

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT COMPEL  
BATTERED WOMEN TO REMAIN IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN VHEMBE  
DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the dissertation titled: "An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province," hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Masters in Research Psychology has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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**Signature**

**Ms T D Shivambu**

.....

**Date**

## **Abstract**

The study investigated the psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. According to statistics in South Africa (SA) one in every five women is battered by her partner, and one in every four of all women in SA are assaulted by their partners weekly. The research approach was qualitative in nature. Sampling for the study was purposive and utilised eight participants who met the criteria for the investigation. The study was conducted at Tshilidzini Hospital Trauma Centre and The Sibasa Victim Empowerment unit in Thohoyandou, Vhembe District in the Limpopo province. Data was gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire guide. Data was analysed, using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), to gain an in-depth account of each participant's experience of abuse. The results of the study indicate that cultural factors still play an important role in facilitating women abuse. The women in the study used religion, denial and avoidance, guilt and self-blame as coping mechanisms. Low self-esteem, depression, cognitive dissonance and relationship hope and commitment were identified as psychological factors compelling battered women to remain in abusive relationships. The study recommended that educational programmes and workshops on woman abuse be provided to empower women in rural areas.

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
Title page	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Declaration	iii
Abstract	iv
Content pages	v
List of tables and figures	x
List of acronyms	xi

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Battered Woman Syndrome	1
1.2.1 Cycle of battering	2
1.2.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression in battered women	2
1.2.3 Coping mechanisms used by battered women	3
1.3 Background to the problem	4
1.4 Significance of proposed research	5
1.5 Statement of the research problem	5
1.6 Study Aim	6
1.7 Study objectives	6
1.8 Motivation for the study	6
1.9 Summary	6

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 A brief historical overview of women battering	7
2.3 Patriarchy and women battering	8
2.4 Cultural and traditional perceptions of women battering	10
2.5 Woman battering and the role of religion	12
2.6 Myths and stereotypes pertaining to women battering	15
2.7 Abusive behaviours of batterers	16
2.8 The Domestic Violence Act (No: 116 of 1998)	18
2.9 Prevalence of woman battering	19
2.10 Characteristics of battered women	20

2.10.1 Factors that indicate that a woman is in an abusive relationship	22
2.11 Characteristics of a woman batterer	23
2.11.1 Personality characteristics of the male batterer	24
2.12 Factors that characterise abusive relationships	25
2.13 Causes of woman battering	27
2.13.1 Personal and/or psychological factors	27
2.13.2 Sex-role socialisation	27
2.13.3 Lack of economic resources	28
2.13.4 Cultural ideologies	29
2.13.5 Learned behaviour	29
2.13.6 Disintegration of traditional socio-cultural norms	30
2.13.7 Alcohol as a perceived cause of women battering	31
2.13.8 Poverty	31
2.14 Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS)	32
2.14.1 Stages of Battered Women Syndrome (BWS)	34
2.14.2 The cycle of woman battering	35
2.15 Coping mechanisms used by battered women	37
2.16 The consequences of woman battering	40
2.16.1 Physical health effects	40
2.16.2 Psychological effects of woman battering	41
2.16.3 The social effects of woman battering	43
2.17 How women respond to being battered	46
2.18 Reasons why battered women remain in abusive relationships	47
2.18.1 Relationship commitment	47
2.18.2 Cognitive dissonance	48
2.18.3 Relationship hope	49
2.18.4 Fear of loneliness	50
2.18.5 Lack of perceived social support	50
2.18.6 Adaptation to violence	50
2.18.7 Learned Hopefulness	51
2.18.8 Social stigma	51
2.18.9 Religion	51
2.18.10 Dependency	51
2.18.11 Pre-existing set of beliefs	52

2.19	Women as abusers and batterers	53
2.20	Feminist perspective on women battering	54
2.21	Summary	55

### **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY**

3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Key definitions and concepts	57
3.3	Seligman's (1975) Theory of Learned Helplessness (updated by Walker, 2009) as a theoretical framework for the study)	59
3.4	Summary	62

### **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

4.1	Introduction	63
4.2	Area of the study	63
4.3	Description of the population	63
4.4	Sampling method	63
4.4.1	Inclusion criteria	64
4.4.2	Exclusion criteria	64
4.5	Research questions	64
4.6	Data collection	64
4.6.1	Materials, Apparatus and instruments	64
4.7	Data analysis	66
4.8	Bias	68
4.9	Reliability and validity	69
4.10	Ethical considerations	70
4.11	Summary	71

### **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

5.1	Introduction	72
5.2	Biographical information of participants	73
5.2.1	Background information of participants	74
5.3	Participants understanding of psychological and physical abuse	78
5.4	Reasons given for remaining in the relationship	80
5.5	Themes derived from participants' experiences of abuse	80

5.5.1 Disbelief	81
5.5.2 Extra marital affairs	82
5.5.3 Police involvement	84
5.5.4 Violence as a norm	85
5.5.5 Witnessing violence	86
5.5.6 Sexual coercion	87
5.5.7 Fear	88
5.6 Themes gleaned from data pertaining to participants coping mechanisms	89
5.6.1 Religion	89
5.6.2 Denial and Avoidance	90
5.6.3 Guilt and self-blame	91
5.6.4 Distancing	92
5.7 Factors that compel women to remain in an abusive relationship	93
5.7.1 Cultural and social factors	93
5.7.2 Lack of social support	95
5.7.3 Staying because of the children	97
5.7.4 Economic factors	98
5.8 Psychological factors that compel women to remain in abusive relationships	98
5.8.1 Depression	99
5.8.2 Relationship hope and commitment	100
5.8.3 Cognitive dissonance	101
5.8.4 Low self-esteem	102
5.9 Summary	104

## **CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 Introduction	105
6.2 Research conclusion	105
6.3 Summary	108

## **CHAPTER 7: METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Introduction	109
7.2 Research limitations	109
7.3 Research Strengths	109

7.4 Research recommendations	110
7.5 Recommendations for future research	110
7.6 Summary	111
References	112
Appendix A: Scriptures depicting women abuse	127
Appendix B: DSM-IV AND V	129
Appendix C: Semi- structured interview guide	136
Appendix D: Consent form	138
Appendix E – letter to the TVEP requesting permission to conduct the study	143

## **list of tables and diagrams**

Table 1: Myths and stereotypes relating to the battering of women

Table 2: Neglectful and deliberately abusive tactics employed by batterers towards their victims

Table 3: Characteristics of male batterers

Table 4: Biographical information participants

Diagram 1: The cycle of violence

## **List of acronyms**

- AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- BWS - Battered Woman Syndrome
- CNS – Central Nervous System
- HIV - Human Immune Virus
- IBS - Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- LOC - Loss of Consciousness
- MRC - Medical Research Council
- PID - Pelvic Inflammatory Disease
- POWA - People Opposing Women Abuse
- PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- SA - South Africa
- STI - Sexually Transmitted Infection
- TCA - Thematic Content Analysis
- TREC - Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee
- TVEP - Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme
- UK – United Kingdom
- UNICEF - United Nations Children Funds
- USA – United States of America
- WHO - World Health Organisation

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Woman battering often occurs in South Africa affecting women from all backgrounds. It includes physical, sexual and psychological battering. The current study investigates psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. Chapter one introduces the research, discusses the significance of the study, describes the research problem, provides the study aim and objectives and motivates the reason for the research.

### **1.2 Battered Woman Syndrome**

The term Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) was first used by Walker (2009) to represent a set of distinct psychological and behavioural symptoms that result from prolonged exposure to situations of abuse. BWS is a pattern of signs and symptoms such as fear and perceived inability to escape, appearing in women who are physically and mentally abused over an extended period by a husband or long-term partner. In some cases, the woman develops a sense of Learned Helplessness (Seligman, 1975). This means that the woman starts to believe that she deserves the abuse and is powerless to stop it essentially, she learns to accept the power and control her male partner has over her. According to Starburg (2006), BWS helped counter the perspective that women deserve to be beaten. Furthermore, it explains how battered women become unable to speak out about the abuse through a pattern of Learned Helplessness. Women, who remain in abusive relationships experience high levels of psychological distress, accept responsibility for being battered, believe in traditional male female sex-role stereotypes and are reluctant to seek help as the abuse is often seen as a private family matter (Barnet & LaViolet, 1993; Hansen & Harway, 1993; Sullivan, 1999; Renzetti, Edleson & Bergen, 2011). Battered women display many of the following symptoms, hyper-arousal and high levels of anxiety, avoidance behaviour and emotional numbing (which may be expressed as depression), body image distortion and sexual intimacy problems (Hansen & Harway, 1993; Walker, 2009; Evans, 2013).

Battering also occurs within lesbian and homosexual relationships and maybe under-reported, as is often the case with minority groups (Motz, 2014). According to Krahe (2013), though battering in same-sex relationships receives less attention, evidence suggests that the prevalence rates are similar to findings from studies of heterosexual couples. Recent reports

suggest that the rates of victimisation in same-sex relationships are higher than in heterosexual relationships as a result of intimidation and threats to *out* (tell friends, family or business acquaintances about the individuals homosexuality) one of the partners (Motz, 2014).

### **1.2.1 Cycle of battering**

According to Walker (2009), a physically abused woman must experience at least two complete cycles of battering before she meets the criteria for BWS. The cycle described by the author has three distinct phases. First is the tension-building phase. During this phase the man acts with increasing violence. He is edgy and tense, verbally abusive and his insults and criticisms increase. At this stage he begins to push, shove and hit his partner. The second phase is the explosion, or acute battering stage. As tension mounts the woman becomes unable to placate her male partner and she may argue or try to defend herself. The man uses this as justification for his anger and assaults her, often saying that he is teaching her a lesson. The third phase is the loving phase. The loving and kind behaviour of the abuser during the third phase provides reinforcement for the cycle, allowing the battered woman to convince herself that her abuser is capable of change. The cycle then begins all over again, with the violence intensifying in frequency and severity.

### **1.2.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression in battered women**

Hansen and Harway (1993) describe the symptomology of battered women as most resembling those of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (see appendix B for Diagnostic Criteria:DSM-V), which many victims of trauma have. These reactions include re-experiencing the trauma through nightmares, flashbacks, and/or intrusive thoughts of the trauma, numbing to the external world and a variety of anxiety-related symptoms such as sleep disturbance and avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma (Hansen & Harway, 1993). According to Campbell (2002), PTSD comorbidity, is the most common mental health outcome of intimate partner violence. It was also reported that diminished decision making and problem-solving abilities that are self-reported by battered women are linked to repeated exposure to physical and/or psychological trauma.

Battered women experience high dependence on their abusive partners and lack the necessary personal resources to solve the problems associated with abuse or to live independently. This increases their risk of the development of depression (Calvete, Estevez & Corral, 2006). This

is supported by Bender and Roberts (2007) who report that depression is very prevalent in battered women. A study by Campbell (2002) also indicated that depression and PTSD are the most prevalent mental-health problems linked to women abuse. The author (Campbell, 2007) also found that in addition to depression, battered women had significantly more anxiety, insomnia and social dysfunction than women, who were not battered, with physical battering having a stronger effect than psychological battering. According to Hansen and Harway (1993), depression amongst battered women may be the result of negative coping mechanisms. They argue that expressing anger towards the batterer has the effect of increasing the violence so arguing can be seen as negative coping (Finley, 2013). The authors also report that women who repress their intense anger in response to a beating have higher survival rates, but that repressed anger is later expressed as depression.

### **1.2.3 Coping mechanisms used by battered women**

Hansen and Harway (1993) describe a variety of coping mechanisms that battered women adopt in coming to terms with abuse. These coping mechanisms allow women to survive the battering but also ensure that they will remain in abusive relationships. Among the rationalisations developed by battered women, to understand the context within which the battering has happened are: a) denial of the injury she experienced; b) attribution of the blame to forces outside the control of both the perpetrator and the recipient; c) self-blame; d) denial of emotional attachment to the batterer; e) wanting to save the batterer by helping him overcome his problems, while continuing to tolerate the abuse and f) the need to endure the violence for the sake of religion or traditional cultural norms.

A study by Rodriguez (2011) reported that battered women use the following coping mechanisms: positive reappraisal, seeking social support, accepting responsibility and inappropriate problem-solving techniques. The research found that battered women detach themselves from their experiences to avoid getting emotionally hurt. Furthermore, they often fantasise that they are living other lives and that a miracle, allowing them to escape, will occur even though they are not doing anything to help themselves. Essentially, as a consequence of battering, a woman develops the belief that she is the cause of the maltreatment, that the abuse is unavoidable and that she lacks the necessary personal resources to solve the situation. The woman will therefore become isolated from any support system she might have, try and avoid battering and negate the abuse by making excuses for the abuser (Calvete, Corral & Estevez, 2007).

According to Ward, Wilson, Polochek and Hudson (1995), battered women are likely to use cognitive deconstruction as a coping mechanism. They state that cognitive deconstruction is thought to occur in battered women whose expectations about themselves and their intimate relationships are violated by abuse. For example, women who believe that their partners should not use violence towards them but who consider that their own behaviour warranted it and/or those women who blame themselves for tolerating abuse (Landrine & Russo, 2010).

### **1.3 Background to the problem**

Woman abuse is part of everyday life for many women and in many traditional societies it is accepted as the norm (Starburg, 2006). Patriarchy, which exists in most emerging countries, endorses the male as head of the family. It contributes to the incidence of violence against women as they are viewed as the property of their male spouses (Aderinto, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010; 2013), woman battering is a global problem and many women endure psychological or physical abuse daily. South Africa has high levels of violence against women for instance, in Gauteng Province one in every six women who dies is killed by an intimate partner (POWA, 2012).

The following statistics from United Nations Children Funds (UNICEF, 2000) illustrate that violence against women is present globally, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. In Switzerland, twenty percent (20%) of one thousand five hundred women (1500) women reported being physically assaulted by their male partners. Fifty nine percent (59%) of a sample of seven hundred and ninety six (796) Japanese women also reported being physically assaulted by their partners. In Kenya, it was reported that forty two percent (42%) of a sample of six hundred and twelve (612) women surveyed in one district reported to having been beaten by a partner, of those fifty eight percent (58%) reported that they were often beaten. Statistics from Uganda revealed that forty one percent (41%) of female respondents reported that they had been physically harmed by a male partner. In Zimbabwe thirty two percent (32%) of a sample of nine hundred and sixty six (966) women reported physical abuse by an intimate male partner. It was further reported that generally, a woman suffers being battered an average of thirty nine (39) times before she eventually seeks outside help. The average woman stays in an abusive relationship for ten and a half years (10.5yrs) before leaving the abusive partner.

Research, by Walker (2009) in America, using a sample of self-identified battered women aged seventeen (17) to fifty nine (59) years concluded that the women wanted to maintain appearances of normality for their children or other social reasons. Although these women were intelligent, generally well educated and many of them held down responsible jobs, they still protected the batterer. It was further concluded that covering up domestic violence exacted a heavy psychological cost on the women leaving them isolated from friends and family which rendered them emotionally vulnerable.

In South Africa, statistics revealed by POWA (2012) indicates that one in every five women is battered by her partner and one in every four, or a quarter (25%) of all women in SA, are assaulted by their boyfriends or husbands every week. The prevalence of domestic violence against women was found to be high. Over a third of all South African women report some type of physical or psychological abuse (38.3%), of which nearly two thirds (65.2%) was perpetrated by the husband. According to WHO (2010), SA is ranked amongst the highest countries for gender-based violence worldwide.

#### **1.4 Significance of proposed research**

The findings of the study will add to the research base on battered women generally, and in South Africa specifically. It will add to the literature on understanding BWS and will help determine the psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the study recommendations will help guide future research on the topic specifically in Limpopo Province.

#### **1.5 Statement of the research problem**

The abuse of women in South Africa appears to be on the increase despite laws that protect women against it (POWA, 2012). Research on why battered women remain in abusive relationships has typically concluded that they stay for financial and social reasons and that there is also an element of Learned Helplessness (Walker, 2009). However, research into other psychological factors that constrain battered women to remain in relationships is very limited (Barrett & St Pierre, 2011). Woman battering is a growing social problem which requires focused research, the results of which can inform clinical interventions, awareness campaigns and social programmes. The research was thus aimed at seeking a better understanding of the psychological factors, which constrain women to remain in abusive relationships. The statistics on women battering differ, often from the same source (for

instance, (POWA, 2012) and sometimes appear to contradict each other. This is a result of research being conducted in different socio-economic environments and contexts and as a result of researchers using different methodologies.

### **1.6 Study Aim**

The aim of the study is to explore psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships.

### **1.7 Study objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

- determine the psychological state of battered women;
- examine the phenomena of Learned Helplessness in battered women;
- investigate the coping mechanisms used by battered women;
- Investigate psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships.

### **1.8 Motivation for the study**

The bulk of research on battered women and domestic violence has focused on various factors such as the frequency and nature of women battering, its perceived causes (for instance, abusive family histories), and its incidence within all social levels of society (Hansen & Harway, 1993; Walker, 2009). The current research used a different direction in order to further understand BWS. The investigation explored the mental state of battered women which shed further light onto the psychological factors which compelled them to remain in abusive relationships. As the researcher had access to a shelter for battered women, who were battered by male partners, it was decided to make this group a focus for the present study.

### **1.9 Summary**

Woman battering is an important public health problem. It occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural groups. In South Africa there is a high incidence of woman abuse by a male partner. It is a complex problem which this research sought to better comprehend by gaining an understanding of the psychological factors which constrain women to remain in abusive relationships.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Woman battering is not a new phenomenon. It is a major public health problem globally. This chapter reviews relevant literature related to woman battering in order to contextualise the research.

### 2.2 A brief historical overview of women battering

Woman battering has been visible throughout history. In early Roman society a woman was considered the property of her husband and was therefore subject to his control. According to early Roman law a man could subject his wife to beatings and divorce or murder her for offences which he believed to have ruined his honour or threatened his property rights. These were considered private matters and were not publicly scrutinised (Moore, 1979).

The Catholic Church's endorsement of *The Rules of Marriage* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century urged a husband to stand as the judge of his wife. He was to beat her with a stick if she committed any offences noted under these rules the rationale being that beating showed a concern for a wife's soul. Common law in England, during this period and up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also gave a man the right to beat his wife in the interest of maintaining family discipline. The phrase *rule of thumb* referred to English common law, which allowed a husband to beat his wife as long as he used a stick that was no bigger than his thumb (Moore, 1979). This law stated that women were inferior to men. A woman had no legal existence apart from her husband and her husband owned and controlled her (Barnet, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 1997; Moore, 1997).

The fact that husbands had the right to chastisement, while wives did not, was only one aspect of Roman double standards for men and women. Wives faced the death penalty for offences such as adultery and drinking wine, while husbands risked no punishment at all for the same activities. Women also had no property rights, even as widows. The major alternative roles for women were those of priests, prostitutes or concubines (Okun, 1986).

Through the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, men could beat their wives with the tolerance and approval of the community. They could do so in public without fear of interference by others. Some norms did develop during this period against the use of sharp or crushing weapons,

against violence during pregnancy and against assaults on sensitive organs. However, the husband who violated such norms seldom faced stronger sanctions than expression of disapproval. The usual English form of expressing disapproval was called *rough music* which was in practice until at least 1862 (Okun, 1986).

In 1824 the Supreme Court of Mississippi (in the United States of America) also acknowledged a husband's right to beat his wife. This was the same in Maryland, North Carolina and Massachusetts (Moore, 1979). It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that courts began changing their decisions, and no longer supported a husband's right to physically discipline his wife. The State of Maryland was the first to outlaw wife beating in 1883, after the courts of Alabama and Massachusetts overturned the right to chastise wives in 1871 (Moore, 1979). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in 1974, that the state of North Carolina in a High Court ruling stated that:

“The husband has no right to chastise his wife under any circumstances however, if no permanent injury has been inflicted nor malice, cruelty, no dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain shut out the public gaze and leave the parties to forget and forgive” (Moore, 1979, p.9).

According to Humm (1995), in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century women often did not work outside the home, although this changed with the advent of World War 1 and World War 11, when women were forced to work as young men were conscripted into the army (particularly in Europe and America). After this many women remained in the workplace but many returned to work in the home, thus becoming economically reliant on men. This position was changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through successful lobbying by women's rights activists and the suffragette movement (gaining women the right to vote).

### **2.3 Patriarchy and women battering**

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The pervasiveness of violence against women across the boundaries of nation, culture, race, class and religion points to its roots in patriarchy. Historically, gender roles, which are the socially constructed roles of women and men, have been ordered hierarchically, with men exercising power and control over women. Violence against women thus serves as a mechanism for maintaining male authority. When a woman is subjected to

violence for transgressing social norms, patriarchy which governs female sexuality and family roles also reinforces prevailing gender norms (Moore, 1979; Renzetti, Edleson & Bergen, 2011).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Dobash and Dobash (1979), there was much legal, political, economic and ideological support for a husband's authority over his wife. The legal right of a man to use physical force against his wife was no longer explicitly recognised in most western countries. Nonetheless, the legacy of patriarchy continued to produce the conditions and relationships that led to a man's use of force against a female partner. Patriarchal dominance was still supported by a moral order which underpinned the marital hierarchy (Evans, 2013). Women who lived in traditional societies were expected to give a man, especially a husband, respect and loyalty in all areas of domestic life. This, in spite of the fact that wife battering is a form of patriarchal dominance which is indisputable in the light of historical evidence. Legal, academic and religious writings, which support patriarchy, contribute to understanding the status of women in contemporary society. This status encompasses a fundamental explanation of why women, particularly those in traditional non-western societies, have become victims of marital violence. However, it must be noted that women in developed countries are also victims of physical and psychological abuse. This is usually hidden as male and female partners are expected to have shared rights (Walker, 2009).

Women historically had no identity apart from that given to them as wives, mothers and daughters. To try and move from that identity was discouraged and often punished. To be a wife also meant being legally and morally bound to obey the will and wishes of a husband, and therefore subject to his control, to the point of physical punishment which in some cases led to permanent injury and even murder (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Finley, 2013; Renzetti, Edleson & Bergen, 2011).

Patriarchy has led to the domination of women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. Although the legal right for a man to use physical force against his wife is no longer explicitly recognised in most countries, the heritage of patriarchy continues to generate the conditions that lead to a man's use of force against a woman (Finley, 2013; Moore, 1979; Walker, 2009). According to Walker (2009), men continue to use physical, sexual and psychological battering to obtain and maintain power and control over women

because they can. Glanz and Spiegel (1996) and Walker (2009) report that women in most developing countries are still viewed largely as men's property. This view is evident from the lack of support and protection battered women have been afforded by the legal systems in such countries for instance, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria (Walker, 2009).

Barnett et al. (1997) state that during the late 1960s and 1970s, violence directed at women received renewed attention, largely as part of the women's movement. Recognition of equal status for women in areas such as jobs and pay spread to a growing pressure for equality in the marital relationship. According to the feminist perspective, patriarchy in any and all forms is the ultimate cause of all abuse against women. Patriarchy is seen as the overarching social construct which ultimately provokes abuse. Violence against women is explained in terms of a power struggle, feminists argue that in a patriarchal society those with power (male) must resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened (DeKeseredy, 2011; Tracy, 2007). According to DeKeseredy (2011), the ideology of patriarchy provides a political and social rational for both men and women believing that it is natural or right for women to be subordinate to men in all avenues of life.

#### **2.4 Cultural and traditional perceptions of women battering**

There are different cultural perceptions about how women should be treated and how they should respond to that treatment. In most developing countries women are taught to obey their husbands' dominance and, at all times, to show respect. For example in African culture, cultural beliefs expect women not to talk back to their husbands. They are also expected to be subordinate to the man because men are traditionally perceived to be head of the family (Brown-Miller, 2012). According to Tshesane, (2001, p. 4), this is supported by the following statement made by an African man who reported that: "I am educated but I beat my wife if she makes a mistake. This is the only way of running the house. If we do not beat them they will not maintain the house well." It was also reported that this man stayed in Europe for two years but eventually went back to his home in Africa as he was unable to control his wife due to foreign influence. Basically, because of the laws in Europe against woman abuse, the man returned to his home country where he could reprimand his wife as he felt fit.

In traditional societies, wife battering is largely regarded as a consequence of a man's right to inflict physical punishment on his wife. Cultural justifications for violence usually follow from traditional philosophies of the proper roles of men and women (Saine, 2012; UNICEF,

2000). According to Dobash and Dobash (1979), men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in western society namely: aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination. They also note that these men use physical force as a means of enforcing their dominance. Box (1983) argues that for many males, to be called a man means they must be strong, powerful, independent and prepared to use force if they have to (to show dominance). Because of these cultural and traditional perceptions and beliefs men are expected to constantly strive to be competitive and determined to get what they want through whatever means necessary. Brown – Miller (2012) reports that men are socialised differently from women and, even as young boys, if they get hurt are not expected to cry. Socialisation, tradition and culture thus encourages and promotes abuse of women in the home, in the sense that men are expected to dominate in all situations. Importantly, the author notes that males are disadvantaged by this as they are not expected to show feelings of hurt thus display emotion predominately in the form of anger.

Tshesane (2001) states that traditional beliefs play a role in women abuse in the family context, in the sense that most rural women believe that for the sake of protection and care, they should adhere to everything their husbands say. They are therefore not supposed to ask about their husbands' whereabouts. If they ask a man where he has been or is going, the implication is that they do not have respect for him (Anderson & Taylor, 2009; Aris, 2011). Conversely, females are expected to inform their husbands of where they are at all times, failure to do so could result in physical and/or psychological abuse. Tshesane (2001) states that husbands monitor their wives' movements and they must account for any extra time spent away from home. The general fear women have is, as they have been socialised not to divorce, that if a man leaves them they will be labelled divorcees which equates to being a failure in life. According to Aris (2011), most battered women are raised in the belief that their identity is incorporated into, or attached to the man's and that they cannot have an identity of their own. The author suggests that this mistaken belief is rooted in most African cultures and that rural African woman, born and raised in these cultures, have little or no knowledge about other belief systems.

Traditional African societies even today, often distinguish between just and unjust reasons for abuse and often distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable levels of violence. In this way, males are given the right to punish a woman physically within stated limits, for certain transgressions. Only if a man oversteps these bounds, for example, by becoming too violent

or for beating a woman without an accepted cause will others intervene. Even where culture grants men substantial control over female behaviour, abusive men generally exceed the norm (Saine, 2012; UNICEF, 2011). According to Saine (2012), for many men in Gambia and elsewhere in Africa, wife beating is a proof of manhood, a testimony to male power and control over women and girls. Cruelty towards women by men is persistent and culturally sanctioned. It is most often justified by the belief that women are childlike and need discipline to keep them in line (Saine, 2012).

Harmful traditional practices originate from deep-rooted discriminatory views and beliefs about the role and position of women in society. The role differentiation and expectations in traditional societies relegate women to an inferior position from birth throughout their lives. Traditional and cultural practices maintain the subordination of women in society and legitimise and perpetuate gender based violence. Traditional practices such as payment of lobola (bride-price) and polygamy are often synonymous with gender violence as they reduce women to assets belonging to men (Wadesanga, Rembe & Chabaya, 2011). For instance, lobola strips women of their individual rights and veils the domestic issues of couples in silence. This is probably a result of cultural and societal norms and expectations in traditional African culture. These norms create an environment where marital violence is accepted and justified by the payment of lobola (Wadesanga et al., 2011). When violence occurs, women believe it is a normal part of marriage. They also believe that if they complain no one will listen (Aris, 2011; Day, nd).

