

**MARITAL ABUSE OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMAN: A PASTORAL COUNSELLING.**

**by**

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## Declaration

I, Enesto Muzerengwa declare that this dissertation is my original research carried out with the guidance of my co-researchers. No part of this dissertation has been submitted to any other educational institution for any qualification. All sources used have been acknowledged.

Sign: ----- Date-----

Student

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to all women who co- researched with me regarding this topic on Marital abuse of Zimbabwean woman: A pastoral counselling and in particular my mothers who experienced gender based domestic violence from my late father.

## Acknowledgement

I thank the Lord God for enabling me to complete this dissertation. I thank the following organisations: Musasa Project, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) and Padare (men' forum on gender) who helped me identify co- researchers. I thank the co- researchers for unveiling information openly.

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While I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of all the above mentioned people, I accept full responsibility for the shortcomings of this research and welcome any suggestions for future improvement.

## **Abstract**

This is a strange phenomenon in the present day and yet is happening. This study unpacked the social, economic, cultural as well as religious factors that contribute to women staying in abusive relationships. Research has been carried out reporting that women stay in abusive relationships because of economic and social reasons, therefore this study has focused specifically on the cultural and religious reasons why women stay in these relationships.

This study worked from a social- constructionist paradigm seeking to understand how within cultural and religious communities the role of men and women, marriage and how gender roles within marriages are understood, specifically from an African and Zimbabwean perspective. What cultural and religious discourse shapes this understanding and keeps so many women captive in abusive relationships? This is the main question that guided the study. The co-researchers of this study came from organisations who work with survivors of domestic violence.

## Terms and concepts

**The concept of *dare*** (*Shona* word for group conversations):

I take the concept of *dare* from the *Shona* culture. Men gathered around a fire to discuss family and community issues. *matare* is the plural of *dare*.

### **Gender:**

Perceived difference between men and women that is learnt through socialisation. Understandings of gender dynamics are rooted in cultural beliefs and values and therefore vary from society to society. Gender is based on social organisation and not biological difference.

### **Sex Roles:**

A biological assigned role in society, for example, a woman's ability to carry a pregnancy and is based on a biological difference between the sexes. Sex roles are few, fixed, universal and determined by nature, not culture.

### **Gender Roles:**

Men and women are given other perceived responsibilities through society. Gender roles are many, dynamic, and varied. They are culturally and socially defined and prescribed. Certain activities, tasks, and responsibilities are shaped and conditioned into masculine and feminine. Other factors influence gender roles such as age, class, religion, ethnicity, race, regional origins and history. There are many variations of these roles. Gender roles can be further classified into four main categories, that is, reproductive, productive, community managing and constituency based political roles.

### **Self-other**

This is a participatory consciousness in which relational selves do not come to knowledge by means of separation but by way of care and love.

### **Deconstruction**

Procedures that subvert taken- for- granted realities and practices. These so- called "truths", those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating the lives people or Deconstruction is

the shredding or setting apart of meanings from various texts of discourses. The specific texts could be in the form of speech, written literature and gestures.

### **Patriarchy**

The power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological political system in which men- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under male domination.

### **Narrative therapy**

It is a particular way of understanding people's identities. It is sometimes known as involving re-authoring or re-storying conversations. Stories consist of events, linked in sequence, across time and according to a plot. A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story.

### **Co-research**

The process of unearthing and recording people's insider knowledges is called 'consulting' your consultant. It involves the documentation of people's knowledges and skills about problems and ways of addressing them, so that this knowledge can be distributed to others.

### **Alternatively**

Certain ways of understanding problems and their effects on people's lives or speaking about particular ways of talking with people about their lives and problems they may be experiencing, or particular ways of understanding therapeutic relationships and the ethics or politics of therapy.

### **Social constructionism**

Persons or groups collectively form, over time in their interactions and contexts, ideas, thoughts, beliefs, discourses, values, qualities, attitudes and practices which constitute their lives.

## **Narrative analysis and interpretation**

Narrative analysis is a way of making sense of the stories people tell and re-tell. A narrative researcher and participant(s) subject the externalised conversations to narrative analysis. The narrative researcher and participant(s) then name and separate negative and positive identity conclusions from a person's story.

## **Unpacking**

It is a way of researching with participants to question or break the broader ruling religious ideas and practices through which they "see, talk and interpret" abusive stories.

## **Discourse**

It is the systematic and institutionalised way(s) of speaking/writing or making sense through language in specific disciplinary, political or cultural contexts.

## **Practical theology**

It is a theological theory of Christians about communicative actions which mediate God's coming to people in the world through God's word.



## **Abbreviations**

**AIC:** African Initiated Churches

**AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

**GDC:** Gender Development Commission

**GBDV:** Gender Based Domestic Violence

**HIV:** Human Immune Deficiency Virus

**HRDC:** Humanitarian, Relief, and Development Commission

**PLWHA:** People Living With HIV and AIDS

**SRH:** Sexual and Reproductive Health

**UN:** United Nations

**UNICEF:** United Nations International Children Educational Fund

**WHO:** World Health Organisation

**WLSA:** Women and Law in Southern Africa

**ZCC:** Zimbabwe Council of Churches

**ZWLA:** Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

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## Chapter One

### 1 Research Curiosities and Theoretical Concepts

#### 1.1 Introduction

Chapter one creates the context for this research entitled “Marital abuse of Zimbabwean woman: A pastoral counselling.” This chapter comprises of the problem field; research question; theoretical/epistemological frameworks; research methodologies; design and steps. I present an outline of the chapters of the dissertation.

#### 1.2 Problem field

Domestic violence is a phenomenon within a male domination discourse. The male domination discourse is informed by the socio-economic, cultural, religious and political ideas and practices. The phenomenon attracts the attention of scholars from various fields of study. Scholars such as Forward (1987:43), Mbiti (1990:25) and Ngundu (2010:29) have tried to understand this phenomenon. There is currently a lot of research on gender studies that specifically focuses on domestic violence, particularly against women.

However, there is not much research that specifically focuses on why Zimbabwean women remain in abusive spousal relations. I found very little in current research that allows the women themselves to tell their own stories about how the Zimbabwean social constructions of gender roles and marriage inform and affect them in their relationships. Here, constructions refer to the socio-economic, cultural and religious factors or ideas and practices that the Zimbabwean context uses to describe marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. It is within this research gap that this research project would like to focus on.

This co- research focuses on the Zimbabwean constructions about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence which informs married women in abusive spousal relations. David Epston (cited in Dulwich Centre 2004: 30-34) says co-research is a participatory research in which the researcher and the ‘interviewee’ become participants in the process of co-researching for new knowledges (see also Kotze *et al* 2002:25). The co-researchers collectively construct knowledges on the topic of their co-research. I use the term co-researcher throughout the co-research process. My co-researchers include women from the Musasa Project; Zimbabwe Women Association (ZWLA); men from Padare (men’s forum on



gender) and my supervisor Professor Doctor Johann Meylahn (see section 1.4.1). The co-research seeks to tell the married women' untold stories about the role of the constructions in their lives in relations. This research project is motivated by the research question: why do married Zimbabwean women remain in abusive marriages? This research question emerged from my personal experience, professional experience and observations (see section 1.2) of the challenges that married Zimbabwean women endure with abusive spouses.

Personally, I grew up in a polygamous family. My father, Hamudi Pakura had four wives. I witnessed Hamudi Pakura batter, slap, and kick one of my mothers. I grew up with these images of domestic violence.

In my profession, I listen to stories of husband-wife problems as women consult with me as their minister of religion.

In general, I read, listen and view news on the media about domestic violence and murder in marriage. In 2014, the Musasa Project and ZWLA stated that 90 000 women suffered domestic violence with spouses and/ or partners.

The experiences of married women leave me wondering about the social constructions that inform them to endure abusive spouses. As a man, I now have ways of dealing positively with my past experiences and am ready to work with other men and women to reduce domestic violence. In view of this background I want to learn from women enduring domestic violence. I have several questions that married Zimbabwean women would help me answer. The women are “the experts of their experiences” (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:22).

To answer these questions, I invited women and men co- researchers from Musasa Project, (ZWLA) and *Padare* (men's forum on gender). I use the concept of *dare* (*Shona* word for group conversations). I take the concept of *dare* from the *Shona* culture. Men gathered around a fire to discuss family and community issues (see section 3.0). In this research I discussed with three *matare* (plural for *dare*) namely; *dare* with *Musasa* Project, ZWLA and *Padare*.

I created a focus group conversation with men from *Padare* (men's forum). Conversations with women helped me understand their stories regarding the factors that inform and affect them in their relationships. In this position I talked with men about my research questions.

My primary research question being: Why do Zimbabwean women remain in abusive marriages?

The primary research question leads to the following secondary questions:

- ❖ What cultural-religious and economic discourses informs the women to remain in abusive marriages?
- ❖ What role does the religious-cultural construction of gender roles, marriage and domestic violence play in keeping women in abusive marriages?
- ❖ What can be done to deconstruct these dominant discourses in order to empower women to leave abusive marriages?

Kotze *et al* (2002:6) question the content or the constructions of stories people talk about in their daily conversations. The preceding authorities wonder about what and whose knowledge informs people in their conversations. Who benefits and suffers from the knowledges? Who is witnessing? I lean with Kotze *et al* (2002). The authorities help me to question what socio-economic, cultural and religious knowledge (i.e. ideas and practices) inform women's understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. Whose ideas and practices inform them? Who benefits and suffers from these ideas and practices? How could these ideas and practices be unpacked or deconstructed? When men witness gender based violence what does it mean for them? Co- researching with men should bring male voices regarding domestic violence.

### **1.3 Research background**

In the following section I will share some more about my research background or context and how this background motivated this study.

#### **1.3.1 Personal experience with polygamy**

I grew up in a polygamous family. My father had four wives namely Chemwi; Miriam; Agnes and Esinath. I could not understand the relationship between my father and his wives. I wondered about what makes up marriage? What made Hamudi Pakura have more power than all his wives' power put together? My father's relation(s) with his wives are at the back of my mind as I consider this research.

Most of the time I saw my mother behind the door in her kitchen peeping at her husband making love with a newly married wife on his veranda, tears running down her cheeks,

soaking her blouse and hands. This left me wondering and curious to research more on this topic.

### **1.3.2 Experiences as a Minister of Religion**

I work as an itinerant minister of the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. As a minister of religion, I hear married women tell stories about what their male spouses do to them. They tell stories of battering, economic deprivation, sexual starvation and complaints about extended families. They requested me to address their spouses and / or partners who are non-believers or believers including church leaders about their problems. These concerns of married church women, as well as my own personal story, equipped me to do this research.

### **1.3.3 Experience as a Man**

As a man, I witness domestic violence in Zimbabwe. Stories on domestic violence are escalating. According to the Musasa Project domestic violence has jumped from 1023 to 2129 in first quarter of 2015. At this rate and casualties associated, I wonder what makes women stay in abusive relationship. I condemn domestic violence and related injuries or deaths. In this research I learnt from women the reasons that kept them in abusive relationships. I learnt about the ways women used their skills to deal with domestic violence.

## **1.4 Research question**

As previously mentioned my research questions are the following:

My primary research question being: Why do Zimbabwean women remain in abusive marriages?

The primary research question leads to the following secondary questions:

- ❖ What cultural-religious, social and economic discourses inform the women to remain in abusive marriages?
- ❖ What role does the religious-cultural construction of gender roles, marriage and domestic violence play in keeping women in abusive marriages?
- ❖ What can be done to deconstruct these dominant discourses in order to empower women to leave abusive marriages?

This question and questions can be broken down into the following research objectives:

### 1.4.1 Research objectives

The following are my objectives:

1. Understand why Zimbabwean women remain in abusive relationships.
2. Understand how the socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions force married Zimbabwean women to stay with abusive spouses.
3. Seek ways to sojourn with these women towards healing and wholeness.

The above objectives helped co-researchers and myself to achieve the following research aspects.

- (i) Unpack (or deconstruct) the constructions that inform married Zimbabwean women about marriage, gender roles and endure abusive spouses?

Co-researchers and I unpacked the constructions within the Zimbabwean context which shape married women's ideas about marriage, gender roles and staying with abusive spouses. We learnt about the constructions which keep women in abusive marriages/relationships.

I borrowed the concept of unpacking (or deconstruction) from Derrida (cited in Wolfreys 1998:16) Derrida urges that constructions/ideas are not innocent. They are laden with specific meanings. Morgan (2000:2) says meanings are within the broader context. Derrida urges that the meanings should be unpacked or deconstructed, set apart within the broader context in which they are socially constructed seen also (Gergen 1985:3; Burr 2003:46-56). In this aim I collaborated with married women co-researchers to unpack the factors that informed them to endure abusive spouses within the Zimbabwean context.

- (ii) Understand the significance of socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions which inform them to endure abusive spouses.

Co-researchers unpacked the ways the constructions affected them in their relationships (see section 3.1-3.3). I listened to their stories with interest. My curiosities were answered. I lean with Morgan (2000:2) who says when a person tells one story s/he puts events in sequence, across time and in accordance with the dominant factor(s) within the broader context.

(iii) Sojourning towards healing and wholeness.

The *matare* with Musasa Project; ZWLA and *Padare* (men's forum on gender) established ways in which these organisations sojourned with co-researchers towards healing and wholeness. As *matare* we shared opportunities for healing and wholeness (see chapter 3).

## 1.4.2 Research Question

I positioned the research on the following question. What are the constructions that shape and affect married Zimbabwean women in abusive relationships; how could co-researchers sojourn towards healing and wholeness? The question helped co-researchers and myself to tell stories about the constructions that inform married Zimbabwean women about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The question helped the *matare* to relate the effects of domestic violence on women. It also explored ways that the said organisations and co-researchers sojourned towards healing and wholeness. This means that the research question opened up opportunities for co-researchers to socially construct (see section 1.4.1) the constructions that inform, affect them and ways of sojourning towards healing and wholeness. These stories are written in chapter three of this co-research.

## 1.5 Theoretical frameworks

I position this research within the paradigm of social constructionism; co-research approach, religion; culture; sociological constructions; practical theology; qualitative; narrative methodology and narrative design.

### 1.5.1 Social constructionism

According to Gergen (1985b:3) urges that when people interact they create meanings together within their own social community. In this context, they socially construct ideas, meanings and practices. Morgan (2000:8) urges that persons socially construct ideas and practices from their broader context. I also agree that the Zimbabwean context constructs the socio-economic; cultural and religious ideas and practices that inform women about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence (see section 2.3-6).

I prefer social constructionism. First, social constructionism helps me learn from women and men about their constructions of their understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The Zimbabwean context is the broader environment where persons construct socio-economic, cultural and religious ideas and practices. I learnt from co-

researchers on the ways they story the factors that inform them to stay in abusive relationships. I learnt from them the dominant stories on marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence that keeps them in abusive relationships.

These stories become the constructions that women tell about their marital experiences. They are also stories that men tell about their understanding about the factors that make women endure abusive marriages.

Second, social constructionism helps me to reflect on my personal experiences with polygamy and gender based domestic violence that happened between and/or among my father and my mother and other wives. My family context and community became the source of meaning that informed my personal stories. These meanings informed me about reasons why my mother and her co-wives endured gender based domestic violence from my father. It helped me see the difference between my story and how the women and men co- researchers from other contexts different from mine tell their stories. This consideration helped me collect stories from co- researchers without undue bias. Hence, get the co- researchers' stories regarding the role of theology in marriage.

