government programmes. Oliver states, "Since December 2018, the unit recorded an average of 200 cases per month, and that most of the victims of GBV are women and the youth" (NAMPA, 2019). Oliver further argues that the unit handled cases such as rape, assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm (GBH), assault by threatening, common assault, sexual harassment, crime injuria and defamation of character and other cases under the Domestic Violence Act (NAMPA, 2019).

A World Health Organisation (WHO) (2005) study indicates that from 2005 nearly one-third (31%) of Namibian women who have ever had an intimate partner experienced physical violence caused by men and 17% experienced sexual violence (pp. 243-245). If these figures are amalgamated, 38%, over one out of three women have suffered from one or each of those

kinds of violence in Namibia as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Gender Based Violence has reached its highest peak in Namibia leaving families and communities more vulnerable to poverty, more so women. Poudel (2011) indicates that women in Namibia do not have an autonomous identity; men inherit and control most property with the concomitant responsibility to support parents, wives, and children.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and Social Services in its Namibia Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) (2013) indicates that 33 per cent of Namibian married women aged 15-49 years have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence from their partner. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) (2016) notes that the Namibian Police identified five (5) top GBV forms reported in the country as assault with intention to cause grievous bodily harm (22,174 reported cases); common assault (18,054); rape (2,839); attempted murder (1,138) and murder (734). For these reasons, GBV is evidently a widespread problem for the Namibian nation. Women in Namibia are exposed to a variety of forms of violence as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

This study focuses on "when men beat women" as a form of (GBV) in Namibia, therefore it is imperative to understand how GBV has been researched in past studies in Namibia. A reflection on existing scholarship on GBV is foundational in building the discussion for this study. This is supported by Creswell (2012) who argues that a literature review helps a scholar determine whether research is worth carrying out or not, through interrogating existing literature. The Legal Assistance Centre (2012, p.157) registered that "the drawback of violence against women in modern Namibian society is influenced by the historical imbalance of power between men and women". Factors such as culture and poverty also motivate GBV. For instance, in some Namibian tradition, a woman is expected to respect the husband as the head of the household

and to be very submissive (Women's Action for Development, n.d.); this is fertile ground for GBV.

Moreover, a study conducted on vulnerabilities contributing to gender-based violence in the Khomas region found that women with disabilities are overwhelmingly abused (Matsi, 2018). Another study exploring male and female voices in the reporting of GBV in Namibia found out that ten types of GBV were reported (Kamaya, 2018). Gender-based violence remains a deadly social ill plaguing the Namibian society especially women as shall be explored in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

The Namibian government has committed to dealing with the problem of GBV and officially accepted different international and regional mechanisms associated with women's rights. The Namibia government has drawn up legal instruments to reduce women's abuses and create awareness on GBV. For example, NAMPOL established the Gender-Based Violence Investigation Unit (GBVIU) to offer better support to survivors of gender-based violence (Legal Assistance Centre, (2012, p.49). Also, the capacities of the GBVIUs were strengthened in the current National Development Plan (NDP) (Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2012).

These initiatives are attainable through a progressively receptive political surrounding that, in theory, protects and promotes gender equality. To tackle these and to decrease GBV rates, the government of the Republic of Namibia has consistently supported the institution and the strengthening of many establishments and service providers to eradicate intimate partner violence (World Health Organisation, 2005, p. 243- 245). One may submit that the Namibian government, to a large extent, has done enough to curb GBV in society.

Even though Namibia has the majority of international gender equality and women's rights instruments, it remains as one of the countries with a high rate of violence against women (Amon, 2008). For instance, Thobella Loretta was raped and murdered in 2014 in the town of Rosh Pinah in the IIKaras region (Haufiku, 2014). Justine Amweelo, a student from the International University of Management (IUM), was stabbed to death in the Khomas region by her former boyfriend (Ikela, 2019). Moreover, a female teacher was strangled to death and buried by her boyfriend in Rundu, Kavango-East region (NAMPA, 2018) while Naimi Ngambo Kalenga, 23, became the latest reported victim of gender-based violence (GBV) in Kavango-East region after she was hacked to death at Sikali village (Muyamba, 2019). It seems that all these cases of GBV are similar to the ones presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

2.4 Forms of gender-based violence in Namibia

The following section identifies, defines and discusses various forms of gender violence. This discussion is important for the ultimate understanding of the context of the current study.

2.4.1 Domestic violence

In Namibia, mostly children and women are the victims of domestic violence and are often at great risk in an environment where they should be safe. Domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions, which has far-reaching consequences for the victims in the communities. Birthistle (2000) contends that domestic violence is direct violence that represents the tip of an iceberg, with the massive underwater structural violence hidden below the water's surface. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2000) asserts that domestic violence has many names, for example, women battery, partner abuse, wife abuse, marital assault, wife-beating, conjugal violence and intimate violence. In most cases, these terms directly reflect on the problem that occasions the domestic violence. There is

disagreement about the correct definition of domestic violence internationally since the definition differs between countries, ranging from thin definitions that only include physical and sexual violence to all aspects of definitions that consider emotional and economic violence (Mashiri & Mawire, 2013, p. 97). Individual understanding of domestic violence also varies greatly as there might be different factors that influence a person to have a better understanding of domestic violence, such as traditional background, the level of education and ethnicity.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2000) posits that domestic violence includes any violence by an intimate partner and family members, regardless of how this violence may take place and in whatever form. Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) (2012) defines domestic violence as "a form of gender-based violence which arises from the unequal power relations between women and men" (p. 3). It has been observed that the majority of abusers in Namibia are men and the majority of victims are women (LAC, 2012).

Some definitions centre on the behaviours or actions of adults whereas others take into account how the abuse takes place. Domestic violence in Namibia is one of the human rights violations, denying women equality, security, dignity and self-worth as shall be discussed in the analysis in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Domestic violence might happen in a relationship where the perpetrator and victim are known to each other. It happens in adult and adolescent intimate relationships, for example where the victim and culprit may be dating, cohabiting, married or divorced. The UNICEF (2000) asserts that "No society can claim to be free of such violence, the only variation is in the patterns and trends that exist in countries and regions" (p, 2).

In Namibia for example, there are certain groups of women who are more vulnerable to domestic violence than others, these groups include minority groups, indigenous and migrant women, refugee women and women in institutions of detention (UNICEF, 2000). In analysing

the anthology, *We Must Choose Life* (2008), "domestic violence" refers to the types of violence that revolve around relationships between partners or family members rather than the place where the violence occurs (IKhaxas, 2008; UNICEF, 2000).

However, Wilding (2014) provides an analysis of the relationship between gender and violence. Within the Namibian context, for example, Wilding (2014) submits that to examine violence without considering gender is to ignore the power connection within the operation of violence, hence violence is inseparable from the social context in which it takes place and it is shaped by gendered social contexts. As Wilding (2012, p. 1) further elaborates, "Since most violence is embedded in social relations of power, and is not truly arbitrary, most violence is gendered in some way". It is therefore useful to connect the above definition with the writings of the Namibian women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Furthermore, in Namibia for example, some men do not acknowledge that there is something called "domestic violence", thus most men consider wife beating as an entitlement, whereas, women who experience domestic violence also believe that it is less of a crime worth reporting to the police (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001). As a result, it might be the case that Namibian men take advantage of women in domestic violence issues as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Walker (2011) as well as Francis, Loxton, and James (2017) assert that women who had experienced intimate-partner violence usually suffer from trauma and thus, cannot overcome the domestic abuse or take action against the culprit since there is a belief that action cannot bring about a positive result. Consequently, Singh (2009) argues that most women tolerate and stay in abusive relationships for many different reasons such as belief and high hope that the situation would change for the better; fear of losing social respect; protection; and the love towards the children.

2.4.2 Sexual abuse and rape in intimate relationships

Sexual abuse and rape by an intimate partner may not be considered as a crime in some countries, and many women in various societies do not consider forced sex to be rape regardless of the marriage status (UNICEF, 2000). The UNICEF further notes that there is an assumption by most men that once a woman enters into a contract of marriage, the husband has the right to unlimited sexual access with the wife. This seems to be a prejudicial assumption from the men. Thus, through literary works on ecocriticism according to Gray (2004) states that nature and women suffer from the prevailing forces of a male-oriented culture, and either fictionally or non-fictionally. In addition, Legal Assistance Centre (2012) indicates that Namibia is one of the countries that began to legislate against marital rape, and these include Australia, South Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

There are different forms of rape, which are significantly likely to go unreported in Namibia. For example; matrimonial rape, child rape known as "tournaments" (sex acts with one girl and many boys which may sometimes involve coercion), the sex workers' rape, the rape of marginalised groups such as the San and the Himba in Namibia, the rape of people with disabilities and the rape of prisoners (LAC, 2006, p. 4).

Campbell, Lucea, Stockmana, and Draughon (2013) assert that forced sexual contact usually takes place at homes at any time in a woman's life when men apply pressure that compels women to engage in sex against their will. In keeping with these responsibilities, therefore ecofeminism asserts the suffering of women from the dominant influence of a male-oriented society. LAC (2012) contends that sexual abuse exposes the complainant to sexual material that humiliates, degrades or violates the complainant's sexual integrity and as a result the victims are shy to expose the culprit. In light of this, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's remarks to the Commission on the Status of Women are instructive: At least one out of every

three women are likely beaten, coerced [to have] sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. No country, no culture, no woman young or old is immune to this scourge (LAC, 2012, p. 13).

The above arguments resonate with the happenings in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Muwanigwa (2017) believes that sexual abuse lies in the power of abusive men in social situations and this constitutes the abuse of power. However, sexual abuse among women can still be prevalent as both men and women normally accept the circumstances where violence is tolerable and is justified (Morna & Chingamuka, 2013). There is a perception that most men consider women/ girls to blame for their sexual abuse/rape; for instance, if a woman walks around wearing revealing clothes in the home or in public, this display is said to invite men to commit such crime (Bhattacharyya, 2013). Human Rights Bulletin (2011); Dartnall and Jewkes (2013) assert that sexual acts constitute violence perpetrated against an individual in different forms such as rape in marriage, verbal abuse of a sexual nature/gendered language (Sabao, 2013) and virginity testing in some cultures.

Mashiri and Mawire (2013) contend that sexual violence is coerced sex, forcing a partner to do sexual acts, preventing a partner to use birth control or refusing to use a condom during sex. Globally, data reveal that pervasiveness of sexual abuse is inadequate and various studies suggest that a significant number of women have been the subject to sexual violence, forced sex and sexual coercion (UNAIDS, 2011). According to IKhaxas (2008), marriage has become a death trap for many Namibian women as husbands are often unfaithful, and many women are powerless to negotiate safer sex practices. Such complications as a result of man's negligence and ignorance are reflected and highlighted in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Gender based violence becomes more pronounced in conflict situations that make women and children vulnerable. The United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (NIASC) (2005, p. iii) states that sexual violence in armed conflict is a criminal offence against humanity and it

has been used as a method of war to brutalise and instil fear within the civilian population, especially women and girls. Bhuvanendra and Holmes (2014) report that in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo up to 40% of women have experienced sexual violence in the hands of the armed forces, including national as well as neighbouring government forces who have committed acts of rape and sexual violence. Rapes are often extremely brutal and the victims might be gang-raped, tortured and mutilated. Understanding contexts in which GBV occurs is useful in analysing the depiction of violence against women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Up to 75% of the overall world population of women are sexually profaned or raped, and large numbers of women were kidnapped into sex slavery by members of armed groups; as a result, many women are raped more than once, at different times and by different men (Bhuvanendra & Holmes, 2014). Sexual abuse of women persists in Namibia although there is a strong uproar from individuals and different organizations against this type of violence. For example, a Namibian Police report shows that a total of 122 cases of rape were recorded in the country from January to April 15, 2013; this is in less than four months (NAMPA, 2013). Furthermore, research has shown that sexual abuse or rape happens mostly in schools where male students and teachers are involved in sexual violence in combined schools (Chikwiri & Lemmer 2014; Abrahams, Denvries, Watts, Pallito, Petzold, Shamu, & Garcia-Moreno, 2015; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

Moreover, rape myths tend to be widespread in places that manifest rape culture. Suarez and Gadalla (2010) assert that rape myths are wrong beliefs used by men in most countries to shift the blame of rape from perpetrators to the victim. Rape myths strengthen the argument by perpetrators that men cannot control the strong sexual urges towards women, women who wear short skirts or shorts and drink too much invite rape and that therapists are mentally ill

(Baugher, Elhai, Monroe, & Gray, 2010; Gqola, 2015). However, the Sonke Gender Justice Network (2008) argues that this is a purely defensive mechanism from the rapist to protect the evil act. Ikhaxas (2008) notes that most of the Namibian men believe that women are only seen but not heard in the society and that the women's place is in the hierarchy at the bottom to serve the sexual needs of men. Therefore, Ecofeminism in African literature calls for potent potencies maybe driven both internal or external complexities that are harmful to both the environment and women as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

2.4.3 Psychological and Emotional abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse is a type of violence generally not taken seriously by most people (Morna, Dube, & Makamure, 2015). Emotional and psychological violence as defined by the Human Rights Bulletin (HRB) (2011) is behaviour impacting the emotions and self-confidence of the victim, thus deliberately impairing the psychological dignity of the victim; such acts include insults, stalking, intimidation and denial of access to needs. Morna and Chingamuka (2013) also define emotional abuse as a form of interpersonal violence involving all type of non-physical violence and distress caused through non-verbal and verbal acts and this abuse is both intentional and manipulative. The emotional abuse may occur in conjunction with other types of abuse, although it may also occur in isolation as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Like other forms of GBV, emotional abuse most often affects those with the least power and resources such as women and girls (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Suarez and Gadalla (2010) further elaborate that perpetrators of emotional violence may control the victims and feel in charge of the victims' lives. In Namibia for example, women are threatened, mostly by spouses, with intimidation, humiliated, harassed, verbally assaulted, insulted, financially controlled and to some extent suffer work restrictions (Ikhaxas, 2008). Some Namibian women may find it

difficult to define emotional abuse and therefore, the only way to define it is through telling experiences (Ikhaxas, 2008). Although the experience may be abstract, the ability of literature to capture qualitative attributes was crucial in bringing these experiences to light through the critical analysis of the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) of this study.

