

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE  
CASE OF BENEFICIARIES OF MONICA GENDER VIOLENCE SOLUTION  
ORGANISATION IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT**

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## **Abstract**

This was a qualitative study on women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence that was conducted with women from Monica Gender Violence Solution Organisation in Katutura, Windhoek, Namibia. It was a qualitative study, in depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 12 women using structured interviews. These in depth interviews were chosen because they can produce consistent data that can be compared across a number of respondents. The literature review focused on exploring and explaining the conceptual framework of domestic violence by discussing the different standpoints explaining women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence using the Liberal and Radical Feminist theoretical framework. Women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence were contextualised from an international level to the Namibian context to aid in understanding of domestic violence as a major societal problem. The findings suggest that women are still experiencing domestic violence resulting from barriers such as fear to seek help and lack of support by their family, community and organisations that render services. Factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, religious and spiritual perceptions, family and community response towards domestic violence were found to influence one's desire to seek (or not to seek) professional help and services. Intersectional factors such as age, level of education, social class and ethnicity were found to be instrumental in impacting women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Various recommendations were made to offer solutions aimed at improving services of domestic violence organisations and to reduce domestic violence against women in Namibia. Furthermore, there is need for effective response to domestic violence through addressing the immediate practical needs of women experiencing abuse; providing long-term follow-up and assistance; grassroots primary prevention

focused on children and focusing on changing those cultural norms, attitudes and legal provisions that promote the acceptance of and even encourage violence against women.

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## **Declaration**

I, Portia Muparadzi, hereby declare that this study titled “Women’s perceptions and experiences of Domestic Violence: The case of Beneficiaries of Services of Monica Gender Violence Solution in Windhoek, Namibia” is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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**Name of Student**

**Signature**

**Date**

## **Dedication**

This research study is dedicated to all women who are experiencing domestic violence in their life.

May you gain knowledge, empowerment and strength to speak out and have the opportunity to live a peaceful life without experiencing domestic violence.

## **List of abbreviations and Acronyms**

**DHS-** Demographic Health Survey

**HDR-** Human Development Report

**HIV-** Human Immune Virus

**GBV-** Gender Based Violence

**GRN-** Government Republic of Namibia

**MGVS-** Monica Gender Violence Solution

**MOHSS-** Ministry of Health and Social Services

**UNICEF-** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

**WHO-** World Health Organisation

**IPPR-** Institute for Public Policy Research

**UN Aids-** United Nations Aid

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

This study investigated women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence in Windhoek Namibia. While domestic violence against women is generally one of the most urgent issues facing Namibian society, and despite a raft of important and largely progressive legislative reforms such as the Combating of Domestic Violence Act (2003) and the Combating of Rape Act (2000), it remains a developing crisis. Horrific acts of domestic violence are recounted on a daily basis in the country's media and most of the cases target women and are perpetrated by men. According to The Patriot Newspaper Report (2017), domestic violence is still a growing issue in Namibia as cases reported from victims who are between the ages of one to fifty years are rapidly increasing on a daily basis. The report stated that prevalent crimes usually range from sexual violence; with sexual harassment at work and physical violence being some of the cases reported.

A report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2013) indicated that about 1 in every 3 women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime and 1 out of 5 women are usually found in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the report estimated that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner not including sexual harassment at some point in their lives. Besides it was estimated that of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 globally, more than half were killed by intimate partners or family members, and 137 women across the

world are killed by a member of their own family every day. More than a third (30,000) of the women intentionally killed in 2017 was killed by their current or former intimate partner as stated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). Domestic violence against women in Africa remains rampant, not withstanding the existence of human rights or statutory laws passed by the governments. Based on the information presented above, one may note that domestic violence is a serious issue that affects women in Namibia, Africa in general and globally making it a global issue that needs to be addressed.

Domestic violence is the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another member (Webster, 2017). WHO (1997) defines domestic violence as the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners. Although domestic violence seems to be a widespread phenomenon in Namibia, little is known about the experiences and perceptions of women over the phenomenon. According to the findings of a study on domestic violence carried out in Namibia by Freeman and Kamwanyah (2015) all the women in the study experienced power imbalances and violence in their intimate relationships with emotional or psychological abuse, being subjected to economic and physical abuses, which posed potential adversity to their health, well-being and work productivity. Although some evidence about women's experiences and perceptions about domestic violence was revealed by Freeman and Kamwanyah (2015) in their study, it is limited in scope as the participants are not representative of all Namibian women. Increasing domestic violence cases in Namibia mostly affecting women have led to the establishment of organisations such as Monica Gender Violence Solutions (MGVS), which are dedicated to decrease gender based violence and support survivors of abuse, by assisting women

from all Namibian cultural, social, economic and religious backgrounds. Monica Gender Violence Solutions is a Non-governmental organisation that was founded by Shaanika Neshilongo in 2015. The organisation is situated at Hakahana Community Centre situated in Omulunga Street in Katutura an old township of Windhoek. The purpose of the organisation is to tackle gender based violence and crime by attaining social justice through workshops, counselling and community development activities that target women. Thus, this study focused on the beneficiaries from MGVS to explore their experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. The study was a qualitative investigation, whereby in depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 12 women using structured interviews. The interviews focused on the participants' unique accounts, appreciating their different experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Data was analysed through qualitative data analysis, an approach that transforms data into findings which involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals (Patton, 2002).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. This problem is not only widely dispersed geographically, but its incidence is also extensive, making it somehow a typical and accepted behaviour across societies. In Namibia for example domestic violence is common although it is difficult to get comprehensive data on the phenomenon. The Demographic and Health Survey (2013) in Namibia for instance, reveals that a third of married women have been beaten, forced to have sex, or been psychologically abused by their husbands or partners and fifteen per cent of

Namibian women who have experienced violence have never sought help or told anyone about their experiences. Hartman (as cited in Edwards-Jauch, 2016), in Namibia, the most recent reports indicate that 50 000 crimes related to gender-based violence were reported to police stations around the country, between 2012 and 2015. In the same vein Sister Namibia (2016), reveals that one out of three women has experienced violence and it is estimated that one out of five women are in an abusive relationship. This means that in Namibia, domestic violence is widespread and described as a perennial problem. This view is supported by a police report which stated that, the most prevalent crime between January and April 2013 was rape, with 122 reported cases. A report by UNAIDS (2016), also confirmed that there were approximately 1075 reported cases of rape nationwide for each year between 2009 and 2012. However, the actual number of rapes and other incidents of domestic violence is likely much higher as some victims often choose not to report the crimes due to fear of reprisal from the perpetrator, family pressure, self-blame and/or societal stigma and discrimination. Similarly, a report by The Patriot Newspaper (2017) revealed that most women who are victims believe that their husbands or boyfriends are the breadwinners, which forces them to stay in these abusive relationships as a result of benefits such as money and food. At times, low education, traditional beliefs, child exposure to violence in the family, attitudes of accepting of violence, alcohol abuse and gender inequality are some of the root causes of GBV. Furthermore, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) on the perceptions on gender equality, gender-based violence, lived poverty and basic freedoms 13% of Namibian women reported that they, or a member of their family had been a victim of domestic violence and they felt that, alcohol abuse contributed most significantly to domestic violence, followed by unemployment and poverty. Domestic violence cases have been increasing based on the above information which makes it a serious problem

that needs to be addressed. The evidence demonstrated by the information above indicates that domestic violence is a serious social problem and there is need to gain an understanding on women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence which can also aid in prevention efforts.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study was to explore women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence and the sub-objectives of the study were to:

- Explore factors accounting for domestic violence against women,
- Examine ways in which incidences of domestic violence can be reduced, and
- Explore ways in which women the women victims of violence are assisted by Monica Gender Violence Solution Organisation.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Investigations of personal experiences and experiences of domestic violence are very important as they afford women an opportunity to tell their stories about domestic violence. The study was aimed at investigating women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence in Namibia so as to contribute to literature that seeks to enhance understanding of domestic violence and ways in which to reduce incidences of domestic violence. It is therefore anticipated that this study would provide knowledge, insights and add to debates on women's experiences and perceptions about domestic violence. Furthermore, recommendations from this study may offer solutions aimed at improving services of domestic violence organisations and solutions to reduce domestic violence against women in Namibia.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The researcher struggled to find organisations with appropriate participants to investigate the research questions and for them to speak about their domestic issues, which they consider to be personal matters. To get participants to talk about domestic violence, the researcher had to seek special consent from participants and assured them of confidentiality. When participants did not want to be recorded the researcher would take notes during the interviews. In cases where privacy cannot be ensured for instance if all the rooms at the organisation were occupied, the researcher had to reschedule the interview for a different time and plan ahead in securing venues at MGVS that are safe and private. Some participants decided to drop out of the study after initially showing interest in taking part and some were not always available due to work and family commitments. This meant the researcher had to keep looking for new participants to meet the desired sample size and additionally had to resort to telephonic interviews for some data gathering. Telephone interviews have been used to collect qualitative data to inform or explain more traditional survey results (Martins, 2005) and to access populations that might be difficult to reach in person or by other means. Hence, the data collection process took longer than anticipated. Time to finish the investigation, the lack of resources such as transportation, materials and other expenses were other limitations to the study. The researcher effectively managed time by reducing unnecessary expenses and tried to work at one venue. The researcher did not intend to make promises with the participants of the study but explained that their participation was going to help find the answer to the research questions and contribute to enhancement of understanding of domestic violence and the relevant policies to curb violence in Namibia.

## **1.6 Delimitation of the study**

The study focused on the experiences and perceptions of women beneficiaries of services at Monica Gender Violence Solution. It thus excluded women and men victims of domestic violence who were not benefiting from services of MGVS.

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

This section provides an outline of the chapters in this thesis to give the reader a synoptic view of the whole study.

**Chapter One:** *Introduction:* this chapter provided an overview of the study by introducing the background of the study, the problem statement, objective and significance of the study and spelt out the limitations and delimitations of the study.

**Chapter Two:** *Literature review and theoretical framework:* the researcher discussed the literature review and the theoretical framework on women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence with relevant literature and definitions.

**Chapter Three:** *Research methods:* focused on the research methodology, outlining the research design, population sample, research instruments, how the study was conducted and the procedures followed, data analysis and research ethics that guided the study.

**Chapter Four:** *Data analysis, presentation and discussion of research findings:* This chapter presented the main findings and discussion of women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence that were revealed in the data analysis and presentation.

**Chapter Five:** *Recommendations and conclusions:* This chapter discussed the study purpose review, offered recommendations, arrears for further research and concluded the study.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitations and delimitation and outline of the thesis. It also contextualised the study to demonstrate its relevance. The next chapter focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework used by the researcher, to shed more light on understanding women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review and the theoretical framework**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the literature review and the theoretical framework on women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. According to Creswell (2012), literature review describes the past and current state of information about an issue. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) further state that a literature review contributes to a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of issues by putting a researcher's efforts into perspective, while situating the topic in a larger knowledge pool. Therefore, this literature review describes past and current information about women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. It further contributes to a clearer understanding of the nature of women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence situating the topic in a larger knowledge pool of the Namibian, African and worldwide context. The reasons and effects of domestic violence have been studied widely in Namibia, but there is limited research on women's perceptions and experiences which prompted the researcher on the referred aspects. The study underscores that findings from a study carried out in Namibia by Freeman and Kamwanyah (2015) had some evidence on women's experiences and perceptions about domestic violence. However, the evidence is limited in scope as the participants were not representative of all Namibian women since the participants were only from employees of an airline business.

Namibia, officially the Republic of Namibia, is a country in southern Africa with a population of 2.1 million people, eleven different ethnic groups and a stable multi-party parliamentary

democracy, agriculture, pastoralism, tourism and the mining industry for gem diamonds, uranium, gold, silver, and base metals form the basis of Namibia's economy.

## **2.2 Definition of terms**

### **2.2.1 Domestic violence**

This study focused on reviewing literature on domestic violence which is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour that is used by one intimate partner to gain and maintain power and control over another partner which can involve violence such as physical assault, hitting, kicking, punching, choking, slapping, biting, throwing things and shoving which can end up in death (Newman & Newman, 2008). According to UNICEF (2000), the term domestic violence includes violence against women and girls by an intimate partner, including a cohabiting partner, and other family members, whether this violence occurs within or beyond the confines of the home. In the Namibian context, the Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 maintains that domestic violence is any act of physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, trespassing, emotional verbal or psychological abuse and threats or attempts to violate someone in a domestic relationship. A domestic relationship is further explained as a relationship by marriage, cohabitation, two people who are parents of a child, parent and child, family members with some domestic connection, boyfriend and girlfriend who have lasted for one year after being in the relationship. Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 have established that there are different forms of domestic violence which can include physical violence/abuse, sexual violence/abuse, economic control/abuse, psychological assault including threats of violence and physical harm, attacks against property or pets, acts of intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, and use of the children as a means of control, economic abuse, harassment,

trespass, emotional verbal or psychological and threats or attempts as forms of abuse(Domestic Violence Act 4, 2003). As mentioned in the studies discussed before according to Hartman (2016) (as cited in Edwards-Jauch, 2016 and Sister Namibia a feminist women’s rights organisation in Namibia (2016) domestic violence cases keep increasing in incidence. However, the evidence does not provide estimations on boys and men who are subjected to domestic violence, which can be a result of lack of reporting when it comes to such cases. The researcher acknowledges that men may also be victims of domestic violence, however women statistically remain the primary victims in heterosexual relationships and they are more likely than men to be physically injured, spend time recuperating from abuse-related injuries, report fear of their partner's violence, and report feeling depressed as a result of the violence they experience. Given that the preponderance of victims of domestic violence is women, this research study focuses on women’s experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. The evidence demonstrates that domestic violence is a serious social problem in Namibia and there is need to gain an understanding on women’s experiences and perceptions of domestic violence which can also aid in prevention efforts.

## **2.2.2 Types of domestic violence**

### **2.2.2.1 Physical violence/abuse**

The Domestic Violence Act 4, (2003) states that physical violence involves the use of physical force against another person. Examples include hitting, shoving, grabbing, biting, restraining, shaking, choking, burning, forcing drug/alcohol use, and assault with a weapon. Physical violence can result in an injury that requires medical attention, assault or any use of physical force against the complainant, such as confining or detaining by force, locking the complainant

in a room, or refusing to let the complainant go to work, depriving the complainant of access to food, water, clothing, shelter or rest. However, what constitutes violence depends on contexts for in some cases, physical violence is perceived as a private matter that is not seen as domestic violence to be publicised or even to seek legal action in some societies. Investigations found that one in three women reported experiencing physical violence during their lifetime, and that rural women are slightly more likely than urban women to have experienced such violence. In addition, it was found that women with no education are more likely than women with some education to have experienced physical violence. Current and former spouses are the most common perpetrators of physical violence (Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), 2014).

According to Wahlstrom (1996), one Namibian study found that 21% of women who had experienced physical violence from intimate partners had never told anyone about it and those who did tended to talk only to family or friends; only 10%-20% of these women had reported their cases to the police, and about 21% had gone to a hospital or health centre. MoHSS (2004) study found that over 60% of the women who experienced physical violence from intimate partners had never sought help from any agency. Some victims are reluctant to speak out about incidents of domestic violence as a result of the social stigma attached to abuse and the potential shame to the family. A participant in a focus group discussion in the Ohangwena Region stated that most people in married relationships prefer to suffer in silence since they are traditionally taught not to reveal problems within their marriages (Wahlstrom, 1996). Based on such information one may conclude that physical violence might not be seen or perceived as violence

in different contexts based on the women's culture, social stigma and tradition while women experience it.

#### **2.2.2.2 Sexual violence/ abuse**

Sexual violence, according to the Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 involves the violation of an individual's bodily integrity (sexual assault), including coercive sexual contact, rape, and prostitution, as well as any unwelcome sexual behaviour (sexual harassment), including treating someone in a sexually demeaning manner or any other conduct of a sexual nature, whether physical, verbal, or non-verbal. Sexual abuse also includes behaviour which limits reproductive rights, such as preventing use of contraceptive methods, forcing abortion, forcing someone to engage in any sexual contact and engaging in sexual conduct that abuses, humiliates or degrades the complainant. An example of such conduct is a man who touches his wife's breasts openly at family gatherings whilst making insulting comments about her breast size. Making someone look at sexual material, such as pornographic magazines or websites, abuses, humiliates, or degrades them, engaging in abusive, humiliating or degrading sexual contact or conduct with another person with whom the complainant has emotional ties, such as a family member or close friend (Domestic Violence Act 4, 2003).