## **2.5 Woman battering and the role of religion**

Among the many world religions Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for example, incorporate religious beliefs and practices that impact on women. In this research, Christianity and Islam will be used to illustrate the challenges that religion presents for victims of domestic violence, or women who are in abusive relationships.

In the Old Testament (Holy Bible, 2010) Christian Scriptures contain story after story of violence against women for example, Dinah (Genesis 34); Tamar (2 Samuel 13); the Levite's concubine (Judges 19); Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11); Vashti (Esther 1). In the New Testament (New Living Translation, 2010) the persistent widow in Luke's Gospel (Luke 18) also depicts women abuse. Later Christian texts also condone male violence against women and the domination of women. For example, in the *Rules of Marriage* compiled by Friar

Cherubino in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Bussert (1986) there are careful instructions to a husband in terms of how to reprimand his wife (See Appendix A for a list of scriptures promoting woman abuse).

"And if this still doesn't work, take up a stick and beat her soundly for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body" (Fortune & Enger, 2006, p.13).

Unfortunately, this doctrine has been viewed as consistent with Christian scriptures as underpinned by the following passages from the Holy Bible (2010).

"For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the Church. He is the Saviour of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything" (Holy Bible 2010, Ephesians 5: lines, 22-24).

"A woman should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly" (Holy Bible, 2010, Timothy 2: lines, 11-12)

Christian scriptures have had much influence on the cultural beliefs and social institutions of western society. Christianity was based upon the principle of patriarchy and not equality (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Man was regarded as the head of the household, being referred to as the Godhead, and his wife and children as his flock. The man had responsibility over his family, had authority over them and was able to control and dominate them. The law of the Christian God thus provided a sacred and moral philosophy that underpinned the patriarchal structure of the family (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Fortune & Enger, 2006).

According to Fortune and Enger (2006), either by its silence or its instruction, the church has often communicated to battered women that they should stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives or to forgive and forget. To batterers, this has communicated that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends are justified because women must be subject to men in all things. Males, throughout history have therefore been able to discipline their wives and their

children for the *good of the family*. The authors report that Christian history is filled with examples of church leaders justifying the abuse of women by men.

According to Fortune and Enger (2006), men have throughout history, blatantly described their own physical violence towards their wives. The authors also suggest that one of the most important Christian churches, namely the Catholic church, still denounces divorce and promotes negative views of remarriage after divorce (as divorce is considered a sin). Women are thus encouraged to remain in abusive relationships and endure any form of abuse in order for them to keep social acceptance and respect. Djopkang (2013) posits that although most religions, particularly the Christian religion, preach peace and love, history shows that they have also perpetrated and condoned violence particularly towards women and children. Fortune and Enger (2006) suggest that in dealing with domestic violence there are many Christian scriptural justifications for women remaining in abusive relationships. For instance, subordination in marriage (Holy Bible, 2010, Ephesians 5: line 24: As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything; prohibition of divorce, “for I hate divorce,” says the Lord, God of Israel. “to divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty, so guard your heart, do not be unfaithful to your wife “(Holy Bible, 2010, Malachi 2: lines, 13-16). However, these scriptures must be considered in the socio-historic context of ethics, theology, and doctrine. The author also refers to proof texting (the selective use of a text, out of context, to support a specific position) as a common approach used by males in positions of power to support or justify woman abuse.

According to Idriss and Abbas (2011), in the Islamic religion there are instances where a Muslim husband is lawfully permitted to use physical force against his wife. In various Islamic texts there is evidence that some Islamic scholars believe that a husband is permitted to use force against his wife. One of the most cited verses in this context is in the Quran (2014), verse 4: Line, 34 (p. 97) entitled *Surah An-Nisa*. It is translated as follows:

“Men are the protectors, guardians and maintainers of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband’s absence what Allah orders them to guard. As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct (that is, disobedience, rebellion) admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them.”

According to Murray and Graves (2013), religious teachings that promote male power and female submission are found in many scriptural texts and are often taken out of context as a means of justifying physical and psychological abuse against women. Religious teachings about forgiveness can also perpetuate abuse if the victim interprets them as a need to forgive and return to an abusive relationship.

## **2.6 Myths and stereotypes pertaining to women battering**

According to Lein (2003) and Dekeseredy (2011), there are many misconceptions and much misinformation about women battering. These myths influence how battered women are perceived by society and they influence the battered women's help seeking behaviour. A collection of misconceptions about victims of domestic violence has led to damaging stereotypes and myths about who these women are. Consequently, victims of domestic abuse often feel stigmatised and misunderstood by their families and/or significant others. These people may be family members, friends or persons trained to help them such as social workers, police officers, psychologists and/or medical doctors. According to Cooper-White (2012), a number of persistent myths and stereotypes about battered women can influence a woman's ability to extricate herself from a violent situation and can unconsciously hinder her from seeking help. These myths are so entrenched in culture that even after years of working in shelters for battered women, domestic violence campaigners still need to confront their own inclination for stereotyping battered women (as weak or having a victim mentality).

However, a major function of myths is to reduce people's fears of personal vulnerability by implying that this type of event only happens to other people. Myths also provide convenient one-dimensional explanations for social issues that are actually extremely complex. When repeated enough they become, what is termed, conventional wisdom and are often regarded as established facts (Barnett et al., 1997; Cooper-White, 2012).

Myths pertaining to women battering usually look to shift the blame for the attack from the perpetrator to the victim (Keeling & Mason, 2008; Walker, 2009). Myths and stereotypes about women battering can be defined as false statements which continue to be taken seriously in society despite much evidence of their falseness, and despite the inconsistent facts and experiences offered by the battered woman, friends, family members and professionals. The myth that the battered woman has an unconscious wish to be battered and that the batterer loses control persist, as batters always retain control. Table 1 lists some of

the stereotypes, myths and justifications held by society regarding women battering (adapted from Keeling & Mason, 2008).

Table 1: Myths and stereotypes relating to the battering of women (adapted from Keeling & Mason, 2008)

<b>Myth</b>	<b>Stereotype</b>	<b>Justification</b>
1. Only poor uneducated men batter their wives. 2. No one should interfere in domestic affairs of man and wife. 3. Unhappy families are better than no families. 4. Alcohol causes abuse 5. Husbands have the right to what they want with their wives. 6. She must have enjoyed it otherwise she'd leave 7. Women who are beaten obviously deserve it 8. It's just the odd domestic tiff.	1. Battered women are helpless, passive, and fragile and have little education. 2. Battered women have done something to cause the battering 3. Battered women are mentally unstable if they choose to stay in abusive relationships 4. Abusive relationships will never change for the better. 5. If a battered woman doesn't leave her partner, it must be because she enjoys the abuse.	1. Woman battering is caused by alcohol or substance abuse. 2. Both partners are responsible for the abuse; it can't be blamed on the husband. 3. Being the breadwinner entitles a man to behave as he likes in his own house. 4. If it was so bad, the woman could just leave 5. Men who batter do so because they are stressed at work, through unemployment, poverty and other problems.

## 2.7 Abusive behaviours of batterers

Sexual acts that humiliate or degrade females are common in abusive relationships. The male in a relationship may demand oral sex without any regard for his partner's beliefs or feelings. The batterer may, instigate sexual activities in a violent and forceful manner intended to injure or hurt his partner. Sometimes, sex will occur after a physical altercation, this may seem be loving and caring and an attempt by the batterer to make up for the aggression. This offers false hope to the battered woman and is intended to make her believe that the batterer is really sorry, and that the physical acts of violence will not occur again. Sexual battering may provoke intense emotional and physical reactions in the battered woman. This intensity and humiliation may become addictive and be looked on as a form of release. It may, on occasion, take on a narcotic effect for the battered woman meaning if she does not get battered she thinks she had done something wrong. This form of dysfunctional thinking is quite common (Walker, 2009; Wallace, 1997). Table 2 (page 17) summarises the abusive tactics and behaviours as experienced by the victims of abuse.

Table 2: Neglectful and deliberately abusive tactics employed by batterers towards their victims (adapted from Doherty & Berglund, 2008, p. 35).

Neglectful Tactics	Deliberate Tactics
<p>Denying emotional responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• failing to provide care in a sensitive and responsive manner;</li> <li>• interacting in a detached and uninvolved manner;</li> <li>• interacting only when necessary;</li> <li>• Ignoring the other person's attempts to interact.</li> </ul>	<p>Accusing, blaming and jealous control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• telling a person repeatedly that he/she has caused the abuse;</li> <li>• blaming the person unfairly for everything that goes wrong;</li> <li>• accusing the person of having affairs or flirting with others;</li> <li>• checking up on their activities.</li> </ul>
<p>Discounting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not giving any credence to the person's point of view;</li> <li>• not validating the person's feelings;</li> <li>• claiming the behaviour was meant as a joke.</li> </ul>	<p>Criticizing behaviour and ridiculing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuously finding fault with the other person or making the person feel nothing he/she does is ever right;</li> <li>• belittling the person's thoughts, ideas and achievements;</li> <li>• diminishing the identity, dignity and self-worth of the person.</li> </ul>
<p>Ignoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purposefully not acknowledging the presence, value or contribution of the other;</li> <li>• acting as though the other person were not there.</li> </ul>	<p>Degrading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• insulting, ridiculing, name calling, imitating, or infantilizing;</li> <li>• yelling, swearing, publicly humiliating or labelling the other person as stupid.</li> </ul>
<p>Denying or forgetting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• denying that any abuse has ever taken place;</li> <li>• telling the person no one would believe the accusations because it is all in his/her head.</li> </ul>	<p>Harassing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeatedly contacting, following or watching the other person;</li> <li>• 'keeping tabs' on him/her through others;</li> <li>• sending unwanted gifts.</li> </ul>
<p>Rejecting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refusing to acknowledge a person's presence, value or worth;</li> <li>• communicating to a person that he/she is useless or inferior;</li> <li>• devaluing his/her thoughts and feelings.</li> </ul>	<p>Isolating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physically confining the person;</li> <li>• restricting normal contact with others;</li> <li>• refusing a person access to his/her own or jointly owned money.</li> </ul>
<p>Minimising / trivialising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refusing to validate the other person's feelings of hurt;</li> <li>• suggesting that nobody else would be upset by the same treatment.</li> </ul>	<p>Terrorising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inducing terror or extreme fear in a person through coercion or intimidation;</li> <li>• threatening to hurt or kill a pet or loved ones;</li> <li>• threatening to destroy possessions;</li> <li>• threatening to have the person deported or placed in an institution.</li> </ul>

## **2.8 The Domestic Violence Act (No: 116 of 1998)**

In South Africa as a way of providing effective legal measures and providing services and assistance to battered women, the Domestic Violence Act, no 116 of 1998 was passed into law. According to the Act domestic violence includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse (for example, withholding money needed for survival), harassment, stalking (that is, following a woman everywhere she goes or keeping her under surveillance), damage to her property, entry into her home without consent (where the man and woman do not share the same home), and any other controlling or abusive behaviour which might cause her physical or emotional harm.

The Domestic Violence Act (No: 116 of 1998) broadened the definition of domestic violence as it is not restricted to married couples. It obliges the police to help battered women, including explaining to her the rights she has under the law, finding her a safe place to stay and helping her to get medical attention if necessary. It also gives the police more power to arrest the batterer and includes provision for the batterer to continue to support his family financially. Failure to comply with a protection order issued under this Act could lead to a sentence of up to five years in prison.

According to Soul City (1999) an institute for health and development communication the following are barriers to dealing effectively with domestic violence in South Africa. These barriers still exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Personal communication Prof K A Nel, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2013).

- Despite a political will to improve the situation by reforming the legislation, there has been inadequate transformation of the criminal justice system which is charged with implementing the Domestic Violence Act (1998). (The criminal justice system includes the police, courts and Department of Correctional Services).
- Insufficient outrage about domestic violence and public support for abused women – therefore women continue to stay silent about what is happening to them and do not access services.
- Societal reinforcement of gender roles that expect men to be in control and head of the household.

- Few or no services (such as counselling, shelters, legal support or public education) are available to support women.
- Limited to non-existent financial assistance to women who are financially dependent upon their partners. Even when they have left their partners, the limited effectiveness of the current Maintenance Act often keeps women poor, or still subject to their partner's control.

Research conducted at ten magistrate courts in Mpumalanga, Gauteng and the Western Cape found that 12% to 17% of protection orders in terms of the Domestic Violence Act were made final. However, at 7 out of 10 courts, fewer than 50% of the protection orders were made final (Vetten, van Jaarsveld, Riba & Makunga, 2009). In 2004, 157 000 applications for protection orders in term of the Domestic Violence Act were made at 70% of the courts around the country (Vetten, 2005). In 2009 and 2010 nationally, 291 546 persons applied for a protection order in South Africa, more than half (58.2%) were granted however, 21.2% of protection order requests were withdrawn (Gender Links, 2010). The highest prevalence of domestic violence in South Africa has been reported in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, with 2553 cases reported in the first quarter of 2012 (Limpopo Provincial Department of Social Development, 2012).

## **2.9 Prevalence of woman battering**

The following statistics relate to the prevalence of women battering worldwide (UNICEF, 2000). In the United States of America (USA) twenty eight percent (28%) of a nationally representative sample of women reported being battered by their partners. In Switzerland, twenty percent (20%) of one thousand five hundred women (1500) women reported being physically assaulted by their male partners. Fifty nine percent (59%) of a sample of seven hundred and ninety six (796) Japanese women also reported being physically assaulted by their partners. In Kenya it was reported that forty two percent (42%) of a sample of six hundred and twelve (612) women surveyed in one district reported to having been beaten by a partner, of those fifty eight percent (58%) reported that they were beaten often or sometimes. Statistics from Uganda revealed that in a survey forty one percent (41%) of female respondents reported that they had been physically harmed by a male partner. In Zimbabwe thirty two percent (32%) of a sample of nine hundred and sixty six (966) women reported physical abuse by an intimate male partner.

Research, by Walker (2009) in America, using a sample of self-identified battered women aged 17 to 59 years, concluded that women wanted to maintain appearances of normality for their children or other social reasons. Although these women were intelligent, generally well educated and held down responsible jobs they still protected the batterer. It was further concluded that covering up domestic violence exacted a heavy psychological cost on the women leaving them isolated from friends and family which rendered them emotionally vulnerable.

In South Africa, statistics revealed by People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA, 2012), based on figures obtained in 2000, indicated that one in every five women is battered by her partner and one in every four, or a quarter (25%) of all women in SA, are assaulted by their boyfriends or husbands every week. The prevalence of domestic violence against women was found to be over a third of all South African women (38.3%) of which nearly two thirds (65.2%), or 1 incident in 4, was perpetrated by the male partner. According to WHO (2010; 2013), South Africa is ranked amongst the highest countries for gender-based violence worldwide.

Research by Gender Links and the South African Medical Research Council (MRC) indicates that in the period 2008-2009, 15 307 cases of domestic violence were opened in Gauteng and 12 093 cases involved a female victim. Over half of the women residing in Gauteng (51.3%) have experienced some form of violence (economic, emotional, physical or sexual) in their lifetime. It was also interesting to note that 75.5% of men in the province admit to perpetrating some form of violence against women during their lifetime. According to figures released by the Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, 90% of women in South Africa have experienced emotional and physical abuse, 71% have experienced sexual abuse, 58% have experienced economic abuse and 60% of all cases of abuse are committed by partners, lovers or spouses (Motlanthe, 2012).

## **2.10 Characteristics of battered women**

The following are characteristics of battered women who remain in abusive relationships according to the following authors Barnet and LaViolet (1993), Jasinski and Williams (1998) Walker (2009) and Wallace (1997).

The woman:

- is a traditionalist in the home, strongly believes in family unity and prescribes to feminine stereotypes;
- has low self-esteem. Increased violence is associated with low self-esteem amongst battered women. As the battering continues, the battered woman's self-confidence declines;
- has experienced violence in her family of origin;
- is socially isolated;
- tends to accept responsibility for the batterer's actions;
- feels that she is different from other women as a result of the abusive relationship;
- suffers from guilt and self-blame. Many battered women develop a sense of self blame as do most victims of severe violence who cannot control it or the situation that causes it. They attempt to invest more in the relationship to make it work and blame themselves for its failure;
- hopes that the batterer will change;
- is reluctant to seek help as wife battering is viewed to be a private matter;
- fears revenge;
- lacks inner strength;
- often feels that her partner is supposed to be in charge of the family, even if that means battering her, she must be supportive of him;
- believes all the myths about battering in relationships.

Anderson, Boulette and Schwarts (1991) list a series of factors that are also defined as characteristics of battered women. These characteristics, also noted by Walker (2009) help explain why battered women stay in abusive relationships:

- **Traumatic bonding and entrapment:** once the abuse starts, the woman believes that her partner will get through this rough time and return to normal behaviour again. As the battering continues and increases in severity, the woman may believe she has too much invested in the relationship to leave. This leads her to deny the intensity or frequency of the abuse.

- **Fear and terror:** the battered woman responds with fear and terror to her husband's threats of punishment. She will also try to be alert to his moods and try not to provoke violence by moderating her behaviour.
- **Learned Helplessness:** battered women begin to believe that there is no way for them to prevent the violence, therefore they give up and accept the abuse. Learned Helplessness usually follows entrapment and becomes more usual as the violence increases and the isolation becomes more complete.
- **Guilt and self-blame:** women believe that the abuse is their own fault and blame themselves often stating to others *what a good man their husband is* and demeaning themselves.
- **No self-confidence:** increased violence is associated with low, or no, self-confidence, amongst battered women. As the battering continues, the woman's value of self-declines.
- **Coping by minimising abuse:** all of the previously listed factors contribute to a battered woman's resistance to leaving her husband. She has learned to cope with the abuse by minimising its extent, severity or the cause of it.

Low self-esteem in battered women occurs through the constant devaluing and shaming by her male partner. These women believe that their partner is right and that they are inadequate in almost every aspect of their lives (Wilson, 2011). As the woman's self-esteem erodes she accepts responsibility for her partner's actions. Since she may already be experiencing self-trivialisation it becomes easy for her to believe that she can alter her partner's behaviour by changing hers. The woman tells herself that if she can be for instance, a better wife or mother, her life will improve as her husband or male partner will stop abusing her (Wilson, 2011).

Wilson (2011) suggests that if the battered woman has no place to express her feelings, especially anger, she usually turns it on herself. This is expressed as guilt and she feels guilty for all types of behaviour such as her sexual behaviour to for instance, a perceived inadequacy in her way of speaking. Feelings of hopelessness and passivity occur over time when women are constantly belittled, because they are not allowed to express their feelings they become hopeless and passive. They may not be able to act, make decisions or think through problems logically. What appears to be passiveness is effectively a survival strategy which includes denial, attention to the batterer's wants and stated fondness of the abuser

(while feeling fear). Denial and minimisation of abuse causes women to turn off their feelings in order to cope with everyday living (Wilson, 2011).

### **2.10.1 Factors that indicate that a woman is in an abusive relationship**

According to Wallace (1997) the following are factors that may indicate that a woman is in an abusive relationship. These are noted as follows, the woman:

- is not active in social activities or withdraws from them after having been an active participant;
- has no close friends of her own. She seldom invites people to her home, or when she does, visitors get subtle clues that they must leave before the spouse returns;
- appears nervous and will never accept an invitation or a responsibility without checking with first with her spouse;
- seldom has any cash and has *forgotten* her check book but may have a credit card with her;
- wears heavy makeup or sunglasses, even indoors. Her wardrobe include scarves, turtleneck sweaters, long sleeves and slacks;
- has many ‘accidents’ and at her place of employment she receives and places many calls to her spouse;
- and her spouse have frequent changes of residence that seem unrelated to employment requirements.

Many women try to hide their abuse. In this regard when they appear with black eyes or bruises and tell inconsistent stories, especially when they have received visible injuries before, this is a probable indication of abuse (Loue & Sajatovic, 2004). Physical indicators such as bruises, which the woman may attempt to hide with makeup or clothing are often seen when battered women try to hide abuse. They often claim to be accident-prone, which is another way they try to cover up physical abuse. Another indicator of abuse is when the batterer continually phones his wife or girlfriend at work to *see what she is doing*. Battered women may also, sometimes unwittingly, make reference to her partner’s *bad temper* and state that she is only scared of him when he is in a *bad mood* (Wilson, 2011).

## **2.11 Characteristics of a woman batterer**

According to James and Gilliland (2013) a man who was battered as a child or witnessed it in his own family is more likely to batter a woman (and/or his own children) than a man who was brought up in home where no violence occurred. Tracy (2007) states that the experiences of violence, in this case woman battering, condition the male to believe that violence is not problematic and that the victim is largely responsible for triggering the violent episodes. A male who batters a woman has the following characteristics according to Wallace (1997, p. 56).

- He is extremely possessive and jealous. He experiences an intense desire to control his partner.
- He has an explosive temper, activated by minor frustrations and arguments.
- He has low self-esteem. A batterer has low self-esteem and resorts to violence to compensate for these feelings of inadequacy. The batterer believes that he is a loser, and gains a great deal of satisfaction from his partner's achievements. Conversely, this also causes him to feel threatened and he responds with violence.
- He has rigid expectations of marriage or partner roles and will not compromise, he believes in male supremacy and the stereotypical role of male as the head of the family.
- He has an overwhelming need to control his partner, the batterer fears loss of control or power which triggers his abusive behaviour.
- Tracy (2007) also states that a male batterer has a sense of entitlement and superiority over his wife or partner quite possible because of his own insecurities and need for power and control. He has a sense of superiority over his wife which often lends itself to the development of rigid patriarchal views which can result in wife beating.

### **2.11.1 Personality characteristics of the male batterer**

Table 3 gives a description of the characteristics which make up the personalities of different types of male batterers or abusers.

Table 3: Characteristics of male batterers (adapted from James & Gilliland, 2013, p.124)

Assaultive type	Characteristics
Family only	A family only batterer is described as less deviant or deficient on some of the personality indicators, including impulsivity, substance abuse, criminal behaviour and social skills deficits. These batterers have a history of exposure to violence in the family of origin and have poor communication skills.
Dysphoric or Borderline	Males with these personality characteristics have history of parental rejection and child abuse, some history of delinquency and high levels of dependency on their partners. They have poor communication and social skills. These males also have a hostile attitude toward women and positive attitude towards violence and low levels of remorse for their violence
Generally violent Or antisocial	Males with this profile have the most aggressive, impulsive and anti-social behaviour. They have a history of family of origin violence and involvement with delinquency. These men are likely to view violence as an appropriate response to any provocation

Although the patriarchal organisation of society facilitates, and may even reward wife abuse, some men live up to their violent potential while others do not. Violence comes from the batterer's learned behavioural responses (Krahe, 2013). In Walker's (2009) research, the best prediction of future violence was a history of past violent behaviour. This includes witnessing, receiving and committing violent acts in the individual's childhood home, violent acts toward pets, inanimate objects, other people, a previous criminal record, spending a long time in the military or police service and previous aggressive behaviour towards women.

If a male has a history of temper tantrums, insecurity, is easily threatened by minor upsets, is jealous and possessive, and has the ability to be charming but hostile when he does not get his own way, the risk of him becoming a wife batterer is very high. Men who are insecure often need much nurturance and are very possessive of their female partner's time. These men are at great risk of committing acts of violence against women, especially if they have a history of other abusive incidents (Walker, 2009).

## 2.12 Factors that characterise abusive relationships

Traumatic bonding is a factor in abusive relationships. This is accomplished by a male maintaining control over his female partner's time, contacts, and perception of herself. The female is bowed into submission by frequent psychological battering, usually mixed with physical violence. The battering is typically followed by a period of calm (this can sometimes be months or years), which is then followed by another incident of violence. This intermittent

reinforcement creates a traumatic bond in which the battered partner becomes gradually more attached to the batterer. As the reinforcement of battering is intermittent, and the male shows loving or kind behaviours between each incident, the woman feels she can change his behaviour and remains in the abusive relationship (Donovan & Hester, 2014; Tracy, 2007; Walker, 2009; Wallace, 1996).

Psychological entrapment occurs at the beginning of a relationship when the man has the intent to make it work the way he wants it to (Wallace, 1996; Wilson, 2011). When incidents of battering occur, the woman tries harder to maintain the relationship and thereby invests more time into it. The more she invests in the relationship the more the male partner manipulates her socially. Male batterers seek out partners who are easily victimised, willing to take responsibility for the relationship, who have passive personalities and fit the self-sacrificing role. Wallace (1996) notes the following modes of social entrapment which are related to the characteristics of battered women (see 2.11).

- **Social isolation:** the batterer isolates the woman so that no family or support system she only has the batterer to rely on.
- **Economic stress:** dependency is associated with economics. The batterer may cut off the woman's financial support system. This makes it difficult for her to leave the abuser.
- **Alcohol abuse:** alcohol does not cause abuse but is present in many abusive relationships. The woman may believe that if the batterer did not drink, the abuse would stop. This rationalisation may lead the woman to believe that alcohol is the cause of the problem (explored further under 2.13.7).
- **Power imbalance:** if the male batterer is threatened by the woman's achievements abuse is likely to occur more frequently.
- **Intergenerational transmission:** if the batterer witnessed violence as a child, it is likely he will be violent and abusive as an adult.

Physical and emotional isolation are features in woman battering relationships. Abusers may forbid their partners to work, thereby creating financial dependence (Wilson, 2011). Issues of partner control and power characterise most relationships where a woman is battered. It is also noted that feeling powerless in a relationship may serve as a precursor to violence for some men. Substance abuse and social isolation are two of the most significant contributing

factors in abusive relationships (Carlson, Worden, Van Ryn & Bachman 2003, cited in Eckstein & McDonald, 2010).

Among personal history factors, violence in the family of origin has emerged as the most powerful risk factor for partner violence by men. There is a strong body of research which supports this assertion. It is well recorded in the literature that early victimisation and bullying, especially childhood physical and sexual abuse and/or witnessing violence between parents, increases the risk of male violence towards a female partner in adulthood (Barnett et al., 1997; Durrant, 2013; UNICEF, 2000; Walker, 2009; Wilson, 2011).

## **2.13 Causes of woman battering**

The causes of women battering are inter-linked and difficult to separate from each other. There is no one reason for it thus refer to this section with literature presented thus far particularly 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5

### **2.13.1 Personal and/or psychological factors**

Jewkes (2002) posits that male children are rewarded for becoming independent, aggressive, controlling and unemotional. Conversely, female children are rewarded for becoming dependent, passive, non-controlling and emotional. These are the behaviours that males and females carry into adulthood and marriages which often lead to the acceptability of the man's taking charge of a relationship and the woman's accepting his control, even if that control assumes a violent form (Finley, 2013).