Results from a 209 baseline survey of Violence against women (VAW) in Namibia, reveal that emotional violence was the most recorded form of violence in the "RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women" study, with 70 per cent of women experiencing it. The study goes on to show that at a given time, women may experience more than one type of violence (Morna & Chingamuka 2013). In another study by Damba, Lunga, and Musarurwa (2013), male respondents regarded GBV as sexual assault (rape) by a stranger, whereas female respondents usually perceived it as such. This type of violence, however, is difficult to detect and prove as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Casique-Casique and Furegato (2006) contend that a study conducted in Chile examined different manifestations of emotional violence, such as verbal abuse, use of mental games to confuse, intimidation (throwing objects, screams and scaring face), threats to kill victims or threat to commit suicide as well as economic abuse (abusive financial control). It is imperative to note that victims of emotional violence do not often take this violence seriously hence, there is no urgency to respond to this type of GBV (Casique-Casique, & Furegato, 2006, p. 953)

2.4.4 Socio-Economic violence

In most cases, women around the globe frequently suffer on the economic front and related issues and these include the failure of men to provide the family with the necessities of life, such as soap, salt, food, shelter, clothes and education (Francis et al., 2017). IKhaxas (2008) argues that most of the Namibian women have asserted that property and assets are in the hands of their spouses since this is linked to the cultural tradition of property ownership being the

husband's prerogative. It can therefore be argued from this perspective that the interests of men are thus exposed, those of extracting interest from women, but not taking into account the environmental impact as well as the status and welfare of women. Thus, this type of economic violence exposes women to battery when they demand for equal rights and therefore limits women from socio-economic access to opportunities and resources (Puri, 2010).

Boswell, Boudreau and Tichy (2005) define socio-economic violence as any denial of women access to resources and property by family members and the community, access to health care and participation in government or any organisation's projects, which are all tantamount to violence. Machisa and Chingamuka (2013) pointed out that a lack of economic opportunities in various organisations promotes the vulnerability of women and self-extrication lead to abuse by men. Furthermore, Chang and Romeo (2008) postulate that there is a circular link between abuse and lack of economic opportunities and dependency in women, hence the danger and fear prohibit some women from seeking jobs. As a result, women remain locked in domestic exploitative labour. It appears that many women find it imprudent to leave violent relationships due to lack of economic independence. Wingood and DiClemente (2010) posit that another explanation is growing women's reliance on economics and other matters dependent on the abusive man. This dependence can be emotional or financial and the idea of leaving the relationship creates feelings of depression and anxiety. This creates men's unfair advantage over women, which men consider basis to beat women.

2.4.5 Traditional and Cultural practices affecting the Health and lives of women

Traditional cultural practices represent values and beliefs retained by members of the community over a period, often a bridge of generations. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2015) indicates that each social class in the world has unique

traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which favour all members, while at the same time a particular group harms women.

There are several reasons for the continuation of traditional practices in women's health and status; some of these are that governments were not involved and the international community did not question the sinister consequences of those practices that violate the rights to health, and personal integrity of women (OHCHR, 2015). In anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), such traits are prevalent where men have an impact on women through excessive of traditional malpractice, thus merging the perspectives of Ecofeminism, Trauma and Resilience into the framework of this study. The traditional practices include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); early marriage; practices that prevent women from regulating their fertility; traditional birth practices; dowry or lobola payment (WHO, 2013).

All violations of the rights of women have been defined as harmful practices; however, there are unique types of violence against women, which have been protected by some community members based on tradition, history, religion or superstition (OHCHR, 2015). These forms of GBV are referred to as 'harmful traditional practices' since these crimes are committed in the name of honour, dowry-related violence, and son or daughter preference. Moreover, in Namibia for instance, Men believe that *lobola* is a cultural practice that ancestors have passed down from generation to generation as a symbol or token of gratitude to the parents or guardians of the woman who is to become one's wife (Haufiku, 2016). However, Tjombe argues that *lobola* is demeaning to women since it gives the impression that the woman now belongs to the men because the men would have given the family of the wife cattle. Thus, women would find it difficult to terminate violent marriages (Haufiku, 2016). It appears that many of the problems of women in Namibia [even to this day] permeate from traditional practices as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Although culture benefits its members, some cultural practices are harmful and affect women directly when these are measured against modern reasonable standards of behaviour and civility as expressed in international standards (Hanzi, 2006). These standards and principles are formulated in national constitutions and international conventions. Several cultural practices are harmful to the individual's physical integrity, especially to women since some may cause horrendous physical pain while others may humiliate and degrade women (Hanzi 2006; Iyanuolu, 2008). The harmful traditional practices might have originated from views and beliefs about women's role and position in society that are strongly rooted in patriarchy.

Traditional and cultural practices subordinate women, legitimise and perpetuate GBV. For example, there is a growing idea in South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho and even Namibia that indulging in sexual intercourse with a young virgin girl will cure HIV and AIDS and this has resulted in increased sexual violence that leads to tremendous psychological scars for the victims (UNICEF, 2003). Traditional practices such as polygamy, bride price payments (*lobola*) and child marriages are all associated with GBV since these practices reduce women to be men's subhuman assets (UNICEF,2003).

Sawadogo (2003) asserts that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is one of the harmful traditional practices involving surgical procedures, partial or total removal, for cultural reasons, of the external characteristics of the female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organ. It seems that these practices have immediate and long-term health consequences. The complications include severe pain, shock, and haemorrhages; therefore, sometimes the procedure might cause vaginal tearing and lesions, which requires blood transfusion and results in rising rates of female HIV transmission (Keown 2007). The conditions under which these procedures take place are often unhygienic; blunt and unsterilized instruments such as a kitchen

knife, a razor-blade or a piece of glass are (OHCHR, 2015). Such techniques might be regularly used on many girls and thus increase the risk of blood-borne diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

Sawadogo (2003), further states that during the FGM procedure, three or four women hold the child down to apply mixtures of local herbs, dirt, cow-dung, ash or butter in order to cure the wound. Le Roux (2006) explains that complications resulting from deep cuts and infected instruments might cause the girl's death in rural areas where untrained, traditional birth attendants perform the operations. For example, if the child dies from complications, the excisor is not liable for the death; however, the death is attributed to evil spirits or destiny (Keown, 2007). These type of treatment may result in trauma for the victims. Traditional medicine may also cause infection, leading to tetanus and general septicaemia, thus chronic infection might cause anaemia and infertility (Le Roux, 2006).

Efua (1994) posits that where FGM is practised, teenagers have to adapt in two different cultures where different values prevail; for instance, girls find themselves in a setting of the Western culture at school and at the same time have to traditional conform to values held by the parents.

2.5 The possible root causes and contributing factors to gender-based violence in Namibia

Incidents of GBV seem to be more prevalent in some Namibian communities and amongst certain groups than others despite international conventions and local legislation enacted to prevent it (WHO, 2013). Studies conducted by Asaira, (2013); Kamaya, (2018); Matsi, (2018) and Shigwedha, (2018) revealed that power imbalances in gender inequality and patriarchal practices biased against women seem to be the main root causes of GBV. Furthermore, literature shows that GBV is triggered by an interplay of human, societal, economic, cultural, and religious factors that interact at different levels of society (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2015).

It seems that those patriarchal attitudes favour men over women. When GBV is analysed in the context of Ecofeminism, it implies the representation of particular male behaviour in a manner that leads to violence against women in society and nature.

Heise (2011) states that some of the factors influencing GBV at individual level include growing up in a family that is prone to violence, which becomes commonplace as a means of communication later in life. Factors at the community level include a culture where violence against women is seen as a cultural and religious norm, drug use and gun ownership, all of which are celebrated as symbols of hegemonic masculinity (Peralta, Tuttle & Steele, 2010).

Flood (2007) asserts that gender roles and relationships often influence the intimate relationship and family-level partner violence. Thus, the key factor here is the power relations between partners. The point above sounds logical since another aspect could be a marital dispute, which interacts with the partnership or family power relations resulting in men beating women as a form of GBV. If a conflict occurs within a lopsided power structure, the risk of violence is much higher particularly to women due to the power structures since men wield power over women in the society (Flood, 2007 & Jewkes, 2002).

The study also plans to assess how male alcohol abuse leads to physical violence against women. Jewkes (2002) suggests that when intoxicated, men are more likely to act violently since some men feel unaccountable for intrinsic actions. Moreover, some men describe using alcohol as an intentional habit in some settings that emboldens them to beat women. Lombard (2015) points out that perception of domestic violence and social norms during childhood teach children that in certain environments, violence is natural. Men thus learn to use aggression and women learn to tolerate this type of aggressive behaviour.

Most cases of GBV happen in a family set up and someone closely related to a woman is more likely killed, hurt or physically attacked than in any other social context (Gass, Stein, Williams & Seedat, 2010; Gupta, Reed, Kelly, Stein & Williams, 2010). Gass et al. (2010) and Gupta et al. (2010) concedes that men are unlikely to be victims of strangers outside the homes, however, women are assaulted, beaten, raped and killed by own family members or housemates.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) (2010) states that GBV's causes include customs, traditions and beliefs, alphabetic and restricted education, unequal power relationships and women's low status. Rape and domestic violence are the two most common forms of GBV in Namibia; this affects most of the Namibian women and perpetrators are Namibian men (MGECW, 2010). Culturally, men usually have a powerful position in relation to women because of traditions such as lobola and sharia law in which women traditionally hold low-rank roles in the society (Ansell 2001; MGECW, 2010). The issue of GBV is normalised by socialising both men and women to conform to these cultural and religious practices, thus some of those practices are condoned and tolerated even though they are forms of GBV.

Fletcher (2010) admits that in many African settings, women are highly vulnerable to GBV because of the culture of subservience and reliance mostly on men. The unequal distribution of resources and power between men and women is one of the most influential determinants of gender-based violence against women in most societies (World Health Organisation, 2010). This can be seen as represented by women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Furthermore, this might be the result of conventional and rigid attitudes towards men's and women's positions in society. Some individuals and communities that hold these attitudes tend to regard men as superior to women, and that men's role in the family and the community is to have the power to make decisions without consulting women.

At the broadest level, societies and the broader society have features that have a greater influence on the actions of some men with regards to GBV. Community and social factors are identified as the main attributes for the increasing cases of GBV, even though it is important to acknowledge multiple populations within the same country or community that pose matchless combinations of risk factors (Wilson, 2008, P. 3). Risk factors related to both intimate partner and violence against women include low levels of education, child mistreatment, experiencing parental aggression, paranoid schizophrenia, substance abuse, infidelity, and violence-acceptance attitudes (World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, 2015). Thus, all these social factors contribute to GBV in Namibia.

2.6 Implications of gender-based violence on the Namibian women

The following section discusses the implications of gender based violence on various facets of human existence, particularly in the Namibian society.

2.6.1 Implications of gender-based violence on Health

Exposure to gender-based violence has a broad range of effects on women. Gender-based violence is a global health and fundamental rights problem with serious implications not only for the health of women, but for children and young people experiencing GBV in the society (WHO, 2010, p. 21). Illangasekare, Burke, Chander, and Gielen (2013) indicate that GBV has many negative effects on women and these may include: In the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, low birth weight, prematurity, unintended pregnancy and alcohol abuse were amongst GBV on health. Moreover, GBV has fundamental negative effects on women's physical and emotional health such as emotional distress, physical injury and chronic pain, which may result in suicide and homicide (Illangasekare et al., 2013).

Abuse of alcohol is linked to an increased risk of all types of interpersonal violence and has been connected to GBV in various studies (Abrahams et al. 2009; Asasira, 2013; Kamaya, 2018; Matsi, 2018; Shigwedha, 2018). For example, scholars such as Abrahams et al., (2009); Asaira, (2013); Shigwedha, (2018) found out that most men had consumed alcohol before indulging in GBV by beating wives or inmates. Some men usually tie alcohol to the excuses for committing violence against women, thus such men cannot be accountable for the abusive behaviour (Peralta et al. 2010). Therefore, some women are caught in the cycle of violence and even justify the violent behaviours of their husbands - 'he was intoxicated but is normally nice when not drunk' (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005).

Gender- Based Violence is a serious health problem for women between the ages of 15 and 49, making them vulnerable to the risk of HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis during childbirth, cancer and cardiac disease (WHO, 2013). Through abusive relationships, it seems there is a presence of fear and control from partner's actions thus, some women experience reproductive health challenges in such relationships. These negative repercussions on reproductive health include male partners preventing intimate partners from birth control usage. For example, women have more unplanned pregnancies in such relationships all the time than in others, and almost half of these pregnancies are terminated by induced abortions in unhealthy and dangerous circumstances (Miller, Jordan, Levenson, & Silverman, 2010; Pallitto et al. 2013; WHO, 2013). Gender- Based Violence weakens the ability of women to negotiate safer sex and increases the risk of forced and unsafe sex (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008).

