Domestic Violence against "Men"? A myth or reality? The Lived Experiences of Men in Khami District, Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The study examined "African" men's lived experiences of domestic violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partners in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province's Khami District in Zimbabwe. Central to the study was an attempt to document the causes and forms of abuse that men experience, and how they internalise, negotiate and construct their identity in response to the abuse. The research was informed by a social constructivist paradigm, drawing on the work of Goffman's Dramaturgy Theory. The study followed a qualitative methodology and data was collected by use of in-depth interviews as well as Focus Group Discussions. Research findings attest to the existence of domestic violence against men. It also revealed that male victims of domestic violence are constrained from occupying the position of victim and there is relatively little support for them as compared to abused women. This study therefore calls for a holistic approach to domestic violence programming and recommendations have been made to that effect.

Key words: domestic violence; intimate partner; victim; lived realities, patriarchy

Introduction

The paucity of literature on domestic violence instigated against men arguably reveals that domestic violence has traditionally constructed men as perpetrators. Available studies that attempt to document male victimisation have been conducted mainly in developed countries but not much has been documented in developing countries (Tjadenand and Thoennes 2000), Brogden and Nijhar 2004, Waters 2016, Bragg 2003, Dutton et.al 2005,). Nonetheless, studies conducted in developed nations seem to insinuate that men experience high levels of domestic abuse almost

as equally as women (Archer, 2000, Fitzpatrick, 2002, Tsui 2014, Babcock et al 2016, Ridley and Feldman 2003). Thus, the paper adds literature on men's experiences of domestic violence by capturing the lived realities and perceptions of male domestic violence victims in Khami District of Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe. It explored the causes and forms of domestic violence that African men experience and the barriers to disclosure and reporting of domestic violence by men. It was also recommended that given the vast literature on violence against women, there is a lot that is yet to be unearthed on domestic abuse and violence against men in order to complement existing literature and policy formulation.

The family has been viewed traditionally as a safe haven and a very important social institution where people are nurtured and taught the values and norms of being "good" inhabitants of the society through socialization (Hammond, 2010). Giddens (2009) postulates that family relations are part of everyone's existence, and family relationships can be warm and fulfilling. However, trends in research (Archer, 2000, Dutton and White, 2013, Hester, 2009) have shown otherwise, cases of domestic violence are an inconvenient reality within the family set up and Giddens (2009, 346) argues that this side of family life belies the rosy images of harmony that are quite emphasized on television commercials and in popular media.

The family has also been traditionally viewed as largely patriarchal in most societies, an institution where men reign supreme over women. As such, even in cases where the family becomes an arena for violence and abuse, women have been thought of as the victims and men as the villains (Bragg, 2003; Dutton and White, 2013). Thus in cases where men reportedly suffered abuse in the hands of their intimate partners, they conceal their fate from the eyes of society. Dobash and Dobash (1979) highlighted that in post-Renaissance France and England, society ridiculed and humiliated husbands thought to be battered and or dominated by their wives. (Dobash and Dobash (1979) further state that in post-renaissance France, a battered husband was trotted around town riding a donkey backwards while holding its tail. On the other hand, in England, abused husbands were strapped to a cart and paraded around town, all the while subjected to the people's derision and contempt (Dutton and White, 2013). All this was meant to perpetuate and reinforce cultural ethos where a husband was expected to dominate over his wife. Brogden and Najhir (2004) indicate that men are perceived as either perpetrators or as complicit

bystanders whose failure to effectively challenge abuse perpetrated by other men sustains female victimization. The available literature on domestic abuse owes most to feminist contributions. While there are variations in emphasis in such a wide movement, generally feminist studies have explained victimization in the household as a function of material inequalities, institutional values, and historically embedded social practices that confer power and privilege on men.

Archer (2000,651) points out that there are two conflicting viewpoints about partner violence, either it involves a considerable degree of mutual combat, a view which is associated with family conflict researchers or that it generally involves male perpetrators and female victims, a view that is associated with feminist writers. She further alludes that data supporting the feminist position are largely derived from female victims' reports, from male perpetrators identified by law enforcement agencies or from crime surveys. Thus, historically domestic violence has been framed and exclusively understood as a women issue (Bragg, 2003, Dutton and White, 2013) and violence against women has been considered a significant public problem. Hines et al (2007) argue that the current situation for research on male victims of severe intimate partner violence can be likened to the situation for female victims of severe intimate partner violence prior to feminist movement. Hence there is need to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence against men, to study and document this phenomenon in order understand it.