According to Jewkes (2002), witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, personality disorders, past history of abusive relationships and sexual abuse during childhood are factors that motivate male violence, and are frequently associated with the characteristics of males who abuse women. As a learned behaviour, domestic violence is modelled by individuals, which influences the perspective of children and adults regarding its acceptability. Experiences of violence in the home in childhood teach children that violence is normal in specific settings usually that violence is acceptable in the home but not in public. Males and females thus learn in childhood that violence in specific contexts is acceptable and it is acceptable for males to be violent towards women in this setting (Jewkes, 2002; Walker, 2009).

### **2.13.2 Sex-role socialisation**

According to Jasinski and Williams (1998), males are socialised to use violence to maintain control, aggression can also emerge from frustration over an inability to control the female partner. Cultural justifications for violence usually follow from traditional notions of appropriate roles for men and women. In many settings women are expected to look after their homes and children, and show their husbands obedience and respect. If a man feels that his wife has failed in her role or overstepped her limits even for instance, by asking for household money or stressing the needs of the children, then a male may respond with violence (Murray & Graves, 2013; UNICEF, 2000)

According to Moore (1979), when either the male or the female in a home has extremely traditional views of the male versus female role, frustration or stress based on these roles is likely to lead to battering. Men who are unable to meet their own expectations of perceived masculine sex roles often have little self-confidence which they attempt to raise by beating their female partners (Murray & Graves, 2013).

It has also been suggested that being a woman, more specifically a married woman, automatically creates a situation of powerlessness and that women are taught sex role stereotyping which encourages passivity and dependency, even as little girls. As adults some women have difficulty appreciating more contemporary viewpoints which state that relationships with partners are based on equality. These women have been socialised to believe that the man is head of the household and his opinions and needs are the most important. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this pattern of behaviour is more prevalent in African and Asian cultures (Murray & Graves, 2013; Walker, 2009).

In African cultures, the socialisation process is internalised during childhood and practiced throughout life. In this regard men tend to take advantage of female partners (particularly wives) and treat them differently from their mothers, male and female friends. For example, by being aggressive towards a female partner, a man proves that he is strong and able to prove his manhood to other males and ironically to other women. In many African cultures males are taught, from childhood, to separate sexual desire from caring, respecting, liking or loving. One of the consequences of this training is that many men regard women as sex objects rather than as complete human beings (Tshesane, 2001).

### **2.13.3 Lack of economic resources**

Da`il (2012) and Eckstein and McDonald (2010) note that lack of economic resources underpins a woman's vulnerability to violence and adds to her difficulty in extricating herself from an abusive relationship. The link between violence and lack of economic resources and development is circular. On the one hand, the threat and fear of violence keeps women from seeking employment or forces them to accept low-paid or home-based exploitative labour. On the other hand, without economic independence, women have no power to escape from an abusive relationship (even if they have the will to do so). Conversely, in some countries, women's increasing economic activity and thus independence is viewed as a threat, which leads to increased male violence. This is particularly true when the male is unemployed and feels his power undermined in the household (Ekstein & McDonald, 2010; True, 2012; UNICEF, 2000). Severe poverty and its associated stressors increase the risk of woman battering. Higher income does not mean less risk, it is however, reported less often. Unemployment of the male partner and low income has been found to predict the continuation of violence over time (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010; Walker, 2009).

### **2.13.4 Cultural ideologies**

Eckstein and McDonald (2010) posit that cultural ideologies in both developed and developing countries provide legitimacy for violence against women in certain circumstances. Religious and historical traditions in the past have sanctioned the chastising and beating of wives (See 2.5). The physical punishment of wives has been endorsed under the concept of entitlement and ownership of women. Male control of family wealth inexorably places decision-making authority in male hands, leading to male dominance and property right over women (UNICEF, 2011). According to Eckstein and McDonald (2010), in many societies globally for instance, in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, women are expected to be subjected to their male partners desires sexually and show respect for him socially, at all times.

### **2.13.5 Learned behaviour**

Experiences of violence during childhood, such as witnessing domestic violence and experiencing physical and sexual battering, have been identified as factors that put children at risk. Violence may thus be learned as a means of resolving conflicts and asserting manhood (UNICEF, 2000). According to Moore (1979), men learn as children how to handle anger and aggression. If a man comes from a home in which his mother was battered and/or he has been

battered as a child, he has learnt that physical violence is an acceptable response to anger or any type of frustration (Ferguson, 2010).

Barnett et al. (1997) questioned whether male batterers are created by witnessing acts of violence between their parents during childhood. Their research concluded that this was the case and that these men are substantially more likely to be violent towards their spouses than men not exposed to parental violence. Additionally, research has found that females exposed to parental violence are more likely to be victims of partnership violence than those who have not. According to Ferguson (2010), this is a complex question because exposure to violence does not take place in a vacuum. Those who see physical violence may be exposed to other disadvantages such as varying degrees of trauma, psychological maltreatment, physical abuse and poverty and neglect. However, woman abuse occurs in middle and upper-class families where poverty does not exist (Walker, 2009). It is also true that some male batterers have not been exposed to patterns of familial violence as a child. It is likely that these males have psychological challenges for instance, Borderline or Anti-Social Personality disorder (see appendix B for Diagnostic Criteria according to DSM V (2013) or characteristics (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

#### **2.13.6 Disintegration of traditional socio-cultural norms**

Rapid disintegration of traditional socio-cultural norms and values that used to regulate wife beating, that is, the transformation from extended to nuclear family, urbanisation, and modernisation along with the newly introduced wage economy, education, and migration have altered the circumstances under which the violence occurs. Adepoju and Oppong (1994.) stated:

“ ... the education of women, the increase in female labour force participation, the improved status of women and the diminishing role of the extended family in resolving marital disharmony both empower women and render them vulnerable to gender violence” (p4).

Thus, battering is explained as motivated by the urge in men to retain their traditional position of power and authority over women which is rapidly eroding as contemporary society allows more social and economic opportunities for women. Generally, men's traditional sources and positions of power are threatened as women acquire more economic

and social resources in the modern socio-economic setting. It is argued that the perceived failure of men to meet their traditional responsibilities in the modern socio-economic family context has given rise to their feelings of powerlessness. Consequently, violence is used to affirm a particular sort of social order, namely a patriarchal one (Ondicho, 2000).

According to Ray (2011), men who batter women often do so when their sense of traditional manhood is threatened. Men use violence against their partners when they fear their control is breaking down not as an expression of their power but as an instance of its collapse. Therefore, if male violence is placed in the context of the erosion of patriarchy and the transformation of intimacy, it is more the case that some men attempt to exercise control through violence while deploying cultural resources of hegemonic masculinity.

### **2.13.7 Alcohol as a perceived cause of women battering**

Alcohol is often associated with women battering it does not cause the violence but becomes an excuse and a justification for it. It may aggravate a situation by blowing real or imagined problems out of proportion and by lowering inhibitions. Not all abusers drink and not all people who drink are abusive. People may use alcohol and drugs to gain the necessary courage to beat their partners. The domestic violence cases where alcohol and/or drugs are a factor are many times more serious and potentially lethal than situations not involving drugs and alcohol (Bancroft, 2002; Finley, 2013; McCue, 2008).

According to Brecklin (2002), strong links have been found between alcohol use and occurrence of intimate partner violence as the use of alcohol increases the occurrence and severity of domestic violence. Alcohol consumption as a direct cause of intimate partner violence has often been contested, either on the basis of additional factors (for instance, low socio economic status and impulsive personality characteristics) however, there is little doubt that frequent heavy drinking can create an unhappy stressful partnership that increases the risk of conflict and violence (Leonard, 2005).

### **2.13.8 Poverty**

Finley (2013) suggests that poverty is another factor that is linked to domestic violence especially among Africans. Some scholars however, believe that poverty does not cause domestic violence but rather aggravates it. Research has found that minor and unexpected problems angers individuals experiencing poverty and men, in this context, are more likely to

resort to violence. It is women and children who are usually at the receiving end of such anger and violence. According to McCue (2008), poverty is associated with stress and intimate partner violence is often a consequence of that stress. Poverty, unemployment and poor job opportunities for men create a sense of frustration and repression which predisposes them to abusive behaviour. Violence can be used as a strategy by men who have low income or from lower socioeconomic class to maintain a position of power in family life (Finley, 2013). Women who experience poverty (and thus have few economic resources) are confined to their homes where their abusers share their space, which erodes their chances of leaving the abusive relationship (Da`il, 2012).

## **2.14 Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS)**

The term Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) was first coined by Walker (1979) to denote a set of distinct psychological and behavioural symptoms that result from prolonged exposure to situations of abuse. From July 1978 to June 1981, Walker conducted interviews with 435 women in Colorado, United States of America (USA), each of whom had been, or were at the time, victims of domestic violence. These interviews were conducted with a view to identifying key sociological and psychological factors that made up the proposed BWS and were also aimed at testing two specific theories about battered women, namely the Cycle Theory of Battering and an adaptation of Seligman's (1975) Learned Helplessness theory (Walker, 2009).

According to Walker (2009), BWS is a pattern of signs and symptoms, such as fear and perceived inability to escape, appearing in women who are physically and psychologically abused over an extended period by a husband or long-term partner. In some cases, the women develop a sense of Learned Helplessness. This means that the woman starts to believe that she deserves the abuse and is powerless to stop it. According to Starburg (2006), BWS helped counter the perspective that women deserved to be beaten. Further, it explained how battered woman become unable to speak out or get help as they develop Learned Helplessness. Women, who remain in abusive relationships experience high levels of psychological distress, accept responsibility for being battered, believe in traditional male female sex-role stereotypes and are reluctant to seek help, as the abuse is usually seen as a private family matter (Barnett & LaViolet, 1993; Hansen & Harway, 1993; Miller, 2012; Sullivan, 1999; Walker, 2009). Battered women display many of the following symptoms: hyper-arousal and high levels of anxiety, avoidance behaviour and emotional numbing (which may be expressed

as depression), body image distortion and sexual intimacy problems (Hansen & Harway, 1993; Miller, 2012; Walker, 2009).

BWS produces a clear description of the patterns of violence in intimate relationships and their psychological/behavioural sequelae for female victims. Whilst BWS has not yet been specifically listed in the DSM-V (2013), it is generally recognised as an implied sub-category of the medically certified Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is noted under gender related diagnostic issues (DSM – V, p. 276) that:

“At least some of the increased risk for PTSD in females appears to be attributable to a greater likelihood of exposure to traumatic events, such as rape, and other forms of interpersonal violence.”

Such an association between BWS and PTSD is commonly justified on the basis that many victims of domestic violence exhibit symptoms comparable to those exhibited by persons who have undergone other traumatic life experiences, such as prisoners of war (Craven, 2003).

According to Walker (2009), women who have BWS show the following symptoms:

- hyper-arousal and high levels of anxiety;
- avoidance behaviour and emotional numbing (usually expressed as depression, dissociation, minimisation, repression and denial);
- disrupted interpersonal relationships from batterer’s power and control measures;
- body image distortion and/or somatic or physical measures and
- sexual intimacy issues.

The first three groups of symptoms are the same as for PTSD (intrusive recollection of the trauma, hyper arousal and high level of anxiety and avoidance behaviour and emotional numbing, depression, dissociation, minimisation, repression, and denial), while the additional three criteria groups are present in intimate partner violence (Walker, 2009).

According to Walker (2009) disruption in interpersonal relationships, in addition to physical violence and sexual coercion, are used by batterers as forms of manipulation. Others include

isolation, following the batterer's rules, sexual degradation, jealousy, unpredictability and direct and indirect threats of more violence towards the woman, her family or any children from the partnership. Isolation includes being treated as a possession and controlling the woman to ensure she has no contacts with anyone the batterer deems unsuitable. Some males lock the phones or do not allow the woman a cellular phone to ensure they have total control.

Walker (2009) suggests that many battered females have problems with their body image, they are insecure and, it seems, may transfer their *hate* of the batterer onto specific body parts which they work hard to improve for instance, by dieting, exercising and/or using plastic surgery. The author, in research she carried out, noticed that battered women often talk about not liking their bodies as an entire entity, which is consistent with their low self-esteem. Batterer's also use sex as a way to mark the woman as his possession, by giving her frequent black eyes or other bruises he is fundamentally *marking his territory*, telling other males to stay away (the implication is if they don't things could get worse). The male in a battering relationship also controls whether the couple has loving sex or abusive sex. Many women report that male partners insist on having sex immediately after a beating has taken place. This indicates that these males get sexually excited by violence which makes them very dangerous. Women who manage to leave this type of relationship are usually not able to have successful intimate relationships with other males (Walker, 2009).

#### **2.14.1 Stages of Battered Women Syndrome (BWS)**

The following stages are associated with the syndrome of women battering according to Eckstein and McDonald (2010) and Walker (2009).

- **Stage one: Denial**

The first stage of BWS is denial, denial occurs when the battered woman is unable to admit and acknowledge that she is being subjected to abuse. During this stage, battered women not only avoid admitting the abuse to their friends and family but they themselves will not acknowledge the brutality that they are suffering from. They fail to recognise that there are any problems between themselves and their partners. There are multiple factors that may contribute to a battered woman's unwavering denial: 1) manipulative and behaviour of their abuser, 2) the acts of abuse maybe so covert that they do not appear to be harmful or detrimental. In other instances, battered women may believe that denial is the most effective way to avoid being subjected to further violence and brutality (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010).

- **Stage two: Guilt**

When battered women have experienced the denial stage, they move to the guilt stage. This stage occurs when a battered woman recognises or acknowledges that there is a problem with her relationship. She recognises that she is a victim of abuse and such abuse is likely to happen again. This is when most battered women take on the blame or responsibility for physical and psychological abuse that they receive. Battered women begin questioning their own characters and find themselves lacking, they also try harder to live up to their partners' expectations of them. This does not work and the cycle is repeated time and time again (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010; Walker, 2009).

- **Stage three: Enlightenment**

Stage three occurs when a battered woman begins to understand that no one deserves to be beaten. She now accepts that the beatings she receives from her partner are not justified. She also recognises that she is not the problem; it is her abuser that has a problem. Nonetheless, she stays with her abuser attempting to keep the relationship going with what are usually unrealistic hopes for future change (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010). Battered women in this stage also commit themselves to saving their marriage and use various different reasons to justify this decision (Walker, 2009).

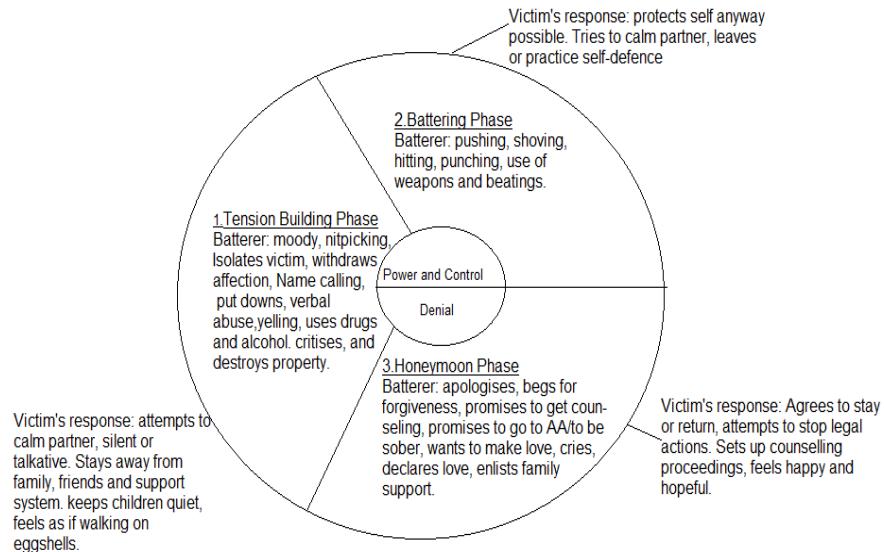
- **Stage four: Responsibility**

Stage four of BWS occurs when the battered woman recognises that her abuser has a problem that only he can fix. Battered women in this stage realise that nothing they can do or say will help their abuser. When battered women acknowledge this, they understand that their safety and the safety of their children (if any), is contingent on them leaving the abusive relationship (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010).

## **2.14.2 The cycle of woman battering**

According to Walker (2009), a physically abused woman must experience at least two complete cycles of battering before she meets the criteria for BWS. The cycle has three distinct phases, first is the tension-building phase, second phase is the explosion or acute battering incident phase and lastly there is the loving phase. The longer this cycle continues without intervention the more frequently the cycle will occur, and the more severe the battering will become.

Diagram 1: The cycle of violence (Walker, 2009, p. 32).



- **Phase one: tension-building**

During this phase the man acts with increasing violence. He is edgy and tense, is verbally abusive, insults and criticisms increase, and he begins to push, shove and hit his partner. Battered women often believe they can still calm their partner by using techniques that have been successful in the past. When these coping techniques fail, the tension becomes unbearable and the couple moves into the second phase.

- **Phase two: explosion or acute battering incident**

The second phase is the explosion or acute battering incident. As the tension mounts the woman becomes unable to placate the man, she may argue or defend herself. The man uses this as the justification for his anger and assaults her, often saying that he is teaching her a lesson. Although Walker (2009) acknowledged that the severity of violence used in this phase varies, she argues that it is at this stage that a survivor's sense of fear and perceptions of danger are at their most heightened as they fear death or serious injury.

- **Phase three: honeymoon**

The third phase is the honeymoon or loving phase. The batterer may try to justify his abusive behaviour by blaming the woman for the abuse. It is common for a battered woman to falsely believe the battering is her fault. The batterer's promises to change often encourage the

woman to have hope as she wants the abuse to end, not necessarily the relationship. Denial of abuse and minimising of batterer's behaviour is common in both the abused and the abuser. The loving and kind behaviour of the batterer during this phase appears to provide reinforcement for the cycle, allowing the battered woman to convince herself that her partner is capable of change. The cycle then begins all over again, with the violence escalating in frequency and severity. Males who psychologically abuse their partners usually begin to use intermittent physical abuse after the honeymoon phase. Psychological abusers may not ever become frequent physical abusers but at some point physical abuse is used, particularly as the woman becomes older (Walker, 2009).

In summary, the battering cycle usually begins after a courtship period which is often described as being filled with loving behaviour. Over time, the first phase of tension building becomes more common, and the honeymoon phase or the third phase declines. Phase three is often characterised by an absence of tension or violence and no observable loving-contrition behaviour and reinforces the woman's notion that all will be well (Walker, 2009).

## **2.15 Coping mechanisms used by battered women**

Hansen and Harway (1993) describe a variety of coping mechanisms that battered women adopt in coming to terms with their abuse. These coping mechanisms allow the battered women to survive the battering and conversely, ensure that they will remain in abusive relationships. Among the rationalisations developed by battered women to understand the context within which the battering has happened are a) denial of the injury she has experienced; b) attribution of the blame to forces outside the control of both the perpetrator and the recipient; c) self-blame; d) denial of emotional or practical options; e) wanting to save the batterer by helping him overcome his problems while continuing to tolerate the abuse and f) the need to endure the violence for the sake of some higher commitment such as religion or traditional norms.

A study by Rodriguez (2011) reported that battered women also use the following coping mechanisms: positive reappraisal, seeking social support, accepting responsibility for the battering and inappropriate problem-solving techniques. The research found that battered women detach themselves from their experiences to avoid getting emotionally hurt. Furthermore, they often fantasise that they are living other lives and that a *miracle*, allowing them to escape will occur, even though they do nothing to help themselves. Fundamentally,

as a consequence of battering, women develop the belief that they are the cause of the maltreatment, that the abuse is unavoidable and that they lack the necessary personal resources to solve the situation. The women will therefore become isolated from any support system they might have, try to avoid battering and negate the abuse by making excuses for their abusers (Calvete et al., 2007; Walker, 2009).

According to Ward et al. (1995), battered women are likely to use cognitive deconstruction as a coping mechanism. They state that cognitive deconstruction is thought to occur in battered women whose expectations about themselves and their intimate relationships are violated by abuse (for example, women who believe that their partners should not use violence towards them but who consider that their own behaviour warranted it).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that individual coping strategies are influenced by whether there are coping resources and options available. If an individual perceives that a situation is harmful but at the same time controllable, it is likely the individual will use emotional focused coping while appraising the situation. If a situation is perceived as less harmful and controllable it is likely that the individual will use problem focused coping. Both forms of coping can reduce psychological distress and can bring about sound psychological well-being.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified eight ways of coping namely:

- confrontive coping describes aggressive efforts to alter the situation and suggests some degree of hostility and risk taking;
- distancing, describes cognitive efforts to detach ones-self and to minimise the significance of the situation;
- self-controlling coping, describes efforts to regulate one's feelings and actions;
- seeking social support, illustrates an effort to seek informational support, tangible support and emotional support;
- accepting responsibility means acknowledging one's role in the problem with an associated theme of trying to put things right;
- Escape-avoidance coping is fundamentally wishful thinking which does not have an impact on escaping or avoiding the problem. In South Africa some women tend to blame the fact that they are abused on their male partners having affairs (CVSR,

2001). This can be described as avoidance or wishful thinking as it takes the focus of the male partner and puts it onto another woman.

- planful problem solving describes deliberate problem focused effort aimed at altering the situation, coupled with an analytic approach to solving problems;
- positive reappraisal describes efforts to create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth. It can also have a religious dimension. Battered women may rely on prayer because it is a culturally validated private method of coping that may be perceived as safer than direct or public forms of coping aimed at changing the balance of power, the abuser's behaviour and/or leaving the relationship (Johnson, Ollus & Nevala, 2008).

Planful problem solving and accepting responsibility are ways of coping categorised as problem focused while the rest are emotional-focused types of coping. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) these coping processes refer to specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological that individuals employ to reduce or minimise stressful events. A study by Sabina and Tindale (2008) with 478 participants, examined female survivors coping strategies, which included their amount of help seeking behaviour, pursuing an order of protection and staying away from the abuser. Ninety percent (90%) of the participants engaged in at least one of the three types of measured problem-focused coping strategies. Approximately 50% of the sample stayed away from the abuser and 81% sought help from at least one source. However, these problem-focused coping strategies were usually short term and the majority of the women returned to their abusive partners.

Efforts to cope with stressors can be differentiated based on their function. Emotional focused coping is directed at lessening the emotional distress produced by the stressor. This includes acts such as avoidance, minimisation of the situation, distancing, selective attention, positive comparison and extracting positive value from negative events. This coping strategy involves changing the subjective appraisal of a situation, without changing the objective situation itself. Emotion focused coping is usually correlated with depression and psychological distress. Problem focused coping on the other hand, is directed at changing the objective situation. Such actions can include problem solving, gathering information, and weighing options, choosing between the options and acting upon the choice that is made. This form of

coping is generally used when the situation is appraised as being open to change and when social support is available (Rodriquez, 2011; Sabina & Tindale, 2008)

## **2.16 The consequences of woman battering**

The consequences of abuse are profound, extending beyond the health and happiness of individuals to affecting the well-being of entire communities. Living in an abusive relationship affects a woman's sense of self-esteem and her ability to participate in the world and ultimately has a very negative effect on any children in the relationship (Senie, 2014; UNICEF, 2000).

### **2.16.1 Physical health effects**

Campbell (2002) suggests that woman battering has long-term negative health consequences for battered women, these effects can manifest as poor health status and quality of life. The author states that intimate partner violence is the most common cause of injury in women. The injuries, fear and stress associated with woman battering can result in chronic health problems such as chronic pain (for instance, headaches and backache), or recurring central nervous system (CNS) symptoms including fainting and seizures. Choking, strangulation and blows to the head, resulting in loss of consciousness (LOC) during a physical attack, can lead to serious medical problems including neurological sequelae. Other physical health effects include abdominal and thoracic injuries, bruises and welts, chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), hypertension and overall decreased physical functioning (Campbell, 2002; Seine, 2014).

Battered women also have significantly more than average self-reported gastrointestinal symptoms (for instance, loss of appetite, weight loss and eating disorders) and diagnosed functional gastrointestinal disorders (for instance, chronic IBS associated with stress). Repeated physical assaults may directly increase the risk of injury or some chronic diseases such as chronic pains, osteoarthritis and migraines. Chronic psychological stress associated with battering may also affect other acute and chronic health conditions indirectly (Campbell, 2002; Fitzpatrick & Kazer, 2012; Seine, 2014).

Women in abusive relationships are less likely to use contraceptives (UNICEF, 2000; Campbell, 2002). According to Campbell and Lewandowski (1997) approximately 40% - 45% of all battered women are forced into sex by their male partners. This forced sex often

results in increased pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, genital herpes, vaginal bleeding and tearing, bladder infection, sexual dysfunction and pelvic pains.

According to WHO (2005), physical and sexual battering can put women at risk of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, if women are forced to have sex, for example, or if they fear using contraception or condoms because of their partners' reaction. There is a growing body of research indicating that violence may increase a woman's susceptibility to HIV infection (Campbell, 2002; Tufts, Clements & Wessell, 2010; UNICEF, 2000; WHO, 2005). Studies carried out in Tanzania (Maman et al. 2002) and South Africa (Dunkle et al., 2004) found that seropositive women were more likely than their seronegative peers to report physical partner abuse. Their results indicate that women with violent/controlling male partners are at risk of HIV infection.

### **2.16.2 Psychological effects of woman battering**

For many women the psychological consequences of abuse are even more serious than its physical effects. The experience of abuse often erodes women's self-esteem and puts them at greater risk of a variety of mental health problems including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, phobias and alcohol and drug abuse (Walker, 2009).

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** - according to Campbell (2002) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which has substantial comorbidity with women abuse, is the most prevalent mental health sequel of intimate partner violence. The diminished decision making and problem-solving abilities that are described in battered women are linked to repeated exposure to trauma (see 2.15, paragraph 3). Hansen and Harway (1993) describe the reaction of battered women as most resembling those of PTSD, which many victims of trauma have. These reactions include re-experiencing the trauma through nightmares, flashbacks, and/or intrusive thoughts of the trauma, numbing to the external world and a variety of anxiety-related symptoms such as sleep disturbance and avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma (Howard et al., 2010).

- **Depression** - battered women experience a high dependence on their abusive partners and think that they lack the necessary personal resources to solve the situation or to live independently. Thinking in this way increases the risk of the development of depression (Calvete et al., 2006). This is supported by Bender and Roberts (2007) who report that depression is clearly prevalent in battered women. A study by Campbell (2002) also indicated that depression and PTSD are the most prevalent mental-health problems linked to women abuse. It was also found that in addition to depression, battered women had significantly more anxiety, stress, insomnia and social dysfunction than women, who were not battered, with physical battering having a stronger effect than psychological battering. According to Hansen and Harway (1993) and Howard et al. (2010), depression among battered women may be the result of a coping mechanism. They argue that expressing anger towards the batterer has the effect of increasing the violence thus perpetuating and worsening the battering cycle. The authors suggest that repressing the intense anger experienced in response to a beating is likely to have a greater survival value but is commonly expressed as depression. Women may seek treatment for the depression but are not honest in stating why they are depressed to their medical practitioners.
- **Low self-esteem** - self-esteem is the degree to which individuals see themselves as important and valuable. It is a fundamental belief in self as worthy of respect, love and fair treatment from others (Kirkwood, 1993). Low self-esteem can be the result of battering. Coping with being the victim of battering influences a woman's sense of invulnerability and other perceptions of the world. Low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness contribute to depression and the difficulties that some battered women have in leaving a relationship. When a battered woman's self-esteem is eroded and weakened, she tends to believe that she deserves to be battered because she is a failure or that she asked for it (Jasinski & Williams, 1998; Walker, 2009). Battering by an intimate partner, in and of itself, is likely to lower self-esteem by creating or adding a sense of personal defectiveness (Barnett et al., 1997). According to a study by Kirkwood (1993), the degradation, isolation and objectification of battered women over time works to convince them that they have no worth either to themselves or to society.