Serran and Firestone (2004) contend that some of the women killed by men have reported GBV history and that the perpetrators have a history of violence or killing. The WHO (2013) indicates that non-fatal injuries normally appear on the face, arm, and back of the victim and this might be accompanied by neuromuscular and genital injuries. The severe consequences of

physical health involve serious damage to reproductive organs, fertility problems and even injury-related mortality (Cornelius, 2013, p. 176; Jewkes, 2002, p. 253).

2.6.2 Implications on Development

Sen (1999) defines development as a process of improving the privileges available to people; however, GBV is a major obstacle to this development. Gender Based Violence prevents women from contributing completely to the social, cultural, and political development of their communities (Jewkes, 2002). In Namibia, for instance, most women are frightened by these threats of violence and this ultimately affects women's lives in such a way that they are discouraged from exercising the human rights to participate in any development (WHO, 2013). In the context of Ecofeminism, women's effectiveness in productivity, innovation and creativity in the society is hampered by GBV as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

To a great extent GBV is a restricting barrier to human development since it impedes full recognition of their full potential; for instance, human development values include wellness, information/education, and resource access (Mwije, 2014). All these elements are minimal for women who are experiencing GBV. Mwije (2014) contends that most governments recognise that women contribute to household, community and National-level growth; however, GBV affects most the wellbeing of households.

In Namibia, it appears that women are productive family members in society through performing household duties as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Domestic roles may be described as responsibilities performed at the household level to ensure that the members' basic needs are met (WHO, 2013). GBV negatively affects agriculture, earnings, education and healthcare, all which affect the household well-being of women in the society. For example, women who have suffered from GBV in the public realm get less

influential, leading to low production and shortfalls in national production (Mwije, 2014). Also, most women who are affected by GBV are involved in limited production and receive less, which in turn, influences consumption and expenditure, leading to limited supply at the National level (Morrison, Buvinic & Shifter, 2003, p.107).

In addition, GBV also affects children's performance in schools; as a result, it impacts the society's future productivity, ability and income and government school expenditure. At community-level, GBV reported incidents to include child abuse, social control, abandonment, displacement, dishonour, and stigma (UNFPA, 2011). All of these have a serious impact on the victim as well as on the perpetrator, community, economic and political development. Women are the recipients of Trauma in this study as the focus is on how women are being oppressed by men in Namibian society as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

2.7 Prevalence of gender-based violence in Namibia

The incidence of violence against women is alarming, despite efforts by numerous private and government shareholders in Namibia to curb GBV. Despite recent improvements in the legislation and political campaigns to tackle women's problems, women in Namibia continue to face social violence and discrimination as the subservient position within the family (UNICEF, 2011). The collected data regarding GBV is segmented and is mainly unmatched, although some results might be resemblances since there are diverse ways in which each country visualises GBV (UNAIDS, 2013).

The gender-power dynamics in a relationship seem to directly lead to the subservience of women. Masenya and Mokoele (2015) acknowledge that gender discrimination is amongst the worst forms of stigmatisation that communities are yet to surmount. Far too often, women and children are among the most disempowered in most societies and face difficulties in enjoying human rights, religion and culture due to GBV (Tamale, 2014). This study explores the three

most prevalent forms of GBV in Namibia; domestic violence, inheritance and property grabbing as well as rape.

Domestic violence is classified as marital or intimate violence and aggression from other members of the family or unknown persons (WHO, 2010). Rodgers (2016) defines intimate partner violence as physical aggression, sexual assault, psychological torture and controlling behaviour within a relationship that causes serious harm to women or children. In addition, Fidan and Bui (2016) claim that Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is the most common form of violence against women in the world and usually occurs within families since there is a central connection between IPV and domestic violence. Ecofeminism therefore, seeks to balance the inequality of power within the society as women are perceived as homemakers and considered mothers by nature but not seen as important people in society.

Moreover, Cannon, Lauve-Moon and Buttell (2015) define the paradigm of gender as an expansion of masculinity in GBV and that men are perpetrators while women are victims. The paradigm of gender undermines the fact that some men are subjected to some forms of GBV yet this is not taken seriously when reported. Men suffering GBV therefore, have limited choices on what to do or where to go as programs are tailored for women victims (Dutton & White 2013). The gender paradigm argues that violence against women is not extreme, and is typically a reaction towards abuse of men (Cannon et al., 2015).

Dutton and White (2013) further explain that the GBV that some women commit against men within the community seems to be less criminal and does not affect men. Furthermore, the adherence to the leading model of gender supports differences in academic research, for instance, in Africa, men get less attention in research than women as victims of GBV (Saffitz, (2010). Statistics from 2017 indicate that 45 per cent of married women in Namibia experienced domestic violence in the form of beating by the intimate partner (UNAIDS, 2018).

Namibian women are exposed to gender based violence by being denied inheritance and property rights. Violation of women's rights is particularly prevalent in remote rural areas where the GBV is perpetrated against women in geographically isolated traditional societies (Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW), 2010). Thomas (2008) contends that property grabbing as result of GBV has been disputed by those who argue that GBV is not an inheritance problem, but merely an act of violence perpetrated on survivors on the basis of their gender. Inheritance grabbing takes place in many different ways that affect women overwhelmingly (MGECW, 2010). This represents a type of GBV, which not only causes economic and social-cultural hardship, but also damages the self-esteem of the victims (Izumi, 2007). Gender based violence related to inheritance conflicts is often linked with the HIV / AIDS epidemic, hence when the death rates increase, it also leads to family disputes and property grabbing increases too (LAC, 2012).

In some African countries, for example in Namibia, traditional practices that inform property grabbing have been responsible for the suffering of many widows. Highlighting on Ecofeminism, aspects of environmental degradation, including women, are prevalent in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) which is of particular concern to this study. LeBeau *et al.*, (2004) note that in Namibia there is an increasing trend wherein extended family members of the deceased divide all the property of the deceased amongst themselves, leaving the children under the care of relatives. With the implementation of the 2002 Communal Land Reform Act, women were granted equal rights of access to the land just as men who had the rights before this Act was passed (Likuwa, 2013).

In addition to property and inheritance grabbing as a prevalent form of GBV suffered by women in Namibia, rape is one of the common forms of violence also experienced in the country. According to Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (2013) and the Centre for Justice and

Crime Prevention (2011) 33% of women between 15 and 49 years of age have experienced sexual abuse by their partners, whilst 50% of the perpetrators of violence against women are most typically the current husband. Namibia is one of the countries dealing with extreme levels of violence against women beaten or abused by closely related people (UNICEF, 2013). Mashiri and Mawire (2013) assert that sexual violence include coerced sex, a partner being compelled to do certain sexual acts, and partner prohibition from using birth control or denial of condom use, which is considered as rape. Dartnall and Jewkes (2013) and Tenkorang and Owasu (2013) suggest that for young girls and women the first sexual encounter is typically out of manipulation by men or intimidation in most cases.

2.8 Coping strategies of abused Namibian women

Women react to the complexities of life, especially GBV, in many different ways. Some might erupt emotionally; others could get irritated, others may get physically aggressive, other women might crumble, become numb, feel powerless and frustrated by what happened (Cloete & Mlambo, 2014, p. 94). Gender based violence offends women and they may blame others for what happened and sometimes sink downward and harbour a sense of unhappiness; however, some women bounce back and come out stronger and better than before (Cloete & Mlambo, 2014). Resilience in this study has been the focus on the coping strategies that women in Namibia develop despite experiencing or witnessing GBV in homes, families or society.

Overlien and Hyden (2009) define coping strategies as the interpretation of conduct that results in a positive result; thus, in this context, it refers to learning how to deal with this condition to try to change the level of stress felt by women who are victims of GBV. Experiencing GBV is a life-stressing event. However, by developing coping strategies; most abused women try to mitigate the pain and misery. Focusing on coping mechanisms means to examine how women survivors are dealing with GBV, especially physical violence. Resilience has been used in the

analysis of traumatic experiences encountered by Namibian women in the context of GBV as shown in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008)

A study by Deuba, Mainali, Alvesson, and Karki (2016, p. 11) revealed that "women's coping mechanisms were limited when faced with abuse hence, most women explained how they have been screaming and crying, and trying to leave the house to be outside". Moreover, from a legal perspective, some plaintiff women used a protection order when encountered with any type of GBV (Hubbard & Rimmer, 2007). Hubbard and Rimmer (2007) further explain that a protection order is a court order compelling the complainant or the offenders to stop executing GBV.

The protection order might include protection of victims from certain individuals as a result of GBV. For example, the perpetrators might be prohibited to go near the claimant thus, the perpetrator might be forced to make maintenance payments for the GBV committed (LAC, 2012). The Combating Domestic Violence Act, 2003, regulates protection orders issued in Namibia and any person may apply for a protection order if such a person is in an abusive relationship (NPA, 2012; LAC, 2007, p.17). The law made provision that it is an offence to defy a protection order. Police are empowered to apprehend anyone who has breached a protection order without a warrant (LAC, 2007, p. 31). Furthermore, a person who breaches a protection order is fined up to 8,000 Namibian dollars or sentenced to two years' imprisonment or both.

Waldrop and Resick (2004) contend that one of the coping strategies for women who have experienced physical violence by a spouse or dating partner is quitting a relationship or going away for a while. Furthermore, the successful approaches include fleeing from the abuser, seeking refuge in designated safe shelters in the case of women victims, filing charges against offenders for litigation whilst in the relationship, calling the police to rescue the situation and

speaking to a relative (Hubbard & Rimmer, 2007). Waldrop and Resick (2004) acknowledged that in some situations it was counterproductive to ask for help, as it is not always successful. In Namibia for instance, family members and friends might decline to assist the victim in a violent situation (LAC, 2012). Family refusal to assist the victim are common trend in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

The trend of GBV experienced by women in matrimonial relationships is a very serious problem that has become progressively public and disturbing. Therefore, it has encouraged professional efforts to provide coping strategies for the victims. (Menéndez, Lorence, & Pérez, 2013). Since the advent of certain media-reported cases in recent years, gender-based violence has become a 'public' issue. It has prompted the authorities in Namibia to take action in the context of legislation, since marital rape was outlawed in 2000, for example, to prevent abuse and protect the victims (LAC, 2000).

Moreover, it seems that there is evidence of current efforts to increase awareness of intervention amongst the community and empower the survivors with social tools. There seems to be some harmony in place despite that most women who experience GBV from their abusive partners can terminate the matrimonial relationship (Menéndez et al., 2013). Jingchu et al., (2017) assert that women are resilient enough to resolve traumatic events by accessing internal and external assets that enable women to be free from the violence. The most common truth is that, from the first episodes of violence, women do not respond in a revolutionary and comprehensive way, thus they continue to bear the violent circumstance for a while until the situation becomes tense (WHO, 2013).

In comparison, women who avoid coping strategies hinder problem-solving, resulting in ineffective approaches, which might cause damage to the victim's life. Jingchu et al., (2017), Roco, Baldi, and Álvarez (2014) suggest that some women accept the abusive situation to

continue and expect that the issue will resolve itself positively as time goes on, but this type of attitude causes significant challenges in eradicating the cycle of GBV (p. 42).

2.9 Mapping the measures to curb gender-based violence

One could argue that GBV is a security concern and presents the highest security threat to Namibian women. "leadership and politicians have a role to play in rendering violence against women and prosecuting criminals, thus most nations already have effective legislation in place but are not fully enforced" (Tjombe & Harmse, 2004). Namibia interestingly has strong and far-reaching legislation and policy structures to improve women's security; however, women face challenges to get the necessary protection (Tjombe & Harmse, 2004). The present study sought to explore GBV in relation to men against women abuse, as presented in the Anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), and in literary criticism, relevant issues pertaining to Ecofeminism, Trauma and Resilience call for careful reconsideration.

Chireshe (2015) also claims that, given all the legislative and policy mechanisms, these implementations are underexploited and GBV continues to soar. This may be due to a large number of reported cases which are never escalated to the courts since sometimes the police officers withdraw cases at the request of the complainant. Medie (2013) asserts that these actions or situations weaken GBV legislation's intent and pose serious questions about the transformation of structured policies into substantial changes in women's lives (p. 378). Namibia has committed itself to eliminating all types of GBV since it is a signatory to multiple international and regional legal frameworks. These legal frameworks include; The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (UNAIDS, 2013). The National

Gender Policy of Namibia (2010-2020), identifies GBV as a major obstacle to tackling equality between men and women, thus GBV is one of the policy's major objectives (UNAIDS, 2013).

Furthermore, The National Plan of Action on Gender-based Violence (2012–2016) was established to guarantee direct implementation of these policy goals. Two key objectives of the Action Plan are to reduce GBV occurrence and to enhance GBV responses in Namibia (UNAIDS, 2013). OHCHR (2004) emphasises on the progress made by the government on the domestic front with respect to the implementation of two crucial pieces of legislation that state that GBV is an offence; these are the Combating of Rape Act No. 8 of 2000 and the Combating of Domestic Violence Act No. 4 of 2003.

Prevention of GBV has broad and social determinants, which means it is multi-sectoral and include the private and public sectors such as health, education, criminal justice, social services, corporations and human rights institutions (Butchart & Mikton, 2014, p. 26). Prevention of GBV, therefore, calls for ending violence by raising the risk factors and promoting resistance factors. The approach to public health underlines three different levels of prevention of GBV; primary prevention to prevent the GBV, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention (WHO, 2013).