Scholars have pointed out that what constitutes violence depends on contexts, historical, cultural, social and legal history in a society. According to Kalra and Bhugra (2013), sexual violence is likely to occur more commonly in cultures that foster beliefs of perceived male superiority, social and cultural inferiority of women. Although culture is an important factor to understand sexual violence in its entirety, it plays an important role in how certain populations and societies

view, perceive and process sexual acts as well as sexual violence. Tjombe (2006) of the Legal Assistance Centre in Namibia points out that domestic violence exists as a result of patriarchal power. Although there is an ever-increasing globalisation of media influences, sexual violence and alcohol use, sexual violence continues to occur in cultures where such influences are minimised.

The problems of rape, sexual violence and aggression are seen as manifestations of deeper and more complex conflicts, possibly exacerbated by historical legacies of oppression and powerlessness. History also constitutes violence in Namibia looking at sexual violence which was part of the colonisation process of subjugation during the German colonial period. Indigenous women were raped, abducted, forcibly removed to other areas of the territory and murdered (Moshenberg, 2012). Such occurrences which were witnessed by the local man influenced the way men view and treat women resulting in them also being perpetrators of sexual violence experienced by women. Retief and Green's (2015) study found that complaints of marital rape were not often received but on the few occasions a complaint was made it was generally accompanied by other forms of abuse that are often more difficult to prove in a situation where victims seldom report marital rape, when they report, emotional abuse or other forms of abuse are involved but they are not so easy to identify. This resonates with findings by Parenzee and Smythe (2003) who maintain that sexual abuse often goes hand in hand with physical and emotional abuse, but are not reported as frequently by victims. The failure to report all sexual abuse as indicated by the findings, is however in agreement with the estimate of Simpson and Kraak (1999) who found that annually at least 1, 2 million South African women are likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know. This infrequent reporting clearly

indicates that sexual abuse continues to be under-reported in Africa whilst women are experiencing it. The 2013 DHS found that 7% of women had experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, and that urban women are slightly more likely than rural women to have experienced sexual violence. Increasing education is linked to decreasing experiences of sexual violence. Current and former spouses are the most common perpetrators of sexual violence, followed by strangers (MoHSS & NSA, 2014).

### **2.2.2.3 Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse according to the Domestic Violence Act 4 (2003) is characterised as intimidation, threats of harm, and isolation by an intimate partner. Instilling fear in an intimate partner through threatening behaviour, such as damaging property or abusing pets, constant supervision, or controlling what the victim does and who they talk to, is psychological abuse. Spiritual abuse may be included under psychological abuse, whereby the perpetrator misuses spiritual or religious beliefs to manipulate or exert power and control over an intimate partner. Walker (1984) defines psychological abuse as all behaviour that undermines a partner's self-esteem or sense of control and safety. In this definition, abuse is defined by the felt consequences of the victim, if the victim felt diminished or controlled by the perpetrator, he or she was a victim of psychological abuse, even if the perpetrator had no conscious intention to harm the person. According to Mberira (2016), there is a general lack of consensus regarding which particular behaviour constitute psychological abuse. Several researchers (Walker 1984; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1992) have attempted to define psychological abuse in intimate relationships and have created scales of psychologically abusive items based on research literature and anecdotal information. Through multiple conceptual lenses, researchers have defined and identified

psychological abuse as the felt consequences of the perpetrator's behaviour, the intent of the abuser, and the impartial judgment of outsiders on the deleterious impact of one person's behaviour on another person's psychological state. Furthermore, Chikuhwa (2011) maintains that psychological abuse is very difficult to prove and therefore evidence in such cases is often lacking. This has an impact on how psychological abuse is viewed not only by society at large but also by those people experiencing the abuse. Researchers have suggested that a great percentage of abuse in intimate relationships is psychological rather than physical (Kazdin & Painter, 1992). An understanding of psychological abuse is important as it often precedes physical abuse since it is very difficult to prove. This study focused on how women perceive and experience psychological abuse the way it is defined by the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003).

#### **2.2.2.4 Emotional and verbal abuse**

According to the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003), emotional abuse involves undermining an individual's sense of self-worth which includes constant criticism, name-calling, embarrassing, mocking, humiliating, and treating someone like a servant. This requires a pattern of seriously degrading or humiliating behaviour towards the complainant, a family member or a dependant of the complainant, such as repeated insults or causing emotional pain. Robinson (2013) states that emotional abuse is the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal acts or behaviour which results in harm to a person's self-concept and mental being subjected to behaviours such as verbal abuse, continual rejection, withdrawal of affection, physical or social isolation and harassment or intimidation. Women have been experiencing emotional abuse and are still victims as was revealed by the study.

#### **2.2.2.5 Economic abuse**

Economic abuse, as is stated by the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003) involves making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser, unreasonably depriving the complainant of goods or money which she needs to live, reasonably expects to use or has a legal right to use and unreasonably selling, destroying or damaging property in which the complainant has an interest or a reasonable expectation of use. Despite its prevalence, intimate partner economic abuse has received less scholarly attention in sub-Saharan Africa. Economic abuse occurs in a variety of forms, including extortion, denial of income-earning activity, and attempts to deny women's economic independence and financial self-sufficiency. Findings point to the pervasiveness of economic abuse among both high and low income women. While economic dependency among nonworking women was associated with sexual violence, working and independent women experienced physical and emotional violence on questioning intimate partner's economic abuse (Sedziafa, Tenkorang, Owusu & Sano, 2016). Unfortunately, economic violence results in deepening poverty, compromises educational attainment and developmental opportunities for women. It leads to physical violence, promotes sexual exploitation and the risk of contracting HIV infection, maternal morbidity and mortality, as well as trafficking of women and girls. Economic abuse may continue even after the woman has left the abusive relationship (Olufunmilayo, 2008), as a result of women's dependence on men as a source of income.

#### **2.2.2.6 Intimidation**

Intimidation is intentionally making the complainant afraid for herself, or afraid for another family member or dependant, by threatening to physically abuse the complainant physically, or threatening to abuse, a family member or dependant of the complainant and exhibiting a weapon,

or any other behaviour that seems threatening (Domestic Violence Act, 2003). In the same vein, Retief and Green (2014) generally appear to view intimidation as very difficult to prove as victims who experienced this form of abuse had difficulty putting a name to what was happening to them and often no action could be taken. Jewkes (2001) notes that only when victims know what is happening to them will they be better able to take action or get help. None of the participants reported having to deal with intimidation only, as it was always encountered in conjunction with other forms of abuse, most frequently emotional or psychological abuse.

#### **2.2.2.7 Harassment**

This is repeatedly following or communicating with the complainant, a family member or dependant of the complainant in an unwelcome way as is defined by the Domestic Violence Act of (2003). It includes watching the person, or loitering nearby, calling the person, including silent phone calls and sending letters, email, other messages or objects and if the perpetrator gets someone else to take any of these actions (Domestic Violence Act, of 2003). Women often show a great level of tolerance to harassment and violence since they have been socialised into submissive gender roles; others lack the assertiveness to resist or are ignorant about their sexual and reproductive rights, as a result it often goes unreported and exposes women to experiencing more violence.

#### **2.2.2.8 Trespass**

Trespassing is entering the home or property of the complainant, without the complainant's consent, where the complainant and defendant do not share the same home, (Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003).

### **2.3 Theoretical framework explanations of domestic violence**

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The selection of the theories depended on their appropriateness, ease of application, and explanatory power to explain women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Holloway and Wheeler (2010) claim that feminist theories have developed a research methodology and are underpinned by theories and multiple constructions about women's perspectives of oppression and consciousness. Thus the study applied the Liberal and Radical Feminist Theory to explain domestic violence in addressing the research study.

#### **2.3.1 Liberal Feminism**

Lederman and Bartsch (2001) observe that Liberal Feminism is the belief that women are suppressed in contemporary society as they suffer unjust discrimination. Liberal feminists define domestic violence by stating that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing. If the certain enabling conditions are not present in women's lives and if the social arrangements fail to respect women's personal autonomy and their flourishing, it results in them experiencing domestic violence. In agreement Baehr (2013) notes that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and those conditions lack legitimacy since women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination. Liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits for women are due to the gender system (Okin, 1999), or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, that the women's

movement should work to identify and remedy them. The absence of equal conditions and enabling systems in society can result in women experiencing domestic violence.

According to Folami (2013), liberal feminism provides a deeper understanding of gender-related issues such as exclusion, inequality, repression, oppression, prejudice and imbalance in patriarchal societies. The liberal feminist theory has its root in the social inequality theory of Karl Marx and provides the basis for the global movements for women's emancipation and respect of their natural and civil rights. Liberal feminism, also known as egalitarian or mainstream feminism, is considered the most moderate branch of feminist theory. It is based on the simple proposition that all people are created equal and should not be socially, politically and economically denied rights on basis their gender (Beneria, 2003). Men and women would benefit by the elimination of sexism. Liberal feminism is based on enlightenment beliefs of rationality, education, and the natural rights that extend to all men and women (Alvarez, 1998).The theory provides a quintessential approach to the understanding of relationships between men and women both in the public and private spheres of society. It is assumed that gender inequality, gender repression, gender oppression, gender discrimination and gender prejudice are products of individual ignorance which results in women experiencing domestic violence (Bettie, 2000). Women are seen as a form of private property owned by men through the institution of marriage. Women become free from their shackles of violence and abuse when patriarchy has been dismantled. Invariably, patriarchy is not the only factor shaping social divisions which affect the behaviour of men and women. Other factors such as ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds tend to play a significant role (Rosenblum, 2010) in causing women experience domestic

violence. Considering all of this evidence, it seems that absence of certain conditions in society and communities exposes women to experiencing domestic violence.

### **2.3.2 Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism is based on women's own experiences and needs which use the concept of patriarchy to argue that man's power is not confined to the public worlds of economic and political activity but that it characterises all relationships between sexes that is sustained by certain cultures (Bryson, 2003). According to Leburu & Phetlho-Thekisho (2015), to explain domestic violence, radical feminism focuses on one aspect of culture namely, patriarchy. Attempts are made to highlight how patriarchy is bred through the socialisation process, which begins in the family and how patriarchy infiltrates into other sectors of society like religion, education, the economy and politics. The main argument put forth by radical feminism is that patriarchy leads to gender inequality and subordination of women to the extent that females do not have control over their sexuality, resulting in them experiencing domestic violence. Additionally, radical feminists define patriarchy as a social system in which men appropriate all social roles and keep women in subordinate positions. They further state that this social system has managed to survive for so long as its chief psychological weapon is its universality and its longevity (Kambarami, 2006).

Martinez (2012) focused on domestic violence against women, as a response to hegemonic feminists of the Second Wave in the USA (1970–85). Initially, this violence was explained by the biological difference between men and women, a difference ultimately used as a basis for the origin of the patriarchal system. The use of violence against women came to be associated with the social and sexual control of women by men in patriarchal societies. As a result, hegemonic

feminists of the Second Wave assert the following about domestic violence: 1) it is associated with biological differences between men and women, a difference which is fundamental to patriarchal systems; 2) it is unilateral, that is, only men commit acts of violence against women, and it affects all women irrespective of age, social class, education, or national origin; and 3) it is an expression of power that men hold over women in patriarchal societies. Radical feminists claimed the issues of rape and domestic violence came from Kate Millett in her 1970 classic (Millett, 1970) where it is argued that sex, like race, is a status category with political implications. It is the basis upon which one group of men controls other women. In patriarchal societies, sexual dominance is the most pervasive ideology and the most fundamental concept of power. Millett (1970) argues that, patriarchy like racism and colonialism relies on the use of force for its maintenance. Rape is one example of this type of force which is classified as sexual abuse under domestic violence experienced by women. The evidence presented in this section suggests that patriarchy contributes to women experiencing domestic violence.

#### **2.4 Culture and domestic violence**

The different ethnic groups in Namibia have got different cultural beliefs with different cultural tenets that have likelihood to promote and cause violence. Webster (2017) defines culture as the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. As culture may be seen as an organising concept which provides meaning for human activities (Rosman & Rubel 2001), this study is interested in the conditions that culture either creates or provides which impact women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Cultural conditions may be seen as referring to qualities and states of human and social life that have been impacted upon or created by

culturally motivated values, practices or events (Wamalia et al., 1999). Culture, as a set of values and expectations representing a particular world view, impacts on what people do, what they do not do and on their moral judgement regarding what is done and not done. Hence, the conditions that culture creates or provides represent material, social, political, human and economic possibilities or limitations (Okere, 1996). Culture is made up of the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group and the characteristic features of everyday existence such as diversions or a way of life shared by people in a place or time. According to Government Republic of Namibia Report (1997) in traditional African culture men held the power, with women being viewed as subordinated beings who had no say in their daily lives, families and communities. Women had no choice about their sexual desires, or a voice in community politics though males, inherit through their mothers. Men and women lived according to their culturally prescribed gender roles, which accommodated everyone in a secure, though unequal, position. New concepts of gender equality arrived with the new dispensation after the attainment of independence or liberation. African tradition and gender equality seems to be eternal foes which can be attributed to as the cause of women experiencing domestic violence (GRN, 1997).

Cultural patterns of male dominance and female submission also play a role in Namibia as was pointed out by Hubbard (1998) who observes that there are words for domestic violence in most Namibian languages (except Oshiwambo) which shows that it is a common practice. However, it would be simplistic to say that abuse is an accepted cultural practice. While some people maintained that men have the right to beat their wives under certain circumstances, others stated that such violence is wrong and contrary to the cultural practices of their communities even

though it occurs anyway. It may be that, what is considered to be violence in one community is not viewed as violence in another. Women in Oshiwambo culture strongly rejected the idea that wife battery is done in order to show love is an integral part of their culture (Hubbard, 1998). They are adamant that women do not expect or ask for it. Without exception, women in Uukwambi and Ondonga cultures have heard of this alleged cultural belief but they unequivocally refute it. Female informants thought that in the past women might have expected that type of behaviour, but they made it clear that Oshiwambo women in the 1990s have strong objections to it. In contrast, men were divided in their perceptions where some men agree with the women's perspective, while other men claim that women expect beatings as a sign of love. There are no differences of perception along the lines of age thus, if ever this cultural trait had been internalised by women in the Oshiwambo cultural groups, they have abandoned the belief long ago. Men, perhaps unwittingly, perpetuate a cultural belief in order to justify violent behaviour. In court cases in Namibia, some men have defended the maiming or killing of female partners as their perceived right to chastise a woman, which is allegedly part of their distinct culture. In some Namibian cultures, some people believe that a woman would expect beatings from her husband to feel loved (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000).