- **Alcohol and other substance abuse** - can be a consequence of being battered. Battered women may use alcohol and other drugs to numb the effects of physical and psychological battering. According to Vives-Cases, Ruiz-Cantero, Escriba-Aguir, and Miralles (2011) the mental health status of battered women is further compromised by the heightened risk of use and abuse of tranquilizers, anti-depressants and/or forms of legal and illegal drugs. Walker (2009) posits that alcohol and drug abuse has been found to be used as a form of self-medication, to block the intense emotions that are often experienced by the victims of abuse, especially physical and sexual abuse victims. Results of a study carried out by Wilson (2011) using a sample of 481 battered women seeking emergency care, indicated that battered women have a six times-higher risk of drug abuse and a fifteen-times higher rate of alcohol abuse than women who are not battered. The study also revealed that some women may also use alcohol to self-medicate fundamentally, to lessen the emotional and physical pain associated with battering. Self-medication with legal or illegal drugs is both an expression of a desire to exert a measure of control and an attempt to numb the pain of the experience. Unfortunately, in an attempt to ease their pain, a chemically addicted battered woman may actually increase her danger. Drug and alcohol abuse make her less aware of, and less responsive to, cues of forthcoming violence. The woman is thus less able to escape, and is more likely to fight back, increasing the likelihood of serious injury or death. She may also be less aware of the seriousness of the injuries she has suffered (Wilson, 2011).

### **2.16.3 The social effects of woman battering**

There are many social effects of woman battering. Common social effects are listed below.

- **Social isolation**

Neilson, Endo and Ellington (1992) found that battered women were more isolated in terms of frequency of interaction with friends and neighbours, frequency of interaction with relatives and participation in public activities. Furthermore, isolation appears to precede the battering and also increases as a result of the battering. According to Lombard and McMillan (2013), batterers isolate their partners, instil dependence, express exclusive possession and keep them away from getting help or support. Battered women may isolate themselves to

prove loyalty, protect friends and family or in response to a partners' jealous accusations or disparaging comments.

- **Effects of woman battering on children**

The effects of woman battering extend beyond adult victims as children, adolescents and other adult family members are adversely affected by witnessing violence. Children who witness the abuse of their mother are likely to demonstrate a high rate of psychological symptoms. These symptoms include depression and PTSD and behavioural problems such as conduct disorder (children who engage in behaviours that violate society's norms) and problems at school (Ferguson, 2010). According Ferguson (2010) and UNICEF (2000), children who witness marital violence are at a higher risk for a whole range of emotional and behavioural problems, including anxiety, depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem, disobedience, nightmares and physical health complaints.

Ferguson (2010) notes that personality and behavioural problems among children exposed to violence in the home can take the forms of psychosomatic illnesses, depression, suicidal tendencies, and bed-wetting. Later in life, these children are at greater risk for substance abuse, juvenile pregnancy and criminal behaviour than those raised in homes without violence (Ondicho, 2000). Witnessing and experiencing violence as a child can also result in internalising violence as a form of conflict resolution. Girls who witness their mother being abused may be more likely to accept violence as the norm in a marriage than those who come from non-violent homes. While many children from violent homes do not grow up to be violent, those who have witnessed violence in childhood are more likely to become adults who engage in violent behaviour both inside and outside the home (Ferguson, 2010; Ondicho, 2000; UNICEF, 2000).

A study by Bennett (1991) focused on adolescent girls' experience of witnessing marital violence. Seven themes were identified that represented interrelated process dimensions of the experience: remembering, living from day-to-day, feeling the impact, escaping, and understanding, coping, and resolving or settling differences. The girls coped with the violence by blocking aspects of the experience from their awareness. The participants stated that they felt like they had been living in violence for a lifetime, yet they had difficulty recalling specific violence episodes.

Similarly, Ericksen and Henderson (1992) noted that 13 children, aged 4 to 12 years old, also interviewed in depth, perceived that violence was both normal and acceptable and appeared unaware of alternative means of expressing their angry feelings and handling conflict. In addition, these younger children described three components to their experience. The first was living with violence, which included themes of witnessing the violence, fear, vigilance, powerlessness, and coping. The second component was living in transition and included expressions of relief, pleasure, and protectiveness. The third component, living with mother (without their abusive fathers), included expressions of sadness, protectiveness, uncertainty and acceptance of violence as a normal way of coping with interpersonal conflict, and coping strategies. The children also exhibited a pervasive sadness that seemed to infuse their experiences. The children reported that they did not feel that they could talk to their mothers about their sadness because it would upset them (that is, their mothers).

Woman battering also causes social problems for women. Battered women often lose their jobs because of absenteeism from work as a result of the violence. They lose family and friends as a result of never being available, not visiting them or not allowing people to visit their homes. First, the abuser isolates women from family and friends, then the women become embarrassed by the abuse inflicted upon them and withdraw from social situations. The woman's family often becomes estranged from her because she keeps returning to the abusive relationship and they do not understand why (Roberts, 2007). This affects the women's overall quality of life over their lifespan, which can, in turn impact on their participation and engagement in various aspects of life and society (Johnson, Ollus & Nevala, 2008). This isolation can also be the result of threats and manipulation by the woman's batterer, or from a desire to keep the abusive nature of the relationship a secret as she feels ashamed (James & Gilliland, 2013). In a society that is not traditional, and where battering is not regarded as the man's right in order to keep his wife in order, men who abuse their partners can be cut off from the community. They can lose family and friends and can be isolated or separated from their children. As a result of their abuse they can be sent to jail which can lead to losing their jobs or source of income (Johnson et al., 2008).

## **2.17 How women respond to being battered**

Most battered women are not completely passive victims, but use active strategies to maximise their (and their children's) safety. Some women resist, others try and leave and others attempt to keep the peace by surrendering to their male partner's demands. What may

seem to an observer as a lack of response to living with violence may in fact be a woman's strategic assessment of what it takes to survive and to protect herself and her children (Johnson et al., 2008; UNICEF, 2000; Walker, 2009). A woman's response to battering is often limited by the options available to her. They consistently cite similar reasons for remaining in abusive relationships for instance, fear of retribution, lack of economic support, concerns for their children, emotional dependence and an abiding hope that their abusive partners will change for the better (Ferguson, 2010; Meloy & Miller, 2011).

According to Heise, Ellsberg and Gotternoeller (2005), women state that the unacceptability of being single or divorced poses an additional barrier that keeps them from leaving abusive marriages. At the same time denial and fear of social stigma often prevent women from reaching out for help. The authors state that in numerous surveys, from 22% - 70% of battered women stated that until they had taken part in research on women battering they had only told staff at clinics about their abuse, not their family, friends or personal medical doctors. Those who do speak out about their abuse do so primarily to adult children, family members or friends, very few contact the police.

Despite the obstacles, many women do leave abusive partners even if after many years. Heise et al. (2005), suggest a consistent set of factors that propel a woman to leave an abusive relationship: the violence gets more severe and triggers a realisation that the partner is not going to change, or the violence begins to take a toll on the children. Emotional and logistical support from family and friends was also cited as critical in a woman's decision to leave her abusive partner.

In a study carried out in Canada by Ansara and Hindin (2010) regarding formal and informal help-seeking, associated with both genders experience of intimate partner violence, 6 in 10 women reported police involvement in incidents of abuse, half reported discussing the violence with a counsellor or psychologist, but still remained in the relationships. The study also revealed that most women in the study used informal help - seeking that is, family members, friends and neighbours while males were more likely to seek police or legal interventions if they were abused by their female partners. According to Hamby (2014) battered women respond to abuse with strong survival tactics only to find that their help seeking efforts are largely unsuccessful.

## **2.18 Reasons why battered women remain in abusive relationships**

The question why battered women remain in abusive relationship is frequently asked. Women's response to abuse is shaped by their various cultural, racial and ethnic identities. There are many and different reasons why battered women remain in abusive relationships, some of them are linked to the literature already presented and more are outlined in the next few paragraphs.

In its most extreme form, violence kills women. Worldwide, an estimated 40% - 70% percent of homicides of women are perpetrated by intimate partners, frequently in the context of an abusive relationship. By contrast, only a small percentage of men who are murdered are killed by their female partners, and in many such cases, the women are defending themselves or retaliating against abusive men (Smith, Moracco & Butts, 1998). A study of female homicide in South Africa carried out by Mathews et al. (2004), found that intimate femicide (female murder by an intimate partner) accounted for 41% of all female homicides. This study estimated that a woman is killed by her intimate partner in South Africa every 6 hours. Another study by Mathews (2010) found that 50.3% of women murdered in South Africa are killed by an intimate partner, with an intimate femicide rate of 8.8 per 100 000 and an intimate femicide suicide rate of 1.7 per 100 000 females.

According to Eliason (2009), when battered women attempt to leave violent, aggressive partners who batter them they are often injured badly and sometimes murdered. If an intimate partner murders or attempts to murder his female partner he often tries to commit or commits suicide thereafter. Furthermore Eliason (2009), reports that most murder-suicide is spousal involving a man killing his intimate partner. The triggering event is usually the female's rejection of her partner or her threat of leaving him or reporting him to the police. This is supported by research by Van Wormer and Roberts (2008) who found that murder is often a side effect of the proposed suicide, wherein the specific decision to kill oneself precipitates a perceived necessity to kill others who are perceived to be at fault. This often occurs in intimate relationships where the partner or spouse (and sometimes children) are murdered before the male commits suicide.

### **2.18.1 Relationship commitment**

According to Barnett et al. (1997), in many cultures battered and non-battered women alike agree that women should marry, take responsibility for the quality of their marital

relationships, provide a home for the children and remain with their husbands. One reason battered women remain in abusive relationships is to honour these relationship commitments. Society praises marital partners who are committed to a relationship and criticises those who *give up too easily*. Sayings like *sticking together through thick and thin* or *I married him for better or worse* capture these social tenets. Battered women may feel legally bound to their abusive partners. Alternatively, they may want to avoid hurting their partner or may want to protect their children and parents. They may worry that if they leave the relationship, they will not be able to find a new one, especially when told routinely that they are *stupid and ugly and no one else would ever want you*. Believing that they should stay no matter what is significantly related to battered women's decision to stay.

Battered women are committed to their relationship and hope that they can work things out and stop the violence. Attachment and commitment to the abuser and the relationship often makes it difficult for them to take the necessary steps towards leaving or seeking help (Roberts, 2007). Battered women may feel that they should be able to transform their partner's behaviour through love. These women are committed to their partners and believe they can, and should, help him to change. These women are aware of the discrepancy between their actual marital relationship and their ideal relationship but have come to believe that she should stay with their partners no matter what (Towns, 2000). When the relationship is not going well, frustration may motivate women to try even harder to work things out. According to Hewstone, Stroebe and Jonas (2012), the more committed the battered women are, the more they are likely to remain in violent relationships.

### **2.18.2 Cognitive dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance is a theory developed by the social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957). Cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual experiences discrepancies between their actions and attitudes. An individual experiencing dissonance will make attempts to reduce or prevent the psychological discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance, whether it is through modifying attitudes or avoiding situations that may lead to increased dissonance (Dare, Guadagno & Muscanell, 2013). Individuals in abusive relationships experience high levels of cognitive dissonance resulting from their negative attitude towards the abuse in the relationship and their inability to leave the relationship. If a woman believes she has married charming, caring man but then he goes on to control, manipulate and abuse her, this is extremely confusing for the woman. She does not want to admit he is abusive thus the reality

of the abuse (when he hits her) does not relate to the charming man she married which causes her to experience cognitive dissonance. Staying with the abusive partner causes the woman to have feelings of discomfort and disharmony because her thoughts and beliefs about his abusive behaviour do not match her actions (staying with him).

According to the theory, people find ways to reconcile the discrepancy between their thoughts and their actions. In this instance women do the following (adapted from Dare et al., 2013):

- adopt beliefs and attitudes that are in harmony with the situation. In a relationship where a woman is battered she will blame herself for her partners actions or rationalise that his behaviour is because of an unhappy childhood (or some other reason);
- Change perceptions about his abusive behaviours. The woman will rationalise that her male partner is trying to help her as she does not behave in a proper manner thus the abuse is acceptable;
- Change her behaviour to match her beliefs and attitudes. The woman will make attempts to change what she does for instance; she will stop wearing make-up and attractive clothes to please her partner. This is because she believes that the way she dresses has caused her to attract male attention (other than her husband).

### **2.18.3 Relationship hope**

Relationship hope is a powerful influence on battered women. Battered women often remain in an abusive marriage or relationship because they hope, and need to believe that their abusers will change and stop the violence. According to Barnett and LaViolet (1993), relationship hope seems to be an internalised and reinforced notion characteristic of women in general. Families, friends, song lyrics, literature, religion and the media all encourage women in general to hope or believe that they can change their male partners and that they should persevere in relationships to see the results of their labour of love (Barak, Leighton & Flavin, 2010).

According to Moore (1979), a very important reason why a battered woman chooses to stay with her partner is a combination of hope and love. She may stay because she loves her

partner when he is not beating her, and holds out the hope that each beating will be the last. The woman faces a real conflict with regard to this hope. It is also important to recognise how the cycle of violence lends itself to the woman's continual hope that her partner will change, since he tells her after each beating how sorry he is and how he intends to change. Tied to this hope is a sense of loyalty to the man she loves. This is underpinned by later research by Walker (2009) and Seine (2012).

According to Collins, Jordan and Coleman (2010), battered women sometimes remain in abusive relationships because they hope that their abusive partners will change their behaviour. All women want the violence to stop but many do not want their relationships to end. As abusive partners often promise to change, no matter how many times violent acts have taken place, this reinforces the battered woman's hope that the abuse will end. This hope is further reinforced by the partner's intermittent kindness and love after a battering incidence (Sanchez, 2007). According to Hewstone et al. (2012), many battered women retain feelings of fondness, affection and attraction for their partners even after episode of victimisation. When the batterer promises to get help for his violent behaviour (for example, counselling) and promise to change, the woman wants to believe that change is possible (Lombard & McMillan, 2013).

#### **2.18.4 Fear of loneliness**

Like widows, battered women mourn the loss of the relationship they have come to value. Varvaro (1991) identified twelve losses encountered by battered women that intensifies their feelings of loneliness: safety, everyday routine, living in a home, personal possessions, self-esteem, a father figure for the children, love and caring from the male partner, success in marriage, hopes and dreams, trust in their partners, view of the world as a safe place and status and support systems. According to Barnett and LaViolet (1993), the psychodynamics specific to a battery relationship may intensify a battered woman's fear of loneliness. Battered women are often told that no one will want them by the abuser. This form of emotional abuse leaves the battered woman with low self-esteem and they believe that no other person will want them. Therefore they stay in the relationship because they fear being alone (Lettie, Lockhart & Danis, 2010; Roberts, 2007).

### **2.18.5 Lack of perceived social support**

Battered women who leave their spouses may not receive sufficient social support to be able to survive. The lack of social support, both personal and social tends to impede battered women's attempts to leave their abuser. According to Barnett and LaViolet (1993), a battered woman's decision may be affected by the fact that society offers little help to battered women who are unemployed or do not have homes. Most battered women who turn to family and friends for help experience society's general reluctance to interfere in the privacy of the family unit. They may turn to their extended families whose capacity for helping is restricted by their own social and emotional ties with the women and the batterer, as well as by their own limited space and financial resources. According to Miller (2012), most battered women do not receive enough social support from family and friends. They usually encourage the battered woman to remain in the abusive relationship and try to make things work. The authors states that in general society in general offers little help for battered women.

### **2.18.6 Adaptation to violence**

Another reason that battered women remain with batterers is that they have learned to make numerous accommodations to their battering relationships. A prerequisite to learning how to live with an abusive male is finding a way to make his violence acceptable. Basic psychological defence mechanisms of rationalisation and denial achieve this goal. By denying that their partners have harmed them, battered women can negate the danger they confront. A common attribution made by battered women about themselves is that they somehow provoked the violence or that they should have been able to prevent it by changing their own behaviour. Male batterers contribute to battered women's self-blame by holding them responsible for the relationship abuse (Barnett et al., 1997; Miller, 2012).

### **2.18.7 Learned Hopefulness**

Learned Hopefulness is a battered woman's ongoing belief that her partner will change his abusive behaviour or that he will change his personality (Barnett & LaViolet, 1993). Learned Hopefulness is the hope that despite one's own inability to control an abusive situation the abuse will come to an end and a non-violent relationship will resume (Barak et al., 2010; Zaitzow & Thomas, 2003). The woman's hope that her partner will change is influenced by media, friends, relatives, religion and the context the woman lives in. The popular notion that behind every good man is a woman implies that it is the woman's role to change not the man's. The abusive partner presents a challenge for the woman, which she is willing to take.

According to Zaitzow and Thomas (2003) this hope often provides the foundation for a woman's decision to remain with her partner.

### **2.18.8 Social stigma**

The social stigma attached to divorce or failed marriages may encourage battered women to remain in abusive relationships, particularly in patriarchal societies. Battered women remain with their abusive partners because it is expected of them (Barnett & LaViolet, 1993). In a study conducted by Ahmad, Driver, McNally and Stewart (2009) women discuss the social stigma or shame they feel on disclosure of domestic violence. Such disclosures are often not made to family, friends or parents as they are perceived to bring about suffering and loss of respect to those parties. Some women discussed their worries about parents' suffering more than themselves due to the social stigma associated with an unsuccessful marriage. The authors also reported that women did not discuss their abuse because they were also scared of the social stigma and shame that they would experience on disclosure of domestic violence.

### **2.18.9 Religion**

Most women who state that they have strong religious beliefs struggle with their spiritual principles when confronted with personal violence inflicted by the man that they love and trust. A woman with a deep religious conviction may try and get advice from a spiritual adviser and/or other members of her religious community for support. For battered woman, the quality of the assistance she receives can have life or death consequences. If a battered woman's religious convictions lead her to believe that a wife is subordinate to the husband, that marriage is an unalterable life-time commitment or that suffering is the lot of the faithful wife, then those convictions have the sanction of God and she is likely to stay in the relationship (Clarke, 1986). Many of the formal religions do not support divorce. It must also be stated (see 2.5) that historically religions have encouraged men to control their wives (Djopkang, 2013; James & Gilliland, 2013).

### **2.18.10 Dependency**

One of the most compelling reasons for a woman to remain in a battering relationship is that of dependency, physical, financial and/or emotional. Battered women who do not work outside of the home, or who are traditional in their self-role behaviours, are particularly vulnerable to such dependency. If the male is her only form of financial support, it is difficult for her to leave. Without financial assistance, housing or job training, the feeling of

dependency upon her partner is a reality many women cannot overcome (Miller, 2012; Moore, 1979). According to Rhodes and McKenzie (1998), battered women who are highly dependent on their marriage are less able to discourage, avoid and end both physical and verbal abuse. Emotional dependency, created by a battered woman's isolation, also makes it difficult for her to leave an abusive relationship (Collins et al., 2010; Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998).

An adult woman's sense of well-being is often tied to her relationship with her partner. The threat of a break in the relationship and fear of separation from her partner may cause her to believe that leaving is worse than sporadic physical aggression (Barnett, 2001; Miller 2012). According to Collins et al. (2010), battered women often lack education or work experience that would allow them to independently support themselves and their children. These women often tell themselves that, because of this, their only means of survival is to remain in the abusive relationship.

### **2.18.11 Pre-existing set of beliefs**

One theory as to why battered women remain in abusive relationship is that they develop a distinct set of beliefs during the abusive process. These beliefs may be classified into pre-existing beliefs, beliefs that develop during the abusive relationship and beliefs that occur as a result of the violence experienced (Wallace, 1996). Pre-existing beliefs are formed as a result of early childhood experiences. The woman may have been raised in a violent household and believe that all women are abused, or she may confuse abuse with love. Beliefs developed during the abusive relationship many involve a sense of fear, low self-esteem, Learned Helplessness or other dynamics that prevent the battered woman from leaving her abuser. Illnesses that are a result of the battering may include PTSD, depression and other symptoms which affect a women's ability to function normally in society. These illnesses affect the woman's confidence and lead to low self-esteem developing out of the abusive relationship. These illnesses are also likely to influence her behaviour and beliefs, which contribute to her decision to stay in the relationship (Lombard & McMillan, 2013; Wallace, 1996).

Barnet (2001) reports that battered women may have beliefs that echo what they believe are societal attitudes towards how a woman should be treated. They may believe that a woman must submit to her husband in all circumstances thus, if they are abused, they believe they

deserve it. These beliefs differentiate them from non-battered woman who do not have these dysfunctional thoughts. The woman then becomes entrapped in an on-going pattern of abusive behaviour. These women cannot recognise or define themselves as victims of abusive behaviour because their belief is they live a normal life. Many women for instance, mistakenly accept unhealthy behaviour on the part of men such as intense jealousy, as normal male behaviour. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2007) suggest that battered women falsely assume that other women have problems, with psychological and physical abuse that are comparable to their own. Because these women believe in traditional role stereotypes, they often view their male partners as caregivers and providers. They tend to shun the alternatives of separation or divorce.

## **2.19 Women as abusers and batterers**

The current research focuses on women as victims of abuse, however, in the last several decades there is a body of literature and research which concentrate on women as abusers of men (Cook, 2009). The problem is that society closes its eyes to the predicament of men who are emotionally and physically abused by wives or female partners. It does not tally with society's notion of patriarchy and male and female stereotypical roles, woman as victim and man as perpetrator (Cook, 2009; Cook, & Hodo, 2013). There is little research undertaken to understand the issue of domestic violence against men. According to Hoy (2011), there are a number of commonly reported interactions in which violence against men erupts, for example, when the woman insults the man in front of their children. Threaten the man's relationship with his children or refuses to control her abusive behaviour when children are present. The violence is often more psychological than physical in nature, although physical violence perpetuated by women against men does occur.

The characteristics of men and women who are abusive typically fall into one or more of three categories (Cohen, 2011; Cook, 2009; Hoy, 2011):

- Alcohol or substance abuse, women who abuse men frequently are alcoholics and drug users
- Psychological disorder, there are certain psychological problems, primarily personality disorders in which women are characteristically abusive and violent towards men. At least fifty percent of all domestic violence towards men is associated with women who have Borderline Personality disorder. The disorder is also associated

with suicidal behaviour, severe mood swings, lying, sexual problems and alcohol and/or other substance abuse

- Unrealistic expectations, assumptions and conclusions: women who are abusive towards men usually have unrealistic expectations and make unrealistic demands of men.

Hoy (2011) also notes that men who live in patriarchal societies are less likely to report abusive behaviour by their female partners than those who live in more open societies. Men in patriarchal societies would feel that their manhood would be mocked if their friends and families knew that they were abused by women. However, as Walker (2009) states although a few males are battered, and some cases may go unreported, women are still abused psychologically and physically significantly more than males.

## **2.20 The feminist perspective on women battering**

Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression of the real and ideological levels of a woman's existence in a family context. It also looks at her sexuality within this context and the woman's struggle to achieve the same rights as men both in the home and in the workplace (Anderson & Taylor, 2009; McCue, 2008; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). There are different feminist perspectives for instance, radical, socialist and liberal feminism which give different lenses to a woman's context and to intimate partner violence. The majority of these approaches look at the power imbalance between males and females which perpetuate intimate partner violence (McCue, 2008).

Feminist theory suggests that intimate partner violence grows out of inequality within marriage and underpins male power and female subservience within the home (McCue, 2008). Traditional societal roles define the husband as the provider for the family, while the wife is supposed to be submissive and nurturing. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was accepted as natural however, this changed with the advent of women in the workplace being able to be more assertive. Women also realised that homemakers had rights and began to be assertive as well (Anderson & Taylor, 2009).

The feminist paradigm also supports the idea that domestic violence is primarily a culturally supported male enterprise and that female violence is always defensive and reactive. According to Dobash and Dobash (1979), men who batter their wives or partners are living

up to cultural prescription that is valued in western society that is male. Domestic violence cannot be properly understood unless gender and power are taken into account. Feminism is still powerful in its criticism of patriarchy as it has focused on women as victims of domestic violence (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005).

## **2.21 Summary**

The chapter extensively reviewed historical and recent literature on battered women and factors that compel them to remain in abusive relationships. Historical overviews on woman battering, the role of patriarchy, culture, feminism and religion on woman battering were also explored. A brief note on male battering was also presented as this occurs however, to a lesser extent than woman battering. The following chapter reviews the theoretical framework for the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Different theories have suggested possible explanations for women battering and their reasons for remaining in abusive relationships. In this research the theory of Learned Helplessness is used as a theoretical framework for the study as it is posited as an explanation for why women remain in abusive relationships. The psychosocial theory of Learned Helplessness was developed by Seligman (1975) as a psychological rationale to explain why battered women remained with their batterer. It was updated by Walker (2009).

### **3.2 Key definitions and concepts**

**Physical battering**-refers to slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon and murder (Walker, 2009). Physical aggression may take the form of minor acts that escalate over time. It may begin with an arm being grabbed, a dish thrown or a slap to the arm or face. This aggression increases in severity, often resulting in severe injury. It must be noted that physical battering is often a sexual turn-on for male batterers. Women are often sexually assaulted after a physical beating (which the batterer may refer to as the woman being loved). The following lists the common forms of physical battering (adapted from Walker, 2009):

- The batterer may engage in striking acts: he may strike the face, arms, body or legs of his partner. The violence may be delivered with an open or closed hand. These acts include punching with his fist.
- Control or choking acts: choking is a common form of battering. It sends a very clear message that the batterer is stronger and more powerful. It allows the batterer to control his partner and have her beg for mercy.
- Throwing and destruction of property: the batterer may throw dishes, small appliances, or other objects at the woman, or he may go on a rampage and destroy household property.
- Repeated beating using objects: the use of belts, or sticks or other objects during an assault is not uncommon. Using the same object allows the batterer to control the victim just by laying his hand on the object.
- Humiliation violence: some batterers require their victims to assume certain positions for the imposition of violence. Having the victim undress, before yelling and beating

them, adds to the batterer's feeling of power and the woman's feelings of hopelessness.