According to Harvey, Garcia-Moreno and Butchart (2007) primary prevention entails reducing the number of new GBV cases by having to engage in prevention before any violence happens. Resilience somehow deals with human experiences, distresses, instabilities, and anticipations, to name but a few, as represented in the works of literature and in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) Thus, primary prevention focuses on discovering risk and resilience participants and works to counter these factors. Notably, primary prevention may occur in various ways, but the common thread transforms gender-related behaviours and stereotypes at the level of the individual, amongst both men and women, as well as at the social level

(Seftaoui, 2009). In contrast, secondary prevention involves responses after violence occurs to mitigate the impact of GBV, whilst tertiary prevention is long-term care and rehabilitation to prevent serious consequences for victims of violence (Harvey et al., 2007).

Conflict transition can be used to deal with GBV. According to Miall (2004) Conflict transition is central to the prevention of GBV since it addresses and shapes relationships, expectations and, where appropriate, the structure of society that is responsible for the continuation of the conflict. In other words, one can argue that GBV can be curbed through multi-sectoral interventions at different levels.

It is acknowledged that GBV destroys life and this arises from inequalities in the social structure (WHO, 2013). According to Harders (2011), "Transition of conflicts seeks to address the causes of GBV by ensuring human safety, addressing basic human necessities and promoting justice and reconstruction" (p. 134). In this research, the use of the conflict transition approach serves its purpose of building a society of peace and mutual respect by addressing the social geometries and masculinity that women adhere to in the community. In other words, it intended to help women to build gender behaviours that lead toward more equal/democratic gender relationships.

Connell (2001) posits that democratic gender relationships are those, which move towards equality, anti-violence and cooperation among people of various genders, sexualities, ethnic groups and generations. Young people, especially boys, therefore need to be involved in GBV issues in Namibia to prevent the use of violence that is becoming part of a daily practice. This research pays attention to attitudes and beliefs related to gender as primary risk factors for committing GBV. These are referred to as traditional dominant gender-related attitudes that determine the views of an individual about acceptable role-related behaviour for men and women in society (WHO, 2013).

Reyes et al., (2016) note that attitudes towards the role of gender range from traditional to equivalent. It seems like most African communities conform to traditional gender roles and practice as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The researcher concurs with Reyes et al., (2016), that Namibia is one of those African communities, which practice traditional gender roles that allow men to be main decision-makers whereas women are do not make decisions. The present study relies on shaping gender attitudes as a means of preventing GBV. Since violence seems to begin at the adolescence stage, gender attitudes and norms of violent-dating experiences develop.

Furthermore, the Republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) launched a national Zero Tolerance campaign (NZTC) in all 14 regions in reaction to popular patterns of GBV and the campaign focused on three themes: baby dumping, human trafficking and passion killings (Kretzmann (2010). One of the National Plan of Action on Gender-Based Violence (2012-2016) strategies was to conduct frequent country-wide campaigns on GBV, with events and messages at the national, regional constituency and community level, using community-based strategies, radio services in different languages with messages targeting all people in the society (MGECW, 2010).

His Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba called for a nationwide day of prayers in Namibia, which was held on 6 March 2014 to combat GBV and raise public awareness on GBV as well as advocate for tougher measures against perpetrators (NAMPA, 2014). There have been several projects and programs that have been launched to raise awareness in order to combat GBV in Namibia. For example, Mobile Telecommunication Company (MTC) launched "MTC Knockout project", an initiative that was aimed towards creating awareness and fighting for social change on GBV in Namibia (Nicodemus, 2019). In 2014, Tnamrock

Investments National Project²⁶ launched "Namibian men stand together to protect the women" to prepare men in the fight against GBV in Namibia (Lucas, 2014).

2.10 Previous studies on GBV in Namibia

In the field of African literary studies, scholars are committed to carrying out social-life studies on issues such as race, racism, with GBV against women and children highlighted in various forms of violence and then branded as a human rights violation. However, this study analyses the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) with a specific reference to "when men beat women" as a form of GBV.

A review of work on GBV done by other researchers was laid the foundation for this study as far as gender-based violence in Namibia is concerned. Creswell (2014) states that a literature review helps the researcher to decide whether a study is worth investigating or not. This is done through reading across research that other scholars have already carried out. Therefore, one can best contribute to the existing body of knowledge by familiarizing oneself with what others have established.

Shigwedha's (2018) study focused on women's experiences of domestic violence and their coping strategies. The study revealed that prevalent traditions of male dominance and masculinity were the underlying cause of domestic violence since men are conditioned to physically abuse their partners. This research has, therefore, attempted to examine the painful experiences of Namibian women in the Anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Gender based violence happens in different forms and can be understood in the context of specific cultural backgrounds and people's diverse values.

Furthermore, Kamaya (2018) explored male and female voices in the reporting of gender-based violence in the Namibian media. The study found out that ten forms of GBV were documented

during the time of carrying the study; these ranged from murder, rape, and domestic violence while those occupying the smallest space were on, child abuse and physical violence. Matsi (2018) carried out a study on vulnerabilities that contribute to GBV against women with disabilities in the Khomas Region, Namibia. The research sought to explore the complexity of the challenges that women with disabilities such as hearing, visual and physical impairments face in the Khomas area. The outcome of the study was that there were overwhelming cases of abuse of disabled women; only a few were reported to the GBV Investigative Unit Namibia. These findings resonate with the current study which focuses on 'when men beat women' as a form of GBV since this failure to report cases is also illustrated in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Mukulu (2019) researched perceptions of men experiencing gender-based violence in the Oshana Region, Namibia. The research aimed to examine and explain men's experiences of GBV in the Oshana Region, Namibia. The study revealed that GBV attitudes amongst men are affected by high levels of stigma, patriarchal belief in superiority, shame and culture, unequal power distribution, unemployment, lack of awareness of human rights and inequality in income. The researcher concurs that Gender-based violence is a major public health and human rights concern that affects all ages and genders around the world including Namibia as shall be demonstrated in the analysis of stories in the anthology.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

The study is theoretically located in the Ecofeminism theory, Trauma Theory and the Resilience Theory discussed individually below. On the one hand, Ecofeminism deals with the suffering of women from the dominant influence of a male-oriented society, whilst Trauma theory focuses on a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense. On the other hands Resilience deals with the strengths

that people have, rather than their vulnerability, through focusing on the coping strategies. Therefore, these three theories are the most appropriate to inform this study on the basis that the environment may not be separated from humanity, GBV experiences are traumatic and victims show resilience in dealing with GBV. Therefore, these are the most appropriate theories in analysing the battery of women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life*.

2.11.1 Ecofeminism Theory

Ecofeminism theory (Warren, 2000), is defined as an umbrella term for a variety of different viewpoints surrounding the relation between the unjustified exploitation of women, people of colour, indigenous citizens, and the unjustified dominance of nature. Cudworth (2005) defines Ecofeminism in the context of male oppression; ecofeminism analyses the relationship between women and nature. Puleo (2011) echoes the same sentiments by noting that ecofeminism asserts the suffering of women from the dominant influence of a male-oriented society.

Ecofeminism theory could be named ' women-others-nature ' link; "Others" is written with a capital O to distinguish it from the general term "others." "Others" refers to the various subordinate individual groups (Warren, 2000). These include all people in the society such as traditional people, the elderly, frail and sick people, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Nature in this study includes everything that is not human, such as animals, plants, water, air, soil as well as mountains. Thus, most of the GBV against women takes place within the environment as a potentially vibrant area as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

According to Besthorn and MacMillen (2002), the term Ecofeminism was first conceived in 1974 in the book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death) by French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne. The usage of the term reflected the ability of women to bring about an ecological transition that would ensure human survival on the earth. This would involve new relationships

between men and women as well as humans and nature (Adams, 1993; Merchant 1990; Warren, 2000).

d'Eaubonne argues that:

Women... have been reduced by a male-dominated society to the status of a minority, even though their value in terms of numbers, and even more substantially in terms of reproduction, should have allowed them a dominant position... In addition, women must act to provide for themselves and the earth at the same time. The two requirements are closely connected. (Gates, 1998, p.15-22)

It is against this background that the study considered d'Eaubonne's argument to be connected with 'when men beat women' as a form of GBV in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). It appears that most people today are worried about the harm caused by GBV to our earthly habitat, but may not make the connection between their own struggles and distresses as well as the deteriorating environmental situation. Nature provides, though at different times, both rough and smooth terrain as it relates to GBV as in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Ecofeminists such as Katherine deny the presence of essential connections between women's dominance and subjugation and the exploitation of nature by masculinizing processes and attitudes (Puleo, 2015). The Ecofeminists argue that women have a more intimate relationship with nature than Men since women are usually passive, so is nature (Puleo, 2011). On the contrary, some other Ecofeminists argue that this relationship between women and nature is developed socially; therefore, Ecofeminism offers a common ground for women and men that helps us to understand the relationship with nature (Mies & Shiva, 1993).

After considering the issues raised about Ecofeminism, this study adopted the d'Eaubonne's conceptualisation of Ecofeminism. This position was taken on the basis that the GBV depicted

in stories in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), written by Namibian women are examples of Ecofeminist texts. Theoretically, Ecofeminism provides both male oppression of women and as the theoretical framework, it is therefore, best suited to this study.

Moreover, women around the globe are challenging masculinity that denies women the rights to their bodies and sexualities (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 14). Other ecofeminists like Starhawk, Gruen, and Gaard claim that male dominance is the main cause of women and nature problems (Riechmann, 2016). In most societies such as Namibia, men are often viewed as superior to women, even as culture seems to be regarded as superior to nature. In general, men see themselves as superior to the environment and masculinity as the villain behind the ecofeminism crisis (Plumwood, 2011). The Earth is a place for all living organisms, whereas homes are habitats for groups of humans where GBV happens in most cases.

Ecofeminism is a type of literary discourse that examines women-nature relationships (Asika & Madu, 2015). When GBV is analysed in the context of Ecofeminism, it implies the representation of particular male behaviour in a manner that leads to violence against women in society and nature as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Ecofeminism is concerned with making sense of what women anticipate in a predominantly male-oriented society, and what women want for themselves. Ecofeminists make use of dichotomous thought to discuss the relationship (Gray, 2004).

A major part of living in a natural environment is that one ought to be self-reliant since this plays a key role in life to cope within the environment. Women may lead a life of "self-dependence and self-reliance," and learning will encourage women to do so (Gray, 2004, 137). The researcher agrees with Gray's sentiments as one of the themes in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008); thus the oppression of women and its connection to nature is important to the understanding women battery.

Ecofeminism theory seeks to balance the inequality of power within the society as women are perceived as homemakers and considered mothers by nature but not seen as important people in society. Gray (2004) states that nature and women suffer from the prevailing forces of a male-oriented culture, and either fictionally or non-fictionally wrote about women encounters with nature. The above notion relates to this study on the writings of Namibian women about GBV against women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

2.11.2 Trauma Theory

Trauma refers to "a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense and the standards by which one evaluates society" (Balaev, 2014, p. 1). Rodi-Risberg (2010, p. 33), defines trauma as "a condition that is too surprising to be completely reported upon occurrence". From this interpretation, what comes out is that Rodi-Risberg captures fruitfully the essence of literary studies in the sense of documenting an event in its lateness; what has occurred and can happen (Cleote & Mlambo, 2014). Furthermore, Marder (2006) posits that a traumatic event is an unusual kind of occurrence that cannot be found within the limits of time and place, and literature is one of the ways that can convey things about human experiences that cannot be covered by other ordinary means of communication.

Caruth propounded trauma theory in 1996 after experiencing the event of a wound that nearly caused death (Whitehead, 2007). Caruth (1996) defines trauma as all symptoms previously referred to as shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome and traumatic neurosis, as well as reactions to natural and human disasters" (p. 3). Trauma means a tragic event involving a single incident or experience; it involves the emotions and feelings that might have severe long-term negative consequences such as GBV in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Caruth suggests that traumatic experience is not assimilated into memory and thus returns late to torment the survivor in flashbacks and re-enactments (Goldberg, 2006).

It should also be pointed out that the word trauma comes from the Greek word for "wound" and trauma creates repeated, unmanageable and untold effects that persist long after an event (Marder, 2006). Marder (2006) contends that trauma has an extremely political, historical, and racial aspect since traumatic events arise in the social world due to social forces. It is against this background that this study considered Trauma theory to be use in setting and plots of anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Women are the recipients of Trauma in this study as the focus is on how women are beaten or oppressed by men in Namibian society. Goldenberg (2006) argues that the survivors, who struggle to process trauma and make sense appear to be silenced, either avoid talking about their experiences, which often contribute to incoherent words, or suffer complete speech loss. For example, most victims of GBV in Namibia become, aggressive and experience guilt, anger, depression or anxiety, shyness, nightmares, disruptiveness, irritability, and problems getting along with others (Beukes, 2015).

A distinction is made in trauma-theoretical approaches to literature between "acting out" and "working through," concepts which are focused on Freudian psychoanalysis, and were further developed by theorists such as LaCapra (LaCapra 2001, p. 65). This means that when a victim is "acting out" after a traumatic event of GBV, that particular person has not yet reached the point of coming to terms with the experience and the emotions involved in it. The person acting out frequently re-experiences the event, for instance, flashbacks, hallucinations, or dreams, which are seen as an effort (incapacitated) to deal with the experience. It is, therefore, widely believed that the victims of GBV should "work through" the trauma to move on with their lives (La-Capra, 2001; Caruth, 1996; Goldenberg, 2006).

Furthermore, Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience, Narrative and History* (1996), finds the repetitiveness of post-traumatic dreams to be an effort to "master what was never completely understood in the first place" (p. 62). Nevertheless, LaCapra (2001), comments on this general insistence on closure in the *Writing History and Writing Trauma* that:

Within recent criticism, there may have been too much a tendency to focus on the necessity of repetition, to see it as a way to prevent resolution, to suppress or obscure any other possible reaction, or simply to define all work as closure, complete cure, and complete mastery. The consequence is a crippling kind of logic of all-or-nothing in either summation and closure resistance, or action with almost no other possibilities (La Capra, 2001, p. 145).