Third, social constructionism helped me and my supervisors (Professor Dr Johann Meylahn from University of Pretoria) socially construct new knowledge around the research topic. I bring my story and stories of co-researchers from the Zimbabwean context. I co-researched with co-researchers from different contexts. Inevitably, there are possible ideas and practices that Professor Johann and myself are likely to unpack further. I see this as a form of a co-research social constructionism. This helped me clarify the Zimbabwean constructions that informed women about marriage.

### **1.5.2 Co-research approach**

David Epston cited in Dulwich Centre (2004:30-34), proposes a co-research approach to research. Epston rethinks regarding seeing research as being objective to seeing it as a subjective process. The researcher is not an expert. But the research participants/consultants are the experts of their experiences. This made Epston propose the concept of co-research. He urges that the researcher and interviewees are collaborators or co-researchers. Collectively they co-produce knowledges about their experiences.

I prefer the co-research approach to research. The approach helps me to see participants and myself as co-researchers on the understanding of social constructions of marriage, gender

based roles and domestic violence. This makes us co-researchers in the co-research of the experiences of married Zimbabwean women who endure abusive spouses. It becomes an opportunity to name the socio- economic, cultural and religious constructions that inform my co-researchers about marriage.

### **1.5.3 Theology**

Theology was derived from two Greek words *Theos* (God) and *logos* (word about God), which then means the word of God or discourse about God. Scholars suggest that it was first used by the Greek philosopher Plato (McGrath 1993:117). For him, “theology” meant “a rational conception of the divine” or studies which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available (Macquarrie 1971:1). Theology which is the word of God (comprises of five major fields but I focus on practical theology).

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) say practical theology is theological theory of Christians about communicative actions which mediate God’s coming to people on earth. It helps us to talk about God in their lives and it helps myself to understand the theological ideas and practices which are coming from religion which cause women to stay in abusive relationships.

In practical theology I prefer the pastoral therapy approach. This is one approach to counselling that helped me understand the ideas women tell about their relationships with spouses.

In pastoral therapy, I borrowed ideas from liberation theology. Moore (cited in Mbiti 1998:152) urges that liberation theology is the theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed. Moore informs me to learn from co-researchers the ways in which religion and culture oppress them. Together, we want to sojourn in ways that help co- researchers’ work towards healing and wholeness. This means that liberation theology is the means through which the oppressed female genders tell their stories and create meaning from their experiences with men in their respective contexts.

### **1.6 Research Methodologies**

I positioned the research within the qualitative methodology. According to Leedy and Omrod (2005: 94), defines qualitative methodology as an approach used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of describing and understanding the

phenomena from the co-researchers' point of view. I also co-opt the narrative methodology. A narrative methodology is a method that uses stories to tell the life experiences in a particular context (White and Epston 1990:33).

The blending of qualitative and narrative methodologies offered advantages to this research.

These methodologies facilitate the extensive collection of narrative data from the co-researchers' experiences within their socio-economic, cultural and religious contexts.

In view of my research objectives (see section 3.1- 3.3), the first step recorded the married women's stories about why they stay in abusive relationships and the constructions that informed them about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The researcher learnt about the constructions that informed them to stay in abusive marriages.

It was important to learn and listen from the stories of the co-researchers how they have constructed their ideas on marriage and specifically gender roles in marriages.

Questions which guided the interpretations of the stories are the following:

- ❖ What informs these constructions of gender roles?
- ❖ What role does religion and culture play in the construction of these roles?
- ❖ Why do these roles tolerate abuse?
- ❖ Are there socio-economic reasons that force women to remain in abusive relationships that are condoned by culture and religion?
- ❖ Why are they so powerful that women remain in abusive relationships?
- ❖ How can these constructions be deconstructed?
- ❖ Can alternative stories be developed within the socio-economic contexts of these women?

So, the narrative methodology provided the married Zimbabwean women with the framework of storying the problem – saturated experiences (White and Epston 1990:3-4) regarding why they stay in abusive relationships.

The second step named the problem saturated stories from Zimbabwean constructions regarding marriages, the gender based roles and domestic violence women go through. White and Epston call the stories internalised conversations. Internalised conversations are stories or descriptions that put problems within the self and/or relations. Internalisation is the process of writing the societal values, beliefs, norms and mores into the members of society and the



community (White & Epston 1990:38; Morgan 2000:2; Carey & Russell 2002:3). This means that persons “tend to lump together, their lives and the problem”. So, when Zimbabweans interact they internalise the religious and cultural values, beliefs, norms and mores about marriage. This step named conversations or constructions that have informed the co-researchers’ ideas and practices in marriage.

The third step was externalising conversations. Externalising conversations are ways of working with persons that consult with a pastoral therapist. The approach separates the person from the problem. The therapist and the person consulting become one and team up to talk about the problem (see White & Epston 1990:38; Morgan 2000:2). This means that as co-researchers we used externalising conversations to talk about the constructions that affected my co-researchers. They told how the factors affect them. They told also how they sojourned towards healing and wholeness. This changed internalised conversations into alternative conversations. For example the married Zimbabwean women unpacked ways of dealing with the religious and cultural factors that fed abusive relations. This produced alternative stories that re-told married women’s stories from problem - saturation to new stories of healing and wholeness.

The fourth step was the alternative conversations. These stories are new ways that empowered married women to deal with abusive spouses. In this position, co-researchers and myself sojourned toward healing and wholeness. The alternative conversations opened up empowering “rich conclusions” about sojourning amid abusive relations. The rich conclusions are unlike the thin identity conclusions that burdened persons tend to present at the initial stage of the narrative conversations (Morgan 2000:13).

## **1.7 Research Design**

I also used narrative ideas and practices (White and Epston 1990:33), especially the focused group conversations. According to (White and Epston 1990:3-4) the narrative research method allows persons to tell their stories in sequence, across time and in accordance with their dominant themes. In this research the narrative method and design allow married Zimbabwean women to story their life experiences with their spouses. The *matare* become the narrative space for married women to tell the constructions that inform them to stay in abusive relationships.

I seek to be respectful, non-blaming and centre women as the experts of their stories (Morgan 2000:2). Use of questions and curiosities helped me open up the co-researchers' untold stories (White & Epston 1990:38-39) Thus, these conversations produce the stories that reflect the constructions and effects on women and their relationships.

### **1.8 Narrative interpretations**

White and Epston (1990) urge that conversations help in the process of creation of meanings and conclusions. As a design, narrative interpretations help co-researchers and myself construct a meaning from the stories about their relationships with men. It is the responsibility of the *dare* to interpret their stories into what factors and effects inform and affect them to stay in abusive relationships. They also tell of ways they can sojourn towards healing and wholeness. My responsibility is to seek clarification on constructions, effect ways of healing and wholeness. This enriches the stories and meaning of the *matare*.

### **1.9 Research validity**

Research validity is a contested subject. Some urge that a researcher must have a large sample to come up with objective, exhaustive and conclusive results. Others maintain that a small sample is invalid and cannot be generalised. In this qualitative and narrative research, I consider the stories co-researchers tell in terms of constructions, effects and ways of healing and wholeness as valid. Co-researchers are the experts of their stories, meanings and interpretations. If these stories are true for the co-researchers, they are the persons that validate their stories. The truthfulness and validity of the stories are socially constructed and negotiated in the context of the *matare*. My role is to use curiosity and questioning to enable co-researchers to story their experiences of abusive spouses. This means that these stories are objective for the co-researchers and cannot be generalised to reflect all women in Zimbabwe. In some cases co-researchers tell stories that they have heard from other women. The validity is applicable to the extent of the few stories other women have experienced.

It was also valid in that the *matare* and the hosting organisations helped co-researchers to sojourn towards healing and wholeness.

### **1.10 Research Procedure**

First the researcher approached three organisations dealing with gender based domestic violence; Musasa Project, ZWLA and Padare. The researcher gave co-researchers consent

forms, detailing the research topic; Objectives and request for entry into research (see Appendix 1). The researcher asked the co-researchers their contribution(s) if any on the consent form.

Second I asked for a *dare* of five co-researchers each. The researcher got five women (co-researchers) from Musasa Project and ZWLA, and four men from Padare. One did not turn up but despite that we proceeded with *dare*. The co-researchers were aged between 18-55 years from the above organisations. Co-researchers read the consent form. I answered their questions about the research process. Certified, the co-researchers completed and signed the consent form. The researcher explained the research topic, objectives and questions to the co-researchers. The researcher asked for any improvement on the research elements. The co-researchers allowed the researcher to record or/and take notes during the *matare*. Fourth the researcher transcribed the audio stories into written stories (see 3.1-3). The researcher wrote his personal story regarding the witness of gender based domestic violence in an extended family (see 3.4). Fifth, the researcher gave co-researchers written stories from their *matare* which they read through, improved some parts and the researcher clarified on other excerpts. The stories belong to the co-researchers. This makes the research valid.

## **Chapter 2: Literary Review**

### **Introduction**

In chapter two the researcher consults with other authorities who wrote on marriage; gender roles, gender based domestic violence; religious and cultural authorities. These authorities helped the researcher understand the research topic. They also helped the researcher see the gaps within marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence in Zimbabwe.

## **Chapter 3: *Dare* (Focused group conversations)**

### **Introduction**

Chapter three presents the *matare* of the three groups. The research objectives and question guide the stories.

Not all stories presented by the co- researchers were considered in this research. Rather the researcher weaves through the research objectives and question. The researcher presented his personal and professional stories with regard to marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

## Musasa Project stories

Musasa Project is a non-governmental organisation. It was established in 1988 by two women Jill Taylor a psychologist and Sheelagh Stewart a lawyer in response to the high levels of domestic violence in Zimbabwe. The mission of the Musasa Project is to enable targeted groups in society to change their attitudes, behaviours and existing laws and policies in order to reduce/end gender violence with particular emphasis on domestic violence. The Musasa Project provides relief to survivors of gender based violence through its provision of counselling services, basic legal advice, medical assistance, temporary shelter, advocacy and other basic humanity needs. The mission vision of the organisation is to have a society where women are free from domestic violence and can fully participate in development.

Why the Musasa name? The name comes from the Musasa tree which the organisation identifies itself with. This is because the tree provides cool and refreshing shade to weary travellers after a hot long journey. The Musasa Project provides similar relief through counselling and legal services. Families in rural areas also used to put up temporary shelters known as *musasa* while building permanent homes. The Musasa Project also provides temporary shelter to survivors of domestic violence whose lives are in danger.

The Musasa Project has its core values. These are total commitment; integrity; confidentiality; client centeredness; quality service and prompt sensitive response. Musasa Project's objectives are to enhance the development of women in our society through making the authorities and the general public more fully aware of the illegality and non- acceptability of domestic violence. To co-operate and partner with the government and other organisations or groups that are prepared to tackle the issues of domestic violence provided their aims are similar to those of *Musasa*.

The Musasa Project develops educational and training materials in order to train a wide range of people in gender violence, gender and HIV and counselling. They strengthen the capacity of targeted communities so that they are able to effectively deal with cases of domestic violence. The Musasa Project also gathers empirical data on issues related to gender violence to be used as a basis that guides organisational activities and informs society on the need to adopt zero tolerance and gender based violence. They also alleviate the suffering of individual women and children who have been abused by providing direct counselling and referring them to appropriate organisations where applicable.

The Musasa Project offers counselling, shelter and legal services to survivors of domestic violence. They strive to break the cycle of domestic violence by helping people reclaim ownership over their lives. The counselling team provides clients with information and options available to deal with their problems. They are professionally trained to help those who have been abused, either recently or in the past and support them through the immediate trauma and the difficult times that can follow.

The team can also refer clients to partner organisations or appropriate resources. The organisation runs a shelter for women and their children who experience domestic violence. A half way home is also available as an optional housing for working women and their children. The maximum period of stay in the shelter is up to two weeks however in exceptional cases some clients may stay for longer.

Musasa Project provides public education and training. The organisation reaches out to different target groups in the community. The unit also targets various service providers, sensitising them on domestic violence. The unit also facilitates the production of publications and training manuals on domestic violence. Services also include facilitating and presenting at local regional and international workshops, public debates and conferences and are also involved in promoting law reform to advocate for the rights of gender based violence.

The organisation researches on the extent and consequences of domestic violence and other subjects relevant to its work such as the linkages between gender violence and HIV and AIDS. The unit has an arm within the organisation which looks at the linkage between gender violence and HIV and AIDS. The unit facilitates the running of the support groups for women survivors of domestic violence in which prevention, education and training on HIV and AIDS is covered. The Musasa Project does this in partnership with the government and all organisations involved in fighting HIV and AIDS. They are committed to raising awareness on HIV and AIDS and its link to gender violence.

#### Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)

ZWLA is an association of women lawyers that was established in 1992 by a group of women who were all lawyers in either private practice, government service or the academia and non-governmental sector. Membership is open to Zimbabwean female lawyers based in or out of the country. Female law students can also register to be associate members.

They promote Justice and Equality for all. To develop, defend, dialogue on women and children's rights. ZWLA's goal is to meaningfully contribute towards the creation of a Zimbabwean society where women are empowered and assert their rights within a justice system that treats men and women equally and that is sensitive to the needs of children. TOGETHER WE CAN is a campaign by the ZWLA that is aimed at creating a multi sectoral approach to responding to domestic violence in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has a high prevalence of domestic violence where one in four women have experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetime and where 60% of all murders cases going through the high court are related to domestic violence. This violence is manifest across socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and exists in all the different forms that are physical, economic, sexual, psychological and harmful cultural practices.

For instance

- ❖ 39% of women have experienced economic violence
- ❖ 39% have experienced sexual violence
- ❖ 32% have experienced physical violence and
- ❖ 23% have experienced violence during pregnancy.

Zimbabwe ratified both the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women and the African Women's protocol that reiterates the need to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and provides redress to survivors of domestic violence. True to this the Zimbabwe government in 2007 enacted the Domestic Violence Act and since then efforts have been directed at ensuring implementation of the Act.

ZWLA on its part provides legal aid assistance to women victims of domestic violence, it disseminates information on the Act to communities, trains judicial officers and Chiefs on gender sensitivity and the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, monitors the implementation of the Act and identifies issues for law, policy and administrative reforms of the Act.

However ZWLA realises that more work needs to be done to ensure that women and children (and men in some instances) are protected from domestic violence. One such measure that needs to be taken is to disseminate information on the Act to ensure that women and children and the communities at large are able to recognise acts of violence and seek redress for those violations.

ZWLA realises that responding to domestic violence is not something they can do alone but requires all stakeholders to play their part in ending domestic violence. The Together We Can campaign thus calls upon all stakeholders to join hands in the fight against domestic violence recognising that domestic violence has harmful consequences in our families, communities and society at large.

It particularly calls upon

- ❖ Churches and faith healers to challenge religious beliefs that condone violence, require women to be submissive even in the face of violence and challenge the culture of silence that prevents women from speaking out about the violence they experience.
- ❖ Traditional leaders and healers as the gate keepers of custom to challenge cultural beliefs and practices that perpetuate violence against women such as *lobola*, early marriages and wife inheritance. To show that culture is dynamic and engages in processes of separating the values underlying harmful cultural practices from the practices themselves.
- ❖ Judicial officers to ensure their responsiveness to victims who approach the courts seeking redress for violations by using the Domestic Violence Act to provide protection and redress to victims.
- ❖ The police to provide assistance to victims reporting cases of domestic violence (changing attitudes) through investigation, prosecution, providing information on available remedies and even service of process such as protection orders.
- ❖ Communities to be responsive to victims of domestic violence. To assist victims and create community safety nets that can provide assistance to victims.
- ❖ Men to appreciate that they are an integral part in the fight against domestic violence. To challenge negative masculinities that precipitate acts of domestic violence and encourage male role models who espouse values of gender equality.
- ❖ Health officers to assist victims of domestic violence seeking medical attention and raise awareness on the ills that domestic violence poses to society especially in relation to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.
- ❖ Civil society to work together in responding to the challenge of domestic violence, building partnerships and sharing resources and ensuring that multi sectoral approaches are adopted that can result in the empowerment and emancipation of women.