**Psychological battering** - includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes form of threats of abandonment or abuse. Confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation (UNICEF, 2000; Walker, 2009). Psychological battering is a serious form of battering, it leaves no physical scars, and it can bind the battered partner to the perpetrator far more effectively than physical abuse (Wallace, 1997). Psychological battering includes many different acts which contribute to the woman's feelings of helplessness and result in her inability to do anything as she typically is depressed with low self-esteem. The following are different forms of psychological battering (adapted from Walker, 2009):

- ***Isolation:*** the batterer may isolate his partner by limiting her access to money, use of a car or ban other every-day activities. He is likely to talk negatively about her family and friends making it uncomfortable for the woman to maintain outside relationships.
- ***Guilt:*** the batterer usually blames the woman for his assaultive behaviour with the rationale that if she had only been a better wife, he would not have had to hit her or psychologically abuses her (call her names or run her down). After a period of time, the battered woman begins to accept these statements and blames herself for the battering.
- ***Fear:*** the abuser may threaten to reveal secrets or private information to the woman's family and friends, or threaten the woman with a beating when she gets home. The batterer may also threaten to harm the woman or her family if she ever leaves him or does something he does not approve of.
- ***Humiliation:*** the battered woman may be humiliated verbally in front of friends, family or children. In extreme cases, the batterer may require her to perform degrading acts in public such as requesting permission before leaving the room or going to the bathroom. This type of psychological battering destroys the woman's sense of self-worth and ability to resist further acts of control by the abuser.

**Sexual battering**—this refers to coerced sex, through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing sexual acts, unwanted sexual comments or forcing the woman to have sex with others

(Walker, 2009). According to Wallace (1997), physical battering is often accompanied by sexual battering. Sex on demand or after a physical assault is very common as male batterer's often become sexually aroused when beating women. Since a battered woman does not believe that she has any choice or free will, she will submit to the batterer's demands. Additionally, she may fear that a refusal to engage in sexual activity will cause the batterer to react violently (Wallace, 1997).

### **3.3 Seligman's (1975) Theory of Learned Helplessness (updated by Walker, 2009) as a theoretical framework for the study**

Seligman's (1975) theory of Learned Helplessness has been used in many studies to explain why many battered women fail to leave their abusers (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010). His theory explains certain forms of psychological paralysis by noting how individuals utilise social learning and cognitive and/or motivational principles in different contexts. The theory was originally based on studies conducted with laboratory animals whereby they were repeatedly given an electric shock. Seligman placed dogs in cages and administered electric shocks at random and different intervals. The dogs learned that no matter what response they made, they could not control the shocks. At first the animals tried to escape through various voluntary movements, when nothing they did ended the shocks, they ceased any further voluntary activity and became compliant, passive and submissive.

When Seligman (1975) tried to change this procedure and teach the dogs that they could escape by crossing to the other side of the cage, they still would not respond even when the door was left open and they were shown the way out, they remained passive, refused to leave and did not avoid the shock. It took repeated dragging of the animals to the exit to teach them how to respond in a voluntary manner again (that is, escape the electric shocks). The earlier in life the dogs received such treatment, the longer it took them to overcome the effects of Learned Helplessness. Once the dogs did learn they could make a voluntary response, their Learned Helplessness disappeared.

Seligman (1975) suggested that these principles apply to human beings who have been exposed to trauma or abuse over-time. They develop distorted perceptions of reality which result in their inability to predict how their own actions could help them escape either psychological or physical abuse. He also noted comparisons between the behaviour of the dogs and certain forms of human depression, highlighting similar cognitive, behavioural and

emotional characteristics exhibited by both dogs and humans.

According to Wilson (2009), the Learned Helplessness theory has three basic components:

- information about what will happen: this refers to the objective relationship between a battered woman's behaviour and the outcome of her experiences. It describes a characteristic of the environment and expresses the extent to which human behaviour does or does not influence environmental outcomes
- thinking or cognitive representation about what will happen (learning expectations, beliefs and perception): cognitions are the mental events that intervene between a person's experiences of actual, objective environmental contingencies and the actual environmental contingencies. Perceptions are inherently incomplete, biased and distorted. Thus, there is a good deal of cognitive intervention between objective environmental contingencies and battered women's subjective understanding of personal control
- behaviour towards what does happen: behaviour in Learned Helplessness theory refers to the battered woman's relative passivity, versus activity in coping with the abuse. Passivity means giving up and withdrawing and typifies listless, demoralised coping efforts, whereas assertive coping and high activity typify a planned optimistic and mastery-oriented effort. Walker (2009) suggested that women learn that their personal attempts to alter their situation results in punishment and consequently come to believe that they are helpless to change their circumstances

According to the theory of Learned Helplessness personal helplessness can be learned during childhood from experiences of uncontrollability between response and outcome (Eckstein & McDonald, 2010). Hansen and Harway (1993) posit that battered women may, early in their lives, learn to believe that nothing they can do will permit them to escape or protect them from their partner's violence and their ability to predict different outcomes. This results in battered women having a reduced ability to predict that certain behaviours will produce results that could protect them from adversity. The term helplessness has caused great deal of controversy from feminists because they see this term as judgemental casting women in a victim role with few resources or little empowerment. However, Walker (2009) suggests women are not helpless in the standard sense of the term as Learned Helplessness means that

battered women choose behaviour responses that have the highest predictability of causing them the less harm in a known situation.

Expanding on Seligman's (1975) work, Walker (2009) found that continual exposure to battering reduces a woman's motivational responses. She conducted various studies and concluded that women who remain in abusive relationships were more likely to display signs of Learned Helplessness and other psychological indicators than those who had never been in, or had escaped, an abusive relationship. Her research indicated that battered women lose the ability to predict the outcomes of their own behaviour. She further postulated that Learned Helplessness is one reason that battered women are unable to perceive that they can escape abusive relationships. Fundamentally, battered women lose the ability to protect themselves from abuse.

Rhodes and McKenzie (1998) developed this into a two-stage model of Entrapment and Learned Helplessness. To begin with, a woman may exert a great deal of effort to improve the relationship and stop the battering and she may continue to make efforts to remain in the relationship, partly to justify her past efforts (that is, she has too much invested in the relationship to leave). Eventually, she may reach a point where it becomes clear that her responses have no impact. Whether she leaves or succumbs to the self-perpetuating cycle of Learned Helplessness depends on the attributions she makes for the prolonged failure of her attempts.

Peterson, Maier and Seligman (1993) report that when applying the Learned Helplessness theory to battered women, all three of the following components must be present: 1). Contingency (uncontrollability of the event); 2) cognition (the way in which the event is perceived or explained) and 3) behaviour, defined as how the individual acts following the uncontrollable event. Walker (2009) suggested that women learn that their personal attempts to alter their situation results in punishment and consequently they come to believe that they are helpless to change their circumstances.

According to Walker (2009), the theory of Learned Helplessness, despite its controversial name, is one of the cornerstone theories of research into BWS. Her studies confirm that battered women are not helpless, but are extremely successful in staying alive and minimising their physical and psychological injuries in a brutal environment. However, in order to

maintain their core self, they must give something up. The theory of Learned Helplessness suggests that they give up the belief that they can escape from the batterer thus they develop sophisticated coping strategies. Learned Helplessness theory explains how they stop believing that their actions will have a predictable outcome. It is not that they cannot use their skills to get away from the batterer, stop the abuse at times, or even defend themselves, but rather, they can't predict that what they do will have the desired outcome (that is, the stopping of physical and psychological battering). It is for this reason they remain in the relationship and the Learned Helplessness persists.

Critics of the theory of Learned Helplessness argue that the conceptual framework presents an image of women as weak and powerless. The theory lost favour during the 1970's and 1980's within the field, as victim advocacy groups and victim service providers began looking for alternative theoretical explanations that were more acceptable in title and presented women, as personally and socially more capable (even though remaining in abusive relationships). Although some research has questioned the validity of the theory, most published research has, for the most part, supported Learned Helplessness as a valid explanation for many of the behaviours exhibited by female victims of battering (Wilson, 2009). Another criticism of the theory is that it does not negate the important coping skills that battered women do develop that protect most of them from being more seriously harmed or killed. However, most critics do note that the theory does demonstrate the psychological pattern the impact from experiencing abuse can take (Walker, 2009).

From a positive perspective, the Learned Helplessness theory, as an explanation of the battered women's behaviour utilises a strong empirical base. At the same time it provides a strong alternative argument to allegations that battered women are masochistic or Borderline Personality Disorders and therefore need the abuse (Wilson, 2009). Deutsch (1945) offers an explanation as to why battered women remain in abusive relationships, according to her theory; they secretly enjoy the pain of abuse. They may fantasise about being raped, beaten and humiliated and may take pleasure in being abused physically and psychologically. This has been largely discredited (McCue, 2008) but it may be that battered women with Borderline Personality Disorder need attention as they can never get enough love thus any attention is better than none, and makeup sex may help fill the emptiness they feel. However, not all battered women have Personality Disorders and the postulation may be *buying in* to existing patriarchal norms.

### **3.4 Summary**

The theory of Learned Helplessness is used as the theoretical explanation for why battered women remain in abusive relationships. The theory provides a contemporary argument to accusations that battered women are masochistic and therefore desire the abuse. The theory explains how battered women are unable to perceive that they can escape abusive relationships. Battered women who have developed Learned Helplessness have a reduced ability to predict that certain behaviours will produce results that could protect them from adversity, and they also lose the ability to protest themselves from abuse.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following chapter describes the research process for the study. A qualitative approach is used as for the current study. The research procedures implemented are noted in the chapter, which include the sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations as well as the research questions addressed by the study.

### **4.2 Area of the study**

The study was conducted at Tshilidzini Hospital Trauma Centre and The Sibasa Victim Empowerment unit in Thohoyandou, Vhembe District in the Limpopo province.

### **4.3 Description of the population**

Population refers to all members of an identifiable group (Goodwin, 2005; Tracy, 2013). It consists of a group of people, which is the object of the study, of whom the researcher wants to determine specific characteristics (Castillo, 2009; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). The population of the study consisted of battered women who are in abusive relationships, who attend the Victim Empowerment Unit at the Trauma Centre at Tshilidzini Hospital in Thohoyandou, Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province.

### **4.4 Sampling method**

Sampling is a procedure for finding cases to study (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), a sampling procedure is used in research when the researcher is unable to investigate the total population which is involved. Non-probability sampling was used in this study as the researcher used a qualitative approach to the phenomena under investigation. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) state that non-probability sampling is used in studies that are not interested in the parameters of an entire population and where members of the population do not have an equal chance of being selected. The method of non-probability sampling that was used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the characteristics that are representative of the population under investigation (deVos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpot, 2005; Tracy, 2013). The type of purposive sample to be used in the study is referred to as a typical case sample (Given, 2008).

Participants in the study were battered women who are in abusive relationships. The study consisted of eight participants who met the criteria for battered women, who consented to participate and attended the Victim Empowerment Unit at the Trauma Centre at Tshilidzini hospital in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. Participants who did not meet the criteria for battered women were not interviewed but thanked for showing interest in the study. They were identified by the researcher with the help of health service provider (trauma counsellor) as participants who were able to provide rich descriptions of their experiences.

#### **4.4.1 Inclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria deals with how a researcher goes about choosing who to include in the study. It is driven by the goals and purposes of the proposed research (Rubin & Babbie, 2011; Shank, 2002). The inclusion criterion was based on physically and psychologically abused women who meet Walker's (2009) criteria for battered women. The battered women had experienced at least two complete cycles of battering. The criteria also consisted of battered women who are married or in cohabiting relationships.

#### **4.4.2 Exclusion criteria**

According to Walker (2009), a physically abused woman must experience at least two complete cycles of battering before she meets the criteria for battered woman. Participants who did not meet this criterion for battered woman were not included in the study. Women who were abused physically or psychologically but not married or in cohabiting relationships were not included.

### **4.5 Research questions**

The questions the research asked and attempted to answer are as follows.

- a. What kind of abuse do battered women experience in their relationships?
- b. What coping mechanisms do battered women use?
- c. How is the psychological state of battered women?
- d. What are the factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships?

### **4.6 Data collection**

Firstly, the researcher scheduled appointments with the participants and interviews were conducted in those locations or locations of the participants' choice. This was to ensure the personal safety of participants and that they were comfortable during the interview. A semi-

structured interview guide (See appendix C) in face-to-face interactions with participants to collect data was used. According to Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland (2009), an interview guide maps out the broad areas which a researcher wishes to address within an interview encounter. Semi-structured interviews are used in cases where the researcher has identified a relatively clear focus to the research as well as where they wish to draw comparisons across a sample of research participants (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver & Ireland, 2009; Tracy, 2013). The qualitative interview is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method of capturing the experiences and lived meaning of the participants' everyday world (Bless et al., 2006; King & Horrocks, 2010). Semi-structured interviews allow the participants to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words (Delamont, 2012). Each interview lasted approximately forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minutes. The researcher conducted the interviews in quiet, comfortable and safe setting. Appointments were set with each participant willing to participate according to their schedule and time. At the start of the interview rapport between the interviewer and interviewee was established. According to Shenton (2004), rapport can be described as a state of mutual trust and responsiveness between individuals or groups of people.

Demographic questions were asked first to obtain pertinent background information and to allow the participant to become used to the situation. The researcher probed participants' answers to obtain more information; this allowed the participants to express themselves where clarity was needed. All participants were de-briefed immediately after each interview. Debriefing is an opportunity to share in depth recent experiences with someone who is willing to listen and care, without judgment or criticism (Maree, 2007; Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2013). An appointment was made after the initial interview, which took approximately thirty (30) minutes, participants gave feedback on the transcript of their interviews to ensure that it was a proper record of their experience. Participants were informed that, if the interviews made them feel bad in any way they would be immediately referred for a therapeutic intervention.

#### **4.6.1 Materials, Apparatus and instruments**

During data collection, an audio recorder was used to record the interviews (if permission was given). One participant refused to be audio recorded. Field notes were also taken during the interview and compared with recorded data when transcribing the data. The interviews were conducted in Xitsonga and compared with field notes and then transcribed to English

within forty eight (48) hours of the interview date. Handwritten notes used to record observations or data (in the case of the participant who did not want to be recorded via an audio tape) was entered into a Word document as soon as the interview was over.

#### **4.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (King & Horrocks, 2010; Welman et al., 2005). Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretive philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. It is a non-numerical examination and interpretation of the data (Maree, 2007; Schreier, 2012). For the purpose of this research, analysis of the texts and collected data was guided by Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). According to Shank (2002), TCA is the process of identifying specific principles, themes or general rules underlying data, it is about searching for patterns in data. TCA is used both as a framework and for analysing data collected in the research process. It is the scoring of messages for content, style or both for the purpose of assessing the characteristics or experiences of persons or groups. TCA can be applied to a wide range of narrative text, including narratives produced in interviews and written documents (Neuendorf, 2002; Schreier, 2012).

The following steps were used when analysing the data using Thematic Content Analysis.

##### **Step one: Becoming familiar with the data**

The initial phase of TCA is for researchers to familiarise themselves with the data. Prior to reading the interview transcripts, researchers should create a start list of potential codes. Reading and re-reading the material until the researcher is comfortable is crucial part of this step in order to begin developing potential codes. All the relevant sections of the transcript relevant to the research question are marked and assembled to create a new file or subtext (Frost, 2011; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). After data collection, the material was transcribed into written form within forty eight hours of the initial interview. After transcribing, the researcher read and re-read the data in order to familiarise herself with the data, highlighting relevant sections addressing the research questions.

##### **Step two: Generating initial codes**

The second step in TCA is generating an initial list of items from the data set that have a re-occurring pattern. This means building a set of themes by looking for patterns and meaning

produced in the data. The researcher then labelled and grouped them in relation to the theoretical framework of the research (Frost, 2011).

### **Step three: Definition of thematic categories**

Themes and perspectives are defined across the selected subtexts. These were in the form of words, then sentences or groups of sentences. These categories were informed by the theoretical framework. Another method the researcher used was reading the selected subtexts multiple times and defining the themes that emerged from these readings (Frost, 2011). Transcripts of the interviews were made and read through several times this is consistent with familiarisation and immersion. Interesting or relevant information was highlighted when reading through the transcripts.

### **Step four: Reviewing themes**

This phase required the researcher to search for data that supports or refutes the proposed themes underpinned by the theoretical framework used by the study. This allowed for further expansion on and revision of themes as they developed. At this point, the researcher had a set of potential themes, as this phase is where the reworking of initial themes took place. Some existing themes collapsed into each other and other themes were condensed into smaller units (Guest et al., 2011).

### **Step five: defining and naming themes**

Defining and refining existing themes that were presented in the final analysis assisted in analysing data within each theme (Guest et al., 2011). Separate sentences and utterances across the narrative texts were assigned to relevant categories. In this way, different parts of narratives were grouped under the defined thematic categories (Frost, 2011). The researcher categorised items and then started to link them together from minor to major categories. The wider picture then started to emerge. Each transcript was treated in the same manner. After this process the categories were developed into themes, the researcher defined what each theme is and which aspects of data were captured.

### **Step Six: Drawing conclusions**

After final themes were reviewed, the researcher began the process of writing the final document. The narrative content collected in each thematic category was used to describe the meaning in the context of the narrative text (Frost, 2011). The data was set aside and a week

later perused again to help with objectivity. This process was undertaken several times to ensure that themes were properly inferred. Member-checking was also carried out at this stage to validate the data and to check if their description was an accurate representation of participants' feelings. The results were then written up into the dissertation.

#### **4.8 Bias**

Bias can range from errors in using measuring systems to the prejudices and opinions of the scientist's involved (Ritchie et al., 2013). A consideration of self as a researcher and self in relation to the topic of the research is a precondition for coping with bias (Maxwell, 2013; Rajendran, 2001). As the purpose of the study was to investigate psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships, and the researcher had some bias and pre-conceived notions, to minimise bias in the current study, the researcher:

- exercised caution in making interpretations based on the research findings;
- attended to the ethical practices and implications of conducting research;
- constantly confronted her own opinion and prejudices with the data;
- and recorded detailed field notes which included reflection on her subjectivity;
- used the services of a second researcher to go through the transcripts. The second researcher critiqued the field notes as an additional check on bias. This helped the researcher explore her preferences for certain kinds of evidence, interpretations and consider alternatives.

#### **4.9 Reliability and Validity**

According to de Vos et al. (2005), all research must respond to social norms that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. There are four criteria that should be considered by researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study, that is, credibility (internal validity), transferability (internal validity), and dependability or reliability (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2013).

Porter (2007) states that validity refers to the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers. In research validity has two crucial parts; internal and external validity. According to Shenton (2004), internal validity encompasses whether the results of the study are legitimate because of the way the groups were selected, data was

recorded or analysis performed. Porter (2007) states the internal validity can be established using the procedure of member checking, whereby tentative results are shown by researchers to their participants to assess the degree of correspondence and to incorporate members' perspectives into the study's findings (Ritchie et al., 2013).

To ensure internal validity of the current study the researcher adhered to the following guidelines.

- **Frequent sessions between the researcher and the supervisor:** these sessions were used by the researcher to discuss alternative approaches. The meetings provided a sounding board for the researcher to test her developing ideas and interpretations. Probing from the supervisor helped the researcher to recognise her own biases and preferences.
- **Psychology Department and relevant committees' scrutiny of the proposed research:** the researcher used the feedback that was given at presentations made presenting her research proposal. This enabled the researcher to refine her methods, develop the research design and strengthen her arguments in the light of the comments that were made.
- **Participants' validation:** the participants in the study were given transcripts of the collected data to read. This was to verify that the experiences expressed by participants are the same as those formed during data collection.
- **Examination of previous research findings:** the researcher used findings of previous studies staged in similar organisations and that addressed similar issues as the current study.

External validity often called generalizability refers to the degree to which the results of an experiential investigation can be generalised to and across individuals, settings, and times (Ritchie et al., 2013; Shenton, 2004). To ensure external validity of the current study, information on the following issues was given at the outset of the research.

- Data collection methods employed, for example, audio recorder and field notes.
- The number of participants involved in the study.
- The number of organisations taking part in the study and where they are based.
- The number and length of data collection sessions.

Reliability is one of the cornerstones of social science research; it is usually about the accuracy of efforts (May, 2002). The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representative of the total population under investigation can be produced using a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Golafshani, 2003). To ensure the reliability of the study, the methodology included sections devoted to:

- the research design and its implementation, describing what is planned and what was executed at a strategic level;
- the operational details of data collection, addressing the details of what was carried out in the field.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

According to Kumar (2005), ethics are guidelines or standards for moral conduct. In research, ethical issues are the prescribe principles for upholding the values of science and for resolving conflicts between scientific ideas and societal values (Tracy, 2013). The researcher applied for ethical clearance at the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC), once the clearance was granted, another clearance was applied at the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme. Participants who got emotional during the interview were referred to the counsellor in charge.

- **Informed Consent**

Informed consent means that research participants have the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time (Silverman, 2006). Participants were informed about the significance and relevance of the study. The nature and aim of the research was explained to the participants and it was ensured that participants understood that information. According to Rubin and Babbie (2011), researchers obtain informed consent of participants to ensure that they explicitly express a willingness to take part in the research after having been informed about the nature of the study (See appendix D).

- **Participants' withdrawal rights**

The researcher explained to the participants that their participation in the research project was entirely voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time and should they choose to withdraw, their information will not be used anywhere in the study.

- **Confidentiality And Anonymity**

Confidentiality means a person knows but will not tell and anonymity means that a person's name is not known and is not made public (Delamont, 2012). According to Miller (2007), information obtained from the research must be confined to certain well-defined scientific uses that should be clear to the participants at the time of informed consent. Such information must not be made generally available in any way that could harm or embarrass the participants. To ensure that both confidentiality and anonymity are not compromised, the researcher recorded and stored data using pseudonyms rather than participants' actual names. At the time of publication, the anonymity of individual participants will be preserved.

#### **4.11 Summary**

In this chapter, the qualitative research method and exploratory research design used were discussed. Semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection and thematic content analysis was chosen as the method of data analysis. Credibility of the study and ethical considerations followed in the study were also outlined. The next chapter will deal with data analysis and interpretation. The data collected will be presented in the forms of themes.

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter results from the recorded interviews are presented and discussed. The term *participant* is used instead of the real names of the individuals participating in the research. To ensure that participants can be easily recognised in the research they will be given a number to protect their identity. Biographical information of participants will be given so that their social context can be understood. Themes that emerged during the interviews will be discussed in terms of the theoretical framework underpinning the study, Seligman's (1974) theory of Learned Helplessness updated by Walker (2009). The following elements of the updated theory will be used to underpin discussions arising out of the themes which arose naturally out of the data. These elements are adapted from Wilson (2009) and presented as follows.

- Information about what will happen - this describes what happens to a woman objectively and the outcomes that she experiences. It looks at the context or the woman's environment and the extent to which her behaviour influences her environmental outcomes. Fundamentally, a woman learns to be helpless which is often the result of, an abusive childhood or is predicated by her own personality or some kind of trauma in adolescence or early adulthood (for instance, rape or violent assault) or a mixture of childhood abuse, personality and an experienced trauma. A woman learns that there is nothing she can do, as in childhood abuse the perpetrators of violence are often her parents who are her caregivers and who she believes are *doing the best they can for her*. She takes this into her adult life and accepts abuse from her male partner as her learned behaviour has taught her that he *is doing the best he can for her*. When the trauma occurs later the woman, particularly if the abuse is not reported and she receives no counselling, accepts the violence and has the misguided belief that her partner is protecting her, it is her own fault or that all women experience the same problems but say nothing.
- Thinking or cognitive representation about what will happen – this looks at how learned behaviour(s) influence a woman's beliefs, expectations and perceptions usually in a negative manner, in the case of battered women. Battered women have biased perceptions and are unable to objectively assess their situation;

- Behaviour towards what does happen – women who are battered tend to react in a passive manner and do not actively cope with the abuse. This is because when they try an active behaviour it is usually a maladaptive one for instance, hitting back which results in worst abuse. Passive behaviours essentially mean that the woman is compliant this does not mean she does not get abused but that the abuse is what she can tolerate.

## **5.2 Biographical information of participants**

Table 4 gives the biographical information of the eight participants interviewed for the study. Each participant is indicated by a number. Their age (average age of participants is 44.25 years), marital status, years of marriage, number of children, educational background and occupation are given.

Table 4: Biographical information of participants

Participant	Age	Marital status	Years of marriage	Number of children	Educational qualifications	Occupation	Child support grant
1	47	Married	25	Five	Grade 12	Housewife	Yes
2	49	Married	19	Three	Grade 6	Housewife	No
3	48	Married	20	Four	Grade 8	Self Employed	No
4	38	Cohabiting	11	Three	Grade 12	Cashier	No
5	52	Married	26	Three	Grade 12	Personal Assistant	No
6	50	Married	32	Four	Grade 12	Small Business Owner	No
7	33	Married	15	Three	Grade 10	Housewife	Yes
8	37	Married	11	Three	Grade 11	Housewife	Yes

### **5.2.1 Background information of participants**

Background information for the participants is given so that their socio-economic context can be properly understood. It was decided to use numbers instead of pseudonyms as they are less personal and a pseudonym could inadvertently be based on participants' characteristics which might reveal their identity. All the participants attend counselling at the trauma centre for their abuse. Three sessions were completed with each participant and this includes de-

briefing, interview and follow up interviews which confirmed the themes found during data analysis.

- **Participant 1**

Participant 1 one is a 47 year old female. She studied up to Grade 12 and was unemployed during the time of the interview. Her husband works as a builder. She grew up in a family where her father was physically abusive towards her and her siblings and mother. Participant 1 reported that her mother was more loving and understanding. Her father worked as a farmworker and her mother was a housewife. She was married at the age of 22 years through customary marriage and has five children with her husband. After getting married she did not pursue her studies any further than grade 12 and worked as a domestic worker. She reported that she receives a child support grant, which helps her make ends meet. She started experiencing abuse in her marriage in 1992, after the birth of her second child. The abuse is both psychological and physical. She reported that her husband insults her and calls her names which later led to physical abuse. She reported her husband's infidelity as a reason for the abuse in the marriage. Despite his abusive behaviour the participant is still married to her husband and sexual intercourse continues without protection. She applied for a protection order but when the case went to court she cancelled it because she did not want him to go to jail, as she would have had no income. At the time of the interview the abuse was still ongoing. She noted that she stayed with him because she has five children and would not be able to manage without his earnings. During the time of the interview she seemed to be in good health and did not disclose any illnesses.

- **Participant 2**

Participant 2 is a 49 year old woman. She studied up to Grade 6 she has no further educational training or qualifications. Her husband is a small business owner (Spaza shop). She reported that she grew up in a religious family and did not experience or witness any form of violence when growing up. Both parents were business people. She was married in 1994, it was her second marriage. Her first husband passed away and she had two children (girls) with him. She did not report any form of abuse with her late husband. She only has one child with her current husband (a boy). At the time of the interview she was unemployed. The participant started experiencing abuse three years after getting married. Her husband is psychologically abusive, she reported that he swears at her, insults her and addresses her in a

disrespectful manner. At the time of the interview, the husband was still psychologically abusing her but the abuse has subsided and according to her report, this might be because of the affair the husband is having. She also reported that they were no longer sexually intimate in their marriage. She seemed to be healthy at the time of the interview though she reported that she lost a lot of her body weight as the result of the abuse. She was emotional when talking about her experiences. She attends the trauma centre as a way of dealing with her experiences. However, she does not attend regularly only when she feels the need to.