Related Literature on male victimisation

Available literature has documented the nature of domestic violence that men face; however, most of them were conducted in developed nations and they are mainly based on quantitative researches. In their study in the United States, Corry et al (2002) postulate that laws usually result in arrest of the male and ignore research showing that 50% of domestic assaults are mutual combat. They further argue that women in this case are encouraged to abuse their partners and such aggravation on males is hazardous. Corry et al (2002) also note that women tend to use weapons more often in assaults than men, that is, 80% for women and 25% for men. The abuse also ranges from emotional, economic as well as physical abuse of a serious nature (Dutton et al 2005). Ridley and Feldman (2003) conducted a

study on conflict and communication in USA and the surveyed women revealed that they frequently physically abused their male partners through kicking, choking, physical attacks on male genitalia and the use of a knife or gun. Similar findings were also revealed by Hines et al (2007) and Hester (2009).

There is also a general acknowledgement of lack of support in the present data for the hypothesis that women use violence only in self-defence and male abuse of a woman, requiring self-defence, is one of the less-frequently stated reasons by women for their assaults (Hines et al, 2007; Hester, 2009, Dutton et al, 2005, Dutton and White, 2013). In the first U.S. National Family Violence Survey of 1975, it was observed that women tend to be as violent as men. Similar results were observed in Canada (Lupri and Grandin, 2004), Australia (Headey et al, 1999), Northern Island and Scotland (Brogden and Nijhar, 2004). However, some scholars allege that since these findings seemingly contradict feminist theory, they have been suppressed, unreported, reinterpreted, or denied mainly by women rights activists (Mulroney and Chan, 2005, Archer, 2000). This rise in cases of husband battery, according to Adebayo (2014) is blamed on increasing "female superiority complex". It has also been argued that violent women will be engaging in self-defence and this is regarded as a less serious violent act as well as normal. Hester (2009) argues that men and women tend to use and experience violence and describe it in different ways and such dynamics affects the understanding of the nature of male victimization.

Stets and Straus (1992) allege that the rate of female initiated violence in intimate relationships could exceed that of males. The authors further point out that women also commit serious violent acts against non-violent men and the male victims remain silent. According to Ferraro and Moe (2003) female domestic violence offenders constitute the fastest growing segment of the criminal justice system and the American National Institute of Justice estimates that the increase in the incarceration rate for women charged with domestic violence is double that of men. Carney et al (2006) allude to the fact that much attention is paid to the cultural influences that shape societal conceptualization of domestic violence and an emerging concern being raised within the field the hanging question on male victims of domestic violence. Thus, Dutton et al (2005) postulates that the impact of women's abuse on male partners is a relatively unexplored area and further investigation and enquiry is needed in order to understand violence in the homes.

However other researchers argue that female domestic violence against men is still insignificant. According to Mulroney and Chan (2005) there is little statistical data recording men as victims of domestic violence and Kumar (2012) echoed the same sentiments that there is no systematic study or record on domestic violence against men in India. Kumar (2012:292) argues that although there is no systematic study or record on domestic violence against men in India, it is generally estimated that in 100 cases of domestic violence, approximately 40 cases involve violence against men. He further states that there is little evidence available in India on the actual number of violent acts against men and underlying dynamics of violence. There are various reasons for under-reporting by men in India and the chief cause being the social system and values attached to men, which impede them from sharing and reporting domestic violence and abuse (Kumar, 2012). They fear that no one will believe and they would want to avoid social ridicule. Even when men report domestic abuse and violence, most people do not believe them; when men try to narrate their ordeals within the marriage institution and family, no one listens to them or people laugh at them instead of helping them (Kumar, 2012). Thus one can still conclude that abuse of men is a social problem that warrants immediate attention and the reality of domestic violence on men is an awakening call for policy makers to handle the issue of domestic violence in a holistic manner. Dutton and White (2013) indicate that bilateral intimate partner violence is usually missed in most surveys since one-sided questions are asked about intimate partner violence. Bilateral intimate partner violence is where both partners use violence. These authors further state that five large scale surveys that asked about both victimization and perpetration found that intimate partner violence was bilateral. This finding revealed that 75% of the women reporting victimization were also perpetrators. According to Dutton and White (2013, 9) since there are no surveys that have ever solely focused on male victimization the bilateral nature of intimate partner violence had been missed by one sided inquiries.

Adebayo (2014, 15) argues that even though there has been so many outcries about domestic violence against women across the globe, domestic violence against men is a reality and this phenomenon occurs in every society at varying levels. Gass et al (2010) in their study reported rates of female- perpetrated physical intimate partner violence in South Africa, using data from the South African Stress and Health survey. The authors examined data from 1,715 currently married or cohabiting adults on reporting of intimate partner violence and found out that the prevalence rate was 25.2% for cohabitating or married couples. According to Adebayo (2014), domestic violence against men has been on steady increase in Kenya and in 2011, almost 500 000 men in Kenya were beaten by their wives. As result, a men's pressure group called MaendeleoYaWanaume meaning 'Progress'

for Men' announced an initiative to protest what is becoming a growing problem of female perpetrated domestic abuse in that country. This protest entailed a nationwide boycott of meals made by their wives and partners and was supposed to encourage men to eat away from home together and share their experiences with domestic abuse whether physical or emotional.