- ❖ Corporate bodies to begin to contribute towards social responsibility. Employers should design programmes for employees that disseminate information on gender equality and the need to end domestic violence.
- ❖ Young people. The goal is to move from curative to preventive approaches to domestic violence through education including challenging stereotypes and attitudes related to the social value of women and men.
- ❖ The media to help create awareness about the problem of domestic violence, of the remedies available as well as demand action from government.
- ❖ Celebrities who can be role models who endorse anti- domestic violence campaigns.
- ❖ Decision makers in state institutions to urge them to develop and implement policies and programmes to support survivors of violence and bring perpetrators to book and to allocate resources to the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act: and last,
- ❖ Women to be empowered to take decisions about themselves and to know that they have a right to live a life free of violence. It is necessary to expand women's options beyond the trappings of abusive relationships.

Whereas ZWLA has initiated this campaign it is calling upon all stakeholders to join hands to make it a success (ZWLA pamphlet).

Padare/Enkundleni (Men's forum on Gender)

Padare/ men's forum on gender is an association of men advocating for gender justice in Zimbabwe formed in 1995 as a platform to support men who believe in gender equality and to mobilise and influence other men. Padare's main mission is to redefine masculinities through male introspection in safe spaces where men can move from domineering and violent masculinities to more egalitarian and nurturing forms of masculinity using a human rights framework. The programmes with men are interactive and community driven through chapters which are community structures formed to mobilise men and conduct outreach work on gender, gender based violence, masculinities, positive parenthood, palliative care, community home based care, school and tertiary institution based activities.

**Personal stories:** The researcher's personal reflection on polygamous family and abuses.

**Chapter 4 Understand what role constructions plays in them staying in abusive relationships.**

**Introduction**



Chapter four contains the dominant themes from chapter three that inform married women to stay in abusive marriage in Zimbabwe.

## **Chapter Five Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

Chapter five concludes the research. It presents the final results of the research. It also proposes recommendations to reduce or prevent gender based domestic violence.

## Chapter Two

### 2 Literature Review

#### 2.0 Introduction

Chapter one of the research question was developed within an epistemology and research methodology. Now, chapter two reflects on social construction of the world, religion, culture; social construction of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence, divorce, research gap and conclusion.

#### 2.1 Social construction of the world

Berger (1967:1, 8-9) urges that the world is a product of human creation. Human beings socially create the environment or context in which they live. Burr (2003) agrees with Berger (1967). Burr (2003:46) agrees that much of the experience that constitutes us as people is socially constructed through language. Burr (2003:46) notes that language is a bag of labels which we can choose from in trying to describe our internal states such as thoughts and feelings. Berger and Luckmann (1991:39) agree that language comprises of coordinates, symbols or pointers that persons use to tell their daily experiences. This means that language is a social construct that persons create and negotiate over a period (Berger 1967:6, 7, 12).

The construction takes place during socialisation (Berger 1967:15). Berger and Luckmann (1991:115) share that socialisation is a life-long process of creating and learning the values, beliefs, norms of the world or society they create and in turn create them. In other words the preceding authorities agree that socialisation is an important process through which human beings construct and learn about the world or society they create.

Human beings define and describe the material or object aspects of their world. Berger (1967:4, 6) urges that on the one hand, a human being is a biological being. The biological being learns to become a social being. In this process, the beings learn and internalise the essential material or objects about the world or society one lives. The material or objects are the tangible or visible identities of a human being. These comprise of identities like name, position, status, sexuality among others. On the other hand, the human being constructs and expresses the material creation through language, tools, dress and artefacts.

Human beings also construct and learn about non-material and non-object realities. This means that religion has characteristics that are tangible and non-tangible. The non-material

and non-objects are the value and belief systems that human beings internalise. These systems include the important invisible realities human beings create and learn about their world or society. These internalised values inform and guide the activities of society. The societal institutions validate or legitimise the invisible values of its members (see Berger & Luckmann 1991:110).

Informed by social constructionists such as Berger, Luckmann and Burr, I learn that the material/objects and non-material/non-object realities are social constructions. These constructions make up the ideas and practices that persons create. These ideas and practices in turn make up the characters of the members of the world or society. These lessons help me as I research from a social constructionist theoretical framework.

The social constructionists leave me wondering about the Zimbabwean socio- economic, cultural and religious constructions. I wonder how the preceding factors inform married Zimbabwean women about marriage; gender based roles and domestic violence. I also wonder about ways married women construct on ways they can sojourn towards healing and wholeness. These are the important stories this co-research should construct.

The social constructionists help me to see religion as a social construction. I learnt that religion is both a material and non-material construction. This means that religion has characteristics that are tangible and non-tangible, visible and invisible. Such an understanding of these characteristics is socially constructed in a specific context that may not necessarily be interpreted everywhere. Persons create religious ideas about their local spirits and/or ultimate great divinities (see Berger 1967:26). These ideas help persons construct practices that guide their interactions. However religion is a complex field of study. Below, I consider some ideas on what is religion.

## **2.2 Definition of Religion**

Mbiti (2008:15) states that religion is notoriously difficult to define, more-so in the African context. Idowu (1973:22) adds that religion is a difficult topic to handle, whether we are considering its roots/origins, meaning and connotation or its definition. It comes from the word “*leg*” meaning to take up together, commit, or observe. It also comes from the word “*lig*”, which means binding. ‘*Religio*’ meant “a relationship between the human and super human” (See also Platvoet 1996:10).

Cox (1992:3) argues that the complexities make it impossible to have a single definition of religion. The single definition which some scholars propose is accused of ambiguity, narrowness, and oppresses other collective beliefs and practices. Ferguson, cited in Cox (1992:3) proposes 17 definitions of religion. He further puts the definitions into five categories. These are sociological, theological, moral, philosophical and psychological. This co-research does not seek to give a working definition of religion. Rather, it suffices to observe that religion is one of the sources of dominant ideas and practices. I prefer the sociological perspective of religion.

### **2.2.1 Sociological perspective of religion**

I consider some sociological perspectives of religion. The perspectives define religion as a group consciousness. Berger (1967:26) urges that religion is a human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. This cosmos refers to the visible or invisible sacred or profane beings. Berger puts the sacred or profane beings into natural and artificial objects. These include respect for sacred plants, animals, rocks and deities. In the African and Zimbabwean contexts persons create religious ideas and practices that inform communities.

Berger and Luckmann (1991:115) urge that religion is one of the sources and agents of socialisation. It inculcates religious and cultural norms, values, beliefs and practices. For example, religion values marriage, the children and in-laws. Religion according to Karl Marx and Durkheim (cited in Cox 1992:7), is the opium of the people. Marx and Durkheim add that religion is a creation by oppressed people. The oppressors use religion to keep people content with their lot in this life. They keep them hopeful about the coming future in heaven.

### **2.2.2 African Traditional Religion (especially Zimbabwean Religions)**

I prefer the sociological perspective to religion. This perspective helps me to prefer African Traditional Religion. Hayes (1998:160) says African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the religion of Africa, by the Africans and it responds to African problems. In other words (ATR) is the religion of the Africans as they seek meaning concerning their problems. The meanings are the local solutions to their local problems. The Zimbabweans adapt the (ATR) into the Zimbabwean context. This becomes the Zimbabwean religions (Chitando 2008:152,172).

### 2.2.3 Zimbabwean Religions

Zimbabwean religions comprise of two major categories. These are the Zimbabwean indigenous religion and Zimbabwe Christian churches. Chitando (2008:152) urges that an African and Zimbabwean are born as an African and Zimbabwean in particular. The Zimbabwean becomes a Zimbabwean traditional worshipper. The worshipper believes in *Musiki* (Shona word for God) through the peoples' spirit mediums. They do not need any initiation into the Zimbabwe indigenous religion. An African, Zimbabwean does not need to be initiated into ATR. One is born in that religion (see Chitando 2008:152). Rather one needs to renounce ATR and get initiated into Christianity.

The Zimbabwe Christian churches comprise of two categories: The Zimbabwe Initiated Christian Churches (ZICC) (white-garment apostolic churches and the Pentecostal churches) and Zimbabwe adopted and adapted Western Missionary churches (the Methodists, Catholic, Anglican and Salvation Army). Chitando (2008:152-172) says Zimbabwean Christian churches are churches founded by the local Christian leaders and; an adoption and adaption of white western Christian religions by some Zimbabweans.

I use the Zimbabwean religion to inquire with co-researchers about the socially constructed ideas and practices about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The perspective enables my co- researchers to story their life experiences with spouses within abusive relations. Again, the perspective enables us as co-researchers to socially construct meanings during the process of the research.

### 2.3 Definition of culture(s)

Culture is defined from a variety of disciplines. I take a preference of definitions from the field of social sciences. Several authorities attempt to define culture. I consider some definitions of culture, especially from the social constructionists. John Fiske (cited in Kwaramba 2000:79) urges that culture is “the constant process of producing meanings of and from our social experience”. This means that culture is a constantly changing process in which people make sense of the world around them and this is done through shared signs and symbols.

Chigwedere (2007:8) states that,

a nation, tribe, ethnic group has its own culture. It has distinct ways of living, loving, eating, playing and worshipping. Culture may refer to the musical and visual arts, modern influences on life, an acquired tradition, or to regulations that bind the life of a community. Culture can be a double-edged sword. It can form community identity. It can also be used to set apart or oppress those whose culture defines as others. Participants in culture are so natural and ubiquitous that most people take culture for granted.

Kreps and Kumito (1994); Geertz (1973) cited in Kwaramba (2000:79-80) further defines culture as, “the collective sense-making of members of social groups, the shared ways they make sense of reality”. This definition, like the one advanced by Fiske, emphasises the collective nature of culture and its roots in society and social groups.

Bermuda (1978:3) states that culture is, “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general”. Culture, “refers to the material production of a society”, which becomes a “central system of practices, meanings and values and which we can properly call dominant and effective”. The concept of culture does not have one definition. Culture has been defined from a wide variety of disciplines including social sciences and humanities among others.

According to the Marxist school (cited in Bermuda 1978:3 and Kwaramba 2000:80), observes that culture is a product of the ruling class which serves to maintain domination over the powerless. This means that it is an ideology that is formulated by those in power for their own ends. It does not serve all members of society. In the Marxist perspective culture is therefore, “both materially informed and informing”. Expounding on this perspective, Boer (1995:12) holds that in a Marxist framework, “culture shares space with religion, the state, intellectual endeavour and so on, which are then set over against economics, the relationship being mediated by social class”.

Berger (1967:6) urges that culture is a human construction and product. Human beings construct their cultural products as they interact face to face within their daily experiences. The cultural products comprise of material and non-material constructions (see section 2.1). Berger adds that culture is dynamic. It must be continuously produced and reproduced by man. Bermuda (1978:8) adds that the changes to a culture should be gradual within the acceptable norms or else the culture is disrupted.

I agree with the preceding social constructionists. I agree that society socially constructs its norms, values, beliefs, taboos and practices. Burr (2003:18, 64) urges that these aspects becomes the dominant discourse or ruling ideas and practices that inform and guide interactions among the members of society. This means that the social constructionists inform me as I co-research with married Zimbabwean women and men. We want to unpack the constructions that inform co-researchers about marriage, gender roles and gender based domestic violence.

### **2.3.1 Social construction of gender**

Lorber (1994:1) likens the relationship between gender and society to that of fish and water. She urges that to talk about gender is to talk about society and the reverse is true. Links (2014:1) explains that the social construction framework urges that there is no essential, universally distinct character that is masculine or feminine. Behaviours are influenced by a range of factors including class, culture, ability, religion, age, body shape and sexual preference. The process of constructing gender identities and roles is a complex matter. Therefore this interactive and complex process is the context in which authorities on gender attempt to define gender ideas and practices.

So, what is gender? Lorber (1994:3) proposes that gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses of the assignment of rights and responsibilities. She clarifies that gender construction creates the social differences that define “woman” and “man”. United Nations International Children Educational Fund (UNICEF) (2009:1) says gender is the behaviour, expectations and roles the broader socio- economic, cultural, political and religious context defines and assigns to men and women. Gender is not the same as sex see also Malleus (2000:34) and Chigwedere (2007:9).

Construction of gender identities, varieties of feminities of masculinities, is also seen as dynamic, ongoing, changing and changeable, rather than static or fixed. Links (2014:12) and Burr (2003:64) share that persons use language to define gender roles, identities and expectations ascribed to men and women. The electronic media carries constructions on gender. The writers express their gender stereo-types in various media content (Malleus 2000:34-40; Fiske in Kwaramba (2000:79). This means that members of society socially construct gender ideas and practices. These ideas and practices guide their interactions.

In Zimbabwe gender construction stereo-types names, clothing, colours and toys. Society names children along gender constructions. The names spell out the gender roles. They share power unequally between boys and girls. Mbiti (2008:109) argues gender marks the boy child as a leader and property-owner. The girl child is a domestic player, humble and lover. The gender stereo-types between boys and girls are noticeable during house-play. For example boys mould cows from clay and girls play with dolls.

This research takes an interest in the social construction of gender roles in Zimbabwe. I wonder about the significance of the socio-economic, cultural and religious factors that inform women about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. My research question about these constructions creates research space for co-researchers to tell their stories on gender based domestic violence.

### **2.3.2 Gender education and modelling**

Children learn their gender roles most powerfully by observing their parents. Soon you find them doing *mahumbwe* (playing house). It's surprising on how precisely they learnt and expressed gender roles.

Mbiti (2008: 108) argues that the life cycle stages are stages through which boys and girls learn religious and cultural ideas and practices. Oral stories are sources that teach proverbs, idioms and metaphors that reinforces unequal gender views. If one checks the oral sources on gender, one sees the religious or cultural bank that shares power unequally between genders.

Malleus (2001:17) argues that the media constructs gender imbalances. The contents of school textbooks underline the unequal gender roles. The radio and television show girls or women as victims and weak. Pictures show a mother going to the market to buy vegetables, while the father goes to look after the cattle. These constructs reproduce and endorse gender roles prevalent in Zimbabwe. These constructions should be engaged and questioned to work towards gender equality.

In some traditional cultures, boys and girls go through exclusive initiation ceremonies. This marks life cycle stages from childhood to adulthood. Community leaders (chiefs, grandparents, aunts, uncles, pastors and friends) teach, reinforce and spread gender roles. Adolescents learn about the meaning of manhood and womanhood. For example, girls and young women are taught on ways they should satisfy male spouses. This education makes a



woman an object of men's sexual satisfaction. It constructs in women a sense of availability for use by men.

Kambarami (2006:6) urges that in the family, the male child is preferred to the female child. Kambarami explains that males rule females by right of birth, even if the male child is not the first born in a family. He is automatically considered the head of the household. He should protect and look after his sisters. The female child is further discriminated against due to the fact that eventually she marries out and joins another family while the male child ensures the survival of the family name through bringing additional members into the family (Human Rights Monitor, 2001).

This attitude has seen some parents preferring to educate boys to girls, because of girls' capacity to bear children. As a result, the girl child is socialised to become a mother, soft, emotionally sensitive, and to have all motherhood features. Furthermore, boys who cry easily, are shy or avoid fights are often scolded by their parents for behaving like girls. Upon reaching puberty, aunts, grandmothers and mothers play an active role in ensuring that the girl child understands her sexuality and the implications it brings to her life.