It is against this LaCapra (2001) background that this study considered the historical background of Trauma theory to connect with the current study, as represented by women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Tal (1996) and other similar scholars support the view that "trauma is a life-changing experience" and that "those who are transformed can never completely return to a state of previous innocence" (p. 119). Equally, the researcher agrees that once a woman or child experiences GBV, it is quite impossible to forget about the event and sometimes this changes their life completely. The traumatic event, that is not correctly processed and taken into memory due to its shocking and excessive nature, leads in disassociation from and subconscious repression of the experience (Goldenberg, 2005). Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study since it connects the suffering of the Namibian women with the rest of the world and proposes ways to help the victims of GBV to recuperate from the depression endured.

Noticeably, trauma does not always have negative consequences, but it does provide a new mind set to evolutionary sense that reflects an episode of transformation that starts with trauma, misery, pain to awareness and comprehension moment of recovery (Harold, 2009). Tolan (2010) states that trauma makes the victims find new ways to recognise the impact of events that can be known late and to listen to the power of experiences that can be expressed indirectly. For example, women who might experience GBV such as domestic violence or rape do not come out publicly thus, trauma provides a new mind set by recognising the impact of the violence as represented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Moreover, Martinez-Falquina (2015) notes that:

Traumatised experiences in the women's community bring suffering and pain to give the new viewpoint. Literature is one of how women inform each other about aspects of human experience which cannot be covered by ordinary forms of speech and which can even transcend human understanding (p. 3).

For the above reasons, the researcher agrees that Trauma Theory relevant to the discussion of GBV such as, "when men beat women" as articulated by the Namibian women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Caruth (1996) argues that the literary forms part of representation that highlight traumatic incident structure and belated experience. Literature allows women to observe things that cannot be fully known and open the ears to experiences that might otherwise have remained unnoticed and unheard of. For example, women may be a ghost in the middle of the traumatic event as in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). And with that absence, women who have experienced trauma can become so "possessed" that sometimes identify themselves as living "ghosts" (Caruth, 1996, p. 9).

The researcher agrees with Caruth's views in the sense that literature is ubiquitous and without literature, most of the GBV against women could not be in the public domains, for this reason therefore, the Namibian women have written the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The research believes that through literature people expose GBV that might have remained hidden from others. These events become significant to everyone and therefore, through mirroring the world, fiction is one way of expressing trauma.

Trauma is the tale of the wound that needs to be told and this mode of communication is found across literary texts, both fictional and non-fictional (Cloete & Mlambo, 2014). Trauma unveils the facts that only by a close reading of the text people can feel the event, therefore trauma is the act of bringing light to this study.

2.11.3 Resilience Theory

Mlambo (2014) defines resilience as "the strengths that the people have, rather than their vulnerability, through exploring the coping strategies that they exhibit" p. 39). Resilience is noted as a dynamic process where individuals show a positive adaptation, notwithstanding experiences of significant overwhelming odds or trauma. Betancourt & Khan (2008) explain resilience as the achievement of acceptable social outcomes and emotional adjustment of people, despite major risk exposure. Folke et al. (2010) define resilience as the propensity to adjust and stay within a realm of stability, continuously changing and adjusting within critical thresholds. Furthermore, resilience is interpreted as the act of progressive adaptation to adversity and these are the very actions portrayed in *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

According to Ahmed (2006), one domain that identifies resilience integration is the natural catastrophe risk area where exposure to threats is of utmost concern. Three dimensions of resilience were established as the ability to withstand shocks; the ability to recover; the willingness to learn and adapt (Ahmed, 2006, as cited in (Miller et al., 2010)).

The above remarks draw attention to the issue of how the Namibian women cope in the face of GBV, hence women react to life's challenges in many different ways as seen in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Furthermore, Masten (2014) contends that resilience is a continuous process involving positive adaptation in the context of major adversity (p. 3). However, Luthar (2000) and other scholars argued that resilience normally occurs if two conditions were met that are; exposure to a certain serious threat or extreme adversity, and achieving tangible adaptation despite massive assaults on the development process (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Reel, 2012; Morgan, Fletcher & Sarkar 2013; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). In the context of the current research on GBV, different scholars have carried out studies on women and children who were subjected to potentially stressful conditions, such as domestic violence in homes where men beat up women as well as all other aspects of GBV (Mancini & Bonanno, 2009; Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, & Vlahov, 2007; Denz-Penhey & Murdoch, 2008).

Rutter propounded the Theory of Resilience in 1987, with the concept focusing on defining relative resistance to psychological risk encounters by children in families (Sarkar & Fletcher 2016). Rutter (2012) defines resilience as a family-wide interaction that tends to affect individual children in quite different ways noting that the positive chain reactions influence the extent to which adverse reactions occur over a while (as expounded by Sarkar & Fletcher, 2016; Ahmed, 2006; Balaev, 2014). Resilience is the term that comes from the Latin *resilire*, which means, "to recoil", therefore, resilience means to rebound, spring back, and have elasticity, flexibility, or recoverability (Taormina, 2015, p. 36).

Resilience in this study has been the focus on the coping strategies that women in Namibia develop despite experiencing or witnessing GBV in homes, families or society. Resilience has been used in the analysis of traumatic experiences encountered by Namibian women in the

context of GBV as shown in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) and how the survivors cope with the different painful situations. The study suggests that both external (social support and conditions) and internal conditions (value modifications, incorporation of traumatic experience and self-reliance) assess GBV survivor's resilience to trauma.

Moreover, Research on women who manage to negotiate their lives and overcome the negative impacts of GBV has frequently used 'resilience' as a concept to explain such ways of coping (Hyland, 2014). Burke and Carruth (2012) reported that higher-functioning people, those with good coping techniques, go through traumatic events with a lesser risk of serious injury than lower functioning people. From this viewpoint, Duma (2016) and other scholars point out that the turning point in the lives of women who have suffered abuse is the 'women's path towards recuperation and is a transition from being a victim to a survivor and often back to being a victim (Cicchetti, 2013; Masten, 2014; Panter-Brick, 2015; Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2015).

The researcher, with the support of the above scholar's views, concurs that the journey of resilience depends on the support and resources that women have access to. In other words, the path to enlightenment or return to being a victim depends on the extent to which women may access sufficient and appropriate support or the extent to which the environment can develop their resilience against GBV. Resilience plays a critical role in the reaction of women in different ways to GBV since some victims, blaming others for what has happened (Cloete & Mlambo, 2014, p. 94).

The current study examines, the degree to which the characters in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) face stressful circumstances in the Namibian cultural context. In other words, it suggests that resilience is never specifically measured, but presumed implicitly, and therefore one way of documenting and measuring it is through literary representations. The

theory of trauma and resilience are lenses through which the African analyst can examine and explore processes for trauma and coping strategies (Ungar, 2015).

Assessing literary texts through the lens of the resilience theory relies on the coping strategies of people and their ability to resist challenges in life, even in the worst situations, such as those presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Literary characters seem to transcend victimhood even after witnessing an unimaginable traumatic event, hence they can turn a new leaf around and rebuild their lives (Masten, 2014). One can see that there is a link between trauma and resilience thus, most women usually try to recover after witnessing a horrific event that keeps haunting their memories.

This theoretical framework section sought to show how theories of Ecofeminism, Trauma, and Resilience can be used to examine fictional texts to illustrate the complexities of Namibia's daily lives. The three theories were selected as they provide a basis for better analysis and understanding of the effects of GBV in the society and the coping strategies of the Namibian women. Trauma creates an emotional meltdown and women need to be resilient from this breakdown.

2.12 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the relevant literature and offered an outline of the theoretical frameworks, such as Ecofeminism theory, Trauma theory and Resilience theory in addressing the perception of women on gender-based violence in Namibia. The chapter discussed the consequences and risks of gender-based violence, as well as the need to bounce back and overcome hardship from a literary viewpoint. Chapter Two also highlighted important issues such as the effects of GBV to Namibian women, the causes of GBV, coping strategies as well as the possible ways to curb GBV in Namibia. The next Chapter Three outlines and explains the methods used to collect data and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three, outlines the methodological approaches used in this study. The chapter also looks at the research design and discusses in-depth the research background in which the research design was based. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the research population and the characteristics of the defined population. In addition, the chapter pronounced the sampling technique and the procedure used to collect data. Finally, this chapter gave a more detailed description of the content analytics and ethical considerations section for this study.

3.2 Research approach and design

This study adopted a qualitative approach as the research aimed at examining women's relationships within an environment characterised by gender-based violence, a phenomenon of a qualitative nature as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Qualitative research is a way to examine and understand the meaning attributed to a social or human issue or circumstance by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2009; Bhattacharjee, 2012). The intrinsic interaction that exists between women and the environment may not be explained in numbers, thus the most appropriate approach for this study was the qualitative approach.

A qualitative approach centred on claims and interpretations intended at explaining a particular context of the complex nature of the social sphere. In this case, the qualitative approach is significant since it gives form and guidance for this research and this is supported by Kothari (2004, p. 31) who notes that a research design is the layout of the conditions for collecting and analysing data in a way that aims to incorporate relevance for the study. This means that in this study the researcher gathers data to analyse the problems studied and then express the data in

the form of words. This helps the researcher to perform an inductive analysis of the data and to collect, interpret and draw conclusions from a variety of sources.

Young, Fisher and Kirkman (2014) describe two qualitative research design features that are interpretative. Firstly, the qualitative research design indicates a concern with the social world's perception and interpretation. Secondly, it is responsive and versatile to the social context in which data is generated. The researcher examined the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) using content analysis as an approach to analysis. This was a desktop study, as there was no fieldwork involved, thus the study relied on secondary data.

3.3 Population

According to Creswell (2014), a population is a group of people with the same characteristics and within the same environment. Taking into account Creswell's views, the population of this study is all the short stories (115) and poems (45) written in English by Namibian women in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) which was edited by IKhaxas.

3.4 Sample

Alvi (2016) defines sample as a grouping of comparatively smaller numbers of participants selected for research purposes from a population. A sample is defined as a section of the target population comprising members, components or subjects from which the information is gathered (Creswell, 2014). For this study, purposeful sampling was used as the researcher intentionally selected the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) from the total population as common features and utilised 20 selected short stories and 15 poems which have the same theme of gender-based violence in Namibia. The basic concepts of trauma and resilience were familiar in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), so the selected anthology was similar from a thematic viewpoint, and the analysis was able to meet the stated research objectives.

3.5 Procedure

Since the study was desktop based the data were gathered using features of ecofeminism, trauma, and resilience theories through a rigorous reading of the anthology. The researcher considered appropriate credible sources including works by art, critics, book reviews, articles, journal articles and appropriate sources on the ecofeminism, trauma, and resilience theories. These sources aided a close and more critical evaluation of the topic of this study. Moreover, the sources also supplemented the research and established the context upon which this thesis hinged. The selected anthology was examined by applying the theories of Ecofeminism, trauma and resilience that established this study's theoretical framework and it was informed by the literature reviewed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is concurrent to data collection in qualitative research (Christensen, Johnson, and Turner, 2014). Anderson (2010) posits that data analysis is the description and presentation of the data collected for the research. The thesis used content analysis to elucidate and evaluate the representation of the intrinsic relationship that exists between women and the environment and GBV. The collected data were divided into smaller pieces by segments for simpler analysis, and the themes and relationships between categories emerged in the process. Data analysis was done using the theories of ecofeminism, trauma and resilience. Furthermore, the outcomes were derived from the interpretations and evaluation and then used to formulate discussions and conclusions.

3.7 Research Ethics

Bhattacharjee (2012) defines Ethics as conformance to the standard conduct of a given profession or group. Therefore, the researcher complied with the specifications of the institution by complying with the ethical research requirements. This study focused on fictional

works whose characters were creative, thus not involving human respondents. The study used written material, which was already accessible in the public domain. The researcher pursued impartiality by analysing the chosen anthology based on the framing of Ecofeminism, trauma and resilience theories. The literary analysis concentrated on the concept that references to actual persons, events and locations were used fictitiously in the anthology. Even though the topic is sensitive to humankind, the researcher abstained from manipulating the study for any personal emotions and feelings that might hamper the study's objectivity.

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the researcher gave an overview of the research methodology used in the study, by beginning with the research design. A qualitative desktop study was employed as no fieldwork was conducted. The population and sample were specified and defined. The research ethics criterion was also noted and coerced the researcher not to comment on the authors of the selected anthology for the study. The next chapter, Chapter Four, presents an in-depth data analysis of the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

CHAPTER FOUR

DITA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the data collected from the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) through short stories and poems. The findings are presented under various themes based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as directed by the research objectives of this study, and as guided by Ecofeminism, Trauma and Resilience as theories. Sub-headings have been used to focus specifically on different themes, and a synopsis of each of the 20 short stories and 15 poems are provided first before they are analysed to give an insight of the gender-based violence against women in Namibia. The objectives of this study remain as follows:

- To examine the causes of gender-based violence against women as presented in the selected literary anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008);
- To investigate the implications of the gender-based violence on women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008); and
- Explore the transformation of victims in reconstructing their lives and hope for a better future.

4.2 Brief synopsis of the 20 short stories

This section gives an overview of the selected short stories in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) namely; "Ndeshuuvu's story", "Raped by stepfather", " Stolen Youth", "My parents decided that I had to marry", "I have my next strategy worked out!", "I still have human rights", "It's not hard to be a woman", "A break from violence", " A tough lesson to learn", "I wish could predict the future", "Culture can turn into danger", " A love slave", "Accused of bewitching her husband", "Use your mind", "On the Herero culture", "Katuna, the victim of

tradition”, “On the Caprivi culture”, “*Lobola* should not be a punishment”, “How women took control of their lives” and “Inheritance”.