- **Participant 3**

Participant 3 is a 48 year old female who passed Grade 8 and is self-employed. She sews traditional clothes from her home, her husband works in a factory. When she was young, she witnessed abuse in her home where her father was abusive towards her mother. Her mother tried to cover- up the violence. Her family was very traditional; her father had two wives and passed away when she was in her early twenties. She was married at the age of 19 years through customary marriage and was legally married in 2002. She has four children (two girls and two boys). She reported having been abused since 1987 and, at the time of the interview, the abuse was ongoing. The abuse is both psychological and physical. She reported that her husband assaulted her all the time and complains about everything she does. Her family is not supportive of her when it comes to the violence in her marriage and is always encouraging her to stay with her husband. Regardless of the violence in her marriage, she reported to be still being intimate with her husband, often without condoms. During the time of the interview she seemed to be in good health.

- **Participant 4**

Participant 4 is a 38 year old woman who passed Grade 12 and works as a sales assistant. Her partner works as a security guard. She comes from a stable background with no violence between her parents who have both passed way. She has been cohabiting with her partner for a period of eleven years and has three children. The reason she gave for not marrying her partner is because she is from another province and since meeting her partner she has not been home (because of the long distance). She has one child from a previous relationship (she did not report abuse in this relationship) and two with her current partner. The participant reported that she has been abused since 2005, two years after permanently staying with her partner. At the time of the interview the abuse was ongoing. Despite this they still have

sexual intimacy mostly without condoms. The participant experiences both physical and psychological abuse. She reported that her partner physically assaults her, and sometimes pulls her by her hair. Sometimes the assault is very severe and it has left her with bruises and broken bones. She reports that her partner is very short tempered and is angered easily. Her partner has a child with another woman but they are no longer together. Despite the child that her partner has outside their relationship, she has accepted the child. At the time of the interview, she was dishevelled. The participant reported that the day before the interview she spent the night at the trauma centre because she had a fight with her partner. On one side of her head, her hair was pulled out. She also had a bruise on her left shoulder. She also reported that she doesn't have any kind of support from her partner's family and her family because they live far away. The participant reported that her children are all she has. She attends the trauma centre as a way of coping with the abuse. She has a protection order against her partner but the abuse continues despite the protection order.

- **Participant 5**

Participant 5 is a 52 year old female who passed Grade 12, has a certificate in computer science and works as a Personal Assistant in a medical clinic. Her husband is a teacher. She reports that her parents were very strict and traditional and believed in corporal punishment. She was also bullied by her older brother. Both her parents had good jobs. She was legally married in 1987 when she was 26 years old and has three children with her husband. She reported that the abuse started six years after getting married. The abuse was at first psychological, her husband followed her around, was too controlling, insulted her and called her names. Later, he abused her physically. The participant is still married to her husband and reports that she is still being psychologically and physically abused. The participant has a good job and a stable income, and her reason for remaining with her husband is because she comes from a traditional background and has accepted the violence in her marriage. She once reported him to the police but when the case went to court she cancelled it because she did not want him to go to jail (she felt she would not have managed without his income and her family would have been ashamed). At the time of the interview she seemed to be in good health. She did not disclose if she was still physically intimate with her husband.

- **Participant 6** Participant 6 is a 50 years old woman who passed Grade 12. She has a certificate in Business Management and currently is a cash loan business owner. Her husband is a Police Officer. She comes from a religious and traditional background her father had two wives. (her mother was the first wife). She reported that her parents were harsh in their method of physical punishment but despite that her upbringing was good. She got married in 1982 through customary marriage and was legally married in 1986. She has four children with her husband and reported that he has two children outside wedlock with different women. She started experiencing abuse three years after her legal marriage. The abuse is more physical than psychological. He husband accuses her of having affairs, calls her stupid and tells he how useless she is. He hits her and assaults her and she always has bruises. She has a protection order against him but the violence is ongoing and she doesn't feel the police can help her further. Despite her experience of abuse she was still married to her husband at the time of the interview. They were still intimate though, according to her it is "makeup sex." At the time of the interview she was neatly dressed but had a black eye, which was covered with makeup, she reported that she got it two days before the interview. She was emotional during the interview despite her efforts to control herself.

- **Participant 7**

Participant 7 is a 33 year old woman. She studied until Grade 10 and then dropped out because of learning difficulties. She was unemployed at the time of the interview and has never worked before. She receives a child support grant which she stated helps her buy groceries and other day to day needs. Her husband works in construction and is self-employed. She was raised by her maternal grandmother, her parents worked in Johannesburg. At the age of ten she was raped by a close family friend, according to her this has also contributed to her marital problems. She got married at the age of 18 years through customary marriage and was legally married when she was 25 years old. She has three children with her husband. She has experienced psychological abuse since 2004 which became physical in 2007. She reported, at the time of the interview, that the abuse was ongoing but was better compared to the previous years. According to her the abuse happens because she told her husband about the abuse (rape) she experienced as a child. Her experience of abuse was, at first, more psychological than physical she was called degrading names, insulted but was eventually physically abused. She reported him to the police and he was arrested and charged.

As a result of the charge he spent six months in jail. When he was released from jail the abuse subsided for a while but eventually started again. She reported that it was more psychological than physical after his release. However, occasionally he still assaults her physically. She was still married to her husband at the time of the interview and was still intimate with him. She did not report whether or not condoms were used. At the time of the interview she was neatly dressed and seemed to be in good health. However, she was emotional especially when talking about her rape experience. She reported that her source emotional of support comes mostly from her pastor.

- **Participant 8**

Participant 8 is a 37 year old woman she has been married for 11 years (since 2002). She has three children with her husband. She did not study further than Grade 11, is unemployed and receives a child support grant. Her husband works as a taxi driver. She comes from a religious background and was raised by her mother and didn't know her father. Her mother worked on a farm. She was raised strictly but was not abused. The participant reported having been abused, by her husband, since 2006. At the time of the interview the abuse was ongoing. The abuse is very physical and according to her report he hits her all the time. She reports that he hits her with anything that he can and throws things at her. She also reported that lately the abuse is accompanied by swearing and the use of swearing and hurtful words, mostly telling her that she's not woman enough. She once reported him to the police but when she was supposed to go to court she was told that her documents went missing and she never reported him again (she felt it was not worthwhile). Regardless of their marital problems, they are still intimate. Her husband does not always use condoms. At the time of the interview, she seemed a bit edgy, physically she looked worn-out. Her source of emotional support comes mostly from the church and her mother.

### **5.3 Participants understanding of psychological and physical abuse**

Participants were asked to give their understanding of psychological and physical abuse to ensure that they had a true understanding of what the research was about. It was apparent by their responses that they all had a literal understanding of both of these forms of mistreatment. Their responses are noted as follows.

**Participant 1:** “When someone beats you, pushes you and throws things at you. Being called names and sworn at. Always criticising you in everything you do and finding faults with your behaviour.”

**Participant 2:** “Being beaten, threatened and called hurtful names.”

**Participant 3:** “When you are being belittled in front of your kids or family, being pushed around and having things like dishes thrown at you....also when your partner does not communicate with you.”

**Participant 4:** “Well, I think it is being pulled by your hair, beaten up and insulted in front of your children.”

**Participant 5:** “When your partner insults you, calls you names and hits you. He treats you very badly.”

**Participant 6:** “I think that being abused is when you are insulted, called names or when you are rubbished and made to feel like you are worthless. It is about being controlled and beaten.”

**Participant 7:** “It is when you are beaten, pushed and hit by your husband and when he swears at you. It is also when he tell you what you can and what you can’t do.”

**Participant 8:** “When someone beats you and talks to you in a harsh way...also when you are pushed around, choked and beaten up.”

It is apparent the women understand what psychological and physical abuse is. However, because of Learned Helplessness (Walker, 2009) they do not leave but endure the abuse based on what they know (abusive childhood) or some kind of trauma in adolescence (for instance, rape or bullying at school) or their own personality traits (often a mixture of the three).

When asked, at the end of the interview their given reason for staying, the replies support the theory of Learned Helplessness, as the women who took part in the study were unable to think in a logical, rational manner. They had become passive and were unable to take active steps in dealing with the abuse (Walker, 2009). As will be seen from the themes presented in the research some had tried to be active by calling the police or leaving but had been unable to sustain an active, logical response and had ended up staying with their abuser for a variety of reasons, some of them psychological in nature. Often they rationalised the reason for staying in the abusive relationship and used their children as reasons (this is explored further in 5.7.3).

#### **5.4 Reasons given for remaining in the relationship**

The reasons given above by the participants for staying in abusive relationships are subsumed under different themes however; they reflect issues dealing with lack of family support, familial issues mostly related to having a father for their children, financial issues and Learned Helplessness.

**Participant 1:** “*My child once you get married it means you have to stay for better or worse. Marriage is difficult you just have to endure it.*” (Familial values)

“*It is not that simple to pack your bags and go.....you have to think of the children.*”(Familial values)

“*Another thing is the issue of money....*” (Financial issues)

“*The first time I told my mother – in – law that her son was abusing me, she said I must stop making him angry.* (Lack of family support)

**Participant 2:** “*The problem is at the moment I do not know what to do anymore....it seems as if I am not doing enough.*” (Learned helplessness)

“*We started from nothing, we built a home together, we struggled together...that is why I do not want to go back home, I would lose everything.*”(Financial issues)

“*I was told to keep the family together....even though their father is abusive.*”(Familial values)

**Participant 3:** “*I just tell myself that there is nothing I can do about this situation. I have nowhere else to go.*”(Learned helplessness)

“*Even when he is working I don't get money from him sometimes....*” (Financial issues)

**Participant 4:** “*He is the father of my children and I want a home for them.*”(Familial values)

**Participant 5:** “*When you're in a marriage it's not that easy, you can't just pack your bags and go. You have to think of other things your children, your own life....where am I supposed to go?*”(Lack of family support)

“*My children need a father in their lives and I can't deny them that.*”(Familial values)

**Participant 6:** “*We have children together so before taking a major decision like this I have to think about how it will affect them.*” (Familial values)

**Participant 7:** “*My children need a father in their lives and I can't deny them that, I feel as if I cannot leave him.*”(Familial values)

**Participant 8:** “*Whenever, I want to leave I think of my children. I don't want them to grow up without a father.*” (Familial values)

*“...I know what it is like to be without a father and I don’t want the same for my children.”*(Familial values)

*“...I often don’t get money from him I depend on grant money to survive.”* (Financial issues)

## **5.5 Themes derived from participants’ experiences of abuse**

The participants were asked questions from the semi-structured questionnaire schedule probing occurred when clarification was necessary these questions were an outcome of the response and not necessarily the same for each participant. Participants came on different days but were brought with the same transport which meant that they all had to leave at the same time. It must also be noted that as the researcher responsible for the interviews I am quite inexperienced and, at times, did not retain as much focus as I could have done. This was due to the very sensitive and challenging nature of the problems that the participants shared with me. I understood this after I reflected on the process and the interview itself and discussions with my supervisor. The responses from the participants were recorded as they happened thus are a true reflection of the collection process. All the information that was shared with me also gave me added insight to the participants’ difficult day-to-day lives and into how a battered woman copes with her life.

### **5.5.1 Disbelief**

Physical battering may take the form of minor acts that escalate overtime. It may begin with an arm being grabbed, a dish thrown or a slap to the face or arm (Walker, 2009). Psychological battering includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate or persecute, and takes forms of threats of abandonment or abuse confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation (UNICEF, 2000; Walker, 2009). The responses by the participants indicated that they started to experience abuse within the first five years of their marriage or cohabitation with their partners. Seven women in the study experienced both physical and psychological abuse, while only one participant (participant 2) reported to have experienced only psychological abuse in her marriage. They reported that infidelity and alcohol use by their partners were what they considered the causes of the abuse they were subjected to. The participants who first experienced psychological abuse did not regard it as being abused until they were beaten. The information women had about their male partner, at this stage, did not match with what happened to them which created a cognitive dissonance creating disbelief. As the women experienced more abuse they tended to become passive in

terms of accepting the behaviour. The following responses illustrate how they felt after being beaten for the first time and their disbelief that this was happening. The responses are reported from the English translation of their responses in the vernacular (Xitsonga).

**Participant 1:** “*The first time he beat me, I couldn't believe it was happening to me. You hear about other women being beaten by their husbands but when it happens to you it feels like so unreal*”

**Participant 3:** “*He always threatened to beat me up and did not really believe him. I thought it was the booze talking. The day that he actually did, I thought I was going crazy, I couldn't believe what was happening to me.*”

**Participant 4:** “*The first time he laid his hands on me, I couldn't believe that he actually did it. I was so shocked and it hurt a lot. Since that day he beats me up, call me names and pulls me by my hair.*”

**Participant 5:** “*That day, I asked myself if this was really my husband doing this to me. Was it the drink that caused it? I asked myself so many times what happened to my husband, what did I do so bad to deserve to be beaten the way he did?*”

**Participant 6:** “*It felt like a dream, I did not want to believe it, that day I locked myself in the spare room the whole night, trying to make sense of what was happening.*”

**Participant 7:** “*I did not believe it was happening, I just wanted to die. Being swore at is one thing but when you get beaten, it's something very worse; I can't explain the feelings in words. I was really hurt inside.*”

**Participant 8:** “*I was really shocked, that day I cried myself to sleep. It wasn't happening.*”

### 5.5.2 Extra marital affairs

All participants indicated that their partners became abusive as a result of extra marital affairs and they had the misguided belief that this was the cause of the abuse they experienced in their relationships. According to Wilson (2009), this is an example of how thinking or cognitive representation, in terms of the theory of Learned Helplessness renders the woman unable to objectively assess her situation. She has a biased perception that because her male partner is having an affair this is why he abuses her. A woman may have arguments with a man because he is having an affair but verbal and physical abuse are not linked to this however, in these cases the woman attributes the physical and verbal abuse to the affair (although all state in the interviews that both psychological and physical abuse occur when

the man is not, or was not, having an affair). It is unlikely that the women have attempted to find out if the mistresses suffer the same type of treatment which, based on anecdotal evidence, is very likely the case (CSVR, 2001). The fact that *other women* are blamed for the partners abuse is taking the responsibility away from him and, onto another woman (escape-avoidance coping). This theme is illustrated in the following extracts where the battered women rationalise their partners behaviour and give justifications for it by, in some instances, using self-blame as a coping mechanism.

**Participant 1:** “*When the abuse started in 1992, it was because of an affair. My husband was seeing another woman at the time. I found out about it and when I asked him, the fighting started.....he would come back home late and I was not supposed to ask his whereabouts.*”

**Participant 2:** “*While I was pregnant, I discovered that he was having an affair when he did not come back home, he was with that woman, he stayed with her....that is why he beats me.*”

**Participant 4:** “*The woman who he was having an affair with was my friend and now she is pregnant with his child .....and now she is the reason we are fighting.*”

**Participant 6:** “*He is cheating on me, it's one woman after the other, and he blames me for the affairs.....the other time he said the reason he cheats is because I 'm not a good wife, I'm disrespectful and others treat him like a king. That is why he hits me.*”

**Participant 7:** “*My husband is a cheater, there's always a woman that he is cheating on me with. He fights with me and hurts me because of this.*”

**Participant 8:** “*He started changing because he was seeing another woman. She used to call even when he was at home, sometimes he'd go outside to answer her phone call. So that's when we really started fighting and he started to hit me.*”

### 5.5.3 Police involvement

In a study by Ansara and Hindin (2010) regarding formal and informal help-seeking behaviours associated with women's and men's experiences of intimate partner violence noted that six in ten women reported police involvement in the incidents of abuse. The authors noted that half of the women they interviewed also reported discussing the ongoing physical and psychological abuse with a professional psychologist or counsellor. The study also revealed that most women in the study used informal help - seeking (for instance, family members, friends and neighbours). Five of the participants in the present study indicated that

they had reported their partners to the police and received a protection order against them. However, when the case went to court they asked for the charges to be dropped because they did not want their husbands to be arrested and imprisoned, some for economic reasons and others because they only wanted the men to learn a lesson and stop the abuse. Essentially, this points to Learned Hopefulness, the women hoped that the men would learn something from having to go to court. However, they all reported that the abuse continued after the cases were withdrawn. With regard to police involvement in cases of domestic violence, participant 6 is married to a police officer however, when she reported her husband to the police she noted that they did not “*take his side*” or show him any favouritism. In terms of the theory of Learned Helplessness this points towards the women’s inappropriate thinking or cognitive representation of what is likely to happen as well as their Learned Hopefulness that something will change. As they are unable to be objective about their partners behaviour their perceptions of what will *change* their partners’ behaviours are misguided. The women stated the following reasons for withdrawing the cases against their partners.

**Participant 1:** “*The protection order was meant to stop the abuse, but it didn’t, the beating continued. I went back to the police, he got arrested...but I withdrew the case. I didn’t want him to go to jail, when you have kids you have to think of them and how it’s going to affect them. The reason for the protection order was for him to stop beating me not [for him] to go to prison.*”

**Participant 4:** “*I got a protection order against him and it got better though he did not stop completely. When we went to court he promised, in front of the magistrate, that he will stop the abuse and I forgave him. I want my children to have a stable home.... but the abuse didn’t stop.*”

**Participant 5:** “*When I reported him to the police he got arrested and spent a weekend in jail. We were given a court date and when we went to court I cancelled the case. I wanted to solve the problem within the family, not in court, and I was scared that he would go to jail. During the family meeting he promised to stop beating me. For a while he did stop but it did not take long before I was hit again.*”

**Participant 6:** “*I got a protection order against him in 2002 after he had beaten me so badly I had to go to hospital. When we went to court I asked for the charges to be dropped. His family suggested that we resolve the issue within the family. The court ordered us to go for marital counselling but when the time came for us to start with the counselling, he refused.*”

However, **Participant 7** did not drop the case and her husband was sentenced, “*When we went to court he was sentenced to six months in jail.*” She reported that after he was released the abuse continued however, he assaulted her less physically and more psychologically.

#### **5.5.4 Violence as a norm**

Childhood experiences of abuse by parents also contributed to their feelings of guilt and shame. Out of the eight participants, three (38%) were physically abused (participants no: 1, 5 and 6) by their parents as children, one (13%) (participant 3) witnessed her mother being abused and one (13%) (participant 7) was raped by a family friend at the age of ten years. Participant number 5 was also bullied by her brother. Ondicho (2000) is of the opinion that children exposed to violence in the home are more likely to engage in violent behaviour or tolerate abuse in their marriages. According to UNICEF (2000), girls who witness their mothers being abused may be more likely to accept violence as the norm in a marriage than those who come from non-violent homes. In terms of Learned Helplessness the information the woman has is contextualised in her past. Those participants who suffered abuse have information that violence is a norm. The women who did not experience abuse may have witnessed it, this was not probed during the interviews but the historical context they live in was born out of apartheid which engendered violence both psychological and physical. It also engendered patriarchy and women were brought up to be submissive to, and to believe men, rather than women Barnett & LaViolet, 1993). Their thoughts become cognitively maladaptive as they think that the abuse is their own fault so are inclined to guilt and self-blame. In terms of Learned Helplessness the woman’s cognitive representation is maladaptive as she has accepted violence as a norm. Fundamentally, she has learnt that violence can be expected in a marriage or partnership and she cannot objectively assess the situation.

**Participant 1:** “*My father used to beat us a lot, one little mistake you’d get a beating. My mother used to intervene but it did not help much. Sometimes we’d go to bed without eating as a punishment, it was hard.*”

**Participant 3:** “*My father used to beat my mother when I was young. I saw her being beaten all the time, she used to say it was not that bad but I saw the bruises. She made excuses for him and we also got used to it. Perhaps I am used to it.*”

**Participant 5:** “*You know growing up the way I did is painful. We were beaten as kids and I mean really beaten. Children these days have rights, we didn’t. My parents used to beat me and my older brother was so bossy. If I didn’t do what he wanted he’d beat me or pull my*

*ears and I couldn't tell my parents because if he got beaten, later he'd beat me too. ....there is a difference between being beaten and disciplined and what my parents did was not discipline at all."*

**Participant 6:** "*When growing up my parents used to beat me and my siblings when we did something wrong. I was beaten with a shambok. They told us they were disciplining us so we can be good and responsible adults. I still have a scar from my back.*"

**Participant 7:** "*When I was ten, I was raped by a close family friend. He asked me to come by his house so he can send me to buy him cigarettes. When I got there, he asked me to come into the house and that's when he raped me. I told my grandmother about it but she did not believe me, until he raped another child from the same street ten years later. Apart from my grandmother nobody knew about it, I didn't even tell my parents because they were in Johannesburg at the time. All those years I lived with the guilt and pain, somehow I thought it was my fault because my grandmother did not believe me.*"

#### **5.5.5 Children as victims of domestic violence**

The effect of woman battering extends beyond adult victims. Children and adolescents are adversely affected by witnessing domestic violence Barnett & LaViolet, 1993). These children may demonstrate increased psychological symptoms (for instance, depression and PTSD) and behavioural problems, such as conduct disorder and/or problems at school (Ferguson, 2010). According Ferguson (2010) and UNICEF (2000), children who witness marital violence are at a higher risk for a range of emotional and behavioural problems, including anxiety, depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem, disobedience, nightmares and physical health complaints. The participants in the study were asked what they think the abuse is doing to their children and how it has affected their lives. They were aware of how the abuse is negatively affecting their children but were still determined to keep the family together. They believe that having a father, even if he's abusive, is better than not having a father at all. They were unable to understand the effect that the violence both physical and psychological will ultimately have on their children although rationally they understand their inability to do anything about it is another factor in Learned Helplessness. In cultures that are not as patriarchal as African one's in nature women use the same type of illogical reasoning because they are unable to objectively consider the problem. The following responses underpin this problem.

**Participant 1:** “*My children are not happy because of what is going on here at home. My fourth and last born are not performing well at school. They are a bit reserved. The second born is very aggressive and always yelling to his siblings when he talks to them.*”

**Participant 2:** “*My son has this anger in him. He doesn't talk to his father much because of the abuse. When he's angry sometimes he tells his father that he will be a better man.*”

**Participant 4:** “*It has affected them so badly. I try to explain to them that it is not their fault but I can see they are not okay. My older daughter is so quiet these days and I think it's because of the fighting at home. She hardly goes anywhere.*”

**Participant 6:** “*My children are really affected in a negative way. My first born was married and her husband beat her and she divorced him. I guess she did not want to become her mother. I feel like it's my fault, only if I was stronger and better mother. I'm not sure how the others will cope in their marriages but my first born, since her divorce she has this anger towards men. I guess it has always been there.*””

**Participant 7:** “*They are performing poorly at school. Other kids bully them at school because they know what is going on at home so it is disturbing them in a bad way.*”

**Participant 8:** “*It affects my children in a bad way. The older one is very aggressive, whether he's playing alone or with the other kids. You can hear him repeating words his father calls me. Most of the time he plays alone, he doesn't have many friends like other boys his age because he's very rough when playing.*”

### 5.5.6 Sexual coercion

Four of the participants reported that their partners had sex with them following the physical abuse. According to Wallace (1997) and Walker (2009), physical battering is often accompanied by sexual battering. Sex on demand, or after physical assault, is very common. Since a battered woman does not believe that she has any choice or free will, she will submit to the batterer's demands. Additionally, she may fear that a refusal to engage in sexual activity will cause the batterer to react violently (Wallace, 1997; Walker, 2009). In African cultures, once lobola has been paid, most men think they have a right to sleep with their wives whenever they want regardless of the woman's feelings because lobola has been paid. This also causes women to feel that they have no choice but to give in to their husbands' sexual demands even after a battering episode. According to Walker (2009), sexual battering may provoke intense emotional and physical reactions in battered women. This intensity and humiliation may become addictive and be looked at as a form of release.

**Participant 1:** “*When he finish beating me, after sometime that very same day he wants to sleep with me and I let him because I’m scared he will beat me again.*”

**Participant 3:** “*He said it’s his right as my husband to sleep with me whenever he wants, so he just has his way [after beating me] and sleep with me even if I don’t want to.*”

**Participant 5:** “*After apologising for beating me he wants to have sex and sometimes I let him, regardless of my feelings at the time.*”

**Participant 6:** “*After being beaten he would force himself on me and said it is his way to show me he’s sorry. He called it make up sex.*”

In terms of the theory of Learned Helplessness the behaviour the woman exhibits is passive as she allows her partner to have sex with her to ensure that the battering does not become worse. This is reinforced by Walker (2009) who posits that after a male physically abuses a woman he may ask for forgiveness and then have sex with the woman as this proves his love for her. The sex is coerced as the woman has sex so that she is not further physically abused. Walker (2009) states that sex after physical violence is usually quick and aggressive and not loving although the male perpetrator may try to state later that it proved his love. The cycle of violence will then be perpetuated becoming more and more violent through the years.

### **5.5.7 Fear**

Walker (2009) describes fear and terror as part of a woman’s reaction to her husband or partners physical abuse. Wallace (1997) also discuss that women who are abused fear revenge if they have done something wrong (and know it) or if they think of leaving. This is real fear as women have the information according and they know what they will experience as a result of the perceived wrongdoing. She will thus try to accommodate her partner as far as possible using for instance, distancing or other coping mechanisms. However, she learns to be helpless and feels that there is nothing that she can do which will alter things (Walker, 2009). The fear however, is real and terrifying as reported in the following responses.

**Participant 1:** “*I’m always scared because I don’t know if I’m going to get beaten or not.*”

**Participant 2:** “*Another time I ran out just wearing a towel, carrying my child to the neighbour’s house asking for help. Can you imagine running away in the middle of the night because of fear, with a child, and knocking on people’s doors asking for help?*”

**Participant 5:** *I was scared that no one would believe me....When someone shouts at me, even at work, I become so jumpy and scared.*”

**Participant 7:** “...the kids were in the living room [when he beat me] and they saw everything. This made me feel bad, **I was so scared**, and they cried.”

## **5.6 Themes gleaned from data pertaining to participants coping mechanisms**

To ensure that the factors that compel women in the study to stay in abusive relationships it was considered appropriate to look at themes arising naturally out of the data in regard to the participants’ coping mechanisms.

### **5.6.1 Religion**

Fortune and Enger (2006) report that the church has often sent the wrong message to battered women. Many Christian religions such as Catholicism for instance, do not condone divorce and compel couples to have counselling to resolve problems. However, many of these problems are often perceived to be the fault of the woman who for instance, if her husband has an affair should forgive and forget. To batterers, religions have often given the message that their efforts to control their wives are justified because of the patriarchal stem of all religions. The authors note that historically (and sometimes in the present) men are permitted to discipline their wives and children for the *good of the family*. Another example is in Timothy 2, lines, 11-12, where it is stated that women are supposed to be submissive and to be quiet.