Kambarami (2006:7) goes on to explain gender stereo-typing, "Don't play with boys" is a favourite phrase that characterises the puberty stage; however the Shona culture is very conservative to the extent that sexual issues are not discussed openly. As a result the phrase becomes so confusing for girls who begin to treat their counterparts with a wary eye without fully understanding why they should do so. This state is so confusing also due to the fact that as one grows up, she is taught the merits of a good wife, so how does one get married if she is suddenly taught that males are to be treated with a wary eye?

Furthermore, Kambarami notes that as one grows up, biological instincts win the battle and the female enters into sexual relationships and there is always the ambivalent feeling that at one end it feels good to be in a relationship while at the other end one feels guilty because of culturally cultivated attitudes and norms. Along the process a lot of mistakes do happen like unwanted pregnancies or forced abortions and society does not spare such women as they are labelled as 'spoilt' (Human Rights Monitor, 2001).

I agree with Muthegheki (2012) and Women's University in Africa (WUA) (2015).

Muthegheki (2012:1) urges that women and girls in many societies fare less well than men and boys. They have less access to education and training because of the economic value

attached to their household labour, work long hours for lower incomes, and have fewer or no property rights. WUA (2015:87) agrees that in a male dominated society men are heads of families. They control the means of production. Men become economically better than wives. This situation pertaining in families subordinates women and makes them mere appendages of the male-figure. Men mostly get priority for paying jobs.

Hartmann cited in Elliot (1986:110-111) argues that capitalism and patriarchy work hand in hand to ensure the subordinate role of women in society and that patriarchy dictates that men occupy higher positions within the hierarchy. Women are degraded and forced into a life of economic dependency. It is therefore the patriarchal system which determines the specific places within the labour process occupied specifically by men and women. Therefore, religious and cultural constructions in Zimbabwe favour the lives of boys/men than girls/women.

### **2.3.3 Understanding of marriage in Zimbabwe**

There are various interpretations of human creation. In this research I do not discuss these various interpretations. Rather, I talk about two interpretations that may help me discuss the understanding of marriage in Zimbabwe. In the two interpretations I do not make a conclusion about the understanding of the creation of man and woman. It is suffice to say that Zimbabweans buy into either one or both interpretations about human creation and marriage.

The first interpretation is that God created man first. Aschwanden (1989:28), explains his understanding of human creation. “So God took clay and water from the Earth’s belly and shaped a figure”. He told himself: “This creature must be like me, because when I go it will take my place.” He made man and gave him the power to rule, and the strength of procreation (Genesis 1 verse 26-27a).

I find the first interpretation interesting. I assume that the interpretation informs most Zimbabweans about the male domination ideas and practices. This explains the claim by some churches and communities that man is the head of the family and no decision is made apart from him (Ephesians 5 verse 23). Oates (1952:67) urges that in some churches women must not lead and address congregations. Rather they may address forums of women and consult with their male spouses at home and not in church (1 Corinthians 14 verse 34). This is in spite of the fact that many women could be more experienced than men; see (Mukonyora (1993:21).

McFague (cited in Andrews & Kotze 2000:325), contends that a person's ideas of God are influenced by a plurality of perspectives, including our religious language, our class, race, gender, nationality and family background, interests, prejudice and concerns. She contends that losing sight of the plurality of perspectives is likely to jeopardise the relevance of spirituality because it privileges only one tradition of the image of God, excluding many people. The basic metaphor that pervades contemporary Christian culture is "God the father, king, Lord and master."

The second view is that God created both man and woman at the same time (Genesis 1 verse 27bff; Fischer 2005:48). This view suggests that God created man and woman at the same time using different material. It is different from the first view that a woman was created from man. The second view creates ideas that a man and a woman are equal. This means that God put man and woman in the same position. Both should interact with each other equally. Sadly, the church and communities seem to overlook the ideas on gender equality evident in the second story of creation.

The difference in interpretations accounts for the gender inequalities in most societies worldwide. I agree with United Nations Programme on Human Immune Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (USAIDS 2009). USAIDS (2009:14) urges that the relations between women and men in most societies are characterised by unequal power relations, with men being assigned more power and authority over women and girls.

USAIDS (2009:14) observes the following power inequalities:

- ❖ Control- In most societies most of the valuable productive resources (such as land, equipment, cattle) and assets of high value are owned by men.
- ❖ Decision making power- In most cultures including in Zimbabwe, more men than women are assigned leadership roles and the responsibility to decide who, when and where someone can do something, especially in relation to economic resources, family issues and other opportunities.
- ❖ Value- Work that is performed by women is often considered as being of low value and is therefore either not considered as work or is underpaid, in comparison to work and positions occupied by men and boys.
- ❖ Use of time as a resource- Socially, men enjoy greater freedom of movement and association, and more time for rest and leisure than women.
- ❖ Physical power- This can be both real (actual) or imagined.

In most societies, women often have less control over their lives. Largely, women depend economically on their partner or male relatives. They are valued primarily and first as wives and mothers. They are not seen as people deserving full recognition and value despite marital status (USAIDS 2009:14).

In contrast, USAIDS points out a bias towards men. Men are accorded more social power and privileges. These inequalities can easily be observed by looking at everyday interactions between a husband and wife. For example in how the wife greets the husband; in how the wife may ask for money for household supplies and or how the wife may request for permission to attend a church meeting. There can be serious consequences for both men and boys who do not conform to these social expectations. Such consequences include threats, ridicule and violence.

At this point, it is appropriate now to talk about the understanding of marriage in Zimbabwe. The understanding seems to be dominated by the first interpretation of man. In the heterosexual sense marriage means the coming together of a man and a woman for the purposes of becoming a family, companions and procreation. This definition could be interpreted from the religious, cultural and spiritual perspectives (Mills 2008:13).

#### **2.3.4 Marriages in Zimbabwe**

There are various types of marriages in Zimbabwe. They are put in three categories namely customary/traditional, legal and illegal.

Galen (1987: 1-24) summarises marriage in Zimbabwe into following categories namely:

a) Legal marriages

1. The customary marriage (a husband can marry more than one wife)
2. Civil marriage (a husband can only marry one wife)
3. Unregistered customary union a husband may marry more than one wife (polygamy- the union is not a legal marriage but it is recognised by law for some purposes) and

Galen and the legal resources foundation talk about the civil marriage (or 5.11 marriages Act). The heterosexual couple marry and wed in court. Mills (2008:13-14) describes the preceding marriage as a spiritual marriage. Mills defines spiritual marriage as a marriage ordained and ordered by God. The couple make vows to each other so that God seals the marriage. This means that the understanding of the types of marriage inform spouses

about their relations for example, the type of marriage informs men to either have legal or illegal marriage.

b) Illegal marriages

Illegal marriage is one type that is not sanctioned by the law and/or the customary traditional systems. The partners live together without the approval of most relations.

These include:

Galen (1987:18) and legal resources foundation (2006:23) identify living together or cohabitation as an illegal marriage. (This type is also understood in Zimbabwe as a small house. A small house refers to a mistress and her household where a man visits and/or stays without the knowledge of his wife or wives) A man and woman agree to stay together without any customary or legal formalities.

### **2.3.5 Child marriages and dependence on male spouses**

In Zimbabwe, child marriage is illegal. But a number of children are forced into marriage.

Legal resources foundation (2009:1) defines a child as any person under the age of 18, unless there is a law which provides for the child to reach the age of majority at a younger age. This means that children who are below 18 are minors. However, some of our laws, like the children's Act differentiate between a child and a young person. A child is defined as a person under the age of 16 years. A young person is a person who has reached the age of 16 but not yet reached 18 years. An infant is a person under seven years (see also treaties on children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child).

The Zimbabwean constitution (2013 sections 26 and 78) outlaws child marriages. The state must take appropriate measures to ensure that no marriage is entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses. Children are not pledged in marriage (see section 26). Every person who has attained the age of eighteen years has the right to find a family (see section 78) and Bond (2011:12).

The Herald of (03 July 2015), reported that the United Nations voiced their concern on child marriages in Zimbabwe. The country has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Africa-along with Ethiopia, Burundi and Niger. The United Nations says President Robert Mugabe's government must quickly deal with the issue of child marriage because not only is it an

affront to the dignity and well-being of individual girls, but it deprives nations of the social and economic benefits that come from an educated and skilled female population.

The Herald quotes Bishow Parajuli, saying that girls must be allowed to get to a tertiary education level and then choose their career paths.

There should be absolutely no early or child marriage. I understand Zimbabwe has this practice of early marriage for girls and that must stop, it is harmful to the girl; at the same time it is harmful to the nation. This is extremely harmful. I understand Zimbabwe is trying to find ways of trying to change these practices through laws.

“I think that is very important,” Parajuli continued. “And that must be done as soon as possible for the benefit of citizens of Zimbabwe”. A recent official report shows that 24% of girls between the age of 15 and 19 years old in Zimbabwe are married or in a union. In some areas the rate is as high as 35%. The United Nations hopes the government’s commitment to aligning existing marriage laws with the constitution, which places the minimum age of founding a family at 18, will greatly reduce early marriages in Zimbabwe.

About dependence on men, Kambarami (2006:4) explains that the family is a brewery for male domination. Most Shona men see themselves as breadwinners and heads of households. Females are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers. This suggests that society views women as sexual beings and house bound. Charvet (1982:23), McDowell and Pringle (1992:31) further state that women are not only constantly defined in relation to men, but are defined as dependent and subordinate to them as well. As a result, women are socialised to acquire those qualities, which fit them into a relationship of dependence on men.

Kambarami (2006:6) urges that in the Shona culture, once a girl reaches puberty all teaching is directed towards pleasing one’s future husband as well as being a gentle and obedient wife. Her sexuality is further defined for her, as she is taught how to use it for the benefit of the male race. These cultural teachings foster a dependence syndrome. It explains why most African women depend heavily on their husbands for support.

Umemoto (2001:6) identifies poverty as a cause for early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden. Her marriage to a much older or elderly man is seen as a relief. Umemoto cites UNICEF that shows that economic hardship is encouraging a rise in early marriages. Men are postponing marriage because of lack of

resources. Parents have become anxious about the danger of their daughters becoming pregnant outside marriage. They seize any opportunity for early marriage.

To explain the desperation of women, Kambarami (2006:7) observes that once a husband dies, the woman quickly remarries. She finds another pillar of support to lean on. Kambarami conducted interviews with Shona women who visited the Harare Central Hospital's Social Work Department (January 2006 to June 2006). Most women who sought grants from the government answered that, "My husband died so I have no one to look after me"; "I was deserted by my husband, "I do not have a husband". Kambarami concludes that the women's answers spell how male dominance creates dependence on males to the extent that in the absence of males, many women cannot manage to support themselves financially as they were socialised to believe that, that role should be played by males.

### **2.3.6 Marriage as a risky religious and cultural practice**

The customary marriage allows a man to marry more than one wife. These wives could be legally or illegally married. This type of unions presents challenges for marriages. The man is involved in multiple sexual relationships with his wives. Men in Zimbabwe are involved with a mistress also known as a small house, National Aids Council (NAC) (2005a:8). This compromises the health of men and spouse or sexual partners.

I agree with Chirawu (2006:2); Dodson (1984:19); Smedes (1983:59) and Dominican (1984:132-134) who urge that many women have been infected despite staying faithful to one partner. While husband and wife take vows to remain together till death, married women in Zimbabwe paradoxically are facing death from HIV/AIDS related illnesses more than any other group. Marriage literally leads them to the grave. "Women have even become the face of AIDS in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe as 60% of all HIV positive adults are women," Southern Africa AIDS Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS 2009:8) and World Health Organisation (WHO) publication (2012:15).

WUA (2015) also comments on the challenges faced by marriages in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe like any other African country has suffered much loss from the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Quite a significant number of families and households have been decimated by the scourge. The high levels of AIDS related deaths in Zimbabwe have forced men to acknowledge that AIDS is indeed a problem that they can no longer

afford to ignore and demands that they find new ways of doing business WUA (2015:88) see also (Burnard & Mwale 1992:105).

About the HIV threats, Mungwini (2008:6) agrees that the pressure that these traditional expectations place on women is not only constricting on what women can do but has become dangerous too.

Muchena (2012:4), from the several studies and analyses prepared by prevention experts on this topic it has been unanimously agreed that such multiple and concurrent relationships are a key driver of the epidemic. In this age of HIV/AIDS prevalence, women are exposed to high rates of infection especially that they very often do not have the power or the audacity to insist on safer sex even when they know that their husbands have multiple sex partners.

This means that more men than women engage in multiple sexual relationships. Culture allows men rather than women to have multiple sexual relationships. It puts men at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like HIV. It also puts women spouses, partners and the unborn child at risk of HIV infection. The family institution becomes a form of imprisonment. Men' attitude towards prevention of HIV leaves a lot to be desired. They are indifferent towards condom use.

#### **2.4 Men and condom use**

Chamuka (2014:14) defines a condom as a latex or rubber tubular sheath used during sexual intercourse to form a two-way physical barrier that prevents the passage of genital fluids (semen and vaginal fluids) between sexual partners with the aim of preventing STIs, including HIV, as well as unwanted pregnancy in heterosexual partners. There are two types of condoms, namely, male and female condoms. The male condom is a rubber sheath put on an erect penis whereas the female condom is inserted into the woman's vagina before sex (Family Planning Queensland 2012).

According to Steiner and Cates (2008:184), Condoms reduce the risk of infections that are transmitted primarily to or from the penile urethra such as HIV, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, and hepatitis B. Condoms also reduce the risk of infections that are transmitted primarily through skin or mucosal surfaces when these areas are covered by the condom, such as genital herpes, syphilis, chancroid, and human papillomavirus infection.



Most men have an indifferent attitude towards condom use. They do not want to use condoms. Men prefer casual sex or skin – to – skin and urge that condomised sex is not pleasurable. Jackson (2002:106) observes that people who do not want to use condoms say that they are not hundred percent effective; they are contaminated with HIV and they have small holes. The religious communities discourage condom use. They rather preach abstinence before marriage and faithfulness in marriage (Dube 2004: ix). In contrast Jackson challenges that men need to take greater responsibility to protect themselves and family from HIV.

Jackson (2002:111) adds that condoms must be used until the couple who now want to maintain a mutually faithful partnership both seek HIV counselling and testing. If both are negative and they remain sexually faithful, then condom use is not required to prevent infection. If both are HIV positive, condom use is recommended so that they do not repeatedly re-infect each other with different viral strains. If one is positive and the other negative, then condoms should definitely be used for every sexual act. However, this co-researcher urges that most men do not want to use condoms and it causes domestic violence.

In view of men's non-condom use, Muchena (2012:4) observes that the threat of violence often limits a women's ability to negotiate for safer sex. Married women are often traumatised which hinders them from seeking reproductive health services as they are afraid of intimidation from family members and spouses. Without the right support, married women may find themselves experiencing anxiety and depression due to demotivation, disempowerment and demoralisation. Maposhere and Ray (cited in Chirawu 2006:14) also draw attention to the fact that women who are economically disadvantaged have fewer skills to negotiate safer sex to prevent STIs or unwanted pregnancies.

Regarding non-condom use Chirawu (2006:7) observes that this situation does not only infringe on women's rights in marriage. But also exposes them to HIV/AIDS infection. Women find it very hard to negotiate for safe sex as some men would say '*Dzakaenda dzakapfeka macondom here?*' (Did the cattle we paid go with condoms on?). Chirawu urges that the preceding statements expose the caprice embedded in the practice of non-condom use.