Misunderstanding of culture and cultural misinterpretations, such as believing that it is customary for a man to beat up his wife, are argued to be sources of domestic violence. However, one can argue that many African countries did not have specific laws in place to prohibit domestic violence or prosecute abusers which resulted in women experiencing domestic violence. According to Bowman (2003), some African countries have laws that allow abusers to justify their acts of violence. In Nigeria, for example, a husband may lawfully beat his wife for

the purpose of “correcting” her, as long as the beating does not result in “grievous harm” (Cantalupo, Martin, Pak & Shin, 2006) which exposes women to experiencing domestic violence and viewing it as normal. However, people from the various Namibian cultures said that domestic violence was always wrong and against cultural practices, but that it occurred anyway. There are words for domestic violence in most Namibian languages, for instance ‘ondatumisire ponganda’ in Otjiherero, ‘oupika’ in Oshiwambo, and ‘upika’ (making your wife or child a slave) in Rukavango, which indicates that such behaviour was not acceptable (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000). Based on such information one can note that culture cannot be used as one of the contributing factors for women to experience domestic violence. There are also some African cultures which do not tolerate violence as a result of certain notions as taboos or *zviera* about their cultural practices. Taboos or *zviera* refer to statements that forbid certain forms of behaviour in children and adults (Tatira, 2000). Each taboo prohibits certain forms of behaviour and gives the reason for such prohibition. According to Makaudze and Shoko (2015), African cultures as the Shona from Zimbabwe and Venda from South Africa, have always had certain taboos which do not tolerate violence against women. Among the Shona and Venda, every woman was a mother to someone and invariably, no one ever wanted to lose them, thus the Shona and Venda children were taught the importance of women from a very tender age. The taboos also brought out the significance of women as wives in African life. Boys especially, were warned against doing things that would result in the harm and death of their wives. In the Shona and Venda cultures, a wife brought respect and honour to a man (such that he could not be installed a chief before marriage), making it deplorable and difficult or even impossible for anyone to harass, beat, or ill-treat their wives. The image of women and wives in Shona child socialisation is that women are very special beings, whose death was very costly and could result

in dire consequences for anyone who violates women. In view of such findings mentioned, these studies clearly indicate that to some extent there is no relationship between culture and women experiencing domestic violence as some African cultures do not tolerate domestic violence as opposed to those that promote violence against women.

## **2.5 Patriarchy and domestic violence**

Domestic violence is closely related to the nature and structure of the family. African societies are deeply patriarchal and the family space has always functioned as the realm of male dominance over women and children. Patriarchy as a concept, has been defined and recreated by feminists, in their quest to understand and analyse the origins and situation of the domination of women by men. As such it has been used by feminists to refer to the systematic organisation of male supremacy and female subordination according to Olabisi, Sesay & Odebiyi (1998). Ferreira, Asante & Mazama (2005) further describe patriarchy as a system that is both oppressive and discriminatory in the sense that it is oppressive in all areas of society, including social, economic, political and cultural in its control of access to power, management of resources and benefits, and the manipulation of public and private power structures. Similarly, Walby (1990) describes patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Cockburn, Giles & Hyndman (2004) also describes patriarchy as a system, in which leadership, authority, aggressiveness and responsibility reside in men and masculinity; while nurture, compliance, passivity and dependence are the part of women and femininity. The descriptions taken together describe patriarchy as a system that supports the domination of man over women which can contribute to women experiencing domestic violence from their husbands or partners. Nonetheless, there can still be an argument if women experience

domestic violence as a result of other factors that are not caused by the domination of man over women.

Namibia is a multicultural country, mostly patriarchal with the belief in the men's right to demonstrate their masculinity by strength and even abuse which has been tolerated for too long. Despite many cultural practices that are caring and uplifting, Namibian society is riddled with degrading and unacceptable ways of men exercising control over their intimate partners (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000). If males exercise control over their female partners there can be a link between patriarchy and domestic violence. Writing in the context of Nigeria, Dogo (2014) notes that the present Nigerian society, like most of Africa, is patriarchal in nature with attendant unequal gender relations which cast women in a subordinate position. However, African scholars have contended and still do, that it was not always that way, but that it became patriarchal as a result of the introduction of external factors like the religions of Islam and Christianity, colonialism and education. It is believed that most of African society, including Nigeria, was matriarchal in nature, so the claims of western writers to the contrary may be incorrect.

According to Engels (1962), the emergence of male domination can be traced to the society in antiquity when mother-right was overthrown and patriarchy instituted in its place. Engels (1962) work was based on the works of Johann Jakob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan who both believed that society today evolved from a matriarchal base. Their ethnographic research worked on the ancient Native American ethnic groups of the Iroquois which led them to postulate that matriarchy was the earliest form of societal institution, not patriarchy (Dogo, 2014). According

to Diop (1989), Africa, which represented the southern cradle, was a place where the matriarchal family, territorial state, emancipation of women in domestic life, the ideal of peace and justice, goodness and optimism were valued. Patriarchy got further entrenched by the coming and introduction of Christianity and the secular presence of Europe in Africa through colonisation which was attendant by land rights, naming after father, monogamy and the class of western elites and moral contact with the West (Amaduime, 1987). Conversely, Diop (1989) argues that patriarchy came to Africa with the coming of Islam in the 10th century and it remained on the surface level and did not penetrate the deep basic matriarchal systems of the society. Nevertheless, based on the majority of scholars portrayed in this study, one may conclude that the coming of patriarchy to Africa brought its attendant characteristics such as the subjugation of women and specific gender roles. The evidence reviewed here suggests that there is a link between patriarchy and women experiencing domestic violence.

### **2.5.1 Nexus between colonialism and patriarchy**

In Africa the nexus between colonialism and patriarchy is difficult to assess because content-wide generalisations are clearly impossible. Parpart (1995) examining the relationships in post-independence Zimbabwe drawing on the various theoretical approaches for analysing the development of women, particularly the insights of both postmodernist feminism and the gender and development perspective, discussed the economic changes in Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980. It indicated the impact of these changes on women's employment and educational opportunities, and the degree to which patriarchal structures and ideas have continued or failed to restrict women's economic and political opportunities. Furthermore, male violence has also been linked with the harmful impact of historical processes that have

disadvantaged black African people, including, colonialism and apartheid as was the case, in South Africa, (Mekgwe, 2008; Msimang, 2002). These scholars have argued that colonial administrators mobilised African patriarchy in order to control women and make them dependent on men. From this perspective, domestic violence experienced by women may be viewed as a manifestation of patriarchy in a context in which cultural norms enable the abuse of women (Gasa, 2007). From these studies, there is a connection between colonialism and patriarchy since the economic changes brought about by colonialism resulted in patriarchy that causes domination of women by man which leads to women experiencing domestic violence.

As an African society, one of the challenges faced by women in contemporary Namibian society is lack of power and unequal access to property which limits their ability to strive for gender equality within their personal and social spheres of life. There are many social structural factors that contribute to gender inequality in Namibia related to their historical past that discriminated against women at all levels of society and cultural customs that reinforced it. The Namibian cultures view women as second-class citizens and property of men whereby from early childhood girls are socialised to act emotionally, mentally and physically weaker than boys. These gender stereotypes reinforce social and cultural norms of patriarchy leading to many women believing that men are biologically superior to women and thus they should have all the rights of control (Lebeau, Ipinge & Conteh, 2004). Considering all this evidence one may propose that gender inequality against women is connected to domestic violence when women are viewed as property and are expected to be weaker than boys from an earlier stage. Inequality against women which is connected to domestic violence is further explained by structural and systemic violence.

Structural violence is the violence of injustice and inequity embedded in ubiquitous social structures which are normalised by stable institutions and regular experience (Winter & Leighton, 2001). By structures it means social relations and arrangements as economic, political, legal, religious, or cultural that shape how individuals and groups interact within a social system which include broad-scale cultural and political-economic structures such as caste, patriarchy, slavery, apartheid, colonialism, and neoliberalism, as well as poverty and discrimination by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and migrant/refugee states. In such systems it can be noted that structures as patriarchy, poverty and discrimination contributes to women experiencing domestic violence. Similarly, Sinha, Gupta, Singh and Srivastava (2017) state that violence against women has taken the form of a global epidemic which has taken its toll on the physical, psychological, sexual, and economic life of the female. A woman has to face violence in one form or the other throughout her entire lifespan, be it from her parents, her husband, later in life by her son and other relatives. Women are subjected to structural violence which ranges from sexism, rape, domestic violence, to psychological violence, and other acts of violence resulting from the social structures. Montesanti and Thurston (2015) in the same vein found that structural violence was manifested in the form of crumbling social support programmes and policies that had provided essential support to women in violent situations, and which forced some women to return to their abusive situation. Zizek (2008) also complements the fact that systematic violence is as a result of economic and political systems in a society that can also result in women experiencing domestic violence. Heise (1994) further explains the causes of domestic violence portraying structural systems that contribute to domestic violence. Economic systems as women's economic dependence on men, limited access to cash and credit, discriminatory laws

regarding property, limited access to employment and education are all economic systems that can contribute to women experiencing domestic violence. Political systems as under-representation of women in power, politics and media, family being private and not controlled by the state and risk of challenge to the laws in a state can contribute to domestic violence. Collectively this information can conclude that inequality exposes women to experiencing structural and systematic violence which all can be viewed as domestic violence.

Crime and deviance are also social constructions that have been used to explain the development of domestic violence and its relation with other forms of deviance. According to Norwood, Jouriles, Macdonald and Swank (2004), such deviance encompasses behaviour other than domestic violence, such as theft, fraud, violence toward nonfamily members, and illicit substance use that is criminal, antisocial, or otherwise in violation of the prevailing community norms. Theorists and researchers have speculated that men's domestic violence is but one expression of a general tendency to engage in deviant behaviour (Simons, Wu, Johnson & Conger 1995). Rooted in general theories of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), this view maintains that domestic violence, like other criminal or antisocial behaviour, might best be explained by theories that invoke general explanatory principles such as low self-control or antisocial behaviour traits. Such theories suggest that domestic violence and other forms of deviant behaviour should be associated. Such an association would be indicated by a greater prevalence of deviant behaviour among men who engage in domestic violence compared with those who do not. Based on such studies and information one can maintain that crime and deviance are social constructions that can be associated with perpetrators of domestic violence.

## **2.6 Power**

Weber (1947) defines power as the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them. Power is identified as being either authoritative or coercive. Authoritative power is exercising power which is seen as legitimate and effective since those who are subject to the power do so with consent. In contrast, coercion is where someone exercises power through force, forcing someone to do something against their wishes. According to the Namibia Human Development Report (2000), the power dynamics of a situation is common in many forms of violence. Acts of violence against a partner, spouse, child, elder or disabled family member are not simply acts of aggression or injury committed by one family member against another, but involves a dimension of power abuse in which the more powerful person takes advantage of less powerful family members. Women's lack of power and gender inequalities is at the root of domestic violence against women, as is indicated by the evidence above.

### **2.6.1 Forms in which power appears in Namibia**

UNICEF (2007) pointed out that attitudinal survey in Namibia showed that many men still viewed their partners as their property and that they have every right to use violence to gain obedience. In a survey done in 2000, 44% of Namibian men agreed that wife-beating is justified for one or more reasons while in Caprivi Region, the proportion was an overwhelming 91%. Though domestic violence is well protected in terms of legislation, it is still a hidden subject, hardly discussed even within family circles and hence, difficult to capture in quantitative surveys. The evidence can clearly indicate that in Namibia men exercise more power against women in various ways and forms that result in women experiencing domestic violence.

### **2.6.2 Nexus between colonialism and African power**

Colonialism refers to the establishment of political and economic control by one state over another and it had an enormous impact on Africa. Middleton (2002) notes that the colonial experience began in the late 1400s, when Europeans arrived and set up trading ports in Africa, reaching a peak in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when European powers dominated many parts of the continent. Colonialism in Africa created nations and shaped their political, economic, and cultural development. Colonial rule disrupted the traditional political and social institutions that had developed in Africa over centuries. As Europeans carved out empires, they destroyed existing kingdoms and split up or combined many ethnic groups. In time, the colonies they created became African nations consisting of diverse groups with little in common with their fellow citizens. Furthermore, European powers destroyed much of the political and social control of traditional African chiefs and rulers. They failed, however, to establish lasting replacements for these authorities introducing Africans to various aspects of Western culture according to Middleton (2002). Sheldon (2018) further points out that during the colonial period women lost their power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops and their exclusion from the global marketplace. Even further, men and international commerce benefited as they were able to rely to some extent on women's unremunerated labour. The dynamics varied from place to place, whereby in some areas, the introduction of cash crops led to changes in women's agricultural work and in men's and women's control over land. By losing control from exclusion over various issues in day to day life, it could indicate that women are exposed to gender inequality and experiencing domestic violence for the reason of the connection between colonialism and African power.

## **2.7 Women's experiences of domestic violence**

Experience is defined as the process of doing, seeing things and of having things happen to you, skill or knowledge that you get by doing something and the length of time that you have spent doing something (Webster, 2017). Women's experience of domestic violence is critical if we are to clearly understand what happens during the time they endure domestic violence and how long they go through the violence which can aid to understand and address the research problem.

## **2.8 Women's perceptions of domestic violence**

Webster (2017) defines perception as the way one thinks about or understands someone or something, the ability to understand or notice something easily and the way that one notices or understands something using one of their senses. The reason why we need to study women's perceptions of domestic violence rests in that these perceptions are heavily influenced by judgments about the desired quality of life which is considered to be under threat. Simply put, if people think that the quality of life desired by them is under threat or they do not have the desired quality of life, then it means there is a social problem. Attitudes towards men's violence against women shape both the perpetration of violence against women and responses to this violence by the victim and others around her. No less significantly, the ways in which a problem is perceived and judged strongly affects the kind of solution suggested (Manning & Swaffield, 2008). Women's perceptions of domestic violence are important to understand the definition of domestic violence, how they understand the problem and the possible solution they think is most appropriate.

## **2.9 Women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence at broader level**

Domestic violence against women is a global phenomenon. It cuts across all cultures, religions, and socioeconomic groups and touches on fundamental issues of power, gender, and sexuality. Domestic violence against women is a global public health issue, which is embedded in society and pervades all socio economic, gender and cultural groups, and has a devastating impact on the lives of survivors (WHO, 2005). Understanding women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence at a broader level can provide helpful inputs in framing country-specific programmes and policies to prevent violence against women and aid in understanding the definition of domestic violence. To show how women are experiencing domestic violence globally at a broader level, a review of 50 population-based studies carried out in 36 countries indicated that between 10 and 60% of women who have ever been married or partnered have experienced at least one incident of physical violence from a current or former intimate partner (Heise, Ellsberg, Gottmoeller, 2002). Taken together, this information can show that domestic violence is a global phenomenon that is experienced globally. However perceptions on the phenomenon can be different based on context and culture. Extensive research and studies on perceptions and experiences of domestic violence will continue to show that domestic violence against women is a world-wide issue that is experienced all over the world.

## **2.10 Women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence in Africa**

Though domestic violence gained public attention across the continents of the world in the 18th century, its acceptance as a public issue in Africa is relatively recent with studies about partner abuse beginning to appear in the mid-1990's (Vetten, 2014). To add on, Landsford and Dodge, (2008) notes that African women have a high degree of exposure to domestic violence and one in

every three women is likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Bowman (2003) observes that women in Africa are subject to customary African law and traditions much of which reinforces the subordinate position of women within the family and results in them experiencing domestic violence. Though some African countries have initiated a number of legislations to curb the high incidence of domestic violence, the passage of laws on domestic violence is unlikely to lead to significant change in the absence of concerted efforts to minimise its occurrence.

According to Christiansen (2016), the latest statistics show that about one third of African women report to have experienced domestic violence (physical or sexual). Over the past decade, recognition of the scope and significance of domestic violence globally has increased. Domestic violence has been defined as the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners (WHO, 1997). Cocker and Richter (1998) observe that in sub-Saharan Africa, empirical evidence on the prevalence of domestic violence is limited and confined to a small number of population base or special population studies. Although domestic violence seems to be a widespread phenomenon in South Africa, little is known about domestic violence experiences and perceptions as a result of lack of understanding about domestic violence. Reliable statistics on African women in abusive relationships are not available. However, some preliminary results obtained in a study covering three provinces in South Africa namely, the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo confirmed the widely held belief that violence against women is a major problem in South Africa (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka, & Schrieber, 1999) as in many parts of Africa. The level of abuse reported in that study indicated a general under-reporting of abuse in South Africa. Several

reasons for this have been identified as some women were ashamed of the abuse and probably regarded it as a private matter while others did not wish to denigrate their husbands or partners, and some were afraid to admit that they were being abused. Some even viewed their abusive experiences as normal (Mesatywa, 2009). All these studies show that women in Africa are also experiencing domestic violence though the level of abuse reported does not show all the victims because of shame attached to experience and viewing it as a private matter.