In their Nigerian study, Watts and Zimmerman (2002) point out that husband punching, slapping, kicking, nail scratching, sex deprivation and killing are realities that occur. In a study conducted by Dienye and Gbeneol, (2009) at the General Outpatient Department of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, out of a total of 48 victims of domestic violence that were identified, 10.4% of the victims were males.

Mhaka-Mutepfa (2009:86) attests to the existence of domestic violence against men and in the study on spousal violence in Zimbabwe. The author found out that males experienced the same levels of abuse as females and pointed out that the view that females experience higher levels of abuse may be a stereotype. Tom and Musingafi (2013) in their study in Glen Norah found out that 80% of the respondents indicated that most perpetrators of domestic violence were men while 8% felt that both men and women were equally responsible and 5% indicated that women alone were perpetrators of domestic violence. Tom and Musingafi (2013) observed that violence against men exists and argued that there is gross under reporting by men when they are violated. However, it should be noted that most studies conducted on female violence against intimate partners are mostly quantitative in nature. It can be argued that scholars in Zimbabwe do acknowledge the existence of male victimisation thus a detailed qualitative research is therefore required to document men's experiences in Zimbabwe.

The existence of only one organisation PADARE/Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, that works with men and boys in advancing gender issues in Zimbabwe, has also arguably resulted in the under representation of men's rights in Bulawayo. PADARE/Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender is amen-based organisation that was founded in 1995 to bring men together to discuss cultural and social issues related to gender justice and equality. The organisation mobilises men and boys to critically examine and challenge the patriarchal ideology and notions of masculinity that promote men and boys' sense of power, domination and control over women and girls. Thus the organisation can unintentionally promote male domestic violence victims to hide their abuse by promoting male chivalry attitudes when in fact they will be in need of help. The Zimbabwean Justice Service Commission (2015) reveals that Bulawayo Province Monthly Gender Based Violence reports

indicated that between February and March 2015, 35 out of 152 protection orders that were granted were issued to males over 18 years of age. Even though the statistics reveal that men are still the main offenders of intimate partner violence, it is also clear to note that a significant number of women also commit this crime in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, the Domestic Violence Act (2007, 3) points out that domestic violence comes in various forms which are but not limited to physical, sexual, economic, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, malicious damage to property among others. This study adopted the definition by Adebayo (2014) who defined domestic violence as a pattern of behaviour which involves the abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family.

Research methodology

This study was carried out between June 2015 and January 2017. A phenomenological research was conducted in Khami District because of its ability to offer an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context concentrating on meaning and agency The research sought to capture men's experiences and perspectives of domestic violence in their real-life context as victims. Key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were also used in data collection. The combination of these tools was done to reduce the effect of the weaknesses of each method and thus ensuring reliability and validity of the data.

Based on a qualitative interpretivist approach, the study was based on Ervine Goffman's (1990) dramaturgical theory and the conceptualisation of the self. In his dramaturgical theory, Goffman posits that human action is a metaphorical reflection of acting whereby individuals constantly act out and present themselves in ways that may be desirable to the audience. He describes an individual's "performance" as the "presentation of self", that is meant to create specific impressions in the minds of others. Thus social interaction is analyzed in terms of how people live their lives like actors performing on a stage. Hence he reasoned that individual action takes place in three regions, that is, the "front stage", the "back stage" and the" off-stage". On the front stage, individuals act out in order to impress their audience through keeping up appearances and exhibiting certain manners. This implies that from time to time people hide their real experiences that might appear to be contrary to social norms and values through practicing impression management. Thus Goffman as (1990:45) points out that "when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate

and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society". On the other hand, the "back stage" is "the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking in his lines, and step out of character" (Goffman 1990: 46). The back stage is therefore a place where individuals live naturally concealed from audience. The off-stage is the region where individuals are not included in the performance as neither performers nor part of the audience. This is the region whereby actors where actors take off their "masks" (Goffman 1990). The concept was therefore adopted due to its ability to analyse how men as domestic violence victims conceal the victim identity in a society where they are expected to be the powerful actors. It can also be noted that both the male victims of domestic violence and their female perpetrators engage in performance as they attempt to manage a desirable impression to the world.