Chirawu (2006:14) goes on to say condom use has been advocated as one of the strategies to combat HIV/AIDS infection. But apart from its efficacy, married women do not find it easy to negotiate condom use within marriage. Condom use is one of the three strategies in the

ABC (abstinence, behaviour change and condom use) strategy to combat HIV/AIDS. The basis of the ABC strategy is that if one cannot abstain then they must be faithful – if they cannot be faithful- they must use condoms.

Numerous studies on condom use have been carried out in Zimbabwe. In a study conducted by Mbizvo (cited in Chirawu 2006:14) a respected scientist in Zimbabwe, few men reported using condoms with their wives but did use them with commercial sex workers. The study found that it is considered uncultured to use a condom with one's spouse. Condom use gives the impression of a lack of trust in a relationship. Some women feel victorious if their partners do not use condoms with them but do use them with sex workers.

This was aptly captured by SAFAIDS as follows; some women do not want to use condoms, because they see their relationship as long term or “serious” and believe that condoms are only appropriate for casual sex. Other women, who want to use condoms, often keep silent. They rather fear to upset their sexual partners who may be the only source of food and shelter for themselves and their children. Many women prefer unprotected sex to the risk of violence or being thrown out of their homes.

Authorities agree that condom use negotiation is biased in favour of men. Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) – Zimbabwe (2002:3) urges that women in violent relationships face difficulties in negotiating for safer sex regardless of whether *lobola* has been paid or not. Women have been beaten for refusing sex or insisting on condom use.

Mashiri (2013:101) observes that violence promotes the risk factor for women by exposing them to forced and unprotected sex. Their ability to negotiate condom use by their male partners can be linked to the extent or degree of abuse in their relationship. Many HIV and AIDS prevention strategies are implemented on the basis of negotiated condom use between partners.

## **2.5 Social understanding of gender based domestic violence**

Sarbin and Kitsuse (1994:4) urge that social constructionists define violence through language that tells of the experience of violence. The language expresses stories on gender and family violence. Constructionist theories of violence focus on discourse themes- shared meanings- that either justify violent acts or else redefine violence so that it is acceptable behaviour. Most men perpetrate domestic violence on their women spouses or partners (Blumenthal, Kahn, Andrews, & Head 1972:4; Adams 1994:14).

SWK Dictionary (1995:33) cited in Musasa Project (2004:34) defines domestic violence as any form or all violence that occurs between members of the same household or family. This also applies to boyfriend/ girlfriend abuse. Aggressive and hostile behaviour between members of a family that result in injury, harm, humiliation and sometimes murder. It is an act perpetrated to inflict pain or to induce fear to the person to whom it is being directed. The act is perpetrated among members of the same family and in most cases women are the victims of these acts of violence.

The constitution of Zimbabwe (2013:29) says no person may be subjected to physical or psychological torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (see section 53). UNICEF (2007:23) defines domestic violence as any unlawful act, omission or behaviour which results in murder or direct infliction of physical, sexual, mental injury to any complainant by a respondent and includes the following: physical, verbal, non-verbal, spiritual, emotional, psychological, sexual, emotional abuse, intimidation, harassment, and stalking, malicious damage to property.

## **2.6 Causes of domestic violence**

Hunter cited in Jackson (1992:95), identifies four major determinants of the prevalence of violence against women in societies; economic inequality between males and females; use of physical violence to resolve conflicts; low female autonomy and control of decision making in household affairs; and legal restrictions on divorce for women. Jackson (1992:98) adds that gender based violence is a symptom of gender inequality in society that allows men to abuse women with relative impunity and disregard women's needs. This gender inequality exposes women to fatal gender based domestic violence.

### **2.6.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is pain inflicted on a person's body. The Musasa Project (2004:38) argues that physical abuse includes many forms such as punching, kicking, slapping, burns, stabbing and use of other weapons. Caragua (2004:26) produced research from Mexico and discovered that a third of homicide victims are women killed by their husbands. They have signs of physical abuse such as bruises, cuts, fractures and lumps.

Dzingirai (2008:16) states that one out of three women in Zimbabwe is a victim of physical abuse from their husbands and/or partners. Physical abuse can be serious at times with a real constant threat of death. Evatt (1994:34) quotes one woman saying "you don't know the limit

when he is attacking you, it is very frightening. Each time you think this is the last time; he is going to kill me”.

### **2.6.2 Verbal, non-verbal abuse**

Verbal and non-verbal abuse is the use of speech, written communication; and gestural signs to demean someone respectively. The Musasa Project (2004:38) says verbal abuse consists of constant criticism, false accusations about loyal ties and sexual actions, repeated threats of violence against woman, children, friends, and relatives and pets. Comments like putdowns and being inferior, unattractive, incompetent, telling a wife that you are not a good mother are derogatory. Dzingirai (2008) points out that verbal abuse is the second largest form of abuse that Zimbabwean women experience. She says one out of four women in Zimbabwe experience verbal abuse from their husbands and /or partners.

### **2.6.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is when a woman is forced to perform sexual acts against her will or to suffer pain or injury during sex. Musasa Project (2004:38) states that men continue to have sex with their wives even if he knows that he has a sexually transmitted infection like HIV. Sexual abuse in Zimbabwe is mostly experienced by women in marriages and relationships. The Musasa Project (2008:19) points out that 74 to 85% of women experience forced sexual intercourse by their spouses.

### **2.6.4 Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse is the infliction of mental pain on someone. Either spouse or partner causes mental stress on the other (Musasa Project 2004:38) and also (Roxburgh 1989). This type causes family violence. These include woman not allowed to use contraception, in order to space children; use of very abusive or rude words; denigration or chastisement of a woman in front of others; repeated criticism of a woman, her family; or things important to her; forced isolation, restrictions placed on a woman and restraints on her visiting relatives or friends. Psychological pain occurs when a man spends much time away from home; ignores spouse or partner; treats spouse/partner as domestic worker. The man marries a second wife or brings girlfriend home. If a woman is an immigrant or refugee, threatening to have her deported is also psychological abuse.

### **2.6.5 Spiritual Abuse**

Spiritual abuse is mocking the woman's spiritual life or attacking it. It presents when the man spouse/partner bars the woman spouse/partner from attending a church of her choice (Musasa Project 2004:38). Sometimes her children are raised in a different faith or tradition against her will. In most cases the forms of abuse are linked. The various forms of abuse combine to effectively trap and control the victim into a powerless position.

### **2.6.6 Emotional abuse**

Adams (1994:18); Evans (1996) and Musasa Project (2004:38) agree that emotional abuse is the hurt someone feels inside when they are attacked by someone who is supposed to love and protect them.

It presents as a feeling of mistrust, bitterness, regret, fear and insecurity. This approach centres mostly on women's experiences in their relations with men. These types of abuse make visible the impact of abuse on women. Some men experience all these types of abuses. But for the purpose of this research, I focus on the effects of abuse on women. I want to learn from participants how they story the religious and cultural factors that inform them to stay in abusive relations.

## **2.7 The Effects of gender based violence**

*USAID (2009:11) says that* the consequences of violence against women are extensive. The consequences affect the health and well-being of individual survivors, their families and communities. Such consequences may be clearly visible or may be unseen for example the effects could be psychological, emotional, physical and social. Violence may cause permanent damage to an individual's physical health and have long-term emotional and social effects.

The effects result in depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, bitterness, low self-esteem, substance abuse, economic hardships; stigma and rejection. The Musasa Project (2004) agrees with USAID. The Musasa Project (2004:52) further agrees that domestic violence victims may sometimes have a low self-esteem. They are constantly humiliated and belittled through the various forms of violence. They adopt a sense of hopelessness and cannot see themselves being able to overcome their situation. They may feel hopeless and helpless such victims may attempt or even commit suicide.

### **2.7.1 Physical effects**

About the deadly effects of domestic violence, Musasa Project says that violence ends with the murder or physical disability of either the victim or the perpetrator. One may suffer physical damage such as cuts; bruises; swellings; fractures; burns and even murder which all require medical attention. A person who is often beaten by their husband begins to feel and behave differently. Often, they develop bad feelings not only about the person who is beating them. But also about themselves and even about other people.

Musasa Project spells out some invisible effects. Victims experience the constant fear of being assaulted; shame, so they try to hide the truth from others; guilt, thinking the beating was their fault; loss of confidence, and feelings of being worthless; difficulty in concentrating at work; mistrust of all other people, or all men; if the beatings are bad, victims may also have injuries, which have to be treated, causing them to miss work, hospital bills or not able to care for the family and home (Musasa Project 2004:52-53).

### **2.7.2 Effects of domestic violence on the family**

Domestic violence does not solve the problem being discussed. The person is simply forcing his partner and children into submission. The problem will remain. In the end, family problems have to be solved by agreement. The more violence there is, the harder this becomes. The violence has negative effects on the family: it causes injuries, which produce medical, economic expenses and days off work. It makes the home a place of fear rather than a place of comfort and security. People who observe or experience domestic violence tend to copy it and it spreads it to the next generation. It may result in the marriage coming to an end and the family breaking up (Musasa Project 2004:53; see also USAID 2009:9).

### **2.7.3 The impact on children**

Musasa Project (2004:54) urges that domestic violence affects children. An unborn baby is at risk of being miscarried as a result of abuse. Most children living in abusive households see overhear or are aware of the majority of violent incidents and get traumatised. A child who has seen his/ her mother being abused: is emotionally abused. Often these experiences direct physical abuse on themselves. Maybe neglected or abused by their mother who adjusts with the resources available. Children may experience post-traumatic stress disorder. For example nightmares, intrusive thoughts or images, flashbacks, bed-wetting, irritability and anger outbursts.

Musasa Project (2006:19) urges that rape or sexual abuse (which is part of a bigger problem) within marriage can contribute to HIV infection. When a woman is not ready or prepared for sex both physically and psychologically, she is likely to get cuts and bruises when the man penetrates her. This makes her vulnerable to HIV and STIs as the cuts and the bruises provide an easy way for the HIV virus to get into her blood stream (see also Jackson 2002:111).

I agree with USAID and the Musasa Project. Domestic violence has wide reaching effects on married Zimbabwean women in their relations. These contribute to difficulties in forming healthy and trusting relationships with children and others. People who experience violence and abuse are more likely to display similar tendencies in their lifetime. They could adopt risk taking behaviour. This explains the social constructions that inform women to stay in abusive relations and its effects on married Zimbabwean women.

#### **2.7.4 The scale of Gender Based Violence in Zimbabwe**

Level of Gender Based Violence (GBV) remains a concern and a major barrier to women's active participation in development. Despite the enactment of several gender responsive laws and policies, such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2007, women and girls in Zimbabwe continue to be the victims in 99% of GBV cases especially within the private sphere.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007, is still viewed by some especially men as a law to protect women only. Increased awareness raising is important to educate people that anyone in a domestic set- up can make use of the law, at the same time encouraging men to come out and report cases of abuse. The socio-cultural context affects women's ability to use the protective measures of the law. They fear being castigated by their families, resulting in many women withdrawing their reported cases from the police or courts. This is compounded by women's economic dependency on men and limited access to legal aid (UN Country Analysis Report for Zimbabwe, 2010:3).

#### **2.7.5 Women's experience with spousal physical or sexual violence by province in Zimbabwe**

Percent of ever- married women age 15- 49 who have ever experienced physical and /or sexual violence committed by their husband/partner.

**Table 2.1 Prevalence of domestic violence in provinces**

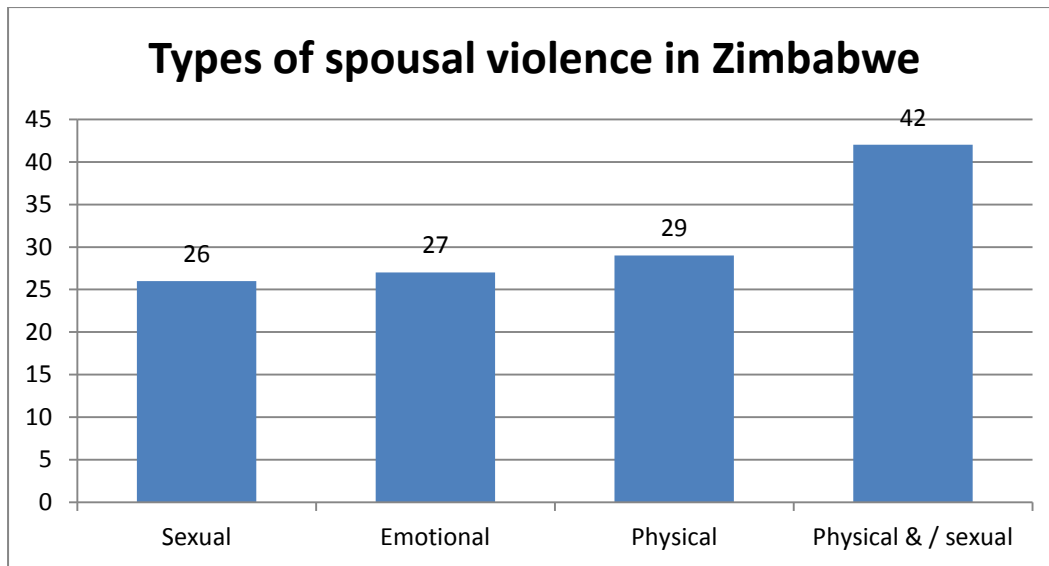
Province	Percentage
Matabeleland North	17%
Bulawayo	29%
Matabeleland South	36%
Midlands	39%
Harare	40%
Masvingo	40%
Mashonaland East	42%
Mashonaland West	47%
Manicaland	49%
Mashonaland Central	56%
Overall Zimbabwe is rated:	42%

This shows the prevalence of domestic violence which ranges from 17% in Matabeleland North province to 56% in the Mashonaland Central. 42% of women in Zimbabwe have experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence (or both) at some point in their lives.

### **2.7.6 Types of spousal violence**

Percent of ever-married women age 15- 49 who have ever experienced violence committed by their husband/partner.





**Table 2.2 Types of violence in Zimbabwe**

Colum Chart 2.1 shows the type of domestic violence experienced by women as reflected in the Zimbabwe Demographic and health survey of 2010- 2011.

## 2.8 Media response to domestic violence

Here, media refers to the print (newspapers and magazines) and electronic (Radio, television and online facilities). Madziwa (1995:15) accuses the media for its poor coverage of domestic violence. Madziwa (1995:15) urges that the media in many instances do not take the issue of domestic violence seriously. The letter from Gweru rightly states that editors not only make a laughing matter of the issue, but hardly ever commit space in their editorial to discuss the severity of domestic violence.

If a woman is reported to have seriously injured or killed her husband in a domestic violence dispute, the press seems to go on about how trivial the case of the dispute had been, painting the woman as evil. In many instances, the media reports far more details about the perpetrator of the crime than the woman murdered, leaving out her name and age sometimes. Stories about women killed by their husband or boyfriends are also considered as “fillers” of too much space in the newspaper.

### 2.8.1 Religious institutions’ role in fuelling and resolving Gender Based Violence

ZWLA (2013:38) observes that the church plays a role in fuelling gender based domestic violence. ZWLA urges that there are common responses in the church that tolerate/excuse or

normalise gender based violence. Too often faith leaders have encouraged women to remain in abusive situations. These responses hinder access to available gender based services:

- ❖ “If you report him, or divorce him, what kind of testimony will that be?”
- ❖ “Even though he hit you, you are not as bad off as it could be.”
- ❖ “He is your husband, you should forgive him.”
- ❖ “Children of God should not resolve their problems the worldly way. The assumption here is the only solution is in prayer/ divine intervention.”
- ❖ “Wait on God, pray and God will change things. Keep praying.”
- ❖ “The husband is the head of the household, you have to obey him.”