4.2.1 “Ndeshuuvu’s story”

The story of “Ndeshuuvu” is the story of a girl who lives with her parents in the Northern part of Namibia. The story reveals how a young girl was raped by her uncle when her parents went to the Cuca shop.

4.2.2 “Raped by stepfather”

The story explores the complicated nature of the parenting of certain Namibian men. It revolves around the roles of the father as head of the household, decision-maker and protector of the family unit. The tale in the story "Raped by the stepfather" revolves around a 14-year-old girl who was raped by the stepfather at gunpoint when the mother was away in the town.

4.2.3 “Stolen youth”

Forced marriage, an arranged marriage between parents and child marriage is the subject of the stolen youth, where a young girl is forced to marry a distant relative. The girl was robbed of her dreams as the best student at school and begging for her mother's help without success, she became a wife and lost her youth as a result of her father's forced and arranged marriage.

4.2.4 “My parents decided that I had to marry”

It is the story of a girl who lived with her parents in a village named Koro, deep in the forest. When the girl was thirteen years old, the parents forced her to marry a security guard who was twenty-six years old and worked in the area. The girl was seriously ill and tested positive for HIV. Once her husband learned of the outcome, he was furious and asked her parents to give back five cattle he had paid for *lobola*. The girl had a miserable childhood without a future.

4.2.5 “I have my next strategy worked out!”

The story of a voiceless girl who had confidence to fight the culture and custom of society. This story is about the grandmother who arranged for her grandchild to marry a sixty-five-year-old rich man. The girl was upset, so she challenged her grandfather to intervene, but the grandfather was not listening to her.

4.2.6 “I still have human rights”

The story portrays the life of a couple who lived a happy life together before the husband began cheating. The man's behaviour towards his wife changed radically, he came home late every night with excuses, he stopped giving money to his wife, and the worst of all began to beat her. When the wife suggested that they should go for HIV testing, the man was angry and smashed the property in the house and humiliated her in front of her children.

4.2.7 “It’s not hard to be a woman”

The story of "It's not hard to be a woman" revolves around a married woman whose husband demanded that she must be a housewife. Things changed when the husband began to cheat with another woman. He argued every day, warning the wife that there are other capable women out there who are behind him and that she should be cautious as their relationship hangs on the thin wire. One day, the wife begged her husband to go with her to the North to see her sick mother, but the man refused to let the woman go alone. Her husband filed for divorce while the wife was still in the North, caring for her sick mother.

4.2.8 “A break from violence”

The story revolves around the urge of women to have men in their lives and find a way and break free from abusive relationships. The woman was living with her abusive husband, and her husband would choose to have sex without a condom; often he would fight and beat her, and most of the time she was raped. The woman felt that it was enough, so she wanted to break

free from the abuse and to quit it. She joined the Red Cross to inspire other women to join a neighbourhood support network to help other women who experience gender-based abuse at home.

4.2.9 “A tough lesson to learn”

“A tough lesson to learn ”is the story about a girl who was in love with her teacher, dropped out of school while pregnant and rejected by the teacher at the same time. After giving birth, she had a different relationship with a driver from one of the ministries and became pregnant again, only to find out that the man was married.

4.2.10 “I wish I could predict the future”

A young woman, who had high expectations of a happy and fulfilling marriage life, may not have realised what the future had in store for her. Whenever most men confront their partners with a sudden change of relationship, their ego is better off, and they resort to raising their hands to their wives to hide emotional problems. Her husband began beating her every third day of the week. The words 'love, sweetheart, darling' were no longer in their conversations since he had started to have extramarital affairs in the neighbourhood.

4.2.11 “Culture can turn into danger”

As much as women are open to the views and ideas of the modern world, their attempts to get justice out of ill-health poverty have been overshadowed by a man who has believed too much in traditions that cure any illness. This is the story of a man who believes deeply in traditional norms and cultures. Because of his conviction, he ruined the lives of five women, including his blood sister, as the traditional healer told him to use his blood to cleanse the first wife's spirit.

4.2.12 “A love slave”

The story is about a young girl who was forced to become a mother at a tender age due to the death of her parents. She was taken to a traditional Zambian healer by her uncle when she

became ill and remained at the traditional healer's home for almost two months for treatment. The traditional healer demanded a ransom of money to be paid for his service. It was a surprise to the family because no one worked and could not afford to get five hundred Namibian dollars. The traditional healer offered the family three choices: to pay the money, to hand the girl over to be his wife, or to bring the disease back to her body.

4.2.13 “Accused of bewitching her husband”

This is a tale of how women can be exposed to social inequality and ill-treatment by in-laws who do not believe that men bring illness to their wives through reckless lifestyles. The story "Accused of bewitching her husband" focuses on a woman whose husband was sick and could not walk when admitted to the hospital. None of the relatives came to see him in the hospital. After six months, he was discharged and started to sleep around with other women in the village. He confessed to his wife that he had affairs with other women. The woman attempted to divorce, but the man insisted that she had to suffer because she was the one who bewitched him.

4.2.14 “Use your mind”

Grandparents are repositories of information aimed at instilling expectations and values in the younger generation. This is the story of a young girl who was advised by her grandmother to use herbs to attract men. According to the grandmother, herbs make her vagina tiny and dry so that sex will be sweet to a man. She was advised that another traditional method was used to cut some area of the private parts and that certain herbs were used to keep men closer to her. Her mother, however, listened to the context and was advised to be careful with the advice of the elderly, as their advice may lead to some illnesses. She was told to listen to the grandmother's advice but she should use her mind to make a final decision.

4.2.15 “On the Herero culture”

This is another short story that explores how cultural patterns and poverty lead to social inequality and addresses abused women. The Herero culture, allows cousins to sleep with girls as young as thirteen years old. It is, in essence, statutory rape that is permitted by the elders because they find the activity appropriate to prepare young girls for womanhood. Men take control of the competitive advantage of these uneducated and unemployed women by using *lobola* as an excuse to handle women as they wish.

4.2.16 “Katuna, the victim of tradition”

This is one of the horrific stories detailing the degree of violence inflicted on women and that also affects children; children are secondary victims since they watch their mother being beaten for attempting to teach their husbands. Some men still use traditional cultural weapons, such as *lobola*, to dominate and assault women who lack help from outside sources. Women face these obstacles because men dominate them in almost every aspect of their lives.

4.2.17 “On the Caprivi culture”

Traditional practices may be effective if they are intended to teach women how to behave and take care of their husbands. In the Caprivi society, young girls have to pull the labia to make it longer. It is believed that the labia minora must be stretched to accommodate a man's penis inside a woman for pleasure. Some Caprivian women have claimed that long labia can protect the vagina from infections. Several Caprivian women use powder or herbs that are inserted into the vagina at least one hour before sex to keep it dry and tight. These powders may lead women to be vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

4.2.18 “Lobola should not be a punishment”

Lobola is an important custom in some of the Namibian cultures.” *Lobola* should not be a punishment” is the story of a woman who married a fisherman who paid *lobola* of four heads

of cattle. After their marriage, the man began to act in cruelly. The man also mocked her, called her names like a closeted lesbian, a slut and a lazy woman. When the woman notified her parents about the issues that had arisen in the marriage, she was told that the issues were part of the marriage, and she should go back and accept anything her husband did. A week later, her husband beat her and again she went to her parents' house, but her father did not listen to her problems.

4.2.19 “How women took control of their lives”

The head of a village is a leader who leads and directs a group and ensures that people live in harmony. This is the story of a tyrant who mistreated women in society. One day, the headman convenes a village meeting and instructs all men not to fetch water, take care of cattle, and gather firewood or any other work in the house, because women will take care of all the work. There was only one man who refused this, claiming that he could not convert his wife into a slave, but no one supported him. The headman called his wife in front of the other men and began beating her and afterwards ordered her to cook.

4.2.20 “Inheritance”

By law, when a couple becomes married, they have the choice of what happens to their property if one of the two dies or there is a divorce. In this case, the woman was entitled to the property of her late husband. The family member, however, took everything and she went through a lot of pain from psychological abuse while grieving her husband. Fortunately, no money was paid to the estate because the law allows the widow to be named executor. All the properties were then returned to the children of the late by the family members.

4.3 Brief synopsis of the 15 poems

Furthermore, the second section provides the selected poems in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) namely; “When a baby girl is born”, “The mother’s hand”, “Stop the war”,

“Deceived”, “The beautiful sun-shine”, “In the world of Aids”, “Growing stronger”, “I believe in God”, “Where were you”, “Dying by your hand”, “It must have been my fault...I am a woman”, “Betrayed by my desires”, “Leaving him”, “Life in Africa” and “Pardon women and children

4.3.1 “When a baby girl is born”

The problem of sexual harassment against women and children is prevalent in many Namibian communities. In the poem "When a baby girl is born," most mothers get excited and have high expectations about what the girls will become in the future.

4.3.2 “The mother’s hand”

The poem portrays the mother's good heart that touches and solves all the problems that her daughters are experiencing. It inspires most of the daughters to gain strength to fight the suffering they have suffered throughout their lives. Many people are afraid of pain, while women may become the source of life’s suffering.

4.3.3 Stop the war”

There is a war on gender-based violence against women and children in Namibia. Violence starts in the homes, the houses, the streets, and later spreads throughout the neighbourhood like wildfire. The theme of the poem is that women are guardians of antediluvian and patriarchal culture in Namibian society. As a result, many women are raped and killed, thus, men must avoid these norms.

4.3.4 “Deceived”

"Deceived" is a poem that tells of how women are being bamboozled into relationships and later succumb to abuse. Regrets haunt women for their decision to allow a man in their lives, thus, men cannot honour commitments and this results in gender-based violence against them.

4.3.5 “The beautiful sun-shine”

Throughout the poem "The beautiful Sun-Shine," most mothers play a significant role in the illness and suffering of their children. Mothers are still there to console their daughters despite the suffering they have suffered from abusive husbands.

4.3.6 “In the world of Aids”

The poem depicts the equality of rights between men and women. Women should stand up and fight for their rights because they have goals to accomplish in life rather than to be weakened by culture. Women must choose life and reject the idea that men are superior to women, thereby requiring assumptions about their destiny.

4.3.7 “Growing stronger”

The poem "Growing stronger" guides Namibian women to live in peace and to be proud of themselves because they have strong hearts. This helps women to concentrate on life and never to be torn down by men's deceiving manners.

4.3.8 “I believe in God”

The theme of the poem is to inspire women to have faith in God regardless of the difficulties they have experienced in their marriages. God loves his children no matter what happens to them, and God will change people's lives. God does not forsake those who obey Him and always consoles, protects and preserves the lives of those who have HIV / AIDS.

4.3.9 “Where were you?”

The poem "Where were you?" captures what gives rise to some women revenging against their abusers. Most men around the world call women bad names like killers, foul-smelling witches, unfeeling, satanic, and the list are endless yet men are largely to blame for all that women are going through.

4.3.10 “Dying by your hand”

The poem speaks of the mother's affection for her children. Mothers are still there to support, to keep themselves safe and warm even in tough times. Many husbands beat their daughters and treat them like dogs, but the mother is there to defend and save them.

4.3.11 “It must have been my fault...I am a woman”

The poem speaks of an innocent man who has been infected by a woman who has been engaged in extra marital affairs and has contracted HIV. The woman blames herself for being a woman and for being unfaithful to her husband.

4.3.12 “Betrayed by my desires”

“Betrayed by my desire ”is a poem that speaks of a couple who shared a happy life before the man was found in bed with another woman. When the woman protested about it, she was chased out of the house.

4.3.13 “Leaving him”

“Leaving him” is a poem that addresses the woman who said farewell to her husband because of emotional abuse. It was not easy to take the drastic step of leaving the man she loved, but the decision was made to save her life.

4.3.14 “Life in Africa”

The theme of the poem is that life for African women is like hard rock since some men still practise African cultural beliefs that oppress women. African women should make the right decisions for their future and shift the African mind-sets of adherence to harmful traditions and norms.

4.3.15 “Pardon women and children”

The theme of the poem is to forgive women and children for being innocent victims of the patriarchal culture of society. Culture destroys a lot of lives, particularly those of women and children through practices that allow men to have unprotected sex with the widow for purifying rituals.

4.4 The causes of gender-based violence in the selected short stories and poems in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008)

The following section discusses the causes of gender based violence in Namibia as evinced in the reading of the short stories and poems in the anthology.

4.4.1 Harmful Traditional Practices

Most of the abuses of women and girls in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) have been triggered by patriarchal social practices, some of which are defended by community members based on traditional beliefs or culture. The editor of the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) admits that it was not easy to name and write about issues that are taboo in certain cultures in Namibia. However, the authors of the anthology were no longer afraid to recognise the Namibian human rights abuses that are justified and shamelessly enforced in the name of traditional practices and culture.

In the short stories “My parents decided that I had to marry” and “Stolen Youth” characters are forced into marriages that have been arranged by the parents. In “Stolen Youth” for example, the girl’s parents argue that;

"We have groomed you into a responsible woman. Time has come for you to take on the role of a woman. Enias is here to ask for your hand in marriage. He is going to marry you and you are going to become his wife" (IKhaxas, 2008, P. 21).