Study Population and Sampling

Khami District is one of the five districts in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province which is situated 20 kilometres west of Bulawayo City Centre and is located in a periurban set up. Bulawayo is Zimbabwe's second largest city. Khami district has an estimated population of 17 267 people with around 4195 households. However, the number of men who encounter intimate partner abuse might never be ascertained due to the sensitivity and the complex nature of the domestic violence. The study targeted the men's forums in Robert Sinyoka, Pumula, Methodist Village, St Peters Village and Mazwi Village as well as organisations that are involved in GBV programming. The district was conveniently chosen since the researchers were acquainted with some of the respondents. One of the researchers also worked in the District as a gender officer. Khami District is the only district in Bulawayo that has established men's forums which address gender equality issues.

Ten in-depth interviews with male victims of domestic violence who were identified through snow balling sampling technique were conducted to capture an in-depth account of men's lived experiences of domestic violence. In-depth interviews allowed for the capturing of a lot of meaning and in-depth knowledge to both the spoken word and non-verbal bodily expression. Conversations were recorded during in-depth interviews after the consent from the participants. According to Kumar (1989), key informant interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject as they are regarded to have expert knowledge on the matter under study.

Six interviews were also done with key informants with officials in the Padare/Enkundleni Men's Forum on Gender, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD), Justice for Children, World Vision International, Judicial Service Commission and Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit (ZRPVFU) Pumula station.

Three focus Group Discussions were also held with 10, 12 and 13 men in Robert Sinyoka, Pumula, and Mazwi Village respectively. Descriptive accounts were gathered and these were presented and analysed in thematic forms. Findings were also presented topically and chronologically in a narrative form. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory and conceptualisation of the self was adopted for the purposes of description and explanation of the findings.

Ethical considerations

By nature, intimate relationships are private and confidential and researchers were congnisant of this fact before, during and after the study. Pseudo names were used in order to protect the identity of the respondents and the participants were assured that their identities were not be revealed to anybody in a bit to avert possible danger or shame which might be incited by the revelation of real identities. However, it should be noted that confidentiality might not be guaranteed since the researcher may have no control over the publication, readership as well as circulation of the study material. Despite using pseudo names, one may also leave a room for the possibility of other people especially those from Khami District to identify the real identities of participants. However, researchers made efforts to ensure the protection of participants' real identity.

All the participants in this study voluntarily agreed to participate, without being unduly coerced and they were well-informed about the objectives of the study and the implications for participating. The participants also signed the consent forms and they were issued with the introductory letter fully explaining the aim, nature, purpose of the research as well as the contact details of the researchers.

Discussion of Findings

Causes of Domestic Violence on Men

High levels of unemployment by men and general economic poverty was identified as major causes of domestic violence against men. It was pointed out during indepth interviews and focus group discussions that traditionally the man was

regarded as a breadwinner but this has been compromised by economic challenges such as unemployment and poor numeration in Zimbabwe. A participant in one of the FGDs stated that, 'nxakungelama liawukwaz iukuthulaendlini' (If money is not there, you know no peace in the home). The participants pointed out that both men's perceived and real failure to fulfill their wives and girlfriends' expectations usually resulted in abuse. They could be verbally abused; sometimes in the presence of children and significant others and this allegedly hurt their ego. Some respondents also pointed out that their wives would verbally insult them and falsely accuse them for squandering money with alleged girlfriends. During an in-depth interview, one respondent admitted that he once spent all of his salary on beer, betting and women and as a result, he was denied food by his wife. This confirmed Archer (2000) suggestion that sometimes women resort to domestic violence as a defense mechanism. It can be argued that wife decided to deny her husband food as a way of expressing her anger against the manner that her husband had economically abused her.

Some of the participants indicated that 'women of nowadays' had gone against cultural values of a virtuous wife by engaging in extra marital affairs. This contrasts the dominant gender construction of hegemonic masculinities where men were allowed to be polygamous and engage in extra marital affairs as he pleases (Kambarami 2006, Chadambuka, 2014). One of the key informants, Mr Zhou (not his real name) gave an example of a case of a woman who allegedly swallowed up her sim card in a bid to conceal evidence of infidelity from her husband. The participants in the study also argued that if a husband was suspected to be involved in extra marital affairs, he was subjected to abuse and he would risk being denied food and conjugal rights, locked outside and even being beaten up. Some of the respondents interpreted women who opposed men's infidelity, extra marital affairs and polygamy as culturally rebellious. One respondent who was physically attacked by his wife and her sister for having an extra marital affair had this to say,

"It has always been like that. Our kings, chiefs and fathers always had several wives who co-existed mutually. Why is it hard for our wives to do the same?"

Thus in Goffman's terms, in some men's mind, fidelity was legitimate for husbands and they were not supposed to be punished for it. To such respondents, male infidelity constituted both a front stage and a backstage of social reality. To prove that they were men, they had to present themselves as actors who engaged in extra marital affairs. They had to put up the performance for both their wives and the world so that they could be accepted as man who acted according to the dictates of their polygamous culture. On the other hand, married women were not supposed to engage in extra marital since a bride price was paid for them.