### **2.11 Women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence in Namibia**

The study in Namibia by Freeman and Kamwanyah (2015) show that all the women in the study experienced power imbalances and GBV in their intimate relationships. All the women reported emotional or psychological abuse where the majority of them reported of being subjected to economic and physical abuses. However, the population sample of the study was not representative of all women in Namibia as the participants were women working at an airline business, some were foreigners. According to the MoHSS (2004) domestic violence often remains completely hidden since it is shrouded in shame and secrecy, or that it is considered to be a private matter; it is seldom discussed and usually not reported to police, which makes it difficult to have appropriate records and statistics of victims that have experienced domestic violence. It is in view of all this it becomes paramount to study women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence.

## **2.12 Conundrums in researching domestic violence**

Domestic violence is recognised as a sensitive topic to research on and it introduces challenges not usually found when dealing with other research topics. This study introduced the conundrums in researching domestic violence and how the researcher applied appropriate research methods to resolve such conundrums. According to Fraga (2016), violence is an extremely diffuse phenomenon and therefore its definition is also complex to operationalize. Notions of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of behaviours and what constitutes harm are culturally influenced and constantly under review as values and social norms evolve. Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano (2002) further state that the definition of violence is not the result of an exact scientific approach but probably a matter of judgement. The wide diversity of moral codes throughout the world, makes the topic of violence one of the most challenging and politically sensitive to address. In the Namibian context, the Domestic Violence Act 4 (2003) defines domestic violence as any act of physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment trespassing, emotional verbal or psychological abuse and threats or attempts. In view of the Namibian context and according to the definition of domestic violence, the study introduced the conundrums in researching domestic violence and how the researcher applied research methods to resolve such conundrums.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

This chapter explored literature on domestic violence and explained the conceptual framework of the thesis by looking into different standpoints explaining women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. The liberal and radical feminist theory explained domestic violence as it is relevant in understanding women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. Women's

perceptions and experiences of domestic violence were contextualised from an international level to the Namibian context to aid in understanding and presenting of domestic violence as a major problem. The literature review has described past and current information about domestic violence and a clearer understanding while situating the topic in a larger knowledge pool about women's experiences and perceptions about domestic violence. The next chapter presents the research methodology and research design adopted by this study.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to find out women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem which can be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Research methodology enables a researcher to study the different steps used in studying research problems along with the logic behind them (Kothari, 2004). There are different research methods that can be used in researching domestic violence. Walby and Myhill (2001) state that new research methods especially the use of dedicated surveys have been uncovering ever higher rates of domestic violence against women. Elsewhere, specialised methodologies have been developed to provide information on crimes of violence against women. These research methods were successful as they freed the interview from the constraining context of crime survey and gave time for detailed questioning and probing on domestic violence alone. Romkens (1997) attests that surveys draw simultaneously on both qualitative and quantitative methods using in depth interviewing and was able to overcome the problem of neglect of context for which some other studies had been criticised. Based on such information one can notice that there are different methods that can be used in researching domestic violence, however a method can be used depending on different factors considered best to use by the researcher.

This study made use of qualitative research design as it provides contextual, in-depth information on the why and how questions that can provide great insights and it is useful for understanding women's perceptions and experiences towards domestic violence. Qualitative research has

provided important insight into the subjective experience of violence and a greater understanding of the context and meanings associated with it. Violence against women is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, occurring within a social context that is influenced by gender norms, interpersonal relationships, and sexual scripts. Scholars have argued that women's experiences of violence cannot be understood in a purely quantitative manner, divorced from their context (see for example Gavey, 2005). Domestic violence typically occurs in private and cannot be observed or manipulated in a laboratory setting, understanding of these experiences of violence is dependent on the subjective meaning for the woman and cannot easily be reduced to a checklist. For example, in the case of sexual violence, a behaviour that may be appropriate and welcome in one context (or by one woman) may be viewed as coercive in another. Qualitative research methods typically involve naturalistic or holistic collection of data through observation or from the perspective of the participant, which qualifies it to be the chosen method for this study. Qualitative approaches are usually inductive, in that they involve deriving meaning or theory from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). In this case the characteristics of data collected by the researcher were very helpful in describing women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. Furthermore specific methodology is needed to analyse qualitative data in a rigorous manner and thematic analysis was used, as a flexible technique that involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data so as to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Considering all this evidence qualitative research design was deemed the best method possible to study women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Domestic violence is recognised as a sensitive topic to research on and it introduces challenges not usually found when dealing with other research topics. Fraga (2016) observes that in the research process, data on violence experiences depends on the availability and willingness of the

individual to recognise their involvement in a violent situation, which may depend, among other factors, on culture, on how the questions are asked, interviewer training, sensitivity and the setting in which data is collected. All of these factors need to be accounted for and respected by researchers aiming to assess violence. Some research participants may not be willing to take part in the interviews and cultural beliefs such as not speaking about your private issues can hinder data collection.

In countries with strong cultural pressure to keep violence behind closed doors or simply to accept it as natural, non-fatal violence is likely to be underreported. Individuals may be reluctant to discuss violent experiences as a result of shame, taboos or even fear. Admitting some abusive experiences such as rape may in some countries such as Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, etc result in death. According to Krug et al. (2002), in some cultures, the preservation of family honour is a traditional motive for killing women who have been raped. Some women are not willing to discuss or talk about their experiences because of fear and that also makes it difficult to collect data in such cases.

The methods for contacting eligible participants, the modes of questionnaire administration and the interviewer characteristics can be conundrums in researching domestic violence. Bowling (2005) stresses that, when planning the collection of information on domestic violence, researchers face critical design decisions that include options on the sampling frame, the structure and the mode of questionnaire administration and also the setting where information collection takes place. There are however, several recommendations developed in order to assess interpersonal violence in particular, which was used by the researcher to avoid similar

challenges. Using structured questionnaires that enable greater consistency in the way questions are asked, the training of the researcher who was doing the interviews, the development of a research protocol to guide interviewers in problem solving and supervision during data collection (Streiner and Norman, 2008). Based on such recommendations the methods used by a researcher could determine the results for the study. Fraga (2016) also claims that most researchers are in agreement that direct questioning about domestic violence should be used rather than using more open-ended and generic questions. Researches often opt for interviews which should take place at the participant's home, in order to improve participation rate in their familiar environment at home rather than going somewhere. However, the researcher made sure that there were no interruptions and that the participant was not put into vulnerability if the perpetrator of the domestic violence lived with the victim.

There are concerns about challenges of conducting research with women who have experienced violence and trauma. Principal concerns are centred on the physical safety and mental well-being of participants. Given the sensitive nature of research questions, the most fundamental challenges are centred on the willingness of women to participate in research (Rosenbaum & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2006). Regarding these concerns and challenges, findings from the study by Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens, & Sefl (2010) show that the majority of women who participate in research on victimisation and trauma tolerate the interviews well and do not report symptoms of distress upon completion. Furthermore, the majority typically expressed benefiting from participating in the study. Taken together, these findings suggest that women who have been victimised are safe to participate in research and are open to discuss their experiences in research, generally tolerate the experience well and generally perceive the experience positively.

In view of all this evidence the researcher thus considered the research design, population, sample, research instrument, procedure and data analysis in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research design**

A research design is defined by Blaikie (2000) as an integrated statement and justification for more technical decisions involved in planning a research project and a process analogous to the activities of an architect designing a building. Similarly Kothari (2004) points out that research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted that constitutes the blue print for collection, measurement and analysis of data. Thus, a research design must have a clear statement of the research problem, procedures and techniques used for gathering information, population studied and methods used in processing and analysing data.

### **3.3 Qualitative research design**

The research design and tools of data collection and analysis should be chosen on the basis that they are the most appropriate to answering a given research study. The study employed qualitative research design informed by the Feminist Theory and semi structured interview guides as methods of data collection as it provides contextual, in-depth information on the why and how questions, that can provide great insights and it is extremely useful for understanding women's perceptions and experiences towards domestic violence. Qualitative research design provides a space for women's voices to be articulated and heard (Skinner, Hester, & Malos, 2005), which can draw out information on perceptions and experiences of domestic violence and the design has the potential to enable silenced women to tell their own stories in their own voices (Davis & Srinivasan, 1994). Qualitative research design was chosen instead of quantitative

methods basing on McLafferty's (1995) argument that qualitative methods do not work when researching domestic violence by feminists because of claims about objectivity and their assumed legitimacy, problems of measurement and definition, and the fact that the methods break the living connections between researchers and the subjects of that research. Qualitative research design is the means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems where the process involves emerging questions and procedures (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative research design is concerned with qualitative phenomena relating to or involving quality, which aims at discovering the underlying motives of human behaviour. Through such kind of research design, researchers are able to analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner (Kothari, 2004), which is critical for investigating women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence.

The study used a qualitative interview whereby a researcher asks one or more participants open ended questions and record their answers, transcribe and type the data into a computer file for analysis. Interviews in qualitative research provide useful information as they allow participants to describe detailed personal information and the researcher will also be able to ask specific questions so as to prompt more information (Creswell, 2012). The interviews were done on a one on one basis where the researcher had to ask questions and record answers from each participant in the study so as to ensure confidentiality and privacy during the research process. The researcher collected all the data in a duration of three months using face to face semi structured interviews and telephonic interviews that took durations of 45 minutes for each interview. The researcher asked more open- ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than straightforward questions and answer format. The researcher prepared a list of questions using them instead to guide the conversation. Open-ended questions allowed the

participants to speak properly about their perceptions and experiences unconstrained by neither any perspectives of the researcher nor any past research findings.

To prepare for the interviews, the researcher followed the steps laid out by Creswell (2012) that are involved in conducting interviews.

- Identify the interviewees or participants through purposeful sampling.
- Determine type of interview to be used so one can best learn the participant's experiences and perceptions to answer the research study.
- Prepare instrument for recording the questions and responses.
- Prepare a jotter to take notes during the interview.
- Locate a quite suitable place or venue for conducting the interview.
- Obtain consent from the interviewee or participant to participate in the study.
- Be flexible to follow the conversation of the participant but also have a plan.
- Use of probing to obtain additional information and clarification on some issues.
- Be courteous and professional when the interview is over by thanking participant, assuring them confidentiality of the responses and asking if they want a summary of the results of the study.

During data collection, all the respondents were interviewed personally at the specific place they agreed to meet and telephonically for those who could not make it to meet with the researcher because of work commitments, had no fares or those who were geographically distant. Telephone interviews were used to collect qualitative data to inform or explain more traditional survey results (Martins, 2005) and to access populations that might be difficult to reach in person or by other means (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). The telephonic interviews helped the researcher to gain access to varied resources and experiences without the need to endure the expense and time

consumed by travelling to different locales. Such interviews also made it possible to interview individuals who were not available due to their location and other commitments. Access to these individuals is particularly important for the increasingly global nature of research (Gibson & Cohen, 2003), as a result, telephone interviewing can allow for a much more exhaustive sample. East, Jackson, and O'Brien (2010) highlight the possibility of supportive participant-researcher relationships developing as participants value the opportunity to talk and receive support. Telephonic interviews are therefore as 'real' as face-to-face interviewing. Telephone interviews may be well-suited to potentially sensitive topics as experiences and perceptions of domestic violence as this technique provides participants with the opportunity to disclose intimate and closely held experiences without feeling uncomfortable. Similar to internet interviewing, telephone interviews provide an opportunity for potential participants who live at a distance from the researcher to participate in research endeavours (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

However, there can be challenges of telephonic interviews as attested by Block and Erskine (2012) who observe there is a possibility that people may respond differently over the telephone than they would if they were faced with the same question in person. This challenge was addressed during sampling which reflected a comparison between those individuals who are accessible by telephone and those who are not, through variation in phone ownership, cell phone reliance, and response rates related to willingness to respond to questions over the phone. Targeting specific individuals or groups of individuals may be a manner in which researchers may avoid biases rather than attempts at random representative sampling. Telephone interviews appeared to be the most appropriate interview method under several conditions such as when the need for anonymity is high, for instance, when sensitive questions are asked. Anonymity enables

subjects to save their face. However, other techniques like observing case-history and secondary information were also used to supplement the interview data, serve as channel to establish rapport with the respondents, made the subsequent interviewing more meaningful and enhanced the validity of the responses collected.

Other feminists such as Holloway and Wheeler who have researched on domestic violence have used different research designs best suited to answer their research questions. It is recognised that feminism has developed into a research methodology that is underpinned by theories and multiple constructions about women's perspectives of oppression and consciousness (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). What unites different feminist strands are the overarching principles that gender is a key determinant of social status, and that the male gender is often considered as privileged and powerful compared to the female gender. Furthermore, it has been suggested that until recently research has been owned by the powerful men at the expense of women, so they differ in their perceptions of life due to their social status (Ibid). Feminist researchers intend to contribute to the improvement of the lives of women through the uncompromising tenet of feminist methods which are concerned with the importance of women's lives and their position in the social structure of society. In her *Handbook of Feminist Research*, sociologist Hesse-Biber (2007) describes feminists' research in a similar way which asks new questions about going beyond correcting gender bias in dominant research studies, centralises issues of power, authority, ethics, and reflexivity in the practice of research and is typically conducted at the margins of traditional disciplines. In view of all that has been mentioned, one can note that the study employed qualitative research design informed by the

Feminist Theory that can provide great insights and it is extremely useful for understanding women's perceptions and experiences towards domestic violence.

### **3.4 Population**

A population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics and it can be small or large (Creswell, 2012) depending on the scope of the study. In the case of the present study, the population of the study were the clients from MGVS Organisation in Windhoek who all had a common defining characteristic of being domestic violence victims that the researcher could identify and study. The researcher was able to select a sample for the study to investigate women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence.

#### **3.4.1 Sample**

A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for getting information about the target population (Creswell, 2012). The researcher made use of the records from Monica Gender Violence Solution through purposive sampling method which relied on the judgement of the researcher when it came to selecting the participants that were to be studied. The sample being investigated was quite small and the main goal of purposive sampling was to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which best answered the research study of women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. The sample size was made up of twelve participants from women who were not severely traumatised, have already gone through counselling and were beneficiaries of the organisation and victims of domestic violence. In justification of the sample size Hudelson (1994) points out that sample size depends on the purpose of the research, scope of the research, the specific research questions to

be addressed, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources. The sample size used in the study was suited to provide rich information from a few select cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, learn from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon in question, illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest, facilitate comparisons and the identification of hard-to-find cases, document diverse variations that can help to identify common patterns that cut across variations, save time, money, and effort and investigate in depth and identify all sources of variation as was suggested by Patton (1990). Severity of trauma during selection of interviewees was assessed to avoid selecting participants who could be at great risk of reliving painful and frightening events of domestic violence during the investigation.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

The study used semi-structured interview schedules prepared in advance as the main tools for collecting data, guided by the nature of data collected, the time available as well as the objectives of the study. According to Creswell (2012), developing a research instrument requires following certain steps such as identifying purpose of the instrument, reviewing literature, writing questions and testing them with people who are similar to the ones who the researcher plans to study. The researcher had to read similar published journal articles which are related to their topic of study to get an idea on what they should focus on. The researcher was taking notes during the interviews after getting approval to do so from the research participants verbally and through the consent forms. Computers were used for data analysis whereby the researcher did not use the names of the participants but only their ages and status to protect their

confidentiality. Confidentiality clauses and consent forms were used during the study so as to protect the respondent's confidentiality.

### **3.6 Research procedure**

The researcher prepared all the interviews and digital voice recording equipment adequately, scheduled time to cover all questions in her research plan by drawing up questions and a plan of how the whole research process was going to be done from the beginning to the end. The interview schedules attached were designed and tested, as they dealt with sensitive issues so as to avoid harming interviewees with certain questions during the interview. The pre-test for the interviews was done to identify problematic questions for participants, to identify the difficult terms and concepts and their attitudes toward the issue and format of questionnaire and technical consistency. With consultations of experts from the research department the terms and concepts were replaced with simpler synonyms and translation of questions were edited. The researcher personally administered the interviews and the questions were in easy understandable English, to ensure that the participants understood the questions. The interview schedule comprised of specific research questions, with prompts that were implemented later for an in-depth interview about women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence, history of partner violence and the actual nature of the violent incidents; nature of social support and empowerment services offered by Monica Gender and Violence Solution Organisation and demographic details of research participants.