The women interviewed in the study are from religious Christian backgrounds and believe that God will see them through their abusive relationships. They use prayers as a coping mechanism several stating that it “*keeps me going*”. They argued that this helps them to cope with their situation. They prayed and believed that God will change their situation. Their responses indicate that their faith and the word of God is what keeps them going. This can also be seen as a coping mechanism. This point is illustrated in the following responses:

**Participant 1:** “*I spend most of my time in church, talking to the pastor also helps because he gives me different perspective and he prays with me.*”

**Participant 2:** “*The pastor told me to persevere and that there is nothing greater than God and all I have to do is pray and believe, God will answer my prayers one day. There are many people crying out there, asking for help from God, so my time will come to be answered.*”

**Participant 6:** “*I pray and give everything to God. One day He will hear my cries and answer my prayers.*”

**Participant 7:** “*When I am too stressed about the situation at home, I talk to my pastor, he would read different scriptures from the Bible and he prays for me and my marriage. He encourages me to have faith that one day my husband will change.*”

**Participant 8:** “*God knows everything and nothing is hidden from him. I leave everything in his hands, one day he will come through for me.*”

Their pastors in the churches (Christian) they belong to encourage the women to stay in their abusive relationships and advise them to trust in God to change their situations. These pastors are probably from traditional, patriarchal backgrounds who believe that divorce is not an option. The participants’ belief that God will see them through brought them a lot of comfort. According to Barnett and LaViolet (1993), women turn to their spiritual advisers and to other members of their religious community for help and support but often they don’t receive the support they need. For battered woman, the quality of the assistance that is received can have life and death results. If a battered woman’s religious convictions lead her to believe that a wife is subordinate to the husband, that marriage is an unalterable life-time commitment or that suffering is the lot of the faithful, she is likely to stay in an abusive relationship much longer (Barnett & LaViolet, 1993). Religious beliefs can be a strong motivator in accepting violence in a woman’s life (James & Gilliland, 2013). In terms of Learned Helplessness her beliefs are that battering will happen and God will eventually help her, she does not have to do anything she remains passive waiting for change which is essentially a maladaptive behaviour. An active behaviour perhaps reporting the husband to the police or leaving is not seen as an option as the woman is unable to objectively assess her situation.

### **5.6.2 Denial and Avoidance**

Another reason that battered women remain with batterers is that they have learned to make numerous accommodations in their abusive relationships. A pre-requisite to learning how to live with an abusive person is finding a way of making the violence acceptable. The basic psychological defence mechanisms of rationalisation and denial help the woman achieve this goal (Barnett et al., 1997). According to Walker (2009), denial and avoidance are major techniques battered women use to avoid dealing with their situations. Sometimes, battered women keep themselves occupied in order to avoid thinking about their situations. They often

suppress their feelings to avoid becoming too excited or disappointed about things that used to have meaning for them. For example, the abusive husband's promises to change is considered in terms of Learned Hopefulness, no matter how long or how bad the abuse is the woman still hopes her partner will change. Five of the participants stated that they used avoidance as a way to minimise the abuse. They mentioned that it helped because when they kept quiet and keep out of their husband's way the abuse got better their partners were less abusive. They also mentioned that they kept themselves busy or occupied with house chores in order to avoid dealing with their situations. The participants also mentioned that they didn't think about the abuse all the time as it was "*too painful.*" The following responses support these assertions.

**Participant 1:** "*Well, these days when he starts making noise. I just keep quiet and do not say anything. During the weekends I spend most of my time in church when he is around. Avoiding him helps because I know I don't have to deal with him and his insults. It makes me feel a bit normal.*"

**Participant 3:** "*These days I keep quiet when I am at home, as long as my children have food to eat, it is okay. In this way there won't be any reason for him to fight with me, one day he will change.*"

**Participant 4:** "*I try to avoid him at all costs. These days when he starts insulting and calling me names, I just keep quiet. It helps because sometimes when I avoid him and do what he wants he does not beat me. If I don't do wrong things he won't beat me.*"

**Participant 6:** "*I avoid confronting him about the things he does or his whereabouts, I pay more attention to my children. I am tired of this fighting. Maybe if I'm quiet, as he wants, the abuse will stop.*"

**Participant 7:** "*I try not to think about it, most of the time [it is too painful] I just pretend like everything is alright at home, like nothing is going on. When I do this it doesn't hurt a lot and I don't take out my anger on my children.*"

### **5.6.3 Guilt and self-blame**

Battered women suffer from guilt and self-blame. Many battered women develop a sense of self blame, as do most victims of severe violence who cannot control it or the situation that causes it. They attempt to invest more in the relationship to make it work and blame themselves for its failure (Barnet & LaViolet; 1993; Jasinski & Williams, 1998; Wallace, 1997). Guilt occurs when a woman experiences a sense of almost constant failure and is not allowed to express her feelings or frustrations. Her inability to express her feelings leads to

anger. If there is no place for the battered woman to express her feelings, especially anger, she usually turns it on herself. This often becomes guilt and she feels guilty for almost any behaviour (Wilson, 2011). Five participant from the study indicated that they feel responsible for the abuse in their relationships. This point is reflected in the following responses.

**Participant 1:** “*Maybe there are things I do that I’m not supposed to be doing, maybe I need to be a better wife and be more submissive like my mother-in-law suggested.*”

**Participant 2:** “*I do not know what to do anymore. It seems as if I am not doing enough.*”

**Participant 4:** “*I think I need to be more patient with him and be a good wife. I’m also not perfect, I have my own faults..... If I don’t do wrong things he won’t beat me*”

**Participant 5:** “*I feel like I have failed as a woman and as a wife.*”

**Participant 6:** “*I must be doing something wrong, maybe I should respect him more.*”

#### **5.6.4 Distancing**

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), women who are battered often use distancing as a coping mechanism. Distancing is a way of detaching from the situation at hand it is also a way of making less of the violence or minimising it. The woman changes her cognitive representations and is thus able to remain in the situation but is unlikely to leave it. She is unable to think rationally and logically due to her biased cognitions as a result of distancing as a coping behaviour. The following responses from the women support this theme.

**Participant 1:** “*I spend time with other people because I don’t want to think about my problems at home.*”

**Participant 2:** “*When I’m in church I feel better and lighter, for a while I forget about my problems at home.*”

**Participant 4:** “*It’s hard but I try to ignore him at all costs, when he’s angry...it actually helps.*”

**Participant 6:** “*...I cope by keeping quiet...When you accept your situation and your problems the way they are you learn to live with them as part of everyday life.*”

**Participant 8:** “*I ignore the issue as if nothing is going on, I just pretend.*”

## **5.7 Factors that compel women to remain in an abusive relationship**

The following factors, which are placed into themes, were gathered out of data which emerged naturally out of the interviews as factors which compel women to remain in abusive relationships. In terms of the theory of Learned Helplessness

### **5.7.1 Cultural and social factors as reasons for compelling women to remain in abusive relationships**

According to Dobash and Dobash (1979), Tshesane, 2001 and UNICEF (2000), culture is part of socialisation just as socialisation is part of culture. In most traditional cultures women are taught to adhere to their husbands' dominance to show respect, which is commonly known as patriarchy. For example, in African culture women are expected not to talk back to their husbands or male partners and be subservient to them because they are assumed to be the head of the household. In more traditional societies, wife battering is largely regarded as a consequence of a man's right to inflict physical punishment on his wife for any and all perceived wrongdoings (Tshesane, 2001). Cultural justifications for violence usually follow from traditional notions of the proper roles of men and state that men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are valued in patriarchal societies namely aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination, men thus use physical force to enforce their will on their wives or female partners and children (Tshesane, 2001; UNICEF, 2000).

Women are also entrapped in abusive relationships due to their financial and emotional dependence on males. This dependence is fostered by cultural perceptions that inform women that it is moral to be dependent on their male partners. These perceptions are formed within the family of origin, which in turn are shaped by cultural values (Tshesane, 2001). The participants in the study have low educational levels and are, although some are working, mostly financially dependent on their husbands. This dependence can be seen as culturally learned behaviour, which adds to their Learned Helplessness, as women are taught in most African cultures that males are providers and head of the family. Some participants reported that their husbands believe that beating them is their right as the '*man of the house*' and it was a proper way of disciplining them.

**Participant 1:** "*He told me I'm a woman and have no say so he can do whatever he wants.*"

**Participant 2:** “*He told me that he’s the head of the family and I must do as he says.*”

**Participant 5:** [my husband told me that].....”*You don’t have respect and it seems as if you are forgetting your place as a wife. I will remind you that I’m the only man in this house.*”

**Participant 6:** “*He said, I’m your husband and I can do whatever I want with you.*”

**Participant 8:** “*He tells me over and over again that he’s the head of the family and I must show him some respect.*”

Traditional practices such as payment of lobola (bride-price) and polygamy are often synonymous with gender violence as they reduce women to sub-human assets belonging to men (Wadesanga, Rembe & Chabaya, 2011). For instance, lobola strips women of their individual rights and enshrouds domestic issues of couples with a veil of secrecy. When problems like violence arise, women believe it is a normal part of marriage and that if they complain, no one will listen. Some participants in the study mentioned that they remained with their abusive husbands because lobola has been paid for them and their families of origin were not willing to return the money. As a result the participants were sent back to their husbands when they went back home. This ensures that African women are given contextual information which ensures their submissiveness and hence their Learned Helplessness.

**Participant 1:** “*My parents spent his lobola money and it was a long time ago. If I go back home they will have return it and they don’t have that kind of money.*”

**Participant 3:** “*Lobola was paid for me and when I went back home to tell them about the abuse, they sent me back saying that since lobola has been paid I have to stay with him. He treats me like I’m his property, one of his possessions. At home they told me that I must stay in my marriage and try to make things work because I agreed to be married when he paid lobola.*”

**Participant 5:** “*He paid lobola for me and we had a ceremony in front of our families and friends. He thinks paying that lobola means that I am his property.*”

**Participant 6:** “*The day he paid lobola for me, I was given rules as to how to behave as a married woman, my family would be upset if I left my marriage and they told me that if I return I will be bring shame to the family name.*”

**Participant 8:** “*He paid lobola and at home I was told it means I’m his and he treats me that way. When you get married in our culture, you are told what and what not to do as a*

**woman and it's a woman's job to build the family. That makes things difficult since they paid lobola, I must stay and make him a home."**

### **5.7.2 Lack of social support as a factor that compels women to remain in abusive relationships**

The perceived lack of social support, both personal and social, tends to impede the battered women's attempts, in this study, to leave her abuser. According to Barnett and LaViolet (1993) battered women's decision may be affected by the fact that society offers them little help, especially for those who are unemployed or do not have homes. Keeling and Mason (2008) report that most battered women, who turn to family and friends for help, experience a general reluctance on the part of their families to interfere in the privacy of family life. Participants have indicated that they do not receive much support from their families, the payment of lobola being a major factor in this. This lack of social support from families could be seen as encouraging abuse. Lack of support from families could also be as a result of families of origin not encouraging their married daughters to return home because they do not have the finances to support them or do not wish to have additional people to clothe and feed (Personal Communication Dr N. Vawda 1.12.2014). In another study conducted by Ahmad et al. (2009) participants felt that their family and community expected a 'real' woman to remain silent about abuse and to maintain the marital bond as an obligation of good wives who they perceived to have a subordinate role to men. As the physical and psychological abuse continued, they reported the abuse to their families and the husband's families but were encouraged to stay. In the study conducted by the authors, participants felt that their family and community expected a *real* woman to remain silent about abuse and to maintain the marital bond as an obligation of good wives. A *good wife* is one who is perceived to have a subordinate role to men. Participants in the current study were advised or rather told to stay in their marriages and persevere, as lobola had been paid and/or it was the right thing to do in accordance with their religious views. These factors *buy into* the women experiencing Learned Helplessness. This is illustrated by the following responses.

**Participant 1:** "*The first time I told my mother - in - law that her son was abusing me, she said I must stop making him angry and behave myself and be submissive to my husband and he won't have a reason to hit me.*"

**Participant 3:** "*When I go back home and explain to them what is going on and the problems that I am facing in my marriage, my mother told me that marriage is full of hardships but I*

*have to persevere. My in-laws are not doing anything about it, they are aware of what he is doing to me but they just keep quiet as if they don't know what is going on. When there is a problem, they throw it back at me [as if it is my fault].”*

**Participant 4:** “*My parents – in - law do not want to get involved; maybe they are tired of the whole thing. The way they behave it seems as if they are blaming me for the fights going on at home. How am I supposed to feed when they say things like that? At home my parents passed away. The only people remaining are my brothers and there is nothing they can do nothing because they are so far away.”*

**Participant 6:** “*When I told my friends and family about my husband's abuse, they told me to stay strong and to respect him as the head of the family. I remember my father-in-law telling me to stop making him angry and everything will be fine. After all this, I decided to keep quiet about the abuse and I have learned to leave with it.*

However, the participants (participants: 1,4,5,6,7) who reported their cases to the police described the police as supportive and reliable, except for participant eight who was told that her document went missing when she was supposed to go to court. According to them the police were the ones who took them to the trauma centres for further assistance. They also reported that the trauma centre is helpful even though they can only accommodate them for a short period of time.

**Participant 1:** “*When I went to the police station I was assisted by a policewoman, she was very understanding and advised me to apply for a protection order. She also explained the importance of applying for it”*

**Participant 4:** “*The police were very helpful the first time I went there, after taking my statement, they even took me to the trauma centre where I spent the night.”*

**Participant 5:** “*At the police station they helped me a lot, even advised me to apply for a protection order.”*

**Participant 6:** “*Even though my husband is a cop, they were very understanding and did not try to take his side.”*

**Participant 7:** “*The police were the ones who took me to the trauma centre.”*

### **5.7.3 Staying because of the children as a factor in compelling women to remain in abusive relationships**

Six of the participants reported that a major factor for them remaining in the abusive relationship is because of their children. These mothers reported to taking care of their children without much help from their husbands or partners, but they felt that leaving their abusive relationships would not be good for their children. In terms of the theory of Learned Helplessness the women's maladaptive thinking and therefore reasoning does not allow them to be objective in considering the harm that listening and possibly seeing the effect their abuse has on the children. Those who were abused as children would also be unable to see the link between the abuse they watched their parents inflict on them or the abuse their father inflicted on their mothers and the abuse they endure. This is because the contextual information they have has taught them that this is normal, it happens in homes. It is often supported by religious bodies and families because of traditional, cultural and social misconceptions about religion, patriarchy and a husband's role in the household. Although participants 1,2,4,6,7 and 8 reported the negative effects of violence on their children (see Theme 6: 5.5.5) they still felt that fundamentally their children, "*need a father.*" The women have maladaptive cognitive functioning because their learned behaviours make them unable to objectively assess the situation which is a part of Learned Helplessness.

**Participant 1:** "*It's not that simple to pack your bags and go, there are lot of things involved, you have to think of the children.*"

**Participant 2:** "*I was told to keep the family together, so leaving means breaking it and I can't do that to my children, even though their father is abusive.*"

**Participant 4:** "*He is the father of my children and I want a home for them.*"

**Participant 6:** "*We have children together, so before taking a major decision like this one, I have to think about how it will affect them.*"

**Participant 7:** "*My children need a father in their lives and I can't deny them that.*"

**Participant 8:** "*Whenever I want to leave, I think of my kids. I don't want them to grow up without a father. I grew up with my mother and never really knew my father and I have always wanted to have a father in my life. I know what it is like to be without a father and I don't want the same for my children.*"

#### **5.7.4 Economic factors that impact on women staying in an abusive relationship.**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century many women, particularly single mothers work full time. However, there are still many women who stay at home and are economically dependent on their husbands. Some of the women interviewed did refer to finances which infer that even if they have their own income they still need their husband to help, others were financially dependent on their husbands. If they did not receive money for food it seemed that they struggled or felt they would lose all they had built up. It seems that some of the male partners use the children's grant money thus will not want to let their wives leave as they use that money to live on or supplement their own income. Essentially, the fact that the women stay can be seen as a part of Learned Helplessness as the women tell themselves they cannot manage without their husbands' financial help. This, in terms of Learned Helplessness, according to Wilson (2009) can be described as maladaptive behaviour and behaving in an active, rather than passive manner. On the other hand the male, because he wants to use the grant, may subject the woman to more abuse aimed at making the women submit to his desires which results in the following responses underpin this theme.

**Participant 1:** "*Another thing is the issue of money....sometimes he does not give me money to buy food.*"

**Participant 2:** "*He would just disappear without buying food for us and I had to make a plan so that my children could have food to eat.*"...."*We started from nothing, we built a home together, we struggled together....that is why I do not want to go back home, I would lose everything.*

**Participant 3:** "*Even when he is working I don't get money from him sometimes then we struggle.*"

**Participant 8:** "*I often don't get money from him I depend on grant money to survive and sometimes he demands the money saying it's our children so we must share the money.*

#### **5.8 Psychological factors that compel women to remain in abusive relationships**

The aim of the study was to explore psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. Psychological factors are determined as those which are not truly coping mechanisms and those which cannot be measured directly. The following are psychological factors, which are presented as themes, which emerged during the interview process.

### **5.8.1 Depression as a psychological factor in compelling women to remain in abusive relationships**

A noteworthy finding in the current study is that battered women are severely psychologically affected by the battering that they have to endure on a daily basis. This supports Walker's (2009) assertions in terms of BWS. Women who remain in abusive relationships experience high levels of psychological distress and often accept responsibility for being battered (Starburg, 2006; Walker, 2009). Battered women may experience the following symptoms: hyper-arousal, high levels of anxiety, avoidance behaviour(s) and emotional numbing which may be expressed as depression (Hansen & Harway, 1993; Walker, 2009). All the participants in the study indicated that the physical and psychological abuse affected them emotionally. They also indicated that they feel powerless to stop the abuse. A study by Campbell (2002) indicates that depression is the most predominant mental health problem linked to woman abuse. According to Calvete et al. (2006), women experience high dependence on their abusive partners as they think that they lack the necessary personal resources to live independently. Thinking, in this maladaptive manner according to the theory of Learned Helplessness, increases the risk of lack of objectivity, feelings of worthlessness which ultimately results in the development of depression. In the current study, participants' responses point to the fact that they avoid their partners and do not express anger for fear of infuriating the situation. This is supported by Hansen and Harway (1993) and Walker (2009). They argue that expressing anger towards the batterer may have the effect of increasing the violence. Battered women repress the intense anger experienced in response to a beating and present as depressed, which has a greater survival value in terms of their everyday lives. During the interview process, participants' statements indicate that they were depressed as a result of their abusive relationships. They indicated both psychological (for instance, not wanting to talk to people) and physical indicators of depression (for instance, not eating for a week), this is illustrated in the following responses which are indicators of depression according to Beck, Steer and Brown (1996).

**Participant 1:** *"Before all this I used to be happy, right now things are different. Sometimes I lock myself in my room not wanting to talk to anyone. This other time I spent a week without eating."*

**Participant 2:** *"I have lost a lot of weight. This is not my body size. I used to be a plus size but now am wearing size 34 and 32."*

**Participant 4:** “What is happening to my marriage is very painful and I feel powerless to stop it. Now I am suffering from high blood pressure because of him. I was once admitted to hospital because of stress, I feel sad all the time.”

**Participant 5:** “I cry very easily these days. When someone shouts at me, even at work I become so jumpy and scared. I don’t like what is going on in my life but I have no control over this situation.”

**Participant 6:** “It hurts a lot. The way he treats me is painful to be honest. I have blood pressure problems and am taking medication for it and sometimes I take sleeping pills. I want to sleep a lot.”

**Participant 8:** “Sometimes I take my anger out on other people without even being aware and the painful part is I sometimes do it to my children. It gets too much sometimes. I wonder if it is worth it [living].”

### **5.8.2 Relationship hope and commitment as psychological factors that compel women to remain in abusive relationships**

Barnet et al. (1997) posit that another reason battered women remain in abusive relationships is to honour their relationship commitment. Battered women often feel bound to their abusive partners or may want to protect their children and parents. They may worry that if they leave the relationship they will not be able to find a new partner. According to Roberts (2007) attachment and commitment to the abuser and the relationship often makes it difficult for the woman in taking the steps necessary in relation to leaving or seeking help. According to Moore (1979) a very important reason why battered woman chooses to stay with her partner is a combination of hope and love. This is also supported by a recent study by Collins, Jordan and Coleman (2010) who report that battered women often remain in an abusive relationship because of the expectation that their abusive partners will change their behaviour. Walker (2009) points out that it is important to recognise how the cycle of violence leads to the woman’s hope that her partner will change, since he tells her after each beating how sorry he is, and how he intends to change. The author notes that there is no doubt that all women want the violence to stop but many do not want the relationship to end. Abusive partner’s promises to change and intermittent violence (both psychological and physical) reinforce the battered woman’s hope that the abuse will end. This optimism is further reinforced by the partner’s intermittent kindness and love after a battering incidence (Collins, Jordan & Coleman, 2010; Sanchez, 2007). Participants’ responses show that they are committed to their marriages and will stay no matter what to make things work. They have expressed undying hope, which can

be considered a psychological factor, as it cannot be directly measured, that their husbands will change and stop the violence. This point is illustrated in the following statements.

**Participant 1:** “*My mother told me, my child once you get married it means you have to stay for better or worse. Marriage is difficult, I just have to endure, and it comes with hardships so I guess this is one of them.... I have to think of the years I have invested in the relationship. I do hope that someday he is going to change and the abuse will end because he was not like this before.*”

**Participant 2:** “*We started from nothing, we have built a home together, we struggled together and that is why I do not want to go back home. I believe that things will change [he will change], one day all of this will be over.*”

**Participant 3:** “*One day he will change and be a good husband and father to his children. I believe and pray that it will happen*”

**Participant 4:** “*He is the father of my children despite our fights, I do love him and I believe at some point the fighting will end.*”

**Participant 5:** “*When I look back, I ask myself if I really want to leave it all behind.*”

**Participant 6:** “*He was a good man before and I do hope that someday that man will come back, people change.*”

**Participant 7:** “*I believe it will all end. I just have to give it time and be patient with him. He will change his behaviour.*”

The woman is often aware of the discrepancy between her actual marital relationship and her ideal relationship however, she has come to believe that she should tolerate the abuse through thick and thin (Towns, 2000). This belief can be considered both a coping mechanism and a psychological factor in determining that she remains in the relationship. It is also a factor in Learned Helplessness as she does not recognise that her partner is unlikely to change and has hope, despite his abuse, which is illogical or maladaptive. She also believes, illogically, that she thinks her husband is doing the *best he can for her*.

### **5.8.3 Cognitive dissonance as a psychological factor compelling women to remain in abusive relationships**

Another theme that emerged from the data as a psychological factor compelling battered women to remain in abusive relationships is cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual experiences discrepancies between their actions and attitudes. An

individual experiencing dissonance will make any attempt necessary to reduce or prevent the psychological discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance whether it is through modifying her attitudes or avoiding situations that may lead to increased dissonance (Dare, Guadagno & Muscanell, 2013). If a battered woman believes she has married charming, caring man but then he goes on to control, manipulate and abuse her it is extremely confusing. Staying with an abusive partner causes the woman to have feelings of discomfort and disharmony because her thoughts and beliefs about the man's abusive behaviour don't match her previous knowledge of him and her behaviour in remaining with him. However, with cognitive dissonance individual's find ways of reconciling the discrepancy between their thoughts and their actions (Dare et al., 2013). Participants in the study all showed cognitive dissonance as what they know to be true (the abuse) is not fully admitted to self. They attempt to modify their true beliefs and actual knowledge, importance or value of their beliefs about their partners and reconcile that with what they believe were the wonderful men they used to know. This supports the theory of Learned Helplessness in that the women are unable to think objectively about the situation and have maladaptive cognitions and responses to the situation. Cognitive dissonance is likely to be a causal influence in the depression they feel as they are trying, in effect, to psychologically justify the unjustifiable. The following responses illustrate this point.

**Participant 1:** “*No marriage is perfect. There are times for things like this [that is, the abuse].*”

**Participant 3:** “*It's hard, especially when he blames me for the abuse. I started to believe him and think I should do things differently. If I do it can work.*”

**Participant 4:** “*I think I can make the relationship work. I can make it work and I can't just give up as things will change.*”

**Participant 5:** “*I've put up with the abuse for so long, because he's not always this bad, sometimes he can be nice and a good husband, then it is okay.*”

**Participant 6:** “*The man that I married is still there, he'll come back someday, and he's a good man when he wants to be.*”

#### **5.8.4 Low self-esteem as a psychological factor that compel women to remain in abusive relationships**

Self-esteem is the degree to which individuals see themselves as important and valuable. It is a fundamental belief in self as worthy of respect, love and fair treatment from others

(Kirkwood, 1993). Low self-esteem can be the result of battering. The battered women in the study indicated that they need their partners in order to survive, even though some do not receive much financial support from their spouses. When a battered woman's self-esteem is eroded and weakened, she tends to believe that she deserves to be battered because she is a failure or that she asked for it (Jasinski & Williams, 1998; Tracy, 2007). According to Wilson (2011) low self-esteem in battered women occurs through constant devaluing and shaming by their partners. The women believe that their partner is right and that they are inadequate in every aspect of their lives (Wilson, 2011). Battering by an intimate partner lowers self-esteem by creating, or adding to, a sense of personal inadequacy. The degradation, isolation and objectification battered women experience over time fundamentally convinces them that they are worthless (Barnett et al., 1997; Kirkwood, 1993). The participants' responses indicate that, because of the abuse they have endured through the years, they have low self-esteem and a sense of inadequacy, because of this fear being alone and remain in their abusive relationships. The woman has learned that staying in abusive relationships is normative (from information received cognitively during her childhood) and often feels that she is part of the problem which she cannot leave because of cultural factors (lobola) and the need for a father for her children which lends to her Learned Helplessness and low self-esteem. This is indicated in the following responses.

**Participant 2:** "*I do not want to start another relationship because it is not good, today you are with this person and tomorrow it's someone else. I don't think I can find someone else.*"

**Participant 3:** "*Even if I can leave, where am I going to find another partner? Most men my age have their own families.*"

**Participant 5** "*I'm not getting any younger, starting a new life is not simple. It's easy for people from outside to judge and gossip about you but those who are in the same situation as me understand.*"

**Participant 6:** "*Back at home they call you the 'returned soldier' when you have a failed marriage so you can imagine how hard life will be. I don't think I can leave and be on my own.*"

**Participant 7:** "*I don't think I can have a good life outside marriage, I just cannot leave him [without him I am nothing].*"

**Participant 8:** "*I don't trust or believe in myself anymore.*"

## **5.9 Summary**

The chapter presented an analysis of the themes that emerged during data analysis and discussion of the themes in relation to relevant research. Biographical information of participants and their experiences of abuse were discussed. Battered women in the current study used religion, denial and avoidance, guilt and self-blame as coping mechanisms. Cultural and social factors, lack of social support and staying because of the children were identified as factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. The aim of the study was to explore the psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships, depression, relationship hope and commitment, cognitive dissonance and low self-esteem were presented as psychological factors, which emerged during the interview process. Findings of the current study relate how battered women are psychologically affected by the battering they experience in their relationships. The following chapter will address the conclusion of the current study.

## **CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS, METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The results from the study highlighted various factors that contribute to battered women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships. Chapter 6 presents the research conclusion and also reports the methodological limitations and strengths of the study. Recommendations resulting arising out of the research findings are also presented.

### **6.2 Research conclusions**

The current study found that battered women in the study started to experience abuse within five years of their marriage or cohabitation with their partners. The abuse was both psychological and physical and in some cases sexual, especially after a battering episode. Alcohol use and infidelity were both quoted as the cause of the abuse they were experiencing or subjected to. The participants understood that both physical and psychological abuse were abusive behaviours but, although some reported physical abuse, still stayed in the relationships. This may be because of denial and not willing to acknowledge the psychological and physical abuse as woman battering. Some battered women in the study took action and reported the abuse to the police but withdrew the cases and stayed with their partners. This is very likely a result of Learned Hopefulness as the women hope that their partners will change and stop the abuse although they had no basis for this belief. This irrational thinking is an element of Learned Helplessness.