According to the respondents, a bride price or "lobola" in vernacular Ndebele language gave a husband exclusive conjugal rights over his wife. Thus once married, a woman was not supposed to be intimate with any other man; however, the same did not apply to men. Nonetheless, some respondents were of the opinion that fidelity was supposed to be observed by both parties within a marriage. A twenty-eight-year-old respondent blamed himself for making his wife angry.

"Well I think I deserve what she did. I was supposed to observe our marriage vows, but I was foolishly tempted. She got angry and burned all my clothes and kicked me out of the house. I would have done exactly the same."

These sentiments showed that the respondents had different perspectives on fidelity in marriage and this could be attributed to different socio-cultural backgrounds of the respondents. However, they all agreed that infidelity was one of the prime reasons why women committed domestic violence against men.

In relation to the above, the respondents also identified conjugal matters one of the reasons that fueled abuse against men by their female partners. The participants indicated that they were subjected to abuse through, for instance, being compared to other men, or being denied sex or labeled as impotent. Tembali in one of the FGDs (12 September 2016) was quoted saying that 'omama balomkhubawo kuthi nxabengasafuni icansilabomkabo basebenzisa igunyalo kuthi ubaba angambamba engafuniuya botshelwairape', (when women do not want sex, they can even accuse you for marital rape if you attempt to caress them and you can be jailed). Some men reported that sometimes they would be too physically tired for them to engage in sexual intercourse with their wives and that usually sparked conflicts. One respondent pointed out that women expected to be understood when they were not up to sex but it was impossible for men to successfully negotiate for a postponement of an intimate encounter with their partner. He further pointed out that,

"You will be accused for having someone else out rightly. She will ask you who will be keeping you satisfied. Women mistakenly think that a man can never be too tired to have sex and that is quite unfortunate".

Some respondents mentioned that some "masculine" lifestyles also attracted conflict and even violence from their partners. Social acts such as drinking, smoking and even attending sporting activities could sometimes invoke disputes and quarrels in the home. Paradoxically, participants in the study pointed out that as men, they love their beer but when they get home, women tended to exhibit negative attitudes over their husbands' lifestyles. Some reported that whenever they came home drunk their wives would show them overt disrespect. Thirty-eight-year-old Sam had this to say,

"Ever since I married her fourteen years ago it has been the same. When I want to smoke, I am always told to go as far as possible. No smile, no kissing, no what. She says I stink, but how can a woman tell that to her only husband? I always tell her that I do not like her make-up, but I always try to put up with it. I am made to kiss her blue and sometimes red fake lips because of her makeup. Why can't she put up with my cigarette as well? She has to learn to respect my life choices"

The respondents also pointed out that their wives could also beat them or deny sleeping with their drunken partners. They stressed the vulnerability of a drunken man to acts such as being scalded by hot water, cooking oil or porridge. Similar results were observed in a study that was conducted by the first author of this manuscript in 2015. It was stressed in one of the Focus Group Discussions that, 'Hatichatoimbi zvekuti tozeza baba vauya vadhakwa asikuti takutozeza kuenda kumba kwacho kana tadhakwa' (we can no longer take the literal meaning of the song 'Tozeza Baba'¹ because it is us men who now hesitate to go home if we are drunk).

The vanishing role of 'Ubabakazi' (aunt) and 'Umalume' (uncle) as per Ndebele culture was also identified as the cause for male victimization in the home by some respondents. The aunt had a role to advise the young women in order for them to become submissive and virtuous wives and according to Kambarami (2006) the same woman was expected to satisfy her husband's sexual desires. The respondents pointed out that women no longer have an idea of how to behave as a typical African or Ndebele or Shona wife. They blamed the media for distorting the nature of a true African woman who submits to and values her husband. Respondents pointed out that their wives behaved differently from their mothers. This was exhibited for instance, by failure to cook, iron, and even lack of respect for their husbands. Thus they bemoaned the absence of these roles from their wives as a form of abuse. One respondent pointed out that his wife was too obsessed with "Western" notions of marriage. "Vele, she expects me to help with the dishes, cook and even feed the babies, I bet one day she will ask me to change nappies. But this is not TV, this is real life so such things are a non-event for me" (Maxwell 29).