The semi-structured interviews took place over a period of three months whereby the interview commenced with thanking the participants for accepting to research with me their time, before

the researcher introduced herself and then advise the interviewees about the research. Oakley (1981) advised that the interviewer must introduce them self before beginning a conversation. The researcher presented the participants with information about the interview and the topic of study, allowed them to ask any questions and informing them that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted at convenient dates, times and places. At the outset of the interviews, the topic was explained and informed consent for obtaining the information was sought. Disclosure of sensitive or confidential information was only possible once a trusting relationship had been established between the researcher and the participants. After each interview, the researcher ensured if the research participant needed some counselling which might have been triggered when responding to question about domestic violence. During the study some participants were afraid of being seen, during interviews, by the perpetrators of domestic violence who may be apprehensive of reports that disclose matters and expose them. The researcher discussed and agreed on rooms that were private and ensured that participants were not seen during interviews and also telephonic interviews for those who could not be accessed. Confidentiality and privacy was considered as it is further discussed in the ethics section. Time to finish the investigation, lack of resources such as transport, materials and other expenses were limitations to the study. The researcher managed the time that was available effectively, by reducing unnecessary expenses and tried to work at one venue.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis was carried out by the researcher after the process of data collection from the research participants. The researcher conducted a qualitative data analysis that transforms data into findings which involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data analysis allows the description of textual data in ways that capture the setting or people who produced this text on their own terms rather than in terms of predefined measures and hypotheses, whereby the analysis identifies important categories in the data, as well as patterns and relationships, through a process of discovery. Data analysis is viewed as a key part of research as it brings order, structure and meaning to the data that has been collected by the researcher (Schwandt, 2007). The main variables that were analysed were women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence, factors accounting for domestic violence against women, ways in which incidences of domestic violence can be reduced and ways in which women victims of violence are assisted by Monica Gender Violence Solution Organisation. The researcher transcribed each of the 12 interviews alone to ensure and maintain confidentiality as well as the participants' anonymity. In keeping with qualitative requirements, the data analysis searched for shared themes, trends and understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The researcher used narrative data analysis approach to conduct a preliminary analysis by reading all the information collected during the interviews to obtain general sense, followed by manual coding which reduces texts to descriptions and coding develops themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2012). The researcher also used coding as a way of analysing data which is described by Saldana (2009) as short words or short phrases that symbolically assign a summative salient essence capturing for a portion of language based or

visual data. It summarises data such as interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents and anything that a researcher has which consisted relevant data for the study. The coding process involved two stages where the first stage was to get single words to full sentences to an entire passage, and the second stage the portions coded can be the same units or longer passages of text.

### **3.8 Research ethics**

According to (Garcia-Moreno, et al, 2005) research on violence against women raises important ethical and methodological challenges. The nature of the topic implies that issues of safety, confidentiality and interviewer skill and training are even more important than for other areas of research. It is not an exaggeration to say that the physical safety and psychological well-being of both the respondents and the research team can be put in jeopardy if adequate precautions are not taken. In order to guide future research in this area, WHO (2003) developed some ethical guidelines which were applied in the study regarding the ethical conduct of domestic violence research build on the collective experience of the International Research Network on Violence Against Women. These include physical safety of respondents and interviewers from potential retaliatory violence by the perpetrator or perpetrators is of prime importance. Protecting confidentiality was essential to ensure both women's safety and data quality. The researcher already had specialised training as a qualified social worker to offer on-going support. The study was designed to include actions aimed at reducing any possible distress caused to the participants by the research, and if there was need the researcher could refer women requesting assistance to other available local services and sources of support. Women as the subjects and immediate beneficiaries of this research gave full informed consent, thus for both ethical and safety reasons,

the women were fully informed about the nature of the questions. During the initial consent procedure, the sensitivity of the research topic was raised, during the course of the interview, the interviewer introduced any section enquiring about violence carefully, forewarning the respondent about the nature of the questions and giving her the opportunity to either stop the interview, or not to answer those questions. Interviews were conducted only in a private setting and the participants were free to reschedule or relocate the interview to a time or place that would be more safe or convenient for them. Interviews were conducted at the times most convenient for participants and at places agreed by the participants and the researcher. Participant privacy and convenience are paramount as was noted by Speziale and Carpenter (1999) that the more comfortable participants are, the more likely they are to disclose information and reveal the nature of their lived experiences. To reduce the participants' sense of vulnerability they were asked to choose places where they could most comfortably participate in an interview. Ensuring a private environment was also important and some participants opted to be interviewed in their homes when other family members would not be present, some for the face-to-face interviews and other over the phone. The interviews were conducted in a private and quiet room with soft lighting and a sign was placed on the door to avoid any interruptions. Comfort was a priority to ensure women were at ease during the interview and the researcher offered breaks, tissues and refreshments, ensured privacy and temporarily terminated interviews when participants were distressed or emotional.

According to Fontes (1998), ethics in researching violence are very important to avoid abuses of power by the researcher, the latter applied ethics research guidelines so as to conduct ethically high quality research. The researcher took care during data collection to avoid disempowering

the research participants by respecting the participants all the time and not manipulating them to participate. The direct benefits of participation by the participants were addressed in the research design so that the research could benefit participants directly. Lather (1991) observes the concept of catalytic validity whereby research studies should change the participants to understand how the world is shaped in order for transformation. The researcher enhanced the ability of participants to extricate themselves from experiencing domestic violence by advising them of potential resources and also increased their understanding of domestic violence in their life. Questions were also phrased so that the research could help the participants to think about their lives in new ways by asking on what could be done in the country to improve the services that were offered for women experiencing domestic violence. As a result, research was used to help participants to recognise resources within themselves and their communities and taught them helpful new skills which aid to the ethics of direct benefits of participation in research.

The risk of harm can occur during any point in the recruitment of participants, data gathering and dissemination of findings (Fontes, 1998). The decision to interview people about sensitive topics stems from the epistemological and ontological stance that knowledge and reality can only be sought from those who experience it (Crotty, 1998). The researcher examined questions of risk with extra care so as to avoid harming the participants since interviews on sensitive topics as domestic violence can provoke powerful emotional responses in participants. The researcher had planned to stop the interview or make referral to counsellors from other organisations to handle stress generated by the research and to preserve confidentiality with the participants. However, they are potential benefits to participating in research whereby individuals sharing their life experiences and telling their stories to an interested listener can experience positive and

therapeutic effects from participation (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Participants may find telling their stories to be cathartic (East, Jackson & O'Brien, 2010) since participants undergo a reflective process, which is a possible way of gaining closure. The researcher was also reflecting during interviews which generated some positive outcomes for women participating in research. This reveals the reason that telling someone your experiences and sharing your story can contribute to healing (Leseho & Block, 2005). Supporting and encouraging individuals to unveil their experiences will help reduce any insecurity they foresee in the future and in their life. The therapeutic effect of catharsis occurs when participants express deeply held personal feelings and thoughts, generally projecting a sense of relief, that the risk of harm from participation can be reduced by research. Based on all the information stated above, the researcher addressed ethical considerations that need to be made when conducting research on domestic violence against women.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, one can note that this research methodology has presented the research design, population studied, sample size, research instruments, procedure and data analysis as the systematic way of solving the research problem here investigated. This chapter has therefore discussed the research methods and methodological issues, including the considerations that influenced the design and implementation of the research. It has attempted to justify and reflect upon the research methodology, exploring factors that influenced the choices and decisions that were made during the stages of fieldwork in collecting data and analysis of data and finally the research ethics. The next chapter presents the data analysis and presentation.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data analysis and presentation**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the main findings and discussion of women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. Data analysis is described as taking the data that has been collected to determine individual responses and then putting it together to summarise it (Creswell, 2012). The main objective of the study was to investigate women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Data was analysed using narrative data analysis approach to conduct a preliminary analysis by reading all the information collected during the interviews to obtain general sense, followed by manual coding which reduces texts to descriptions and coding that develops themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2012). The data was presented and analysed into themes that were discussed and explained main trends, patterns, similarities and differences that emerged from the results. The chapter reviewed and discussed the major themes emerging from the 12 participants' interviews and how these themes relate to the reviewed literature. The study was guided by the research objectives and questions that are attached as appendices.

#### **4.2 Demographic data of the sample and its characteristics**

Participants were purposely chosen to represent women who have experienced domestic violence from different cultural, social groups and ages in Namibia. All twelve participants were selected from the MGVS organisation from Windhoek. The demographic data included their age, marital status, highest levels of education, occupation and the number of dependants they had. This information is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Participants demographics**

| Age | Marital status | Highest education level | Occupation       | Dependants |
|-----|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 24  | Single         | Student at university   | Student          | 0          |
| 29  | Single         | Grade 12                | Security guard   | 6          |
| 45  | Married        | Post graduate diploma   | Registered nurse | 5          |
| 29  | Single         | Grade 10                | Unemployed       | 7          |
| 31  | Single         | Grade 10                | Unemployed       | 3          |
| 29  | Single         | Grade 10                | Unemployed       | 4          |
| 49  | Single         | Grade 8                 | Unemployed       | 9          |
| 42  | Married        | Grade 10                | Unemployed       | 3          |
| 27  | Married        | Grade 12                | Unemployed       | 2          |
| 29  | Single         | Grade 10                | Security guard   | 4          |
| 22  | Single         | Student at university   | Student          | 0          |
| 35  | Married        | Grade 12                | Own business     | 5          |

Table 1 above shows that the age of participants ranged from 22 to 49 years. Most of the participants were single and only four were married. Only two students were single and had no dependents, whilst six women were single and all had dependants ranging from two to nine years. Only four women were employed, whilst six women were unemployed with a number of dependants to look after. The demographic data about women who did not work and had many dependants coincides with the literature which states that one of the challenges faced by women in contemporary Namibian society is unequal access to property which limits their ability to strive for gender equality within their personal and social spheres of life. Women are the ones responsible for looking after all the dependants whilst they do not have access to employment or

finances. According to University of Royal Holloway London (2014) women are more likely to remain in an abusive relationship if they think the costs of enduring it are less than the costs incurred in ending the relationship. As is shown in Table 1, unemployed women have many dependents and are exposed to experiencing domestic violence and for socioeconomic factors, they cannot leave abusive relationships.

### **4.3 Themes**

The following themes emerged from the findings based on the individual interviews. The data was organised under the following themes:

- Knowledge of domestic violence
- History and experiences of domestic violence
- Perceptions of domestic violence
- Causes of domestic violence against women
- Effects of domestic violence on people and families
- Period to seek help
- Support rendered to women experiencing domestic violence by family and community
- Evaluation of services offered by MGVS organisation
- Recommendations on improving services offered women by domestic violence organisations and the government
- Advice to other women who are victims of domestic violence

All the themes were presented with the data that was collected from the research participants and the discussions related to the information.

#### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Knowledge of domestic violence

Knowledge about domestic violence is very important since knowing or understanding domestic violence plays a major part in understanding the research study to investigate women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. This theme reveals what women know about domestic violence, whereby participants were asked to narrate about domestic violence in explaining what it means. The women's general understanding of domestic violence is very important and it appears most of them had an understanding on what domestic violence is, though their answers varied. After being asked about what they knew about domestic violence, the responses were the following: *'Domestic violence is beating and being forced to do something you don't want to do'* (49 year old single woman) while another said *'Domestic violence is physical abuse, beating and emotional abuse'* (42 year old married woman), the other participant said *"Domestic violence means insults, fighting and beating"* (29 year old single woman) and *'Domestic violence is about abusing people physically and emotionally'* (29 year old single woman). The other women said *'Domestic violence is violence that occurs in a family'* (29 year old single woman), *'domestic violence is physical abuse, emotional threats, force and insults'* (27 year old single woman) and *'domestic violence means insults and beatings from your partner'* (29 year old single woman). The responses show that all the woman have an understanding of domestic violence for they are sighting different forms of violence that are stipulated by the Domestic Violence act 4 of 2003. However, the Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 states that domestic violence is any act of physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, trespassing, emotional verbal or psychological abuse and threats or attempts to violate someone in a domestic relationship. The findings can show that their understanding of domestic violence could affect how they perceived domestic violence in the

sense that there are other aspects of domestic violence they might not know or understand as violence as stipulated in the definition.

Meanwhile, these responses on the understanding of domestic violence varied according to educational level. This suggests an intersectional relationship between knowledge and awareness of domestic violence with level of education. To illustrate this, participants who had a higher level of education than others seemed to have different explanations of domestic violence. This is illustrated in the following responses by other participants *‘Domestic violence is women abuse by men, in the form of beating and insults’* (22 year old single student) while another said *‘Domestic violence is violent activities in households between spouses, parents and children’* (45 year old married and educated with a diploma woman) and the other one *‘Domestic violence is violence towards another person in many forms’* (24 year old single student).

From the vignettes above one can note that there is a difference when it comes to understanding of domestic violence based on one’s educational level. It is also clear that women with a higher level of education are exposed to more information than those with lower levels of education. Based on the findings one may note that there is understanding about domestic violence generally among women, though there is need for more awareness for those with lower levels of education to be given more information on the different ways that one can be violated. The level of knowledge women have about domestic violence can also affect their perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. Women’s knowledge about domestic violence can also affect how they view and experience domestic violence. Physical violence might not be seen or perceived as violence in different contexts based on the women’s culture, social stigma and

tradition and sometimes level of education. This is mostly prevalent in communities where certain women do not view or understand some situations they go through as domestic violence, whilst they are experiencing it. Knowledge and awareness about domestic violence among women can be increased from grassroots levels whilst children are still in school, community meetings, church communities and advertising through different media strategies.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: History and experiences of domestic violence**

The study findings revealed information on women's experiences of domestic violence through answering the following issues about when they experienced violence, the location, type of violence, the perpetrator, sort of relationship they had with the perpetrator and how it happened. Based on the research findings most of the participants experienced physical abuse which according to the Domestic Violence Act 4 (2003) is explained as violence that involves the use of physical force against another person, whereby examples include hitting, shoving, grabbing, biting, restraining, shaking, choking, burning, forcing drug/alcohol use, and assault with a weapon. Physical violence can result in an injury that requires medical attention, assault or any use of physical force against the complainant, such as confining or detaining by force, locking the complainant in a room, or refusing to let the complainant go to work, depriving the complainant access to food, water, clothing, shelter or rest. The participants said the following after being asked about how they experienced domestic violence *'I experienced domestic violence from my boyfriend in November 2017 whereby he would just beat me and insult me all the time'* (29 year old single woman), the other one said *'I experienced domestic violence from my partner since 2006 till 2014 whereby my partner would force me to do something I don't want to do, if I refuse I would get beaten and sometimes being accused of something that I didn't do'*

(49 year old single woman), while the other stated that *'I experienced physical abuse, emotional abuse and conflict at home with my husband from 2017'* (42 year old married woman). The other women shared their experiences as follows: *'I experienced domestic violence through insults and threats from my boyfriend since the beginning of the year 2018'* (27 year old single mother), another woman said *'My boyfriend since November 2017 would beat me, broke my car and other household stuff and would also insult me all the time'* (29 year single mother) and the last one said *'I experienced domestic violence from my boyfriend since I was in high school whereby he would beat me, insult me and disrespect me also'* (22 year old single student). The findings suggest that majority of women experienced physical violence than any other type of violence that is classified under domestic violence.

The extreme case of domestic violence revealed by the participants was when the participant's sister lost her life when the boyfriend burnt their shack. She said the following: *'I experienced domestic violence when my sister's shack was burnt by her boyfriend while we were inside in 2016 and my sister died'* (29 year old single woman). The participant was involved as she was in the same shack when the boyfriend burnt the sister's shack. However, she managed to escape but her sister was badly burnt and consequently died. Such extreme cases of domestic violence that result in death are increasing with cases of many women who are being killed by their partners as is being reported by the media.