I agree with ZWLA that the preceding responses like these do not help in the fight against gender based violence. They do not empower survivors to challenge gender based violence in their lives or to access available services. They justify and create a foundation for perpetuation of gender based violence. While spiritual intervention can be used and pursued it should be used jointly with other available remedies, including criminal and civil law remedies. The key priority according to the ministry guidelines is the safety and security of the victim or survivor.

In Zimbabwe domestic violence is resolved through traditional arrangements, church and legal systems.

#### (a) Traditional Arrangements

Traditionally couples consult with their relations. For example either spouse or both consult aunts, uncles, grandparents and *sahwira* (best friends). These relations help families going through domestic violence. The Headman and the Chiefs can be consulted to intervene in domestic violence cases.

#### (b) Church

ZWLA (2013:38) urges that the church has a critical role to play in addressing gender based violence in communities. To congregants, the church leadership is the earthly leadership linking the believer to his or her creator. Believers go to the church leadership for spiritual guidance and also to seek advice on a wide range of social issues. For example, a faith leader may be approached if the believer has financial problems, a delinquent child, marital issues, sickness and other concerns. It is

therefore important that the church recognises the role that it should play in the response to gender based violence.

### **2.8.2 What follows are some of the ways ZWLA proposes for the Church's role in resolving Gender based violence:**

- ❖ Emphasise the teaching, practices, and structures that promote a woman/child's right to be free from violence. For example teaching that supports equality and respect for women and girls.
- ❖ Preach and practice a peaceful resolution of conflict using negotiation, medication and counselling services.
- ❖ Develop theologically based materials that emphasise a woman's right to safety and support; and a perpetrator's personal responsibility for ending the violence.
- ❖ Encourage utilisation of existing laws, policies and support services.
- ❖ Mobilise faith communities to donate time, money and other material and psychological responses to programmes that provide services to survivors of gender based violence.

Ensure that religious, spiritual and faith based communities create space/environment to allow survivors of violence to discuss their experiences and seek healing.

- ❖ Encourage members and leaders of churches to seek training in survivor experiences and on support that will restore and heal the survivor.
- ❖ Create opportunities for survivors to discuss their experiences and needs; form support groups for survivors who desire faith or spirituality based healing.
- ❖ Encourage members to discuss sexual assault, dating and domestic violence in a manner sensitive to local culture and backgrounds.
- ❖ Offer informed referrals to available services.
- ❖ Emphasise teaching and practices that promote equality and respect for both men and women.
- ❖ Integrate information on gender based violence into existing church activities.

Encourage men, particularly leaders in the community to speak out and use their influence to communicate intolerance for gender based violence in all forms.

## 2.9 Develop strategies to address the need of all affected women and children exposed to violence

- ❖ Seek advice from various age groups within communities, on ways to address violence.
- ❖ Organise youth/ women's/ men's ministry and leadership groups to educate them about the dynamics, impact and prevention of gender based violence.
- ❖ Inform leaders of the particular vulnerabilities of children, young people, older people and people with disabilities who may be dependent on abusive partners or care-givers.
- ❖ Seek training and appropriate additional information from available service providers.

Develop and refine guidelines and protocols for responding to gender based violence within the congregation or communities.

Create opportunities for youth to develop healthy and appropriate inter- personal relationships in the context of their religion.

Institutionalise efforts to address gender based violence by educating, training, and supporting existing service providers.

Encourage use of available secular survivor services and perpetrator treatment programmes to enhance communities' responses to gender based violence.

### (c) Legal systems

Legally either spouse can report complaints of domestic violence to the police. The police proceed through legal processes. One such paper is a protection order. Musasa Project (2004:94) defines a protection order as an order obtained from a magistrate directing the accused person to desist from interfering with the peace of the complainant. In the protection papers, the complainant, experiencing the domestic violence specifies the acts of peace the perpetrator should do if they are to stay together or if they stay in the same neighbourhood. Four protection order papers are completed and submitted at the magistrate's court. The court files one set; the second set filed at the police station nearest the complainant; the third set given to the accused; and the fourth set is kept by the complainant. If the accused violates the terms of the protection order, the police summons the accused to court.

Legally if the accused commits a criminal offence he or she is arrested. The court proceeds through the established processes at the magistrate, high court and Supreme Court. If the courts prove beyond any reasonable doubt, the accused will be sentenced to imprisonment.

## **2.10 Divorce cases in Zimbabwe**

Separation and divorce is on the increase in Zimbabwe. The media are awash with stories on marital infidelity, domestic violence and murder. These cases have seen either spouses or partners pushing for separation or divorce. According to the Sunday Mail (29.06. 2014) reports that financial stress, marital infidelity and domestic violence are behind the increase in divorces in Zimbabwe over the past two years. Statistics from the high court show that in the country recorded an average of 96% divorces monthly in 2012, a figure that has grown to 105.

Lawyer Ms Doreen Gapare says no particular age group is especially susceptible to divorce. “People from all walks of life are going through divorce these days and cases involved young people from ages 22 to 38, to even the elderly up to the ages of 60 years are involved,” she said.

On a related matter the Chronicle of 13 January 2015 reports that divorce cases continue to overwhelm the high court despite calls from religious, legal and traditional leaders for couples in the country to safeguard the institution of marriage. Judge president Justice George Chiweshe, said, speaking during the official opening of the 2015 legal year at the Bulawayo high court, that divorce matters dominated cases handled by the court last year. “As I mentioned during last year’s official opening divorce cases are on the rise. The cases rose to 476 and to us that’s a major concern. We are worried about the rate at which couples are divorcing,” he said. He further said the high court recorded 475 unopposed divorce applications in 2014 and 467 were dealt with. In (2013) 473 divorce summons were issued compared to 425 in 2012. Children have been the biggest victims in the cases with 90 percent of the couples applying for divorce asking the high court to rule on the custody of the children. The News Day of 21 July 2015 also records 1102 couples who registered for divorce since January 2015. This shows the impact of inter-spousal relations in Zimbabwe.

## **2.11 Research gap**

The literature review establishes important works by authorities on social construction of the world, religion; culture ; gender; understanding of marriage; sexual dangers; domestic

violence, divorce in Zimbabwe and mediation strategies in Zimbabwe. However, there is not much research that specifically focuses on why Zimbabwean married women remain in abusive spousal relations. I found very little in current research that allows the women themselves to tell their own stories about how the Zimbabwean social constructions of gender roles and marriage inform and affect them in their relationships. Here, it is this research gap that this research project would like to focus on.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

Chapter two focused on social construction of the world, religion; culture, gender; understanding of marriage in Zimbabwe, domestic violence, sexual dangers, divorce in Zimbabwe, mediation strategies in Zimbabwe and the research gap. The available literature helped me to appreciate other voices on the above mentioned ideas. I saw a gap concerning why married women stay in abusive relationships. This gap should be filled through this research. Concerning the gap, the research wants to open up a space for co-researchers to tell stories about the constructions that inform them to stay in abusive relations. These stories will provide answers to my research questions and fulfil the research aims.

## Chapter Three

### 3 Stories from *Matare*

#### 3.0 Introduction

Chapter 1 and 2 created the context of the research. These chapters provide the research background, inspiration, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and a short reflection on some of the works on African religion (Zimbabwe religion in particular). The African religion and culture shaped ideas in Zimbabwe about the understanding of gender based roles, marriage, domestic violence. These constructions were evident in the stories both women and men shared in their *matare*.

Chapter 3 is the first level of analysing the Marital abuse of Zimbabwean women, within their marriage stories with the Musasa Project, ZWLA, Padare and my personal experiences.

The co-researchers told their stories of domestic violence and from these stories it became clear that much of the violence is informed and condoned by Zimbabwean religious and cultural ideas. The stories include stories of those involved with *dare* (see section 1.1). These *matare* stories made visible the religious and cultural ideas from each organisation's story which affected their lives and relationships.

I present only stories relevant to the research aims and question. Therefore not everything discussed was presented. The voices of the story tellers and the specific responses of *dare* (members) which serve to illustrate a particular point was presented in italics. This made the story teller's voice visible. Texts in regular font are either from literature review excerpts or my own story and interpretations. I did not present it to the *dare*, but it is my reflection of my own domestic violence stories. This followed my appreciation of the organisations' stories. I stated in the research journey that I would present my own reflections.

#### 3.1 *Dare* with Musasa Project

I held this *dare* with the Musasa Project, comprising of five women co-researchers. I was curious to learn from women how they storied the constructions or factors that informed them to stay in abusive relationship(s).

The *dare* helped me to understand the socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions that informed co-researchers about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

### 3.1.1 The children factor

This is how the women's *dare* storied:

*We as women we stay in an abusive marriage because of children. A child is important in the Zimbabwean culture and religion. A child comes from vadzimu (spirit mediums) or Musiki (creator/ God). It is a fruit of marriage. A woman values a child more than her man. This attachment dates back to the time of pregnancy. A woman carries pregnancy for nine months. She labours in maternity clinic alone. Men seem to concentrate on so called menial roles. This makes men care less about children than women. It makes men harass pregnant mothers and not help spouses nurse infants.*

*This means that culture and religion put pressure on women over caring of children than men. The pressure is on the biological mother. The mother has the responsibility to nurse and raise the child. Assuming that the mother is alive, this role cannot be delegated to another woman, especially a step mother. Most step mothers are seen as abusive to step children. Even when a woman must leave due to divorce and/or death of spouse/partner, the woman leaves with her children to the next marriage. Who can surrender her children to a woman abuser? This view makes women hold on to an abusive relationship for the sake of one's child or children.*

### 3.1.2 Maintaining same totem

Maintaining one totem came out in the women's *dare*. Women insisted on the importance of one totem.

I was curious to learn the relevance of totemism to domestic violence. This is what the *dare* shared

*It is preferable that children have one mutupo (Shona word for totem). Mutupo is an important aspect of the Shona culture. Mutupo identifies and distinguishes one person from the other. Mutupo could represent an animal or bird. So a family is identified by a particular animal or bird. One totem maintains one family than many totems. A household with children from fathers of different totems is discouraged. Different totems may result when a mother divorces, or spouse dies. They are discouraged in that they create more than one totem among the children. This is said to cause sibling rivalry and general disunity among the totems.*



*A mother cannot stand the negative community ideas associated with many totems. Culturally, when a mother divorces, and has children with different totems the woman is seen as whore (prostitute) and trouble maker. These are cultural ideas and ills that paint women wrongly. To avoid this picture, a woman would rather endure one man one totem and one ugly picture.*

### **3.1.3 Ageing and injuries**

*Fear of ageing (age phobia) affects most women in Zimbabwe. Age phobia pressures ageing women to enter into marriages of convenience. Ageing pressures women to get married or attract the negative constructions about ageing and singleness. In the event of domestic violence, the married woman endures an abusive spouse. Socially, persons wonder why a woman is ageing and unmarried. These statures bring to mind negative cultural and religious ideas. When you are ageing and unmarried people in the community look down upon you. Sometimes, that woman is regarded as possessed by evil spirit(s). A woman inhabited by spirits is said to be unmarriageable stuff. So, men do not prefer an ageing and unmarried woman. As women, we need spouses not to be seen as demon possessed. This forces women to enter into marriages of convenience.*

*It appears that most men dislike marrying a divorced woman who comes along with her children. This perception forces women to stay in abusive relations. No man prefers a woman who has borne children. Most men see the woman negatively. Men think the woman is unsexy and unattractive. Men seem to detest a woman with her own children and have had sex with more than one man. A man may shortly tolerate a woman's children from a previous marriage. But soon changes his mind. This is in spite of the fact that men too are ageing and have fathered many children with different women. These ideas inform women to stay in abusive relationships. A woman would rather be married and abused than be unmarried and stigmatised.*

*Domestic violence affects women differently. Domestic violence has fatal implications for women. Women sustain body injuries.*

*Spouses punch our faces; kick our private parts; scratch our necks and pull-off our dread locked hair. They also use dangerous objects. These include a whip, chitirobho*

*(leather strap), stick and piece of wood. Who would want to marry an injured and ugly woman? Men want attractive, active, beautiful and uninjured spouses.*

### **3.1.4 Women infidelity unacceptable**

I learnt about how culture and religion do not accept extra-marital, sexual practices from married women. (Zimbabwean culture and religion tolerates and forgives men's extra-marital sexual relationships). Men are possessed with unsuitable sexual feelings. They are married but have more than one sexual partner. Some are polygamous but have other sexual partners. The society does not tolerate a married woman to do the same. Any mere suspicion of infidelity can result in a battering or divorce. This is unfair. Prostitution by a married man or woman is the same. This leaves a married woman to burn with passion as the man spends more time with his partners.

### **3.1.5 Basic needs**

Most men in Zimbabwe are bread winners rather than women: either they are formally or informally employed. A woman can marry either an employed or unemployed man. Socially, men have the responsibility to provide for the family needs not the women. Men are expected to provide for the families basic needs. The needs include food, clothes, accommodation, rates, school and medical fees. This situation makes women unemployed or self-employed. They do jobs like vending vegetables, meat, firewood, clothes and junk foods like sweets, biscuits or potato crisps. These efforts do not pay enough. It makes women dependent upon men as the bread winners. In the event of hostile spousal relations, an unemployed married woman suffers. She is between a hard rock and wall.

She is indecisive about exiting and losing basic needs. The indecision involves her leaving her marital family and decision about children. Leaving her spouse could lead to the spouse engaging in extra-marital affairs or remarrying another wife. The new wife takes over the exiting wife's property or residence. These issues cause women to worry and be anxious about leaving her home. Exiting is complex. It causes inter-spousal violence over property, especially cooking utensils, sofas and the bedroom suite.

About the basic needs, the exiting woman needs food, shelter, clothing and money. Most women depend on their male spouses for their basic needs. If a woman leaves she leaves behind the right to her basic needs. She fears burdening her parents and siblings over the basic needs. The economic situation is tough. Jobs are scarce. The few women who are

employed are losing their employment. In some cases women are being forced into prostitution, exposing themselves to STIs. This makes a woman hang on to an abusive relationship.

### 3.1.6 Positive-HIV status

*Men have multiple sexual relationships. Men are like dogs. They have many bitches. They indulge in multiple sexual relationships with other women. Some male spouses indulge with some women in our neighbourhood who have disclosed an HIV positive status. It is scarring and heart-rending. Women become restless and helpless to see spouses having extra- sexual relationships. It is detestable to have sex with a womaniser. A woman lives in fear of contracting HIV. How would you feel if you were a woman? (Referring to me as co-researcher). Men are the same everywhere. They indulge in risky sexual practices.*

*If a woman tests positive she rather stays in her marriage. A person living with HIV has special needs. In addition to the above said basic needs, she requires medical attention. A person living with HIV goes through several illnesses. The illnesses take advantage of a weakening bodies defence system. This makes the person vulnerable to flue, diarrhoea and headache among other things. It is painful to contract HIV from a promiscuous spouse. A woman becomes a victim of a promiscuous male spouse. So, where should the woman go? Who should look after her?*

*The woman must stay in her home and be looked after by the abusive spouse. He is the one who was irresponsible to bring HIV. He must be responsible for the mess. Women hang on to get medical needs. She would need medical fees when she is unwell. The fees include fees for relevant tests, x-rays, drugs and transport fares. Hanging on of the woman puts pressure on the male spouse. The pressure forces him to set aside money for the medical bills. Relatives on both sides of our relationship apply pressure on him over medical concerns. She would rather hang on, struggles on or dies in that relationship.*

*It seems like men avoid sickling positive women. When a woman like any other person is sick, she goes through changes. Some of the changes include skin rash; unusually curled hair; emaciated body; loses appetite and is sexually inactive. These changes bore men. They put a man off. Rather men seem to want round; well curved;*

*attractively smooth skinned and with bulging buttocks and breasts. If a woman is losing her attraction, why should she live? Who will be available for her? Despite illness, a woman needs life-long companionship.*

### **3.1.7 Dignity**

Dignity is one of the values women cherish. Dignity is the worth a woman gains as a result of marriage. Marriage gives a woman a new status. She becomes a spouse or wife. She gains the surname of her spouse. Waal! This is a dream come true for a Zimbabwean woman. It is dreams come true for every family to see their daughter acquire a new status. The new status separates a married woman from a mistress/small house. A small house is a woman who snatches a married man and causes them to abandon their families.