Focus group discussions also revealed that women's rights issues caused domestic violence on men. Participants noted that women were in a habit of threatening to make use of the criminal justice system or calling the police as well as approaching women's organisations such as Musasa as a way of manipulating their partners. It was revealed that some women would deliberately provoke and blackmail their husbands. Examples of such acts which were quoted include, 'ukandirova ndonokumhangarira' (if you beat me I will report you); 'ngiyahamba eMusasa utshone

usuvalelwe' (I will go to Musasa and you will get jailed). This finding supports the assertion by Mhaka-Mutepfa (2009) that women now misconstrue the issue of women rights as abuse. Therefore, borrowing Goffman's conceptualisation of the self, it can be noted that both misinterpretation and appreciation of women's rights formed the women's self-concept. Women felt that they could both manipulate and make use of the law to shelter themselves from both real and unfounded male abuse. Apparently they felt empowered by women's rights.

Other respondents pointed out that there were cultural beliefs and practices which rendered men powerless and women powerful. It has been pointed out that some African identities and clans carry with them some social constructs which render other clans more powerful than others (Beach, 1994). Some respondents pointed out that totemism was one of the cultural traits which made some women "stubborn" especially if they are married to men who are considered to belong to weaker clans. The respondents argued that there are certain totems and clan praise names which made some women oppressive and feel invincible. The clan names influenced the construction of the self whereby women were convinced that their clan identity was supposed to dictate their relationships with their intimate male partners.

The women therefore ended up behaving according to their totemic normative standards. This resulted in the women having to act in front stage manners that exhibited their clan identity to the detriment of their relationships. Forty-two-year-old Melusi from a perceived weaker *Moyo* clan pointed out that he was married to a *Chihera*, (a woman from an eland totemic clan which is believed to be dominant). Both men and women are referred to as eland "bulls" the *Mpofus* and this implies that a man who marries an *Mpofu* or *Mampofu* would have married a man. This further implies that the man has to assume a feminine role whilst *MaMpofu* becomes the bull of the house. He pointed out that as *Vashes* which means princesses, the *Chiheras or Mampofus* are supposed to be tough and dominant and that also affects the manner in which they relate to their husbands.

"My Mampofu loves to do the opposite always. If you say west she goes east. She always says that she is equally a man and that no one dictates the pace for her. You have to say the opposite if you want to have your way but it is nothing easy". (Melusi).

Thus this showed that contrary to the patriarchal rhetoric, there are indeed certain cultural beliefs and practices that actually facilitate women's dominance over men. Women do develop their self-concept from cultural beliefs and practices through totemism and clan identity.

Forms of Abuse Experienced by Men

This study focused on only four forms of abuse and it was observed that the participants in the study reported at least one form of domestic violence. Out of the ten victims who were interviewed, eight highlighted that they had experienced verbal, emotional and psychological abuse from their partners. Seven respondents admitted that they had been physically abused by the current or former intimate partners. Nine of the participants reported that they had been economically abused while all the ten interviewees revealed that they had been sexually abused mainly through denial of conjugal rights.

Data gathered revealed that the nature of verbal, emotional and psychological abuse ranged from insults, being labelled impotent, name calling and being shouted at as well as threats and blackmail. One interviewee in the study stated that his wife was in a habit of shouting at him in the public and is quoted saying, 'ngathethiswa kwathi wafusekimnta nenja' (voetsek, you are puppy) and according to him, 'fuseki yisibongo senja' (voetsek is a derogatory or insulting word which is used to shout at dogs). Another example of this form of abuse can be noted from an excerpt from the interview with Mr Podo (not his real name), where he gave an account of how his wife belittled him at a family meeting when she said, 'hamunyari bwaibwai maziso kunge nyoka, mataura makamira sani imi, chii chamakamboronga chakabudirira' (Are you not ashamed? You are winking your eyes like a snake, in whose capacity are you speaking? What have you ever planned that has materialised?). He reasoned being derogated by his wife in front of everyone was the worst type of ego bruise a man can ever encounter. Mr Podo reasoned that it was better for his wife to belittle him in private, at the backstage to borrow Goffman's terms. Thus being degraded in front of everyone on the front stage, in front of the wrong audience men's ego. Bruised ego also entailed that men had to re-evaluate their self-concept. Men were not supposed to be belittled in front of everyone!

All of the ten interviewed victims pointed out that both men and women initiate violence in the home, while six admitted that they were the ones who initiated the violence. Four interviewees indicated that women were perpetrators of domestic violence. This evidence almost confirms findings by Stets and Straus (1992) that the rates of female initiated violence in intimate relationships are equivalent to or can even exceed male rates. However, it remains a fact from this study that women are victims in most cases though the difference is narrow. It was also observed that men also experience a number of physical abuse acts. Six of the respondents indicated that physical abuse was most frequent form of abuse and the existence of this form of abuse does confirm the traditional name of Bulawayo, 'Komfaziutshay`indoda''

which literally means that in Bulawayo women beat up their husbands. Six men admitted that they had been beaten up; seven men reported being choked and having their genitalia pulled. Choking and pulling of male genitalia are also identified as the most reported types of physical assaults on men by women in Northern Island (Brogden and Nijhar, 2004), the USA (Ridley and Feldman, 2003) and Canada (Lupri and Grandin, 2004). One participant indicated that he had been scalded with a hot liquid while 3 men reported that they were slapped.