Two participants experienced sexual violence which according to the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003) involves the violation of an individual's bodily integrity (sexual assault), including coercive sexual contact, rape, and prostitution, as well as any unwelcome sexual behaviour

(sexual harassment), including treating someone in a sexually demeaning manner or any other conduct of a sexual nature, whether physical, verbal, or non-verbal. The experiences cited were as follows:

*'I experienced domestic violence when I was grade 5 in 2008 at home when my uncle raped me' (single student aged 24) and the other one said: 'I was abused by the father of my child from 2015 to 2016 when he wanted to have sex with me by force he would beat me and sometimes try to strangle me, sometimes when I come from work after working night shift he will refuse to open the door for me and he would also demand to have sex with me just after coming from work' (29 year old single woman).*

The second participant's experiences correlate with the findings by Parenzee and Smythe (2003) who maintained that sexual abuse often goes hand in hand with physical and emotional abuse in the sense that people who experience sexual abuse also experience other forms of abuse as psychological and physical abuse. The first participant was sexually abused which can be classified as rape by her uncle and the second one by her partner who is the father of her children. The World Health Organisation (2011) describes rape as sexual assault against another person without that person's consent while the violation may be carried out using physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or with a person who is incapable of valid consent. It can be noted that all the participants were sexually abused by someone who is close to them which correlates with the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003) which states that the perpetrator is normally someone the victim has emotional ties with such as a family member or a close friend. The experience of the second participant correlates with the literature where Kalra and Bhugra (2013) observe that sexual violence is likely to occur more commonly in cultures that foster beliefs of

perceived male superiority, social and cultural inferiority of women which correlates with the literature. The women's partner and uncle viewed them as inferior resulting from the patriarchal society in Namibia where women are viewed as sexual objects by males. Thus, rape in this context is linked to cultural endorsement ruled by negative cultures of masculinity with a need for men to feel superior to women.

One participant experienced economic abuse which is described by the Domestic Violence Act 4 (of 2003) as abuse that involves making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser, unreasonably depriving the complainant of goods or money which she needs to live, reasonably expects to use or has a legal right to use and unreasonably selling, destroying or damaging property in which the complainant has an interest or a reasonable expectation of use.

The participant said the following:

*'I experienced financial abuse from my husband since the time we got married from 1998, whereby my husband used to control my finances and I was not allowed to keep my bank card and he would monitor everything that I did with the money in my account' (45 year old married women).*

Based on such information, one may note that women are also experiencing financial abuse from their partners in their relationships. Most of the participants experienced domestic violence from their boyfriends or husbands and one student was sexually abused by her uncle. These findings show that women are violated by people they know and have a relationship with in most cases. All the participants also revealed that they were violated by males known to them who were also close to them which caused them to not report and keep on experiencing domestic violence. The failure to report all sexual abuse as indicated by the findings is however in agreement with the estimate of Simpson and Kraak (1999) who found that annually at least 1, 2 million South

African women are likely to be assaulted by someone they know. This infrequent reporting which might be the same case in Namibia clearly indicates that domestic violence continues to be under-reported whilst women are experiencing it.

The participants revealed about history of domestic violence in their families when they were asked so to give more information on their experiences. They said the following: *'My mother also suffered from domestic violence from my father and they separated'* (49 year old single mother), *'My own mother suffered a bit of physical, emotional and financial abuse (45 year old married woman)* another one said *'A few of my family members have been violated by their husbands'* (42 year old single mother ) and the other one said *'Yes since we grew up, my father was abusive to my mother, but my mother told us not to copy him'* (27 year old single mother). Such information shows that sometimes women normalise domestic violence since they have been witnessing it from their parents when they were growing up and it results in them not reporting it. Most of the participants revealed that they experienced domestic violence when they saw their mothers being violated by their fathers, so they thought it was normal and must happen in a relationship. This is also in agreement with some Namibian cultures, where some people believe that a woman would expect beatings from her husband to feel loved (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000). The study established that the history of experiencing domestic violence on the victims and perpetrators resulted in women normalising domestic violence as something they should experience in their relationships and family's. This is prevalent in cases where a person does not know what a healthy relationship should be like as a result of growing up in an environment where abuse was common. This might also be in agreement with some Namibian cultures, where some people believe that a woman would expect beatings from her

husband to feel loved (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000). However, this has been labelled as cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations by people from the various Namibian cultures who stated that domestic violence was wrong and against cultural practices, but that it occurred anyway. Furthermore, colonial history has also been argued to have contributed to domestic violence in Namibia looking at sexual violence which was part of the colonisation process of subjugation during the German colonial period indigenous women were raped, abducted, forcibly removed to other areas of the territory, and murdered (Moshenberg, 2012). Such occurrences which were witnessed by the local men influenced the way they view and treat women resulting in them perpetrating sexual violence against women. Therefore, educating women and men to change their perceptions on the meaning of domestic violence might aid in prevention efforts.

Most women revealed that they do not fight back when they are being violated by men for fear and the belief to save the marriage, otherwise they will suffer from poverty if their partners leave them. The participant's responses after being asked were the following: *'No I am afraid he will beat me back worse'* (22 year old single student), she said *'I didn't fight back I just ran away with the children to the neighbours'* (31 year old single mother), *'No I was just quite because I believe fighting back is not the solution'* (27 year old single mother), and the last one said *'No I didn't fight back because I was holding a baby'* (29 year single mother). Taken together, these responses go hand in hand with the GRN (1997) which observes that in traditional African culture men held the power, with women being viewed as subordinated beings who had no say in their daily lives, families and communities, although there are some matrilineal societies in Africa where women command the home and men. Women have no say in the sense that they cannot fight back, talk

back or do anything to stop the domestic violence in their relationships. One participant said the following: *'No I didn't fight back because of the belief I have in trying to save my marriage and children because of poverty'* (45 year old married woman). Regarding economic systems, as women are economically dependent on men, have limited access to cash and credit, discriminatory laws regarding property, limited access to employment and education result in women staying in the abusive relationships as is supported by Heise (1994) in the literature. As a result of this, women stay in abusive relationships experiencing domestic violence. The study established that women do not fight back or report perpetrators of domestic violence resulting from fear of poverty, discrimination, cultural and religious perceptions they have towards domestic violence. Some participants stated that they could not do anything when they are experiencing domestic violence as they feared making it worse which concurs with GRN (1997) which states that in traditional African culture men held the power, with women being viewed as subordinated beings who had no say in their daily lives, families and communities. The authority of men towards women causes them to violate women and not accept women's views which further results in women experiencing domestic violence. This is further explained by a patriarchal system in the Namibian society which Cockburn (2004) describes as a system, in which leadership, authority, aggressiveness and responsibility reside in men and masculinity; while nurture, compliance, passivity and dependence are the part of women and femininity. The study indicated that even though women view domestic violence as a bad experience they still remain victims of domestic violence as a result of their socioeconomic status which concurs with the literature that stated that women in contemporary Namibian society suffer unequal access to property which limits their ability to strive for gender equality within their personal and social spheres of life. Women are not employed nor have any source of income, so they rely on their

partners or husbands and are forced to stay in violent relationships. Economic dependence has been found to be the central reason for staying in abusive relationships, thus without the ability to sustain them economically, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships and are not able to be free from violence. Due to deep-rooted values and culture, women do not prefer to adopt the option of separation or divorce. They also fear the consequences of reporting violence and declare an unwillingness to subject themselves to the shame of being identified as battered women. Lack of information about alternatives also forces women to suffer silently within the four walls of their homes. Some women may believe that they deserve the beatings for some wrong action on their part. Other women refrain from speaking about the abuse as they fear that their partner will further harm them in reprisal for revealing family secrets, or they may be ashamed of their situation. Therefore, employment and educational opportunities should be afforded to women in violent partner relationships as this can assist with income generation and economic independence to not stay in violent relationships.

#### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Perceptions of domestic violence**

Women's perceptions of domestic violence are important to understand the definition of domestic violence and how they understand the issue. Attitudes towards men's violence against women shape both the perpetration of violence against women and responses to this violence by the victim and others around her. After being asked to narrate their perceptions on the experience of domestic violence the participants mentioned that their partners would ignore their suggestions in family matters and that they could not accept a woman's views and that the authority of the man had to be accepted. One participant said the following: *'No it's not my fault because I tried to correct my partner (25 year old single woman)*. The authority accorded to men

towards women causes them not to accept women's views which further results in women experiencing domestic violence. This is further explained by a patriarchal system in the Namibian society which Cockburn (2004) describes as a system, in which leadership, authority, aggressiveness and responsibility reside in men and masculinity; while nurture, compliance, passivity and dependence are the part of women and femininity. Women are expected to be quiet and not say any suggestions in their relationships. Furthermore, some women think it is their fault in the sense that they did something to trigger the violence as was said by one participant: *'I thought it was my fault believing I did something wrong by answering wrongly and also the culture of women listening to everything their partner says'* (45 year old married woman). In a patriarchal system, women must listen to everything the husbands say even to the extent of admitting guilt whilst they are not guilty. Such information shows that women end up viewing domestic violence as something that they should experience as a result of their guilty actions even if they are not wrong.

However, other participants viewed domestic violence as a wrong and bad experience, but they could not do anything to prevent it from happening. To support this claim one participant had to say this, *'It's not my fault, it's a very bad experience'* (31 year old single mother), the other one said *'the abuser is always wrong'* (29 year old single mother), while another noted thus *'I don't think it's my fault because I didn't do anything wrong'* (29 year old single woman), and the other one could not fight back as she was disabled. Some participants expressed no perceptions about domestic violence as they did not have any views and some would not just answer the question. One participant said the following: *'I am not sure that's why I went to look for help'* (27 year old

*single mother*). One can note the differences on perceptions on domestic violence which can affect the way woman respond after experiencing domestic violence.

Most of the participants expressed that the violence happened after misunderstandings over different issues in the relationship, when their partners drank alcohol, when there are misunderstandings among family and friends and when their partners go through their phones. The women said the following: *'I don't know if I did something wrong, he would just suspect you are having a relationship when he saw messages in my phone, when I have gone to the bathroom or when I am sleeping'* (29 year old single woman). With such information one can note that the violence in most cases always happens when the perpetrators get angry about different issues or mostly when they consume alcohol. Based on such evidence one may argue that, to a larger extent, alcohol and misunderstandings are contributing factors to women experiencing domestic violence in Namibia. The participants all knew that they did not do anything to cause the domestic violence but they were still violated. The women said the following: *'When he comes back home drunk, I cannot say anything otherwise it will make him angry and he will start beating me'* (49 year old single mother), and the other one said *'Even when I have said or done nothing he reacts like that when he is drunk and will start getting violent'* (42 year old married woman). One may note that most of the perpetrators of domestic violence become violent after consuming alcohol which can suggest that alcohol is a contributing factor to women experiencing domestic violence.

The participants narrated their religious perceptions about domestic violence for one's religious views are very important on how they view a number of things in life. The women said the

following: *'The bible says people must love each other and not abuse each other when they are in a relationship or marriage (31 year old single mother)* and the other one noted: *'Christian perspective says men must not violate their wives but to love them and treat them with respect and kindness (42 year old married woman)*. Such responses show that women know domestic violence is wrong according to the Christian perceptions though they still experience it. While some women believe domestic violence is wrong and should not happen, there is an issue of Christian beliefs about submission contributing to women experiencing violence. One participant narrated the following:

*'I believe it is not necessary for violence to take place, but the church belief of women submitting to their husbands makes women to be forced to do a lot of things against their will such as experiencing domestic violence and not doing anything to stop it' (45 year old married woman)*.

The vignette above suggests that church beliefs dictate that women are supposed to submit to their husbands or partners by agreeing to everything that the husband says as the head of the house, and they must also listen to everything the man says, because if they disagree they are subjected to violence. There is also stigma in the church communities which makes people not talk about domestic violence if they experience it. One participant, for instance, reported thus: *'As a Christian I think it depends on people and who they are, domestic violence is not a good thing. At my church they only talk about it, but people who are going through domestic violence do not talk about it and they don't want people to know, otherwise people will look at you as a troublemaker and start avoiding you' (29 year old single woman)*. Women do not want people to know if they are experiencing domestic violence especially in the church for people will view you differently and even start gossiping about you. Women do not want to be viewed as the

woman who experienced domestic violence for not being submissive to her husband or partner. Considering all this information, it may be noted that women's perceptions of domestic violence are largely affected by the above mentioned issues. The study also revealed women's religious and cultural perspectives towards domestic violence. Some women knew domestic violence is wrong and should not happen according to the Christian perspectives though they still experience it. The study established that Christian beliefs about submission may be linked to women experiencing domestic violence and not reporting about it. The patriarchal language of Christian religions that views the males as the head of the house may be criticised as being conducive to the submission of women and thus acting as a contributing factor to domestic violence in some Christian families. Domestic violence in Christian families is exacerbated with the use of Christian religious language that signifies a toleration of imbalance of power, inequality and abuse (McMullin, Nason-Clark, Fisher-Townsend, and Holtmann, 2012). Evidence presented in this study suggests that some women might be experiencing domestic violence, but because of their religious beliefs, it is never reported or exposed. It was also established that experiences of domestic violence are never reported for the reason of the stigma that is associated with women who experience domestic violence. Some women reported how one will be viewed as a disobedient woman who does not submit to the authority of her husband or partner, to the effect that they never report or expose their experiences of domestic violence. The evidence discussed here seems to suggest that there is a relationship between religious perceptions and women experiencing domestic violence. As a result, there is need to challenge such religious perceptions with education and in-depth knowledge about domestic violence. Overall, the evidence discussed above has managed to establish women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence from the research findings.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Causes of domestic violence against women**

Women researched with were asked in their own opinions to express what they thought were the causes of domestic violence against women. Most participants identified alcohol, misunderstandings, poverty, early marriages, lack of education and culture as the main causes. The majority of participants identified alcohol and drug abuse and misunderstanding as a cause of domestic violence, while a few identified culture, poverty and lack of education.

The women who identified alcohol and drug abuse as causes of domestic violence reported thus: *'After taking alcohol and drugs men come home and beat up their wives'* (29 year old single woman) and the other one said: *'Alcohol, misunderstandings, lack of education, early marriages and wrong relationships are the causes of domestic violence'* (29 year old single mother).

This is corroborated by Barnett, Perrin, and Perrin (2005) who emphasise that alcohol consumption contributes to uninhibited behaviour and this may cause harm not only to the abused, but also to other persons. Furthermore, Caetano, Schafer, and Cunrad (2001) in an overview study, carried out on intimate partner violence, revealed that men were probably drunk when violence occurred in approximately 45% of the cases. Most of the participants stated that, whenever their partners come back home after consuming alcohol, they become violent and aggressive, which suggests that alcohol and drug abuse contributes to violent behaviour exhibited by men against women. Moreover, in traditionally male dominated societies, there is a link between alcohol abuse and violence. Consequently, perceptions of masculinity relating to drinking and violence as masculine or “macho” are accommodated and accepted in such societies (Raj & Silverman, 2002). This perception is reinforced by broader societal norms about what is appropriate behaviour for women. Feeding into this problem is the presence and accessibility of shebeens and taverns that sell liquor to African communities; some of them are

illegally established but accepted or tolerated in the communities (Parenee & Smythe, 2003). Of note is the fact that, most of the locations where these women reside are filled with a number of shebeens that sell alcohol. According to Graham, Bernards, Wilsnack, and Gmel (2011), although some studies have suggested that alcohol consumption is more associated with the severity of violent acts than to increases in its occurrence, other scholars such as Tumwesigye, Kyomuhendo, Greenfield, and Wanyenze (2012) have suggested that it should be related and that the association between alcohol and violence becomes more powerful with increased alcohol consumption. To better understand how alcohol consumption might be related to a greater severity of domestic violence, it is important to consider not only the pharmacological effects of alcohol but also the environmental and sociocultural factors that influence patterns of alcohol consumption and violent behaviours. In another view, the WHO (2009) suggests that alcohol is a risk factor for the occurrence of violent acts as it has direct effects on physical and cognitive performances, contributing to violence by reducing self-control as well as reducing judgment and the ability to recognise signs of danger. Moreover, individual and cultural beliefs that alcohol causes aggression can lead to its intake in preparation or as an excuse/justification for violent acts. Taken together the information supports the notion that alcohol consumption is a risk factor for the occurrence of domestic violence experienced by women in the study. However, according to Blacklock (2001), some researchers still query the cause and effect of the relationship between alcohol abuse and male violence by stating that when male partners quit substance abuse it does not necessarily mean that they will stop battery. There are some men who still violate woman without consuming alcohol or drugs but based on other reasons which were also established in this study.