Men seem to respect most married women. They rarely approach married women for love instead of single women. In the *Shona* culture a married woman is sacred-like. She is respected. Men see her highly. Men esteem her. This is caused by the community that address her with her spouse surname. So if a man proposes love to her, this is a social crime. It is a taboo. Such a man is scorned, laughed at and mocked. The married woman makes it her agenda should a man bother her for love. She appeals for help from her relations and community. The community respond swiftly. This is the dignity most women expect.

*To lose such dignity results in worthlessness. The social heaviness or worthiness goes away. A married woman commands respect more than a single woman (unmarried, divorced or widowed). An unmarried woman is seen as a loose woman. She is seen as a prostitute. Most women have negative attitudes toward single women. Married women are suspicious of single women. They suspect that the single women will snatch their spouses away. Being single seems to be a difficult reality. These ideas see the single women as threats and enemies. Who would want such descriptions?*

### **3.1.8 Early marriages**

*An early marriage in Zimbabwe poses threats to marriage. Early marriage happens in different circumstances. The circumstances may include:*

- ❖ *When a girl child gives in to peer pressure. She buys into the idea that every teenager is practising sex. This results in the teenager eloping to the teenager husband or a sugar daddy who is ten years her senior.*

- ❖ *Culturally, some parents marry their teenage daughter to a wealthy man or a son of a wealthy family. This is common in times of social and economic hardship.*
- ❖ *When a young girl is given as a payment to appease avenging spirits after her family murdered a person in the avenging family.*
- ❖ *When a girl child is given as chigaramapfiwa (chigaramapfiwa is when the daughter of a brother is given to marry the brother's sister's husband after his wife passes on).*
- ❖ *When the teenage girl comes home very late she is ordered to return to the man who detained her until late.*
- ❖ *In the event that it suffices that a teenage girl has been de-flowered or impregnated. The girl through aunts and grandmothers is taken to the man in question.*

*In the event of an early marriage below the age of 16 years, a woman is disempowered. The girl child or teenage does not have a career or life skills to live out a decent life. The girl child- turned – wife is in form three or four. At form three or four female does not have a career or job. This puts the minor in crisis on the one hand she is abused by her spouse. On the other, she is disowned by her parents, accused of not heeding their advice. So a woman struggles on in an abusive relationship. She would have messed up. This is the price of disobedience.*

*This makes this young wife dependent on her working male spouse. She has no ordinary level (form four academic qualifications) or professional skills. She is not employable in the formal sector. Maybe she may have chances in the informal sector. She may get work as a house- maid. But men do not want their spouses to be house- maids. This causes them to be ashamed as a husband of a maid. Rather, men force their spouses to be house-bound. The women are vulnerable to economic abuse by their male spouses.*

*So the teenage woman endures the abusive relationship. She has no source of income. We beg spouses for money, including money for sanitary pads. This is the lowest level of begging that a woman experiences. This is a monthly requirement for most women. You dance according to the tune of the drummer. How else can I do it? I cannot go to work or further my education. I have no means. Some men see an educated woman as*

*a threat. They fear that the woman could question their male domination. This explains why teenage mothers endure abusive spouses.*

### **3.1.9 Virginit**

*A woman values virginity. Virginity in our culture and religion is the most important asset or gift a woman brings to marriage. This asset or gift must be protected at any cost. So, a man who breaks your virginity must marry you. If he does not, a woman elopes with him. Who would want to marry a non- virgin? No man in his right senses accepts a used woman. Religion and culture teach that a woman must remain faithful before and during marriage. This benefits man. The religious and cultural factors inform women to hang on with the man who broke her virginity. A woman is expected to have one sexual partner. Any extra relationships have a negative evaluation from the community.*

### **3.1.10 Pressure from relatives**

*In the case of a woman marrying as a virgin, the female relatives on the man's side support her. They will be shy to let her return to her own people. Their family paid a cow to the in-laws as a token of appreciation that his wife was a virgin. They encourage the woman to soldier on. I have supporters to lean on. The family members may know that their brother is the cause of domestic violence. If she returns their brother becomes destitute.*

### **3.1.11 Pay for avenging spirit**

*In some circumstances, some women are forced to marry men they don't love. This happens in the case when a woman's family must appease the spirit of the person murdered by her family. This is a forced and arranged marriage. When a woman runs away the avenging spirit causes havoc for the guilty family. This informs women to endure an abusive marriage.*

### **3.1.12 Women submission**

*Women endure abusive relationships as the church does not accept divorce. I Elizabeth (not her real name) have a testimony. I tried all sorts of prayers with church-mates. But it failed. I fasted; received anointed oil; and was given water to bathe in. I was told to bathe facing east, west, north and south, pronouncing my*

*husband's name. It did not change anything. Rather, the situation worsened. I endured this for three years. I left my husband after he beat me and strangled my neck, showing the dare the scars on her neck.*

### **3.1.13 Sojourning towards healing and wholeness**

The *dare* with co-researchers from the Musasa Project told their stories about the reasons that informed them to stay in abusive relationships. They also told the socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions that made up their understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. In their stories the *dare* expressed pain, bitterness, anger and frustrations. These problem saturated stories informed them to pose several questions to me (see section 3.1). In response, I wondered with them about what kept them going? What helped them to sojourn toward healing and wholeness?

In response the *dare* said

*Musasa Project uses a variety of strategies with its members in Zimbabwe, they commemorate annual events with survivors of domestic violence. Musasa Project conduct dare once every month at their offices. Musasa Project has representatives throughout the country. They advocate against gender based violence. They conduct counselling sessions in provinces.*

*Musasa Project has a girl child network programme in all provinces. The aim of the programme is to catch them young. They engage them on what causes domestic violence?*

In the community campaigns, *Musasa Project* in collaboration with *Padare* (men's forum on gender); ZWLA and human rights organisations uses carefully written slogans. These include

*Do not despair, you can always get support in cases of violence and rape; stand up for your rights; Act now, don't be abused! "Zero tolerance to violence against women.*

### **3.1.14 Co-option of other Organisations**

The second step is that *Musasa Project* which invites women's organisations to their monthly meetings at a central venue. These include *Padare*; ZWLA; WILSA and the Ministry of women affairs. The organisations teach on women's perspectives and the effects of gender

based violence. Through this forum women witness the stories of women at the hands of abusive men. The approach engages and challenges men about their male domination.

*Musasa* Project refers women survivors of rape and domestic violence to the police; ZWLA; WILSA and many Clinics throughout Zimbabwe. The referrals open up opportunities for further improvement of the welfare of women. These services help address the specific needs of women soldiering on in abusive relationships. This should cause women to heal socially, mentally; physically; emotionally and also spiritually.

### **3.1.15 Commemoration of related Annual events**

The third step is participating in the global, regional; national, provincial, district and local community campaigns. The campaigns include international women' day; day of the African child; 16 days of activism against gender based violence and the day against child abuse. These campaigns share information on the effects of gender based violence and child abuse. This shares information and helps the public to buy into ways that bring about wholeness and healing to abused women and children.



## **3.2 Dare with ZWLA**

I talked with clients of ZWLA at their offices in Harare. One officer with ZWLA helped me identify five women co-researchers in accordance with the criteria of the research (see Appendix 1). As a man and pastoral therapist, this conversation privileged me to learn from women about their experiences of abuse in marriage with their spouses. It helped me to see things from their point of view. What follows are some of the stories we shared in the *dare*.

### **3.2.1 Love**

Love is the central part of marriage. Love is like a seed. Love should be planted, watered and cultivated. Love should be allowed to grow daily. A husband and wife are expected to nurture love in their marriage. Both should ensure that they reciprocate their love with each other. The reciprocation helps each spouse to perform roles and actions that encourage a strong marriage. Women see marriage as a life-long commitment between husband and wife. Love informs women to expect happiness in marriage.

Happiness is a state of living in love, peace and joy. Happiness enables husband and wife to resolve marital problems in a positive spirit. It helps couples to support each other in good and bad times. Women uphold this value. They avail themselves and care with their husbands in times of illness. Rarely does a wife run away from her spouse when he is unwell or unemployed. She cares for her husband through and through. In the worst of situations, she hangs over the bed where her sick spouse lies gasping for life. But the case is different with men.

Men are heartless. They are cold and uncaring. They shy away when their spouses are in trouble. This is particularly true when a woman spouse is unwell. When her illness takes longer, a man usually takes his wife to her sister or mother. He asks these relations to look after her. In one case a man put his sick wife in a wheel barrow. He wheeled his sick wife to her relatives. He promised to visit them, but did not visit until she passed on. In such times men get involved in extra- marital affairs. This hurts women who faithfully soldier on with spouses when they are unwell.

### **3.2.2 Conjugal Rights**

I learnt about the religious and cultural importance of sex in marriage from the women co-researchers;

*Conjugal rights are important rights in marriage. The traditional counsellors like aunts, grandparents, family sahwira (best friend) and spiritual leaders teach about the role of conjugal rights in marriage. These are sexual rights between husband and wife. A couple must avail each other for their sexual satisfaction. None should deny the other access to their sexual right. A woman is told to have sex with her husband alone. Any other sexual relations by women are culturally and religiously unacceptable. Any breach attracts social punishment like humiliation before the woman's important relations; temporal separation or divorce.*

*But culture and religion is merciful towards men. Extra-marital, sexual relations by men are taken lightly. The community does not give attention to men's unfaithfulness. The community tolerates men's unfaithfulness. This turns to legitimise men's multiple sexual relations. These relations create problems for married women. Married women become sexually starved. Given that they are expected to enjoy sex with their spouses, the unavailability of spouses starves them of sex. In the process they are denied their conjugal rights.*

*Sex is one of the corner stone of a marriage. A woman leaves sadza (meal) and other delicacies in her paternal home. Sadza is the staple food of Zimbabwe. She leaves her male relations like brothers and uncles. Why? Because she wants sexual satisfaction! A husband who is having sex with other women rarely satisfies his wife. The husband complains of fatigue and lack of libido. Women's satisfaction is a slippery idea. Most men do not understand the meaning of satisfaction for a woman. Men do not want to learn from women, especially from their wives.*

*Culturally and religiously, it is assumed that every man knows how to satisfy his spouse sexually. This means that the man determines when and how to perform the sexual act. A woman cannot have a say on the sexual process. Any say attracts suspicion of unfaithfulness. Men think that women do not know what sexual satisfaction is. They suspect that if a woman knows about it she has been having sexual relations with other men.*

So, the absence of satisfaction leaves a woman unhappy. This exposes women to look for sexual satisfaction outside marriage.

### 3.2.3 Sexual satisfaction from women includes;

- ❖ A man who communicates with his spouse about sex starting in the morning and throughout the day. This happens through telephone messages, what's App, face book, twitter and electronic mail. A couple could create time to themselves for a walk, lunch or dinner. This is some form of mental sex that prepares a woman for physical sex.
- ❖ Sufficient time for fore-play. Fore- play must not be hurried or fast-tracked. This prepares a woman for sex.
- ❖ The actual sexual act should be a pace by pace process. It should not be hurried. A couple should create enough time for themselves but men miss this important piece of information. Men can get this information from their spouses if they would be willing to learn. They perform the sexual act too short and hurriedly, as if they are running out of time.
- ❖ Orgasm. Orgasm should be a climax that the woman should enjoy. But most women may not necessarily achieve it. This can be some form of sexual abuse or rape. The absence of an orgasm may not necessarily be disclosed to the husbands. Wives fear the suspicion of unfaithfulness.
- ❖ Sexual aftermath. The after sexual experience should be a soft landing. It should be a gradual process rather than an abrupt event. It should be a moment of celebration rather than regret of a lost or a wasted experience.

The above points are important. Culture and religion do not create enough space for *matare* around sex. There is no space for women to story their ideas about the process of sex, especially in *matare* that includes men. This situation causes women to suffer in silence. They know exactly what they need regarding sex. But they cannot openly share the information with men. They cannot stand a negative evaluation from the community including other women if they were to speak out on sexual matters. They are described as *mahure* (prostitutes) *Havana hunhu* (moral half-ness) and *vakangwarisa* (too clever). This leaves women to struggle on in marriage without sexual satisfaction.

### 3.2.4 Lobola

The payment of *lobola* creates problems for women. *Lobola* is the material that a man pays to the in-laws to marry their daughter. *Lobola* can be paid by a man to marry more than one wife. The material includes money, domestic animals (oxen, cows, goats, sheep, donkeys,

clothes and groceries). After the payment of *lobola*, the in-laws perform some cultural or religious rituals that present the newly married woman to the family she is marrying into. The ritual is an important cultural rite. The rite marks the departure of the groom from her family to join her new family of choice. What follows are examples of the ritual.

Before the girl leaves her home, close relatives gather in a hut to counsel her. She is told what marriage means and that she is entering an irreversible contract. The living dead must now be informed of their daughter's departure. The father, who is the link between the girl and the living dead, leads her into the cattle pen. The girl kneels while her father pours bile juice over her. As he does this he is speaking silently, informing all the ancestors about their daughter who is getting married (see Nyathi 2001:117).

The father gives his daughter a spear and a knife. The groom leaves the home with his new bride and she continues on the journey without looking back till her homestead is out of sight. The bridal party is under the charge of two elderly women. A few men accompany them to ensure their safety.

After the arrival of the bridal party, a beast is slaughtered to perform incorporation rites. These rituals performed during the marriage ceremony cause women to endure an abusive relationship. They fear to shame their relatives and friends when she divorces her husband. She fears her ancestors will curse her for not obeying her husband and other relatives' instructions before marriage. These cultural practices influence the woman to stay in an abusive marriage. Some of the women have died because they feared to be cursed by their ancestral spirits.

As we see it, it looks like culture says that a man has bought the woman. She lives at the discretion of her man. This puts a woman under the oppression of a man. It takes away her power and voice. Overtime this creates a woman who is ignorant and completely obedient to religion and culture. This factor privileges men as bosses or peacocks over women. It authorises them to make solo decisions, for example how many wives he marries; how to perform sex; what sexual postures and how to spend his money. So a woman is powerless to question her man regarding their negative practices. It leaves a woman trapped. She cannot pay back the *lobola* or return to her paternal home.

In some cases, women soldier on even if no *lobola* was paid. A woman may spend a life time with a man without *lobola* having been paid. The relationship starts as a living-in and

develops into a long term relationship. The partners bear as many children as six. Yet no *lobola* has been paid. The woman hangs on for the sake of the children. She hangs on for the economic and social benefits. Women want to be associated with a male spouse and a normal family. Every woman is proud to raise children in a family with both parents. Children get the basic needs like food; accommodation and education.

### **3.2.5 Total stranger in the paternal home**

Marriage seems to give away the bride to the in-laws' family. It creates the sense that the paternal family has surrendered all responsibility for the daughter to the spouse and his family. Some bride's family carry all the belongings of their daughter to the new family. The new family takes over the woman's up keep. The woman only visits her paternal home for a few days or weeks especially when there is illness, funeral or for a short visit. So in the event of domestic violence the woman is trapped.