Some of the respondents indicated that they had been subjected to sexual abuse. Sexual abuse ranged from sexual deprivation to what seemingly appears to be matrimonial rape. One respondent gave a narration of his experience during an interview and indicated that, 'umkami Monday to Friday uyangincitsha incansi, uyanginika ngeSaturday langeSunday kuphela' (my wife denies me sex from Monday to Friday but only agrees during the weekends). It also emerged from the Focus Group Discussions that women usually cited tiredness as a reason to deny men their conjugal rights. This evidence concurs with findings by Kumar (2012) that in India women tend to withhold sex for no reason and as such sex is seen as a bargaining tool which women use to safeguard their interests and manipulate their male partners.

Three men reported that their female intimate partners forced them to indulge in sexual acts without their consent, but they could not report these abusive acts. One man reported that he was infected with an unnamed Sexually Transmitted Infection by his wife but could not tell anyone about it. Some reported that they ended up pretending to be enjoying the sexual acts for fear their women would perceive them weak. Thus patriarchal values which promote male domination forced men to deny themselves the victim role and identity. This also confirmed Kambarami (2006)'s research studies on domestic violence in Zimbabwe which revealed that society traditionally views males as the stronger sex and women as the weaker and powerless sex. Men were therefore not at liberty to disclose their back stage abusive ordeals to the world for fear of social ridicule.

The research also revealed that men in Khami district perceived themselves as victims of economic abuse. The men reported that this happened through hiding or controlling of income, misuse of income as well as excessive borrowing by their intimate partners, without their knowledge and consent. They argued that under normal circumstances, their partners were supposed to consult with their husbands before borrowing and using money, but alas, this rarely happened. Instead their spouses had a tendency of demanding their husband/boyfriend's full salaries then

hide it or use it without consulting them. The men reported that as a result, they sometimes felt used by their women. One respondent had this to say,

"I work, I toil all the time for her and our children but when I ask her for petty cash, for beer or hanging out with friends, I suddenly become irrelevant. It is difficult to get anything from her. I rarely ask but it is usually a struggle."

Barriers to Disclosure and Reporting of Domestic Violence Cases by Men

Respondents indicated that they did not disclose and report abuse suffered in the hands of their intimate partners for fear of being ridiculed by other men and society in general. They indicated that they had too much pride and ego for them to be a seen as victims, while some indicated fear of embarrassment as a hindrance to help seeking behaviour. Some respondents further indicated that they were afraid of their partner's possible actions if the women found out that the men had disclosed the ill treatment. Twenty-eight-year-old Samu who was married to an older woman reported that he was afraid of her wife who physically abused him.

"I am not sure of what she would think. If she has the audacity to beat me in private, what can stop her from punishing me further?" (Samu, 28).

Thus Samu was convinced that his wife was prepared to perform her backstage behaviour on the front stage too. He therefore did not want to risk playing victim in front of the audience. Like most men in the study, Samu chose to remain silent. Some respondents also cited shyness as a major hindrance to opening up of abuse experiences, let alone to report to the police. They indicated that they could not stand the idea of female police officers acting as their protectors. Some men stated that the police officers laugh at them and a participant in a Focus Group Discussion (9 June 2015) stated that, "ngizafika eCharge office ngithole umpholisa ongumama ngifikengithi, 'Ndarohwa nemukadzi', umpholisa ahleahlekeabize abanye athi, 'uyu arikuti arohwa nemukadzi', so next time angisabuye liukuyamangala ngoba amapholiseni bayahleka" (How can I get to the police station to report and be attended to by a female police officer? Obviously she will turn out to her colleagues and tell them that I said I was being beaten up by my wife, they will all laugh at me, so I will not come again to report because I will be laughed at).

They reasoned that both female and male police officers were more likely to ridicule and further humiliate them. The police officers therefore served as the wrong audience on the front stage and as such the victims chose to remain silent since the perceived results were likely to prove more damaging than redemptive. They therefore chose to keep their abuse at the backstage, away from social surveillance.