The above shows how parents apply patriarchal social practices based on traditional beliefs. In the Ecofeminism context, in some Namibian societies, men are often viewed as superior to women, even as culture seems to be regarded as superior to nature. In anthology, *We Must Choose Life* (2008) directly testifies to the effects of Ecofeminism on women and the environment. African tradition demands that a young person should always show respect towards the elders and this enables parents to decide on the marriage and arrange the wedding without the knowledge of the girl involved. Moreover, some young girls are striving for independence in taking decisions regarding education in the event of a violent marriage. However, traditional marriage is arranged and most girls find very limited possibilities for an independent life.

In the short story “My parents decided that I had to marry” the young married girl reports that she was unable to continue with her education without the support of the husband, which she received relatively rarely. Community agreement about what makes a 'good wife' reveals a lot about what it is; a good wife is characterised almost entirely in terms of the work she does for her husband, children and home. Moreover, there was consensus that domestic violence would flourish in relationships where a woman had no opportunity to be independent and would become socially isolated due to patriarchal social practices as evident in the short stories “Stolen Youth” and “My parents decided that I had to marry”. In the context of Trauma, the young girl’s emotions and feelings were severely destroyed by the parent’s decision, hence it may have some long-term negative consequences in their lives as result of GBV.

Similarly, the poem "Life in Africa" seems to have an influence on the views on household labour that men compel women to do based on conventional norms. Although girls articulate their desire for a much more equitable division of labour at home, it is clear that men and parents usually do not regard the 'ideal wife' as one who has desires for greater equality. In

addition, early or forced marriages are correlated with high domestic demands in terms of household duties, limited flexibility and independence to succeed in professional pursuits, and reduce overall life choices of women. This somehow proves how bad the situation was, the impact that environmental debasement had on women in such a way that they had no choice to make decisions on their own as seen in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Young married girls are more likely to become pregnant before the age of 15, as can be seen in "*Stolen Youth*". This might increase their probability of dying during childbirth fivefold since they are also at higher risk of intimate partner abuse throughout their lifetime (Erulkar, 2013). Early marriage is also the product of a set of values that supports the regulation of women's sexuality and fertility. Families see early marriage as a way to 'protect' their daughters from defamation or embarrassment, but more importantly, to preserve their integrity in terms of tradition.

Furthermore, the notion that there must be male presence for a family to be viewed as "whole" and functional, while harming women in the process, is seen in most of the short stories such as "Culture can turn into danger", "Katuna, the victim of tradition" and "A love slave". In the short story "Culture can turn into danger," the character is overshadowed by her husband, who strongly believes in traditional practices. Even after her husband has been advised to visit the HIV test facility, Aaron refuses because he could not be persuaded by a woman, so he promises that he would take her to the best traditional healer. Through Aaron, the author illustrates the traditional rituals of believers of African traditional healing practices when the healer says;

Her spirit is in your room, and you are eating, sleeping, and doing everything with her. You are supposed to be washed with human blood because this ghost is too powerful, and you could lose your current wife as well. Your house should be washed with blood so the ghost will turn away. You have to pay money and agree to kill one of your sisters so that her blood can be used for cleansing (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 168).

The above quotation justifies the fact that traditional healers can be held accountable for distorting information to manipulate people who practise and believe in African traditional rituals, some of which benefit men, while others hurt women in particular. It is evident that in the short story "*Culture can turn into danger*" five women die in the process leaving the real problem unattended due to traditional beliefs. Most of the victims are women since they are dominated by men in society. Therefore, GBV is analysed in the context of Ecofeminism with the representation of particular male behaviour in a manner that leads to violence against women in society and nature.

There are harmful traditional practices which are committed in the name of honour, culture and related to violence. This is evident in the short story "*Katuna, the victim of tradition*" as shown where it reads;

According to tradition, the man is the head of the household, and he is the one who makes important decisions. The woman is only informed after the decision has been made. Women are not allowed to attend government or NGO meetings that could provide them with information. According to her husband's tradition, even though the man is married, he may have as many affairs as he likes (IKhaxas, p.185).

Katuna's husband uses an acceptable traditional language that draws Katuna to listen to him. In other words, he did not isolate himself from the group of other men, and this allowed him to communicate his message effectively to his wife. However, this type of practice is tantamount to the violation of women's freedom to information and freedom of movement, as limits are placed on them. Clearly, harmful traditional practices may have arisen from deep seated patriarchal perceptions and attitudes about the role and status of women in society. Social and cultural structures make women vulnerable to society. The anthology *We Must Choose Life*

(2008) thus contains sufficient and powerful utilitarian on GBV as some of the men are motivated by the environment to oppress women.

Another instance of how traditional practices harm women is noticed in "A love slave" when the traditional doctor says; " If you have not got the money to pay for the services that I have provided you, give me your niece so that she can become my wife. If you are still not prepared to do so, I will give the disease back to her body" (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 174). The girl becomes the which doctor's third wife even though it is not out of love since she has no choice but to be sacrificed as compensation for failure to pay for services rendered. This seems to be a betrayal from the man intrusted with healing, thus putting the girls in pressure and result into Trauma. In a polygamous marriage, life is miserable for her and even after the death of her husband, the family members grab all the properties and leave her without anything. This is typical of the traditional practice to women in most of the patriarchal societies of the GBV.

Furthermore, harmful traditional practice can be observed in short stories such as; "*On the Herero culture*", as well as "*On the Caprivi culture*". The stories demonstrate that culture exposes women to HIV and AIDS. For instance, in the short story "*On the Herero culture*", a woman is required to sleep with her cousin at her initiation to prepare her for womanhood. Sometimes the cousin that one is asked to sleep with may be HIV-positive (IKhaxas, 2008, p, 183). Herero married women are robbed of their rights as they cannot refuse to sleep with their husband without a condom even when they know that he has slept with numerous sexual partners. The man would say "fine, just give me back my six head of cattle that I paid lobola" (IKhaxas, 2008, p.183). The ruinous state of the GBV represented in the anthology *We Must Choose life* (2008) may most attributed to women being in vulnerable situation and leaves them exposed to diseases.

There are cultural practices that are harmful to the physical integrity of the person, particularly women, as some may cause terrible physical pain, while others can humiliate and objectify women. In the short story "*On the Caprivi culture*" for instance, girls at the age of four years are forced to pull their labia minora and make it longer. Young girls have incisions made on their bodies during the menstruation period to create scars thus, the same razor or knife could be used on five or more girls without sterilisation. Many Caprivian girls use powders or herbs which are inserted inside the vagina before having sex with a man to dry up and tighten the vagina for pleasure. This exercise may make a woman vulnerable to diseases such as HIV because the man would struggle to penetrate the vagina. Thus, most Namibian women are conscious of their cultural practices and highly preserve them since these form part of their traditional values. In a way, "*On the Caprivi culture*" is a text confronting gender-based violence issues by exposing the impact of harmful traditional practices women in Namibia participate in.

4.4.2 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is another form of violence that is observed in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) where most Namibian women have been abused at home where they should feel safe and protected. At times when people participate in heated discussions at home, the atmosphere around them becomes changed by tension resulting in domestic violence. It is evident in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) that women are traumatised and therefore, they need Resilience to cope in their lives and those around them. The same situation can be seen in the short story "*I wish I could predict the future.*" The marriage of Ndapewa and John was great before discord broke out between them. The beating of Ndapewa begins when John starts having extramarital affairs; women often have to bear the consequences of male infidelity. In most cases, women are victims of domestic abuse. It is clear in the text that when Ndapewa asks the husband where he is, the only response that she gets is a punch, a kick, or

slighting words. In several instances, John would remind Ndapewa to be thankful he married her; "There are many women out there crying for me, and if you are not happy with my attitude, pack your stuff and go, and make sure you pay the lobola back" (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 156).

Equally, in the short story "*Lobola should not be a punishment*" where a woman contests the patriarchal view of culture to assert her rights, the man responded with domestic abuse towards the woman. Lobola is a very complex practice manipulated by men to control, exploit and abuse women in society, as can be seen in the short story "*Lobola should not be a punishment*" when the man says: "I found you poor and paid four heads of cattle to your parents, but you are such a lazy woman" (IKhaxas, 2008, p.198). When the woman informs the parents about domestic violence, she is accused of ruining their society and embarrassing the family since those issues are considered part of the marriage. Given the fact that the mother is the only woman on her side, unfortunately, her place in the hierarchy of society is at the bottom and most of the decisions are taken by men. As a result, the woman loses her life from the beating endured in the hands of her husband.

Moreover, most mothers get happy and honoured when they give birth to a baby girl. The poem "*When a baby girl is born*" addresses the mother's high hopes for her baby girl and what the child will become in the future. This ends in tears when the life of the girl is cut short by some men who indulge in sexual violence against the girl-children. It is so painful for the mothers as alluded to in the poem; "You look forward to what she is going to become, what she is going to do for you, just to bathe in tears. Terrible things are happening to our babies (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 3). Similar, to the poem "*Stop the war*," the poem expresses the concern on gender-based violence against women and children in Namibia. The poem urges the men to stop gender-based violence and disseminate information in an attempt to eradicate the violence against

women in Namibia. The war alluded to here in the poem is on gender-based violence which dehumanises women and children.

Women are advocates for equal rights that have been taken away by traditional norms and there appears to be no support from men. This is evident in the poem;

Our congressman mocks gender equality

Churches do not preach gender equality

Schools do not teach gender equality

Our culture as leaders upholds customs and practices that restrict women (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 17).

The above quote denounces the hypocrisy of the representatives of government who, in the name of conventional values, do not endorse the eradication of domestic violence in society. Many women lose their identity and dignity due to domestic violence, hence women are being seen but not heard by men in society. A woman who is beaten by her husband or partner is most likely psychologically broken; a woman who is sexually abused by a male is usually a vulnerable person who feels absolute shame and worthlessness. Schulz (2015) suggests that women who are victims of domestic violence more generally experience long-term anxiety and panic.

4.4.3 Sexual abuse and Rape

Sexual abuse and rape were marked as some of the forms of gender-based violence in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). It is commonly used by men against women in different circumstances and settings. This includes rape of young girls, marital rape as well as verbal abuse using sexual and gendered language. In the short story “*Ndeshuuvu’s story*”, a young girl Ndeshuuvu is traumatised by the incident that happens to her and always experiences nightmares. Meme Mwetuyola was astonished by Ndeshuuvu’s scream while asleep; “Get off

me! It hurts mama! It's him-get him off me!" (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 6). The quote above indicates the trauma the girl suffers because of the abuse.

Ndeshuuvu is raped by her uncle when meme Mwetuyola goes to the Cuca shop. This incident portrays a vulnerable girl who has been exposed to gender-based abuse. The man takes advantage of the vulnerable girl because he realises that the girl is defenceless and weak, so he considers her a sexual object. Garg (2014) argues that women have always been marginalised by sex stereotyping, and even believed to be God's second mistake.

Rapists often use firearms to dilute the purity of the victims. In the short stor "*Raped by the stepfather*," Salmi, a young girl, drops out of school was after being raped by her stepfather at gunpoint at the age of fourteen years. Since the attack, she is traumatised and goes to report the rape case to the counsellors. The worst part is that she is both pregnant and HIV positive. Salmi has to choose either to suffer the pain and sacrifice her liberty at the cost of her stepfather or acknowledge that he is the father of her child. The man is arrested by the police. Salmi becomes an ambassador of other girls in the society and encourages them to report any gender-based violence to the police or counsellors. Globally, the prevalence of sexual harassment remains insufficient such that a large number of girls and women are exposed to child sexual violence.

4.4.4 Psychological and Emotional abuse

Psychological and emotional violence has many facets in terms of process and impacts on the society and social lives of its victims. This type of abuse is a continuous process in which one person deliberately diminishes and destroys the thoughts and emotions of another. The same can be said in the short story "*It's not hard to be a woman*". A woman is forced to be a housewife, and later the husband emotionally abuses her. The couple has a happy life in marriage for seventeen years, until the man begins an extra marital affair with another woman. Once the woman visits her village to see her sick mother, the man applies for divorce alleging

that the woman has fled from him. Later, the woman learns that she is HIV positive, and the ex-husband refuses to support the children. Many women in Namibia seem to experience the same form of abuse from their partners. However, victims of emotional abuse often do not take seriously what they are witnessing and so there seems to be no agency to react to this form of violence.

In the short story "*A tough lesson to learn*", women appear to be the perpetrators of male seduction. A young girl falls in love with her teacher and becomes pregnant who immediately dumps her. The fact of the matter is that he is only concerned with keeping his job. The girl gives birth to a baby girl and raises her without the care of her father. After a few years, life becomes complicated for her and the child, so she decides to have an affair with two separate men. She becomes pregnant again, but both men refuse to acknowledge the child, so she dumps the baby in the municipal dam. She is convicted and sent to prison. This reflects the fact that many young Namibian women experience psychological and emotional violence that leads them to commit crimes.

"*Accused of bewitching her husband*" seems to be another tale of psychological violence. A woman has been subjected to social injustice and ill-treatment by her in-laws. Her husband gets sick and is admitted to the hospital for six months, but none of his family visits him. It is his wife who has taken care of him all the time. This is an indication that women have a desire to be with their loved ones during good and bad times. For certain African traditional cultures, if inexplicable illness persists in a person, family members seek the assistance of divines or seers to find the root cause. This can be witnessed when the man is discharged from the hospital; one of the family members comes to take him to see the witch doctor and find out who is responsible for his illness (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 178).

The woman is accused of being responsible for the illness though she is the only person who took care of him when he was admitted. When the man recovers, he begins to sleep with other women in the village, and he admits this to his wife. The woman does not tolerate this abuse and signals her intention to leave, but the man insists that she should remain and suffer since, according to the diviner, she is the one who bewitched him.