Cultural ideologies whereby a woman is raised to be submissive and not to question the authority of her husband also had an influence on the way the participants saw themselves in their abusive relationships. Traditional African patriarchal and tribal values had a great influence on their behaviour. They felt guilty and blamed themselves for the abuse and some believed that violence is part of marriage, as they had witnessed abuse of their mothers by their fathers. Participants who witnessed or experienced violence as children see violence as a norm hence they are able to tolerate and rationalise it. The results of the study show that participants were aware of the negative effect that the abuse had on their children but regardless of this they still remained in the abusive relationships because they felt that their children need a father. Regardless of their childhood experiences of abuse they were unable to see the link between their own experiences, the abuse they endure with the effect it has on

their children. This is a result of learned behaviour. The women have maladaptive cognitive functioning because their learned behaviour makes them unable to objectively assess the situation which is part of Learned Helplessness. The battered women in the study also have low educational qualifications. Some were unemployed and were financially dependent on their husbands and could not see any way of coping without their partners. This can also be seen as culturally learned behaviour as in traditional patriarchal African culture men are seen as providers of the family. This adds to their Learned Helplessness.

Battered women in the study used different coping mechanisms to cope with the abuse. Most came from religious Christian backgrounds and prayer was used as a way of coping which they stated *kept them going*. This made them accept abuse as part of their relationship which also caused them to be passive (as in not taking action) because they were waiting for their partners to change. Avoidance and distancing are other coping mechanisms that were used. The women kept themselves busy and occupied themselves with other things in order to avoid dealing with the abuse they were experiencing. Suppressing their feelings and not thinking about the abuse made it less painful. The participants also indicated that they felt guilty and blamed themselves. This can be the result of the suppressed feelings and their failed attempts to make the relationship work which is also supports the theory of Learned Helplessness.

The study revealed various factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships. It shows that cultural factors play an important role in the women's decision to remain with their abusive partners. In African cultures males are seen as providers of the family and women are expected to be compliant. As a result women in the study adhered to the cultural standards and their partners used this as an excuse to inflict physical punishment on them. This tolerance of abuse by participants was also, as noted, due to the fact that the majority witnessed and experienced abuse as children (63%). The participants' support system also played role in this regard, they lacked sufficient support systems from their friends and family and were encouraged to remain in their marriages and endure the abuse. Payment of lobola also had an effect on battered women in the study. The women tended to remain with their partners because lobola has been paid and their husbands saw their wives as their property and had a right to do whatever they want with them. This was underpinned by participants' families who encouraged their daughters and/or sisters to stay in their abusive

relationships as they were told it was *the right thing to do* as lobola had been paid and it was the correct thing to do in accordance with their cultural and/or religious beliefs.

A key finding in the current study is that participants were severely psychological affected by the battering that they experience. They indicated that the abuse affected them emotionally and they felt powerless to stop the abuse. Depression was a consequence of this and this caused them to think in maladaptive way in terms of Learned Helplessness. They also avoided dealing directly with their situations by avoiding their partners and suppressing their feelings of anger. Regardless of their experiences, participants were committed to their marriages and wanted things to work out for the better. They expressed undying hope that someday their partners will change and stop the violence despite the years of abuse they experienced. This is also influenced by their partners' promises to change after a battering episode (cycle of violence). This is also an element of Learned Helplessness because they do not acknowledge the fact that their partners are unlikely to change.

Cognitive dissonance is another important psychological factor the emerged from the study results. Before the abuse, participants described their partners as caring and loving but once the abuse started it resulted in confusion and at the same time they tried to justify their husbands' abusive behaviour. Participants' beliefs regarding their partners' behaviour(s) did not match up with reality, that is, what they were experiencing in their abusive relationships. This caused them psychological stress and discomfort. However, the cognitive dissonance they experienced did not allow them to fully understand that the wonderful men they married were now abusive, domineering thugs. Cognitive dissonance also adds to psychological illnesses such as depression as the women are unable to process what they believe from the reality they experience. The study participants also indicated that that many of them felt that they could not continue without their partners. Some also believed that should they leave their abusive relationships they will be unable to find love. This is indicative of low self-esteem and no confidence which is a result of years of battering. Their partners' degrading remarks and abusive treatment has worn these women down. Fundamentally, they believe that they deserve to be battered. Their low self-esteem causes them to think irrationally (cultural factors also play a role), make them feel that they are the problem or that they are not doing enough as wives which leads them to behave in a manner consistent with Learned Helplessness.

### **6.3 Research limitations**

- The sample consisted of eight participants, as a result, the researcher cannot generalise the results of the study because it is not a representative of the whole population under study.
- The study was conducted in a rural area therefore the findings of the study may not be applicable to battered women in urban areas.
- The results are based on the experiences of the participants and what was discussed during data collection. Some participants may not have been completely open during the interviews and could have withheld some of their experiences.
- Bias, the researcher had her own opinion with regard to the subject under study, however, precautions were taken to minimize this bias (See 4.8).

### **6.4 Research Strengths**

The strengths of the current are as follows:

- The researcher used the participants' language of preference and the interviews were entirely voluntary.
- The researcher used a qualitative research method, as a result, the participants were able to provide rich information based on their experiences.
- Constant communication with the supervisor helped with interpretations and other alternatives were considered in order to prevent bias.
- Although the sample was small, as is usual with qualitative studies, the participants all attended a clinic which dealt with women abuse thus although experiences cannot be generalised it is likely that many African women in this community experience similar types of abuse.

### **6.5 Research recommendations**

Recommendations arising out of the research are:

- It is recommended that the mental health service providers including nurses, counsellors, social workers and psychologists help with the development of referral networks and community resources for battered women and their families especially the children. Children of battered women who choose to remain in abusive relationships must be provided with psycho-social support, this will help them cope with their circumstances. Educational programmes and workshops on women

battering should be provided to empower women. Development of support groups can help battered women explore some of the challenges and help put things into perspective. This should especially target women in rural areas. Mental health services should also include identifying battered women's strengths, these can help them resist attack and maintain survival and personal growth.

- It is recommended that government services and non-government organisation fund and support communities, trauma centres and clinics to run programmes and campaigns to raise awareness regarding women battering. Non-government organisations such as POWA, Sonke Gender Justice should continue doing their campaigns and working with violence against women, this should also target women in rural areas.
- The results of the study indicated that culture plays a role in women abuse. It is recommended that on a societal level, society reinforce gender equality and to change stereotypes regarding the role of women in families and community. Society needs to focus on empowering women and changing these sex roles. This can be carried out by government and non-governmental organisation campaigns/workshops on African culture and the role of the woman.
- Literature and the results of the current study reveal that misinterpretation of biblical teachings plays an important role in women battering. It is recommended that churches provide helpful resources on domestic violence through sermons, prayers and pastoral care.

## **6.6 Recommendations for future research**

It is recommended that future research focus on the following:

- The availability of referral networks for battered women, especially in rural communities
- The strengths of battered women and how women can utilise them when leaving abusive relationships
- And the effectiveness of domestic violence legislation in helping battered women

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## **Appendix A: SCRIPTURES DEPICTING WOMAN ABUSE**

1. Dinah (Genesis 34)-‘One day, Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. 2 But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. 3 But then he fell in love with her and tried to win her affection with tender words. 4 He said to his father, “get me this girl I want to marry her”
2. Tamar (2 Samuel 13)-...14. But Amnon wouldn’t listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her. 15. Then suddenly Amnon love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. “Get out of here” he snarled at her
3. Levite’s concubine (Judges 19)-23. ‘Here take my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. I will bring them out to you, and you can abuse them and do whatever you like.....25. But they wouldn’t listen to him. So the Levite took hold of his concubine and pushed her out of the door. The men of the town abused her all night taking turns raping her until morning. Finally at dawn they let her go. 27. When her husband opened the door to leave, there lay his concubine with her hands on the threshold. 28. He said ‘get up! Let’s go’ but there was no answer. So he put her body on his donkey and took her home. 29. When he got home he took a knife and cut his concubine’s body into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each tribe throughout all the territory of Israel.
4. Jephthah’s daughter (Judges 11)-30. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. He said ‘if you give me victory over the Ammonites, I will give the Lord whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering’ 34. When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him, playing on tambourine and dancing for joy. She was his one and only child, he had no other sons or daughters. 35. When he saw her, he tore his clothes in anguish. ‘Oh, my daughter’, he cried out, ‘you have completely destroyed me you’ve brought disaster on me! For I have made a woe to the Lord, and cannot take it back’
5. Vashti (Esther 1)-10.....when king Xerxes was in high spirits because of the wine, he told the seven eunuchs who attended him.....11. To bring queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze at her beauty, as she was a beautiful woman. 12. But when they conveyed the king’s order to queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious and he burned with anger. 13. He immediately consulted with his wise advisors.....16. Memucan

answered the king and his nobles, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but every noble and citizen throughout your empire. 17. Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king.....19. it should be ordered that queen Vashti be forever banished from the presence of king Xerxes and that the king should choose another queen worthy than she’

6. Persistent widow (Luke 18)-2. There was a judge in a certain city, he said, ‘who neither feared God nor cared for the people. 3. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, 5. ‘But this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice because she is wearing me out with her constant requests’

## **Appendix B: DSM-IV AND V**

### **Diagnostic Criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder: DSM-IV**

- A. There is a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others occurring since age 15 years, as indicated by three (or more) of the following:
  - 1. Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviours as indicated by repeatedly performing acts that are grounds for arrest
  - 2. Deceitfulness, as indicated by repeated lying, use of aliases, or conning others for personal profit or pleasure
  - 3. Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead
  - 4. Irritability and aggressiveness, as indicated by repeated physical fights or assaults
  - 5. Reckless disregard for safety of self and others
  - 6. Consistent irresponsibility, as indicated by repeated failure to sustain consistent work behaviour or honor financial obligation
  - 7. Lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another
- B. The individual is at least age 18 years
- C. There is evidence of conduct disorder with onset before age 15 years
- D. The occurrence of antisocial behaviour is not exclusively during the course of Schizophrenia or a Manic Episode

### **DSM-V: Antisocial Personality Disorder**

The essential features of a personality disorder are impairments in personality (self and interpersonal) functioning and the presence of pathological personality traits. To diagnose antisocial personality disorder, the following criteria must be met:

A. Significant impairments in personality functioning manifest by:

- 1. Impairments in self functioning (a or b):
  - a. Identity: Ego-centrism; self-esteem derived from personal gain, power, or pleasure.
  - b. Self-direction: Goal-setting based on personal gratification; absence of pro social internal standards associated with failure to conform to lawful or culturally normative ethical behaviour.

AND

- 2. Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):

a. Empathy: Lack of concern for feelings, needs, or suffering of others; lack of remorse after hurting or mistreating another.

b. Intimacy: Incapacity for mutually intimate relationships, as exploitation is a primary means of relating to others, including by deceit and coercion; use of dominance or intimidation to control others.

B. Pathological personality traits in the following domains:

1. Antagonism, characterized by:

- a. Manipulativeness: Frequent use of subterfuge to influence or control others; use of seduction, charm, glibness, or ingratiation to achieve one's ends.
- b. Deceitfulness: Dishonesty and fraudulence; misrepresentation of self; embellishment or fabrication when relating events.
- c. Callousness: Lack of concern for feelings or problems of others; lack of guilt or remorse about the negative or harmful effects of one's actions on others; aggression; sadism.
- d. Hostility: Persistent or frequent angry feelings; anger or irritability in response to minor slights and insults; mean, nasty, or vengeful behaviour.

2. Disinhibition, characterized by:

- a. Irresponsibility: Disregard for – and failure to honor – financial and other obligations or commitments; lack of respect for – and lack of follow through on – agreements and promises.
- b. Impulsivity: Acting on the spur of the moment in response to immediate stimuli; acting on a momentary basis without a plan or consideration of outcomes; difficulty establishing and following plans.
- c. Risk taking: Engagement in dangerous, risky, and potentially self-damaging activities, unnecessarily and without regard for consequences; boredom proneness and thoughtless initiation of activities to counter boredom; lack of concern for one's limitations and denial of the reality of personal danger

C. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are relatively stable across time and consistent across situations.

D. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not better understood as normative for the individual's developmental stage or socio-cultural environment.

- E. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not solely due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe head trauma).
- F. The individual is at least age 18 years.

### **Diagnostic Criteria for Borderline Personality disorder: DSM-IV**

A pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

1. Frantic efforts to avoid real and imagined abandonment. Note: Do not include suicidal and self-mutilation behaviour covered in Criterion 5
2. A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterised by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation
3. Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self
4. Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-demanding (e.g. spending, sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, binge eating) Note: Do not include suicidal and self-mutilating behaviour covered in Criterion 5
5. Recurrent suicidal behaviour, gestures, or threats, or self-mutilating behaviour
6. Affective instability due to marked reactivity of mood (e.g. intense episodic dysphoria, irritability, or anxiety usually lasting a few hours and only rarely more than a few days)
7. Chronic feelings of emptiness
8. Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger (e.g. frequent display of temper, constant anger, recurrent physical fights)
9. Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms

### **DSM-V: Borderline Personality Disorder**

The essential feature of a personality disorder are impairments in personality (self and interpersonal) functioning and the presence of pathological personality traits. To diagnose borderline personality disorder, the following criteria must be met:

A. Significant impairments in personality functioning manifest by:

1. Impairments in self functioning (a or b):

- a. Identity: Markedly impoverished, poorly developed, or unstable self-image, often associated with excessive self-criticism; chronic feelings of emptiness; dissociative states under stress.
- b. Self-direction: Instability in goals, aspirations, values, or career plans.

AND

2. Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):

- a. Empathy: Compromised ability to recognize the feelings and needs of others associated with interpersonal hypersensitivity (i.e., prone to feel slighted or insulted); perceptions of others selectively biased toward negative attributes or vulnerabilities.
- b. Intimacy: Intense, unstable, and conflicted close relationships, marked by mistrust, neediness, and anxious preoccupation with real or imagined abandonment; close relationships often viewed in extremes of idealization and devaluation and alternating between over involvement and withdrawal.

B. Pathological personality traits in the following domains:

1. Negative Affectivity, characterized by:

- a. Emotional lability: Unstable emotional experiences and frequent mood changes; emotions that are easily aroused, intense, and/or out of proportion to events and circumstances.
- b. Anxiousness: Intense feelings of nervousness, tenseness, or panic, often in reaction to interpersonal stresses; worry about the negative effects of past unpleasant experiences and future negative possibilities; feeling fearful, apprehensive, or threatened by uncertainty; fears of falling apart or losing control.
- c. Separation insecurity: Fears of rejection by – and/or separation from – significant others, associated with fears of excessive dependency and complete loss of autonomy.
- d. Depressivity: Frequent feelings of being down, miserable, and/or hopeless; difficulty recovering from such moods; pessimism about the future; pervasive shame; feeling of inferior self-worth; thoughts of suicide and suicidal behaviour.

2. Disinhibition, characterized by:

- a. Impulsivity: Acting on the spur of the moment in response to immediate stimuli; acting on a momentary basis without a plan or consideration of outcomes; difficulty establishing or following plans; a sense of urgency and self-harming behaviour under emotional distress.

- b. Risk taking: Engagement in dangerous, risky, and potentially self-damaging activities, unnecessarily and without regard to consequences; lack of concern for one's limitations and denial of the reality of personal danger.
- 3. Antagonism, characterized by:
  - a. Hostility: Persistent or frequent angry feelings; anger or irritability in response to minor slights and insults.
- C. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are relatively stable across time and consistent across situations.
- D. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not better understood as normative for the individual's developmental stage or socio-cultural environment.
- E. The impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality trait expression are not solely due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe head trauma)

### **Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD: DSM-V**

#### **Criterion A: stressor**

The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (one required)

1. Direct exposure.
2. Witnessing, in person.
3. Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actual or threatened death, it must have been violent or accidental.
4. Repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the event(s), usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, collecting body parts; professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse). This does not include indirect non-professional exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures.

#### **Criterion B: intrusion symptoms**

The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in the following way(s): (**one required**)

1. Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive memories. Note: Children older than six may express this symptom in repetitive play.
2. Traumatic nightmares. Note: Children may have frightening dreams without content related to the trauma(s).

3. Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) which may occur on a continuum from brief episodes to complete loss of consciousness. Note: Children may re-enact the event in play.
4. Intense or prolonged distress after exposure to traumatic reminders.
5. Marked physiologic reactivity after exposure to trauma-related stimuli.

**Criterion C:** avoidance

Persistent effortful avoidance of distressing trauma-related stimuli after the event: (one required)

1. Trauma-related thoughts or feelings.
2. Trauma-related external reminders (e.g., people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations).

**Criterion D:** negative alterations in cognitions and mood

Negative alterations in cognitions and mood that began or worsened after the traumatic event: (two required)

1. Inability to recall key features of the traumatic event (usually dissociative amnesia; not due to head injury, alcohol, or drugs).
2. Persistent (and often distorted) negative beliefs and expectations about oneself or the world (e.g., "I am bad," "The world is completely dangerous").
3. Persistent distorted blame of self or others for causing the traumatic event or for resulting consequences.
4. Persistent negative trauma-related emotions (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame).
5. Markedly diminished interest in (pre-traumatic) significant activities.
6. Feeling alienated from others (e.g., detachment or estrangement).
7. Constricted affect: persistent inability to experience positive emotions.

**Criterion E:** alterations in arousal and reactivity

Trauma-related alterations in arousal and reactivity that began or worsened after the traumatic event: (two required)

1. Irritable or aggressive behaviour
2. Self-destructive or reckless behaviour
3. Hyper vigilance
4. Exaggerated startle response
5. Problems in concentration
6. Sleep disturbance

**Criterion F:** duration

Persistence of symptoms (in Criteria B, C, D, and E) for more than one month

**Criterion G:** functional significance

Significant symptom-related distress or functional impairment (e.g., social, occupational)

**Criterion H:** exclusion Disturbance is not due to medication, substance use, or other illness

*Specify if:* with dissociative symptoms

In addition to meeting criteria for diagnosis, an individual experiences high levels of either of the following in reaction to trauma-related stimuli:

1. Depersonalization: experience of being an outside observer of or detached from oneself (e.g., feeling as if "this is not happening to me" or one were in a dream).
2. Derealisation: experience of unreality, distance, or distortion (e.g., "things are not real").

*Specify if:* With delayed expression.

Full diagnosis is not met until at least six months after the trauma(s), although onset of symptoms may occur immediately

## **Appendix C: SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**TITLE: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.**

### **A. Demographic type questions**

1. How old are you?
2. Marital status of abusive relationship Married/co-habiting
3. How long have you been married or living (cohabiting) with your partner?
4. What is your highest qualification?
5. How many children do you have with your partner?

### **B. Basic and discussion questions – Probing may be required to “explore” the answers the participant gives**

- What do you understand as physical abuse?
- What do you understand as psychological abuse?
- When did you start experiencing abuse in your relationship?
- Is the abuse physical or psychological? Please explain.
- What do you think are the reasons or cause of the abuse?
- Why do you think this is happening to you?
- Please tell me how it makes you feel?
- What are the reasons for your staying in this relationship?
- How do you cope with the abuse?
- Have you ever reported the abuse to the police (here follow up questions such as: Did you withdraw the case? And/or further probing will likely be required).
- Have you tried to leave your partner before? (if yes, what happened, if no, why not).
- How do you see yourself in this relationship?
- Do you think the abuse will ever end?
- How has the abuse affected or change your life?
- How has the abuse affected your children?

**SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE-Translated interview guide (Xitsonga)**

**TITLE: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.**

**A. Demographic type questions**

1. Mina malembe mangani?
2. Mitekiwile kumbe mi tsama swinwe na munhu wa nwina minga lovoriwangi?
3. Mina malembe mangani mi tekiwile kumbe mi tshama na nuna wa nwina?
4. Mifike kwihi hi tidyondzo ta nwina?
5. Mina vana vangani?

**B. Basic and discussion questions – Probing may be required to “explore” the answers the participant gives**

1. Mitwisia yini hi ntshikelelo wa mirhi?
2. Mitwisia yini hi ntshikelelo wa miehleketo?
3. Mhaka ya ntshikelelo yi sungule rini?
4. Nuna wa nwina umi ntshikelelo hi ndlela yihi?
5. Miehleketa ku i yini leswi endlaka leswaku nuna wa nwina a mi ntshikelelo?
6. Miehleketa ku i yini leswi endlaku leswaku mhaka leyi yihumelela eka nwina?
7. Ni kombela mini hlamusela leswaku swi mi endla miti twa njani?
8. Swivangelo swaleswaku mi tikuma mahatshamile eka vukati lebyi i yini?
9. Mihanya njani na mhaka leyi ya ntshikelelo?
10. Mitshama miya pota mhaka leyi a maphoriseni xana?
11. Mitshama mi ringeta ku hamba na nuna wa n'wina hikwalaho ka mhaka leya ntshikelelo xana?
12. Miti vona njani nwina eka vuxaka bya nwina na nuna wa nwina?
13. Mihleketa leswaku ntshikelelo lowu wuta hela xana?
14. Ntshikelelo lowu wucince njani vutomi by anwina?
15. Vana vanwina vona wuva cincise kuyini ntshikelelo lowu?

## **Appendix D: Consent form**

Date: 19 July 2012

### **FORM B – PART I**

**PROJECT TITLE:** An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.

**PROJECT LEADER:** Ms Dainah Shivambu

#### **DECLARATION**

I, the signatory, hereby apply for approval to conduct research described in the attached research proposal and declare that:

1. I am fully aware of the guidelines and regulations for ethical research and that I will abide by these guidelines and regulations as set out in documents (available from the Secretary of the Ethics Committee); and
2. I undertake to provide every person who participates in this research project with the relevant information in Part III. Every participant will be requested to sign Part IV.

**Name of Researcher:** Tivani Dainah Shivambu

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** 19 July 2013

---

#### **For Official use by the Ethics Committee:**

Approved/Not approved

Remarks: .....

.....

.....

.....

Signature of Chairperson: .....

Date: .....

## **FORM B - PART II**

**PROJECT TITLE: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province**

**PROJECT LEADER: Ms Dainah Shivambu**

Protocol for conducting research using human participants

1. Department: Department of Psychology
2. Title of project: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province
3. Full name, surname and qualifications of project leader:

Professor Kathryn Nel- Registered Counselling Psychologist PhD Psychology.

4. List the name(s) of all persons (Researchers and Technical Staff) involved with the project and identify their role(s) in the conduct of the experiment:

Name:	Qualifications:	Responsible for:
<b>DainahShivambu</b>	<b>BA (Honours) Psychology</b>	<b>Principal researcher</b>

5. Name and address of principal researcher: Tivani Dainah Shivambu. Box 86, Valdezia, 0935.
6. Procedures to be followed: Participants will be informed about the nature, significance and relevance of the study and will be asked to sign a consent form.
7. Nature of discomfort: The research may hold some psychological risks, e.g. feeling depressed after the interview.
8. Description of the advantages that may be expected from the results of the study: Battered women will be able to better understand the positions they find themselves in. The results of the study will help guide future research regarding areas that still need to be explored on the subject.

Signature of Project Leader:.....

Date:.....

## PART II

### INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

**PROJECT TITLE:** An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province

**PROJECT LEADER:** Ms Dainah Shivambu

1. You are invited to participate in the following research project: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province
2. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project (without providing any reasons) at any time.
3. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project, although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the project might prove advantageous to others.
4. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader and her/his staff will gladly answer your question. They will also discuss the project in detail with you.
5. During the interview, a tape recorder will be used to record the conversation between you and the researcher. Notes will also be taken. These recordings will not be used for any purposes other than this research study.
6. It may be that you feel discomfort when discussing the abuse you have experienced. However, I will ensure that this is discussed properly with you and if you do find that you have any problems (such as bad dreams or feeling depressed). After our interview I will ensure that you have a proper referral to a counsellor/psychologist. The advantage of talking to me will be that you may be able to understand the position you are in. The research may also help others in the same position as well.
7. Should you at any stage feel unhappy, uncomfortable or is concerned about the research, please contact Ms Noko Shai-Ragoboya at the University of Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, tel: 015 268 2401.

## **PART IV**

### **CONSENT FORM**

**PROJECT TITLE:** An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province

**PROJECT LEADER:** Ms Dainah Shivambu

I, hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following project: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province

I realise that:

1. The study deals with how psychological and/or physical abuse affects the psychological state of battered women
2. The procedure or treatment envisaged may hold some risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage.
3. The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.
4. The research project, i.e. the extent, aims and methods of the research, has been explained to me.
5. The project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research, an explanation of the anticipated advantages for myself or others that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.
6. I understand that a tape recorder will be used to record conversations during the interview.
7. I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation.
8. Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.
9. Any questions that I may have regarding the research, or related matters, will be answered by the researcher/s.
10. If I have any questions about, or problems regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact a member of the research team or Ms Noko Shai-

Ragoboya.

11. Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.
12. If any medical problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person and/or I will be referred to my doctor.
13. I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHED PERSON

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

SIGNATURE OF PERSON THAT INFORMED

SIGNATURE

OF

PARENT/GUARDIAN

THE RESEARCHED PERSON

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E–letter to the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme requesting permission to conduct the study**

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**School of Social Sciences**



From: Ms T. Shivambu

**Private Bag X1106**

Student no: **201222118**

**Sovenga**

Department of Psychology

**0727**

University of Limpopo

**Tel: +27 15 268 3505**

**Fax:+27 15 268 2866**

**To The Director of Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP) -**

**Permission to conduct a research study)**

Old Embassy Grounds

Box 754

Sibasa

0970

**To the Director of TVEP – Permission to conduct a research study**

Dear Director,

I am currently registered for a Masters in Psychology by dissertation at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus). My research is titled: An investigation into psychological factors that compel battered women to remain in abusive relationships in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.

I would like permission to conduct the aforementioned research at the following institutions which fall under your auspices: Tshilidzini Hospital Trauma Centre and Victim Empowerment Unit in Sibasa (Vhembe, District).

I hope that the organisation will allow me to recruit ten women who attend the above mentioned centres. Due to the nature of the study I want to recruit the participants with full confidential following proper ethical guidelines as laid down by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (Psychology Board). Participants who are interested in participating in the study will be asked to sign a consent form and it will be explained to them that they may withdraw from the research at any time. A copy of the proposal and consent form is attached.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated as it is seen as an important addition to research on psychological or physically abused (battered) women. I will make constant follow ups with the organisation and will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. After the research has been completed and due process at UL completed a copy of the results will be sent to you. You may contact me at my email address: [shivambud@yahoo.com](mailto:shivambud@yahoo.com) or my supervisor Prof K.A Nel at the following address: knel@ul.ac.za

Yours faithfully,

Ms Tivani Dainah Shivambu

---

(Date)

Prof K.A. Nel (Supervisor)

---

(Date)

Department of Psychology (University of Limpopo)