Some of the respondents also mentioned that they were afraid of being stigmatised by the society if they disclose their experiences. They reasoned that this would result in them losing respect, dignity and their virility being questioned. This finding is reinforced by Dutton and White (2013) who stated that historically, men who were victims of assault by their wives were made into objects of social derision and the authors gave an example of a practice in medieval Europe called 'charivari' that involved riding the victim around town. Thus given the consequences of the aftermath of reporting or disclosing one's fate, men have remained silent of their experiences. Also linked to cultural expectations, one interviewee (17 June 2015) pointed out that, 'abadala bathi singazesembula amakhwaphayikhosi khuluma kupheleendlini' (our elders say that one should not disclose home problems but should talk about them and it should remain a private issue between the partners). It was also revealed that other respondents felt that cultural beliefs posed a hindrance for men to reach out for help since it is regarded a taboo and unheard of for a man to report his experiences since he is regarded as the head of the house. Thus disclosure of domestic problems was tantamount to defying socio-cultural expectations and this implied that men have no choice but remain silent when they fall victim to domestic violence.

Some respondents also reported that they would never report or disclose domestic violence suffered in the hands of their partners for the sake of love. They reasoned that reporting an abusive intimate partner or disclosing abuse could be equated to betrayal and this had a potential of jeorpardising intimate relationships. As a result, they decided to remain silent so that their relationships could not be compromised. Most men pointed out that they were not aware of where to turn to and this point was further buttressed by one of the village representatives (10 June 2015) who posed a question 'nxakulama gqwethaamela omama lathisifuna amagqwetha abobaba?' (If there is Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZIWLA), why can't there be Zimbabwe Men's Lawyers Association?). It was also revealed that the participants perceived existing laws as being one sided and biased towards women. As such, they reasoned that men will be treated with skepticism when they try to reach for help. This finding is supported by Carney et al (2007) who argued that the criminal justice system was lenient to female perpetrators of domestic violence and intimidating to men.

Conclusion

The research findings from male interviewees point out that a variety of forms of abuses being inflicted on them in intimate relationships. It was revealed that men

abuse in intimate relationships is indeed a reality but the victims always opt to remain silent. The respondents and the victims opted for their abuse to remain at the backstage because they perceived society as an unwanted audience. A number of causes of domestic violence on men were raised and these included issues of infidelity, conjugal matters, equal rights of women, unemployment, alcohol and the vanishing cultural role of aunt and uncle. There was general consensus amongst all the respondents in the study that domestic violence perpetrated against men does exist and it manifests in the same forms as that of women. The participants in the study also highlighted that there are number of factors that pose challenges for men to disclose and even report cases of domestic violence perpetrated by their intimate partners.

The findings show that men are not a homogeneous group and this notion refutes the generalisation of a 'man' defined by the society. As such there is a hidden population of males in Khami district suffering from a number of victimisations experiences in partner relationships. This research concludes that domestic violence against men is a reality which should be regarded as a cause for concern. It is the contention of the study that as women's rights are protected so should be men's rights too. However, it should not be underestimated that women remain oppressed and they also remain the highest victims of domestic violence.

Recommendations

The study revealed that men are indeed victims of domestic violence. As such more research should focus on the male victims of domestic violence especially from an Afro-centric perspective. There is need to explore the cultural nature of domestic violence which are contextual to lived realities of specific communities. As such deconstruction and reconstruction of patriarchy, masculinity and femininity in African socio-cultural locations is vital because these trajectories are not universal. The research revealed that there are cultural traits which can also render women powerful over men. There is also need to clearly document the coping mechanisms which men employ in order to deal with domestic violence hence the authors propose to come up with a follow up paper which will focus on coping mechanisms, help seeking behaviour and awareness levels of facilities that help male victims of domestic violence.

Since the study revealed the existence of domestic violence against men there is need to proffer recommendations for domestic violence programming. There is a greater need for educational campaign so that the shame that make men reluctant to ask for help can be demystified and deconstructed. This will in turn provide a leeway for men to open and speak their experiences in the public as well as

reporting when they are victimised. Sensitisation of the public about the existence and reality of domestic violence against men is also important and this can be done through great advocacy by government agencies and civil society organisations.

There is also the need to establish for more organisations that advocates and lobby for men's rights in Bulawayo and that the government and NGOs should provide the funds for their operations. Given the fact that most respondents in the study were unemployed, skills development programmes for instance welding, carpentry among others with these men will go a long way in ensuring financial capacity of men so that they provide for their families and peace might prevail in the homes. Scaling up legal literacy workshops with the communities should be done in order to sensitise the people on the provisions of the laws that have been put in place to fight domestic violence in the communities. The media such as the press, television and radio can be used to disseminate the information and cover stories that involve women perpetrators of domestic violence. Activism on gender issues should involve balance of power in relationships so that they would not be seen as biased towards women. However, there is need for caution because the campaigns might erroneously depict women as the offenders hence silencing and obscuring the reality that women remain the main victims of domestic violence.

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Footnotes

¹ A song by renowned Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mutukudzi, which envisages on how children lament on how their father their mother when they come home drunk.