The woman completely rejects the idea of obeying the cultural means of acknowledging the allegation, she attacks and counter-attacks, as well as the discussions. She is determined to find out the truth from the doctor, which is a very odd thing to do, particularly when the family accuses her of something. This is evident when the man gets sick and the woman takes him to the hospital to get tested for HIV (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 178). The HIV test results are positive and the man later dies. In typical disregard for the rights of widowed women to inherit matrimonial property, the family comes to claim all the belongings, leaving the children and the woman with nothing. The woman is being punished for supposedly being responsible for all the mishaps happening in her man's life.

Furthermore, women share the suffering that has been brought to the surface by the men. This indicates that women do not only share edibles but also share difficulties particularly during the emotional torture from men. It appears that Resilience has been used in the analysis of traumatic experiences encountered by Namibian women in the context of GBV. This is seen in the poem "*Deceived*" when the poet writes; "Listen to the scream of my loins, See the agony in my knees if only I have listened." (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 25). The poem depicts the dimension of solidarity in women in the face of loss, which encourages cohesion and condemns individualism at all costs. In most cases, the role of women in society is developed in such a way that women are exposed to men's treacherous ways, thus they are fooled by the lies of false promises made by men and then mistreated, and abandoned without any hope for the

future. It seems that men are creatures that lack appreciation, no matter how women risk their lives for them.

Additionally, women are the heart and pillar, thus, they have a better chance to be successful in life since they have a strong heart to endure the emotional and psychological abuse. However, some men drag them down in the name of beliefs. In the poem "*The beautiful sunshine*" women always shine like a star in the dark cloud, and they are always there for men, children and everyone else in the family during sickness or pain (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 47). However, men put women through psychological pain and blame them for their actions. Similarly, in the poem "Betrayed by my desire" women are deceived by false love that gives them the confidence for a great future. This is vividly seen in the poem where it reads "Whenever I think of him, a smile came to my face, eyes sparkling brightly, seeing the future for both of us" (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 158). The joy of love comes to an end when the man is caught in bed with another woman. However, women have been taught proper decent values about how to act in public and display more respect for men, even if a man is found in another woman's bed.

4.5 The implications of the gender-based violence on women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008)

In this study, we learn about the traumatising and demeaning impact of gender-based violence as these effects are revealed through short stories and poems. In most African countries, it is commonly accepted that a man may have multiple and overlapping sexual and/or polygamous relationships. It has been noted that men who are physically violent towards women are also likely to be HIV positive as seen in several short stories in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). Fear of violence often prohibits most women from disclosing their HIV status to their

partners, leading to increased risk to their health; however, women are often abused and ostracised by their husbands when the disclosure is made.

Namibia is not excluded from other countries when it comes to conventional laws and courts whose authority is controlled by traditional leaders and community leaders. These village heads are protectors of tradition and, in many cases, perpetuate patriarchal tendencies. For example, in the short story "*How women took control of their lives*" it reads;

There was a headman who was treating women terribly. No matter how pretty or hideous these women were, he treated them in a bad way that satisfied him. Women decided to protest the mistreatment of their husbands. They marched to the headman's home with banners demanding their rights. The headman told them he had no power to alter the way their society was, so they had to do what their men were saying and keep it that way. (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 207).

By interpreting the above, one can see clearly that the women were traumatised as they go back to their homes, sad, with tearful eyes and hopeless. When women attempt to dispute gender norms within the home, they are physically punished and assaulted by their spouses (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 208). Despite HIV and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, most women who demand safer sex are frequently abused and assaulted by their husbands who say that, given the circumstances, it is unfair to refuse sex to a husband after they paid "lobola." Some women believe that the *lobola* practice intensifies violence against women by projecting the idea of women as "assets" under the control and possession of their husbands.

For instance, in the short story "*Lobola should not be a punishment*," the man mentions that "I paid four heads of cattle to your family as lobola" (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 198). The woman has multiple issues with the relationship, but her parents insist that it is part of the marriage, as a result, their child is murdered by the husband. Generally, husbands exert full power over

financial decisions, and women in some families in Africa are forced to ask for small sums of cash, regardless of their income-earning status (Kim & Motsei, 2002). When women are poor, they are likely vulnerable to increased gender-based violence.

As has already been pointed out, gender-based violence has a significant health effect, especially on girls and women's physical, sexual, mental health as well as on the well-being of families and communities. The stigma associated with gender-violence also results in circumstances where its effect is obscured as a result of concerns not being addressed openly. For instance, as explained in the short story "*A break from violence*" a woman is in violent relationships where she is abused and raped, but does not tell anyone or report it to the police since she is ashamed to be stigmatised by the husband's family (IKhaxas, 2008, p. 149). Gender-based violence impacts women's reproductive autonomy and physical well-being, thus leaving them mentally and physically weakened since it consumes the victim's valuable time to attend to the GBV cases.

Another instance to note is that, in most cases, women break away from the abusive relationships and start a new life that is a bit of a struggle for them, considering that their lives relied on the husband, thus leaving them vulnerable in the process. This is evident in the short story "*A tough lesson to learn*" where it reads that;

The man stopped giving me support, and my parents relied on growing Mahangu. They could not even take care of me and my child, so I went to Windhoek (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 151).

The woman's words in the above quotation characterise someone who is alienated and detached from the man whom she relies upon for a living. The woman, therefore, feels that she has no source of income and sense of belonging, all of which have been stripped off by the man. This leads to negative effects on women, including lack of productive time, and increased exposure

to HIV and AIDS as a result of gender-based violence. Violence against women limits the willingness of women to engage effectively or entirely in development activities due to fear of harassment and abuse as seen in the short story “*How women took control of their lives*” (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 207).

4.6 The transformation of victims in reconstructing their lives and hope for a better future as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008)

The victim’s transitions were made up of different components and procedures, such as creating hope, taking responsibility, having a sense of balance in life, and developing a positive identity (Yanos, Roe & Lysaker, 2010). In the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), the narrators’ emerging life stories relate experiences to convey the past and present to give their lives and the lives of other women the consistency, meaning, and purpose to live. It is, in essence, a cycle of change characterised by personal transformation and adaptive development for a better future. The essence of transformations of victims revolve around the process of reconnecting with oneself, others, and the universe as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008).

Through the short stories and poems in the anthology, *We Must Choose Life* (2008), it was indicated that some Namibian women can cope and respond to life's challenges in a variety of ways. For example, in the short story "A break from violence" an abusive woman joins the Red Cross as a volunteer worker. The woman influences other victims to form a support group to enable them to share information about their rights. In this way, it helps other women to survive the abuse in their relationships. Equally in the short story "*Use your mind*" a woman uses her influence to warn her daughter not to obey the advice of her grandmother. This is clearly stated when she says, "Listen to what your grandmother has to say, but still use your mind to decide the right choice for you" (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 180). This is an indication that women help each

other to avoid repeating the same mistake that they have gone through and to challenge harmful cultural practices. In this case, women seek to recognise and reinforce key interpersonal communication processes that allow families to cope with and recover from the disruptive challenges they may face in the future; therefore, survival is a primary target.

Some women usually use the ability and advice of individuals or groups to face and respond to the demands of everyday life positively, despite the obstacles they face throughout their life cycle. For example, in the short story "*I still have human rights*," the woman chooses to leave her abusive marriage and returned to live with her mother. "I cannot allow another human being to abuse and dehumanise me despite living with HIV, I still have human dignity "(Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 75). Similarly, in the poem "*Leaving him*" the woman agrees to give up the violent relationship to save her life. Despite all the trauma endured in life, the woman finds courage and bounces back, gaining momentum faster than ever before.

Furthermore, in the short story "*Inheritance*" a woman's estate and the future of her children are lost. She loses all the assets of her late husband to her brothers-in-law. She had been in a vacuum with little hope because there was little light at the end of the tunnel. However, she refused to give them a death certificate for almost a year and this gave her a little hope. The mother-in-law advises her to claim the insurance money and pension. She gets all the money and shares it with the mother-in-law and the children. The car and the furniture that the brother-in-laws had taken were also part of their inheritance; " I have built a life for my children and myself with the inheritance funds " (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 209). This is a coping strategy that some women apply when a problem arises. "Self-organization creates radically new ways of working" (Baral, Stern, & Heinen, 2010, p. 3). It can be postulated that the woman is disappointed at the first instance as she is uncertain about the future of her children. She is no

longer in contact with the brothers-in-law as a result of her reconstruction in order to transform to a better future to cope with life.

Moreover, the reconstruction process is dynamic because one may reassess the severity of the hazard depending on the type of action that one may take; or one may re-evaluate one's behaviour in the event of failure to adopt a coping strategy. Action taken by some women may itself be objective since some women may react to the threat by changing what one considers to be a denial of the threats. For example, the poem “*Where were you?*” depicts the motivations that lead some women to retaliate against what some men consider to be controversial topics. This is evident when the poem reads:

*You accuse me of it,
but did you ask my husband
why he was intoxicated and forced on me?
Did I abort?
Where were you when he raped me?* (Ikhaxas, 2008, p. 138)

The above quotation depicts women being victims of rape since those events bring back the memories and it forces victims to re-live their dilemma. The poem illustrates women's frustration experienced in the hands of men. Thus, they are coming out publicly to put the blame back to men. Through the interpretation of stressful events in the poem, it has been seen that trauma and resilience theories are relevant to explaining the healing of women's pain. On the contrary, nature can also be inspiring in the poem as ecofeminism theory deals with the suffering of women from the dominant influence of a male-oriented society as seen in the poem “*Where were you?*”

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a critical analysis of gender-based violence, as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), which provided insight into how gender-based violence has affected some Namibian women, and the trauma and resilience tactics used by women to survive the violence. The anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) represents the voice of women, feelings and experiences of gender-based violence in Namibia. It elaborated extensively on how Namibian women have been exploited by men to meet the needs of men. The next chapter, Chapter 5, focuses on the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study on "when men beat women" as a form of gender-based violence in Namibia through the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The chapter summarises the results and promotes more engagement in resolving the gaps for further research.

5.2 Findings

It was the combination of the theories of Ecofeminism, Trauma and Resilience that gave birth to the discussions and analysis of the chosen literary anthology, *We Must Choose Life* (2008). The anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) can be seen as a text that ventures to reveal the painful and traumatic effects of gender based violence on women's lives in Namibia.

The study aimed to analyse the literary representations of gender-based violence under the identified specific key objectives, which were to;

- Examine the causes of gender-based violence against women as presented in the selected literary anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008);
- Investigate the implications of the gender-based violence on women as presented in the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008); and
- Explore the transformation of victims in reconstructing their lives and hope for a better future.

To analyse gender-based violence that is represented in the anthology, the researcher looked at the violence that was experienced and presented by the victims in the anthology. The researcher looked at the literary texts that were used to articulate gender-based violence with the assistance of the three theories, Ecofeminism, Trauma and Resilience. Martinez-Falquina (2015) observes

that literature is used as a medium to clarify facets of human experience which cannot be expressed in ordinary modes of speech and which may even transcend human comprehension. One might be able to assume that men have also experienced gender-based violence in the hands of women, but reading the anthology shows the lives and the abuse that focuses on the oppression of women. This study incorporates reasonably strong links verifying the capacity of literary texts to establish the relationship between women and the environment through the Ecofeminism theory.

The causes of gender-based violence as outlined in the study include; conventional traditional gender roles that promote male domination and entitlement; social norms that accept or pardon violence against women; inadequate social sanctions against perpetrators; susceptibility and high rates of violent crime. The anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008) shows how women are disenfranchised by the patriarchal society that nullifies and represses women in Namibia. Cultural beliefs empower men to feel that beating women is normal in one way or another so as to keep the Namibian women lower down the hierarchy in the society. Some men are inconsiderate of intimate feelings and thus, women are not given the chance to demand their rights.

Gender-based violence is a social justice and human rights problem with significant implications not just for women's health, but also for children and adolescents who might have witnessed the violence. The study demonstrates that victimization is a very dangerous act since it can harm individuals mentally and physiologically.

It was also revealed that some Namibian women have long-standing abusive relationships due to over-dependence on the perpetrators of violence for socio-economic support, fear of the perpetrator of reprisals, as well as cultural and religious conscience. As a result, women suffer psychologically and experience educational and economic deprivation.

In the anthology *We Must Choose Life* (2008), some women used coping strategies to survive gender-based violence in the hands of the perpetrators, which can also be described as survival skills. Women use several approaches to deal with stress, suffering, and inevitable changes encountered in their lives. Examples include finding help from friends and family or choosing to disassociate from partners. Survivors of gender-based violence seek out social support and take responsibility in planning how and when to deal with the problems they have been experiencing. Some women seek help to alleviate their stress, whereas others try to cope without revealing any information to anyone. Victims of gender-based violence deserve support from their family or friends, and they do need medical counselling so that they can confidently articulate their experience without fear of judgment by the others.

5.3 Recommendations

Literature is a powerful instrument which can alter the shape of public values. The real-life condition of human beings can be expressed by literature. It is through literature that suspicions can be researched, tested and explored to eliminate the threads that may be the stumbling blocks to people's rights. The study confirmed that most Namibian women suffer in the hands of Namibian men. As a result, this study found it necessary to concentrate on gender-based violence and how intimates interrelate within society. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the following might need further investigations:

- Further research should be performed on programs discussing gender roles and relationship problems as a tool to reduce abuse, in particular gender-based violence.
- More research can be done on "When women beat men as a form of gender-based violence".
- Research to encourage men to write an anthology that discusses gender-based violence against men in society.

- Further study to empower women to be actively involved in the development of a violence-free environment for themselves.

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