Some women identified cultural beliefs and patriarchy as causes of domestic violence against women when they said: *'Domestic violence is caused by cultural beliefs that make men abusive because they believe a man should be more powerful, respected and make decisions alone. Women as they grow up from childhood are made to believe that they cannot fight for themselves because of lack of education and poverty'* (45 year old married woman). In some Namibian cultures, some people believe that a woman would expect beatings from her husband to feel loved (Namibia Human Development Report, 2000). Nonetheless, it is argued to be misunderstandings of culture and cultural misinterpretations, of believing it is customary for a man to beat up his wife. This is to say cultural misinterpretations are argued to be sources of domestic violence. Furthermore, one can argue that many African countries did not have specific laws in place to prohibit domestic violence or prosecute abusers which results in women experiencing domestic violence.

Power was also portrayed as a contributing factor to women experiencing domestic violence when one participant said: *'I think men see women as objects they can use for anything they want, and women after experiencing violence stay because of their economic status, they do not have anywhere to go or money to look after their kids'* (24 year old student). This concurs with the literature review where UNICEF (2007) points out that attitudinal survey in Namibia shows that many men still view their partners or other women as their property and that they have every right to use violence to gain obedience. The study clearly indicated that in Namibia, men exercise more power against women in various ways and forms by viewing them as objects that result in women experiencing domestic violence. Women also identified unemployment and poverty as causes of domestic violence. This concurs with Heise's (1994) observation that the causes of

domestic violence are structural systems that contribute to domestic violence. Economic systems as women economic dependence on men, limited access to cash and credit, discriminatory laws regarding property, limited access to employment and education are all structural systems that can contribute to women experiencing domestic violence. Based on this information, it may be noted that unemployment and poverty forces women to accept and stay in relationships where they are experiencing domestic violence, if they leave such relationships, they will suffer from poverty.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Effects of domestic violence on people and families**

Domestic violence has negative effects on people and their families which may have a negative impact on society in general. The participants narrated how they felt after experiencing domestic violence and how it has affected their families. The participants expressed feelings of fear, low inferiority complex, guilt and shame after experiencing domestic violence. Asked to narrate how they personally felt about going through domestic violence one participant uttered the following statements: *'I feel bad and never want to go through domestic violence again, it's a bad experience at home, children can't go to school because of the violence they saw, they were afraid, the children were affected and had to go for counselling'* (42 year old married woman), while another said *'I feel very bad, and have thought about trying to kill myself because I am always involved in conflicts and fighting and I can't work anymore to provide for my children'* (49 year old single mother), the another woman said *'I felt guilt, shame and dirty and I find it difficult to trust men and I don't want to be in a romantic relationship because I am afraid that I will be beaten and mistreated again '* (24 year old single student) while another one said *'I felt like I was the only one going through this experience, I was always stressed and would not speak*

*to anyone and I started losing weight' (29 year old single woman).* One may note that domestic violence resulted in children being affected and not going to school, while some women develop suicidal tendencies and more others involved in conflicts all the time, develop feelings of guilt, shame and stress which are all negative effects of experiencing domestic violence. The effects of domestic violence on family were further expressed when one participant said: *'Violence is not good because it breaks families' bonds, breaks trust and honesty. The man's family sometimes will not respect you, thinking you are lying about their brother or uncle (27 year old single mother);* another woman said: *'It is a very bad experience because it breaks families resulting in loss of trust and no love among family members but hatred all the time' (31 year old single mother);* and the other participant said: *'Domestic violence is bad because people will start hating each other whereby family members will leave you alone and some family members will start talking badly about you and laugh at you' (29 year old single woman).* Such information shows that domestic violence on its own has negative effects on women who experience it and their families. The effects are very serious to the extent that they can even result in death as was portrayed by one research participant who lost her sister after her boyfriend burnt them in a shack. The effects have been revealed as fear, suicidal thoughts, shame and guilt, breaking family bonds and trust and also causing conflicts within families. The negative effects of domestic violence are also the reason why women do not want to report about domestic violence as they are afraid of being discriminated against and blamed by family members, which contributes to women experiencing and staying in abusive relationships and marriages.

#### 4.3.6 Theme 6: Period to seek help

Participants were asked to narrate on how long it took women to seek help after experiencing domestic violence and the periods for seeking help ranged from six months to many years. While most participants narrated that they were afraid that their partners would be arrested, some participants felt too ashamed to disclose the abuse and most of the participants were scared of rejection and retaliation by family members and partners. When asked about how long people go through domestic violence before they report and the participants said the following: *'It can take even 10 years before you report because you keep telling yourself it will stop. People want to show others that the relationship is working whilst they are suffering. You want to protect your kids and not raise them alone without a father, the father is the breadwinner and you don't have anywhere to go'* (29 year old single lady); the other one said: *'It depends on how ready you are to go and talk about such issues because you don't even know who to trust when you know that people will start looking at you differently and gossip about you'* (24 year old single student) and she said *'It takes a long time like months or years of abuse because of fear and what people will think after you report your partner to the police or look for help'* (31 year old single mother). According to the information narrated by women, it takes too long to report or at times never reported at all which was also reflected by Jewkes et al. (1999) who states that under-reporting as demonstrated by the above findings is one of the problems in cases of domestic violence increasing. Hence, the escalating incidence of domestic violence in relationships is hidden and the data available only reflects the tip of the iceberg. Additionally, literature concurs with findings that a social environment that accepts or even supports domestic violence in some situations, contributes to creating a climate of tolerance that makes it easier for perpetrators to persist with their violent behaviour. Consequently, this makes it more difficult for women to

disclose, seek help or report violence in abusive relationships (Gracia & Herrero, 2006). If nothing is done in the environment to prevent or stop domestic violence, women will not disclose their experiences of violence and it will never stop. Victims of domestic violence report to friends, family members, while some do not even report to anyone as a result of fear. Furthermore, most participants revealed that little or no help is offered after they report to their friends and families.

The participants who expressed that fear stopped them from reporting said the following: *'Very few people report because they are scared of their husbands, they are scared of being kicked out of the house and he will stop supporting you and the children'* (42 year old married mother); and the other one said: *'Yes they report but only after a long time of abuse because of fear of what will happen if the partner gets arrested who will take care of them and the children'* (31 year old single mother). Based on such information, it may be remarked that fear of being kicked out of the relationship and losing a source of income as a result of women's low economic status, contributes to women staying in abusive relationships and taking long periods before they report. This information concurs with the literature where Namibia was portrayed by Lebeau et al. (2004) as an African society that has one of the challenges faced by women which is unequal access to property which limits their ability to strive for gender equality within their personal and social spheres of life.

Culture was also identified as a contributing factor which stops women's reporting about domestic violence when the participants said the following: *'Not all of them report because many of us culturally believe that relationship issues are private so you don't share your problems with*

*other people, only a few have the courage to report' (45 year old married woman); and the other one said: 'Well it depends because some people report and some don't, but people also need courage to report because culturally in our houses we are not allowed to talk about sex in families nor talk about your uncle being sexually active with you, no one will believe you' (24 year old student).* According to Hussain and Khan (2008), there is a cultural acceptance of domestic violence as a private affair that hinders outside intervention and prevents those affected from speaking out and gaining support. As a result, many women believe that culturally they cannot talk about their relationship issues and problems with friends or family members, which hinders them from reporting about their experiences of domestic violence.

Some women do not report as a result of lack of information on how they can be assisted as observed when they said the following: *'Some report and some keep quiet, some they don't know if they are being abused, if its words and beatings and some people think it's normal that's why they don't report. Those who don't report they also don't know where to go and don't want people to know. If you report to the police they will just inspect and leave without being helpful. (29 year old single woman);* the other one said: *'Very few report, some don't know about any organisations which can help with solutions' (29 year old single mother).* Some women do not even know that there are certain organisations and the police that can help them when they are experiencing domestic violence from their partners. Such information shows that there is need for more awareness raising required in communities and society to educate women about organisations that can assist them when they are experiencing domestic violence.

Women need certain kind of support when going through domestic violence which was narrated by the participants during the interviews. Most of the women said they needed support,

counselling, someone to talk to, encouragement and understanding from their family and friends. They said the following: *'We need support, in the form of someone to talk to us who can understand us with counselling cause violence can harm someone emotionally and physically when you experience it'* (29 year old single mother); while another said: *'We need counselling and someone to listen and understand what we will be going through after experiencing domestic violence'* (31 year old single mother). Kaur and Garg (2008) suggest that an effective response to violence must be multi-sectoral addressing the immediate practical needs of women experiencing abuse; providing long-term follow up and assistance; and focusing on changing those cultural norms, attitudes and legal provisions that promote the acceptance of and even encourage violence against women, and undermine women's enjoyment of their full human rights and freedoms. As a result, organisations, families and communities can offer more to address the needs of the women after experiencing domestic violence. Furthermore, some participants said the following: *'We need help that can protect us from the abuse that we will be experiencing from our husbands and partners'* (49 year old single mother); while the other one said: *'The police must arrest the abusive people because when you report sometimes they don't even come and follow up on the issue but just leave you like that'* (29 year old single woman). Such responses show that the perpetrators are not being arrested and women are not being protected enough from their abusive partners. This is supported by Montesati and Thurston (2015) in the literature who found that structural violence was manifested in the form of crumbling social support programmes and policies that had provided essential support to women in violent situations, and which forced some women to return to their abusive situations. However, when such structural systems are not functioning well in society to protect women from being violated after receiving assistance, they will go back to their abusive partners to experience more violence. The study

established that women organisations and the police system in Namibia sometimes do not offer support to women who approach them looking for assistance, such that they go back to their abusive partners to experience further domestic violence.

#### **4.3.7 Theme 7: Support rendered to people experiencing domestic violence by family and community**

The participants narrated the support rendered to them by family and community when they experience and report domestic violence. Some participants stated that both family and community did not offer expected support by saying the following: *'Family does not really help when you report about your husband or partner beating you up because they don't believe you at times'* (49 year old married mother); and the other said: *'Family and community don't believe you because the person who abuses you may look like a nice person to other people while they are violent to you and some family members will laugh at you and tell you to be tolerant because your partner can change and stop abusing you'* (27 year old single mother). The fact that some families do not believe women when they speak about their violent partners is a problem that is making more women experience domestic violence and not talk about it with their family members.

However, some participants got support from their family after telling them about their experiences of violence from their partners. Some participants for instance reported the following: *'Families try to help you when you report to them about experiencing violence but the help you get is not professional'* (45 year old married woman); and the other one said: *'Sometimes family members will try to help and counsel you but they don't look for you or follow*

*up to check on you after helping and they only talk to you the victim leaving out the abuser'* (29 year old single woman). Though the women got support from their families, one can note that professional support and help is very important when addressing issues of domestic violence, because if not addressed properly, the violence does not stop. Participants expressed how the help they got from family members only focused on the victim while leaving the abuser which never solves any problem and exposes them to more danger from experiencing more violence. Nevertheless, some of the participants expressed that the community offered support compared to the family when they said the following: *'The community helps much better and supports you better than family because the family is always trying to hide the issue to pretend as a perfect family'* (29 year old single mother); and the other one said: *'Community is more helpful than people in the family because they hide and try to protect the abuser to preserve the family's reputation'* (22 year old single woman). Based on all the information narrated above, it may be commented that the support rendered to someone by their family and community members when experiencing domestic violence depends on the knowledge and information that the family or community possesses about domestic violence. If the community and family lack knowledge and information about domestic violence, it can be difficult for the victim to get much support when they are experiencing domestic violence. Perceptions about domestic violence in a community and family can also determine the kind of support one can get when experiencing domestic violence. The study has also established that families are more concerned about preserving the family's honour by not dealing with domestic violence issues and moreover not confronting the abuser which contributes to women experiencing domestic violence.

#### **4.3.8 Theme 8: Evaluation of services offered by MGVS**

To evaluate services offered by MGVS, women narrated on how they view the organisation, the help they got and compared the services rendered to them by MGVS. The women narrated that they got to know about the organisation from other women in the community, neighbours and children who go for after school at the centre where the organisation is located. However, there is need for more awareness spreading about notifying people of organisations that can assist people with counselling and therapy when experiencing domestic violence. Organisations can be advertised through a lot of media like television, radio, text messages on mobile phones and social media with all the services they offer.

To find out about more on the services offered by MGVS, the women narrated the kind of help they get from the organisation by saying the following: *'I got to know about MGVS from my sister and they were helpful because they offered me counselling and skills to solve problems when I was experiencing domestic violence from my partner' (42 year old married woman)*; the other said: *'I got encouragement from this organisation and learnt that I was not alone in this situation and it made me feel better after being violated by my partner' (27 year old single mother)*. Counselling is very important as is revealed by Trevethick (2000) who suggests that, counselling and communication skills should form part of empowering of clients who find themselves in abusive situations and stressful relationships. Women also expressed gaining problem solving skills to resolve problems with their partners and also being referred to other organisations that helped them with different resources they needed. Such findings indicate that it is through the organisation that women were able to receive comprehensive support and professional advice as compared to their family and community members though they wanted

other services that were not available. Although women received counselling and problem solving skills the study established that the organisation could have offered more services, concluding that the women needed more resources and services for the intervention to work properly.

Kaur and Garg (2008) indicate that an effective response to violence must be multi-sectoral addressing the immediate practical needs of women experiencing abuse; providing long-term follow-up and assistance; and focusing on changing those cultural norms, attitudes and legal provisions that promote the acceptance of and even encourage violence against women, and undermine women's enjoyment of their full human rights and freedoms. Since violence against women is both a consequence and a cause of gender inequality, primary prevention programmes that address gender inequality and tackle the root causes of violence are all essential. Public health workers have a responsibility to build awareness by creating and disseminating materials and innovative audio-visual messages, which project a positive image of the girl child and women in the society. An integrated media campaign covering electronic, print and film media that portrays domestic violence as unacceptable is the need of the hour. The role of increasing male responsibility to end domestic violence also needs to be emphasized. Programmes are required to address battered women's needs, including those that focus on building self-efficacy and livelihood skills. The significance of informal and local community networks should be acknowledged in this regard. The survivors of domestic violence can be involved in programme planning and implementation in order to ensure accessibility and effectiveness. According to Burlon, Duvvury, and Varia (2000), rather than spotlighting women as victims in non-negotiable situations, they should be portrayed as agents capable of changing their own lives. The organisations' experts have a vital role to play in networking with other NGOs and voluntary

organisations to aid the creation of social support networks. Similarly, WHO (2017) suggests that preventing and responding to domestic violence against women requires a multi-sectoral approach by organisations. Advocacy should be done to make domestic violence against women unacceptable and for such violence to be addressed as a public health problem. Organisations should provide comprehensive services, sensitise and train health-care providers in responding to the needs of survivors holistically and empathetically. Furthermore, organisations should offer the prevention of recurrence of violence through early identification of women and children who are experiencing violence and providing appropriate referral and support. More so promotion of egalitarian gender norms as part of life skills and comprehensive sexuality education curricula should be taught to young people. Generation of evidence on what works and on the magnitude of the problem by carrying out population-based surveys, or including domestic violence against women in population-based demographic and health surveys, as well as in surveillance and health information systems. Overall, the researcher suggests that service to women victims of domestic violence should involve inter-sectoral actions for comprehensive care, involving various sectors such as legal, cultural, spiritual, health, family and non-governmental organisations in a humanised approach. Comprehensive care is only possible if there is embracement, qualified listening and follow-up for these victimized women and their abusers, thus facilitating empowerment and decreasing the occurrences and impacts of the violence on the health and life of the women.

#### **4.3.9 Theme 9: Recommendations on improving services offered women by domestic violence organisations and government**

The research participants gave recommendations on how to improve services that are offered to women experiencing domestic violence by MGVs, other organisations and the government. Some women suggested the following: *'They should bring the services of counselling to universities, and the awareness of organisations that can help women experiencing domestic violence must be made a topic in schools to empower children and they must be more organisations in the locations'*(24 year old student); while another added saying: *'The organisations must do follow up on victims of abuse to check on how they are doing and the government should implement education about domestic violence in schools to educate the young ones and also give organisations funds and resources so they can support victims and offer more assistance'*(27 year old single mother). The women thought that domestic violence should be addressed from the grassroots when the children are still young as they are growing up with the wrong perceptions about violence especially when they grow up in families that experience domestic violence, the chances of also becoming abusive and victims of violence are very high. The women suggested that children can be taught about domestic violence and its effects whilst they are still young children in school so they grow up with that knowledge. Overall, responses to prevention of domestic violence have focused primarily on intervention after the problem has already been identified and harm has occurred. According to Wolfe and Jaffe (1999), grassroots prevention of domestic violence can be primary prevention that includes school-based programmes that teach young children about domestic violence and alternative conflict-resolution skills, public education campaigns to increase awareness of the harms of domestic violence and of services available to victims. The social learning and development theory

suggests that domestic violence is learned behaviour that is modelled, rewarded and supported by families and the broader communities or environmental culture. Analysis based on this theory focuses on the ways children learn that aggression is appropriate to resolve conflicts, especially within the context of intimate relationships. In view of this, if that learned behaviour of violence is addressed from an earlier stage, it can be prevented & replaced with another good behaviour. Emery and Laumann-Billings (1998) have found that perpetrators of domestic violence are much more likely to have had violent fathers. In the same vein, Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) state that developmental research shows that early intervention with children from violent households may restore normal developmental processes, such as empathy and self-control, and minimise the risk of further harm caused by exposure to abusive adult models. The evidence reviewed can show that early intervention with children from violent households may aid in prevention of domestic violence from the grassroots level.

The participants suggested on the need for more organisations in the communities, locations, regions and towns in Namibia as there seems to be no organisations that can assist people in certain places. One participant narrated the following: *‘There is need for building more organisations in the villages and informal settlements because domestic violence happens more in the villages among uneducated people’* (22 year old student). Most women who experience domestic violence are not educated and have no awareness about domestic violence and live in places where there are no organisations, especially in the villages. Having such organisations can help a number of people gain more knowledge about domestic violence and aid on prevention efforts. According to the WHO (2017), there is evidence that having more organisations that can offer advocacy and empowerment counselling interventions, as well as home visitation is

promising in preventing or reducing domestic violence against women. There are a growing number of well-designed studies looking at the effectiveness of prevention and response programmes. More organisations and resources are needed to strengthen the prevention of and response to domestic violence in Namibia. Furthermore, there is some evidence from high-income countries that advocacy and counselling interventions to improve access to services for survivors of intimate partner violence are effective solutions in reducing domestic violence. Public-awareness campaigns such as public service announcements and advertisements are common approaches to primary prevention of domestic violence by adults. These campaigns typically provide information regarding the warning signs of domestic violence as well as community resources for victims and perpetrators.

The participants suggested the need for more awareness about domestic violence and the organisations which can help people. One participant said the following: *‘There should be more awareness about domestic violence in communities through things such as the radio and television campaigns to educate people about what domestic violence is and how it can be prevented or stopped’* (31 year old single mother). Numerous media instruments can be used to educate people about domestic violence, the organisations available that can help victims and perpetrators and how it can be prevented in society. A need for education to address spiritual beliefs about submission and domestic violence was suggested when one participant said the following: *‘Spiritual beliefs about submission and domestic violence should be addressed through education and awareness so that people will know about domestic violence and not view it as Christian submission’* (45 year old married woman). As was reflected before in the research findings, spiritual beliefs and perceptions also contribute to women experiencing domestic

violence. Some women's spiritual beliefs of viewing man as the head of the house and that they must be submissive in their relationships contributes to women experiencing domestic violence. Women believe that they must listen to everything the man says in the relationship and that they also have no right to violate them and they must just be submissive and they do not view that as any form of abuse or violence. According to a study by Pan, Daley, Lourdes, Rivera, Williams, Lingle, and Reznik (2006) to address spiritual and cultural perceptions, cultural values specific to each community must be identified and understood before developing effective interventions to prevent domestic violence. To facilitate any change in deeply embedded cultural values, there is need to first identify those values and beliefs and understand how they influence the behaviours of the perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. The process of learning about another culture requires communication between community members and a social services provider that fosters trust, being nonjudgmental, and does not impose own cultural values. Dialogue with community members can allow the design of programme activities that are culturally appropriate and that address identified needs. Culture, gender and domestic violence and the relationships that are developed by working collaboratively with communities, may open opportunities for other agencies to replicate the cultural and religious specific intervention and prevention programmes. However, insufficient information still exists in the literature on domestic violence as it relates to the different experiences and perceptions of all the Namibian women's cultures, as a result, it can be difficult to develop culturally and religious appropriate intervention programmes designed to prevent domestic violence in these communities. It is also important to engage spiritual leaders' groups and organisations and cultural leaders to also aid in the prevention of domestic violence.

On the issue of alcohol, as a contributing factor for domestic violence against women, recommendations were made, to focus on reduction of alcohol use and consumption by the government since it was viewed as a contributing factor to violent behaviour. The participants narrated the following: *'The government should limit the operating hours of shebeens, or removal of too much shebeens and availability of alcohol should be limited because it contributes to us experiencing domestic violence'* (22 year old student); another one said: *'The government should reduce alcohol, shebeens, smoking drugs and put serious punishment for people who violate women, because the man who abuse get arrested and are freed the next day so they come back to violate you'* (49 year old single mother); and the other one said: *'Government must bring control on alcohol and drugs by pricing them higher so people cannot afford to buy alcohol and drugs which make them abuse women'* (29 year old single mother). The recommendations were based on what the women observed whenever they experienced domestic violence from their partners. The majority of the women have observed that whenever their partners consume alcohol and drugs, they become violent, so based on their observations; such recommendations will have an impact. According to Joseph (2017), the best practices for dealing with alcohol-fuelled violence against women calls for increasing alcohol pricing and for decreasing alcohol marketing. Scientific evidence shows that reducing the availability and affordability of alcohol is associated with lower levels of violence. Increasing the price of an ounce of alcohol by 1% would reduce the probability of intimate partner violence against women by 5.3%. Prior research has found that alcohol abuse contributes to violence against both men and women, and that stringent alcohol control policies by the government can reduce alcohol consumption and in turn some forms of violence. Prior research has identified a strong empirical relationship between alcohol control policies (for example, prices, taxes, minimum drinking age

laws) and reductions in alcohol consumption. Additionally, several studies have identified associations between alcohol control policies and overall violence (Cook & Moore, 1993), as well as violence towards women. These studies found that, raising the price of alcohol and alcohol taxation reduces the prevalence of some forms of violence (for example, rape, assault and robbery) but has no effect on the prevalence of more extreme forms of violence such as homicide. Markowitz (2005) however, argued that beer taxes can reduce assault and alcohol-related assault, but have no impact on rape which is classified under domestic violence, as a result one can argue based on the issue of perpetrators who do not consume alcohol. Based on the results from the study, reduction of alcohol use and consumption by the government can aid in the prevention of domestic violence against women.

However, lack of resources at organisations was also highlighted when one woman noted the following: *'Resources at the organisations are not enough, they must do home visits and see the situations people are living in because abusers also need to be seen and counselled because most of them are abusing alcohol and drugs which makes it hard for them to stop being abusive'* (29 year old single woman). The women narrated that even though they got counselling, it was not enough as there is no follow up on the victims of domestic violence to check on their living arrangements and how it contributes to the experience of domestic violence. Some women after receiving counselling, as a result of their low economic status, they go back home to stay with the same perpetrators of violence. In some cases, the organisations only deal with the victim without involving the perpetrator of domestic violence which will still expose the victims to more violence.

In light of the evidence presented in this study, the researcher suggests that prevention of domestic violence on a broad level will require a clear commitment from all levels of the government, with the goal of establishing a consistent, coordinated and integrated approach for each community. A national policy of zero tolerance for domestic violence is necessary, given the pervasiveness and harms of domestic violence, such a policy and the prevention efforts to support it cannot be postponed any further.

#### **4.3.10 Theme 10: Advice to other women who are victims of domestic violence**

This theme provided the advice that the participants gave to other women who are victims of domestic violence, in order to prevent and stop domestic violence in society. Since the participants went through the experience of domestic violence, they know how one feels and through their own experiences. The participants said that women must speak out about domestic violence to someone or the relevant authorities before it gets serious. One participant said: *'Women must say no to domestic violence, women must report about issues of violence to their family members'* (29 year old single woman); and the other also said the following: *'It is important to seek help so the feelings one is going through can be dealt with and it also has a positive impact if one talks about it'* (24 year old student). Being victims of domestic violence makes them to be acquainted with the negative effects of experiencing domestic violence since they experienced the issue first hand. Another woman said the following: *'Women should learn to talk to someone when experiencing domestic violence, seek help from someone they trust and educate themselves by reading and listening to radio'* (45 year old married woman), which shows that there is a culture of women not discussing their relationships with other people and

lack of education that makes women keep experiencing domestic violence. One woman advised other women to report to the police when she said the following: *'Women must be strong and not give up on life, they must report to the police and not family because they do not help but are afraid to let you report'* (49 year old single mother) which shows that when domestic violence is reported in the family, nothing happens as a result of fear of the perpetrator getting arrested, which is increasing the cases of domestic violence. Most of the participants were advising and encouraging other women who are victims of domestic violence to report and not keep quiet about their experiences as it can help other women to talk and also help prevent domestic violence.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the analysis and presentation of the qualitative data gathered from women participants from MGVS using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data was analysed using content analysis and demographical data was presented in tables, while women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence were presented in narrative format. Women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence were categorised into a variety of themes: Knowledge of domestic violence, history and experiences of domestic violence, perceptions and experiences of domestic violence and causes and effects of domestic violence. The study found that women are still experiencing domestic violence as a result of barriers as the period to seek help and support rendered to women when experiencing domestic violence by their family, community and organisations that render services. Factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, religious and spiritual perceptions, family and community response towards domestic violence were found to influence one's desire to seek professional help and services. The study also

revealed the heterogeneity of the women and how their positionalities converged to impact experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Intersectional factors such as age, levels of education, social class and ethnicity were found to be instrumental in impacting women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. The positive results are that, the study was able to investigate women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence, ways in which domestic violence can be reduced and ways in which women victims are assisted by MGVS through the recommendations they made to improve services. However, the negative results are that women still experience domestic violence because of factors such as men consuming alcohol, misunderstandings, poverty, early marriages and lack of education, cultural and spiritual perceptions that need to be addressed to reduce experiences of domestic violence.

The discussion about the main results of the findings from the study has offered answers to the research study's main objective and sub objectives. The main objective of the study was to investigate women's experiences and the sub objectives examined perceptions of domestic violence, revealed ways in which women victims of domestic violence were assisted by MGVS and suggested ways in which domestic violence could be reduced. The next chapter offers recommendations, identified arrears for further research and conclude the research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers conclusion, recommendations and arrears for further research from the research study. The rationale for undertaking this study was to investigate women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence in Windhoek, Namibia. This was done by investigating women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence, examining ways in which domestic violence can be reduced and exploring ways in which the women victims of violence are assisted by MGVS.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

This study sought to provide a contribution to knowledge about domestic violence against women, by understanding the experience and perceptions of women victims of domestic violence. By understanding the experience and perceptions of these women victims of domestic violence, the study attempted to reveal the phenomenon of domestic violence and understand how this is suffered by the women, in its multiple forms. The study revealed what was reviewed in the literature and what the research participants suggested, made it possible for the researcher to offer recommendations aimed to reduce domestic violence against women. The policy and practice implications are based on the evidence provided by the research findings and are therefore confined to women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. Consequently, the implications listed do not constitute a comprehensive listing of promising practices or even policies and procedures widely recognised to be effective. However, based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggested recommendations that could be utilised for policy and practice to

reduce domestic violence. Domestic violence is very complex on both the individual and societal level which is linked with power structures regarding gender and the status of women; therefore, there can be no simple or straightforward solution.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

In light of the findings revealed by this study, what was reviewed in the literature and what the research participants suggested, the researcher offers the following recommendations based on the conclusion drawn from this study:

- All Namibian women in rural areas, informal settlements and disadvantaged communities need to be educated about the Domestic Violence Act and what it entails to enhance their knowledge about the topic which may help prevent and reduce domestic violence.
- Girl and boy children as well as women in general, should be socialised from an early stage to become zero tolerant of gender violence and to different stereo-typed gender roles that are entrenched by the traditional belief system. Grassroots prevention of domestic violence can be primary prevention that includes school-based programmes that teach young children about domestic violence and alternative conflict-resolution skills, public education campaigns to increase awareness of the harms of domestic violence and of services available to victims.
- African society and all ethnic groups in Namibia should revisit cultural and spiritual beliefs like patriarchy that are dehumanising and compromising the lives of women. To address spiritual and cultural perceptions, domestic violence policies and prevention programmes should identify and understand cultural and spiritual beliefs specific to

different communities before developing effective interventions to prevent domestic violence.

- Community based organisations should be established in rural areas and townships to cater for the needs of disadvantaged abused women. More domestic violence organisations and resources are needed to strengthen the prevention of and response to domestic violence in Namibia.
- Friends, relatives, neighbours and the communities at large must be encouraged by social service practitioners and political structures to be vigilant and supportive of African women in their plight within violent partner relationships. The communities should be vocal about the issue of violence against women to show that it is not acceptable in their communities.
- Non-governmental organisations that offer services to prevent domestic violence should continuously publicise their services in the different modes of media as this information is of value to the communities. Radio and television programmes should continuously be vocal about abusive relationships and the need for women to seek assistance.
- Domestic violence prevention organisations must also follow up on victims to check their living conditions and also involve the perpetrators with counselling during the time they offer assistance to victims. Effective response to violence must be multi-sectoral addressing the immediate practical needs of women experiencing abuse; providing long-term follow up and assistance; and focusing on changing those cultural norms, attitudes and legal provisions that promote the acceptance of and even encourage violence against women, and undermine women's enjoyment of their full human rights and freedoms.

- One-stop service centres should be established by the government and non-governmental organisations, not only in urban areas but in rural areas and within marginalised communities, to assist and empower women who experience domestic violence.
- Employment opportunities should be afforded to women in violent partner relationships as this could assist with income generation and economic independence. Furthermore, poverty eradication programmes and shelters should continuously be initiated by social workers and other stakeholders to assist abused women so that they could be able to walk away from abusive relationships and homes.
- The criminal justice system should be more sensitive to issues of partner abuse and should provide prompt responses to the incidence of violence.
- There should be reduction of alcohol use and consumption by the government since it was viewed as a contributing factor to violent behaviour. This maybe done by alcohol control policies such as increasing prices and taxes of alcohol, increasing minimum drinking age laws, reducing the number of shebeens in the informal settlements and decreasing alcohol marketing.
- Women in abusive partner relationships should be vocal about the abuse and break the conspiracy of silence that tends to prevail in these kinds of relationships.

#### **5.4 Areas for further research**

The study has attempted to reveal women's perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. However, further studies on the subject are necessary so that domestic violence service providers have a holistic and empathetic view. For instance although covering the experiences and perceptions of women victims of domestic violence, this may not be an absolute reality for all of

those who are living with violence. Further research is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of domestic violence against women. To be able to fully understand the phenomenon of domestic violence, future research should be directed at understanding how the patterns and nature of domestic violence change throughout a woman's life. The research might also include the types and sites of injuries women sustain during domestic violence and the consequences of such injuries.

Presently, the majority of research exploring domestic violence is focused on the prevalence, detection and the negative health consequences of domestic violence. There continues to be a gap in the evidence in respect of effective interventions, their long term effects and women's subjective accounts of the effectiveness of referral pathways. The unpredictability of the course of domestic violence might bring other charges and conflicts, which should be considered and evaluated by all the professionals when assisting women victims and their families, in directing the actions to be implemented as well as support to overcome the situation and restructure the family. Further research is required to explore such outcomes. Research on violence against men and boys is also required to investigate their experiences and perceptions and reveal the fact that they are also victims of violence, rather than being viewed as perpetrators only. To conclude, the findings of this study suggest further research to explore the association between domestic violence and alcohol abuse, culture and spiritual beliefs.

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