She cannot divorce her spouse and exit the marriage and return to her paternal family. At her paternal family, she might appear as a total stranger. There is a cultural expectation that a woman must not give up marriage too easily. Most parents tend to question her return. They could blame her for giving in too easily. They might feel they have been embarrassed by her returning. Her brother (s) and their wives could be a source of pressure to the returnee and her children. They may feel burdened by having to provide for the returnees material needs. These practical needs force a woman to stay in an abusive relationship.

### **3.2.6 Life-long illnesses**

Related to being a returnee a woman could be struggling through a life-long condition. The condition could be related to sexual transmissions and/ or stress related illness, for example contracting *chirwere* (Shona for AIDS); life-long genital infection and hypertension. Why should a woman live to be nursed in a different home rather than the home where the illness came from. Particularly as the condition or illnesses are probably related to the spouse's extra – marital relations. He would have caused the contraction and transmission of *chirwere* to his spouse.

This is unfair. Why a woman should be forced out of a marriage and then have to live with AIDS. She must hang on and suffer with the culprit spouse. If she leaves, it becomes a great burden to the paternal family. This explains why many paternal families become angry towards the bridegroom's family. They are bitter at the groom for their daughter's misery.

They are aware of the cost related to a life long illness. It also explains why the bride's family could block their daughter's return. This forces the married woman to desperately hold on to a life threatening marriage.

### **3.2.7 The over involvement of relatives**

*"Rudo nderwe vaviri."* This means that love is for the two or couple. Primarily love starts with the two people. The two should be hotly in love. None should separate the two. The couple must be responsible for the nourishment of their relationship. They are responsible for the planning and implementation of their programmes. The other family relations on both sides should support the couple. They could offer suggestions. The suggestions help the couple refine their planning and implementation of their activities.

Sadly, there is an over- involvement of relations. The over- involvement happens when relations force their ideas and solutions on a couple. These ideas and solutions could be negative and positive. The relations are either on the man or woman's side. The over – involvement interferes with the couples' plans. This results in inter-spousal and inter-relation problems or even violence. In the absence of a strong love between a couple, both or either spouses will be affected with the over- involvement.

This leaves the woman at a complete loss. She worries over various issues. She worries over time wasted. Most women worry over ageing. Culture makes people suspect an ageing man or woman. In the case of a woman, she is thought to have social, cultural or religious problems. People urge that if a woman does not have problems she gets married early. This view affects women. They would not want anyone to see them as infested with cultural problems. As well, women are concerned about their children. Women worry over the welfare of their children when they leave their spouses. Therefore, this affects the woman's decision making.

### **3.2.8 The woman factor**

One woman insisted that not only male relationships were a source of problems for married women. But women as well were regrettably a serious source of abuse for other married women. I was interested to learn more of this and this is how the women described it:

*Immediately after my wedding, I returned home to nurse my ill mother. My mother fell sick immediately after the wedding. In my culture a daughter is expected nurse her*

*mother. A daughter in law is a second option. This means that as the only daughter I was expected to leave my newly wedded husband. I nursed her for two weeks.*

*Surprisingly, when I returned to my husband, I faced opposition from my sisters-in-law. These are my husband's sisters they said I am unemployed and so was their brother. They complained that I was a burden to them. The sisters-in-law urged that they were the ones who provided for my needs. The husband could not provide for me. As a result, they incited my husband against me. In turn, the husband was angry at me. This worsened our newly made family. In spite of the problems, I struggled on.*

*A year later, I could not bear a child. My in-laws screamed at me. They accused me of infertility. Culturally and religiously, infertility is assigned to the woman. Men are assumed to be fertile. Many men seem to experiment with sex more than women. In the experiments the man has a child (ren) before they marry. This is a secret the man's family guard jealously. So, in my case the in-laws pointed a finger at me. I became a laughing stock in the family.*

*I was worried. I worried over the criteria they used to say that I was infertile. They used culture or religion to make the conclusion. It made me sleepless. I lost appetite. I tried to talk with my spouse over fertility tests. I wanted both of us to consult medical practitioners over the delay in pregnancy. He dragged his feet. He avoided conversations on the matter. He spoke more with his sisters than with me. This worried me and I lived in isolation.*

*Eventually my husband fell in love with another woman. The woman was his ex-girlfriend. Everyone in his family knew about this. I was the only one who did not know about this. When I finally discovered it, I had lost his love. When I confronted him, he said he was in search of a child. In the Zimbabwean culture and religion, a child is highly priced. A child is seen as a glue or cement that should bind together a husband and a wife. In the absence of a child, there is no glue or cement that binds the two. In this sense culture and religion affect childless families.*

*My story of opposition from women relations is common when the females do not accept the bride in the new home. The sisters wanted their brother to marry a woman of their choice. The opposition affected my marriage. The sisters were overly involved. No one stood by me. This is the worst form of abuse that many women in*

*Zimbabwe face. No wonder most women in abusive relations are living with hypertension. The hypertension is related to difficult inter-spousal living conditions. This means not only men relations are a source of strife but women as well.*

*The wedding vows made me stuck to this relationship. On the wedding I vowed:*

- ❖ *To love him so much until death separated us*
- ❖ *To give him love in good and in bad times. I vowed to love him in property and good health. I also vowed to love him in poverty and in sickness*
- ❖ *To love all his relations*

*In the church community the wedding ring is cherished. The ring is the symbol that demonstrates completeness or wholeness. This idea comes from the fact that a ring has no visible join and round in shape. These ideas inform a woman to a life time commitment to her spouse and his relatives. The ring is seen as a symbol of marital achievement. Women value their wedding ring more than the man. Literally, they make it visible so that they show that they are married. The thought of leaving my spouse pained me. This would take away from me the symbol of completeness and wholeness.*

*I was not ready to do so. I thought my marriage would improve. I tried to impress him. Among other things, I cooked good food; dressed neatly; attractively; lured him sexually and availed myself for him. My husband ignored me. He seemed not to notice all my actions. Instead he slurred, mocked and frowned at me. It pained me. It broke my heart. But I moved on in hope that one day he would change. My relatives said I soldier on in prayer in the hope that he changes his mind and heart.*

### **3.2.9 Economic and Educational factors**

There are religious and cultural expectations from men as bread winners. Men are more privileged in getting employment than women. This makes men have absolute power over money and decision making. The man decides how the money is used. This disempowers women. In some cases where a woman is uneducated and unemployed the woman cannot make decisions. She is seen as inferior. Even if she is educated and employable most men do not want their spouses to go to work. They fear that spouses would prostitute themselves with their male bosses. Men are generally promiscuous. So they think that their spouses could do



the same. These economic and educational disabilities disempower and therefore cause women to suffer in a hopeless marriage.

### **3.2.10 Secrecy and Silence**

Religiously and culturally a woman is not allowed *kufugura hapwa pane vanhu* (raise her arm pit in public). The woman is expected to be quiet about the problems she is going through for example, woman cannot disclose that there are using different bedrooms. They cannot disclose about their sexual dissatisfaction. Women fear to embarrass their male spouses. Women fear that their relatives may develop negative attitudes towards their spouses. Should spouses reconcile, relatives may not forgive our spouses. *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (what covers huts are roofs). This means that the goings on in the relationship remain a secret to persons outside the house. This secrecy and silence they live with it for a life time.

### **3.2.11 Effects of domestic violence**

#### **3.2.11.1 Sobbing**

A woman bears a lot of pressure. One way of taking it out is sobbing. Women cry to themselves and to their close relatives. In some cases they sob unknowingly in public. This is a sign that domestic violence is affecting them. This attracts attention from on-lookers. Upon asked women, lie about illness or any other problems, the *dare* said.

#### **3.2.11.2 Dishonest**

The unavailability of love and sexual satisfaction affects women. A woman needs love and satisfaction. Any absence leads to temptation. Some women could yield to temptation to catch up with love and sexual satisfaction. In some cases some women have been caught up in extra marital affairs. This has resulted in verbal and physical abuse. Men have described such women as *mahure* (prostitutes) and *varoyi* (witches). These abuses prick like a needle, piercing to the heart. Husbands forget that they expose women to dishonesty.

#### **3.2.11.3 Suicide**

Domestic violence has been the cause of some women committing suicide. Some have used dangerous and other subtle forms of suicide. For example some used fuel to burn themselves. Others drown themselves. In some cases some have attempted suicide and sustained injuries.

### 3.2.12 Sojourn towards healing and wholeness

In view of the factors and effects of domestic violence, I was curious to learn the ways in which the ZWLA clients were able to move forward despite abusive spouses. These are some ways they shared with me: women with the same issues talk about their problems for example when they meet on their own. We have been talking about our problems in the ZWLA waiting room. We shared and heard various forms of domestic violence women are experiencing. This has created a commonality and a form of healing concerning our problems. There is a sense that I am not alone, other women are moving on and finding ways of dealing with domestic violence. It gives one a commitment to pick up broken pieces of one's life and move on. This is one way that women collectively work towards healing and wholeness.

Women seek free legal advice. For example many women in unbearable and irreconcilable conflicts visit ZWLA. Some seek for divorce, separation, a protection order and the eviction of the male spouse from their houses and settlement of deceased's spouses' estate. The free services and knowledge that lawyers offer to help them get legal resolution gives women peace. Women feel hope and the expectation of legal intervention when the in-laws fight them.

The *dare* proposed an alternative to *lobola*. The women spoke strongly against *lobola*. They said it was a form of bride price it literally meant that men were buying a woman as their own property. This discriminates women against men. Now, women are capable of buying as many men as they can. We want to appeal to legislators to outlaw *lobola*. This frees women from spousal abuse. It removes the sense of women seen as properties. Thus absence of *lobola* should in the long term help to heal married women in abusive relationships.

### 3.3 Dare with Padare (Men's Forum on Gender)

Men explain the religious and the cultural factors about domestic violence

I held this *dare* with *Padare* (Shona name for men's forum). The *dare* comprised of four members of the Epworth Chapter of *Padare*. Initially, I had planned to have a *dare* of five men. But the fifth man did not show up. Efforts to wait for him and locate his whereabouts were fruitless. We agreed to proceed with the *dare*.

I held this *dare* after *matare* with Musasa Project and ZWLA. I was curious to learn from men how they storied the religious and cultural factors that informed married Zimbabwean women to stay in abusive relationship(s).

#### 3.3.1 Virginit

The *dare* explored the religious and cultural expectations on virginity that caused domestic violence in marriage. Virginity is a non-breakage of the hymen (Oxford Dictionary 1998:1453). This is how the *dare* puts it:

*A man could propose love to a girl over a long period of time. Proposing was not an event. Literally a man's shoes could wear out the heels as he went to check for the girl and her response. The would- be fiancée wanted to assess the fiancé's commitment. Should the two become partners and then marry, the fiancée had to meet specific religious and cultural expectations. One such expectation was that of virginity. The fiancée was expected to be a virgin. The aunt (on the fiancée's side) would ask their relation about her virginity. After the payment of lobola (Bride token) the aunts from both marrying families would want to prove the virginity. This took place on the first night that the fiancée visited and slept with her fiancé now husband at his home.*

*A white mucheka (cloth) was spread on the mat on which the new married couple laid. It was expected that if the fiancée was a virgin the blood would stain the mucheka. The first thing the next day the aunts would want to see the stained mucheka. Upon seeing the stains the aunts broke into ululation. If the reverse was true. The aunts grew into a sombre mood. The fiancée's aunts on her paternal side become sad and shameful because of the absence of virginity. The aunts on the husband's side took the unstained mucheka and bore it with a sharp object. The stain or unstained mucheka would be presented to the dare of the marrying parties. This cloth determines the stability or instability of their marriage.*

I was interested. I wondered about how virginity was a source of domestic violence.

*The dare explained that virginity was an expectation of both the religious and cultural communities. Both Christians and non-Christians value virginity. Virginity is seen as a sign of faithfulness and abstinence from pre-marital sex. Lack of virginity was a source of domestic violence. The husband would question who de-flowered her. This would bring an accusation to the wife of pre-marital sex. The news of the bored mucheka would spread in the neighbourhood. The news resulted in men stigmatising the husband. He was laughed, pointed at, and mimicked. He was referred to as a man who married a bored woman”, the dare said laughably.*

The dare added,

*A man laughed at is a bitter and angry man. He lives with suspicion and the mistrust of his wife. So the man would beat his wife. The wife has no one and nowhere to turn to. Her relations accused her of pre-marital sex. Her in-laws accused her of being a disgrace to their family. The husband’s sisters, brothers and mother in law would incite her husband to abuse and/or divorce her. This would degenerate into fears of domestic violence. Examples of abuse are punching, kicking, stabbing or even murder of women spouses. Lately, the women spouses are hitting back, stabbing, spilling boiled water on the man or lighting paraffin fuel. Some men have died in the process.*

The preceding stories on virginity illustrate the role of religion and culture in informing and fuelling domestic violence. As a pastoral therapist, I see the ways religion and culture construct (see 1.4.1) gender roles that make domestic violence acceptable. The two factors construct an understanding in women that normalises spousal abuse. Both perspectives, socially construct dominant ideas and practices about virginity. I then engaged and questioned men about virginity. *Padare* noted that a woman was expected to be a virgin. This is not an expectation from the man. Women themselves (Aunts) bought into the religious and cultural expectations about virginity. They were keen to see the stained *mucheka*. They were sombre at the sight of the unstained *mucheka*. The aunts were quick to bore the *mucheka* to mark the fiancée’s non-virginity in their view. The aunts on the man’s side incited the husband to divorce his newly married wife. The aunts on the woman’s side were silenced by the non-virginity of their relation. Similarly, men in the community mocked at the man thereby inciting him against his wife.

### 3.3.2 Over involvement of relatives

In addition to pressuring the married woman, the man's relatives are a source of domestic violence. If the relatives of a married man do not want his spouse he engages in every form of violence towards his wife. They can fight; he falsely accuses her of being mean, unfaithful and unlovable. For example one woman in our ward was beaten by her husband's sister. In this fight her mother-in-law joined in. Unfortunately the latter fell down. This resulted in the married woman accused of thoroughly beating her in-law. This incident could result in the husband buying into domestic violence, incited by the relatives.

Culturally and religiously the daughter-in-law is expected to bow down. This is how the *dare* explained it;

*The daughter-in-law is said to have caused ngozi (serious spiritual offence). Culturally if the mother-in-law dies bitter and not compensated, it becomes ngozi. Her spirit would avenge herself on the daughter-in-law and her son's children. In the absence of a strong bond between spouses it leads to domestic violence. Religiously the married woman is expected to apologise, if she doesn't, it strains relationships.*

### 3.3.3 Idea of *kuroorana wematongo* (marriage of the same locality)

The preceding issues of virginity and over involvement of relatives could be solved by the practice of *kuroorana wematongo*. *Kuroorana wematongo* is a Shona idea and practice.

*The idea is based on the view that persons should marry within their local community. Both share the same beliefs and values. The marrying families know each other well. Any misunderstanding was solved amicably. Now, marrying across communities and ethnic groups causes domestic violence in some families. Some in-laws do not want a daughter-in-law they do not know well, the *dare* argued.*

I pointed out to men and they agreed with me over the changing concept of *wematongo*. We noted the reality of industrialisation and urbanisation. Families are forming communities in cities, towns, mining areas, and rural growth points and farming areas. People are attending mainline and Pentecostal (Right wing movement) churches. These become the modern concept of *wematongo*. Persons are encouraged to marry within their urban and religious communities. However these modern communities are not necessarily familiar with each

other. The communities are not as open as pre-modern communities. This observation means domestic violence remains evident in the modern context.

### 3.3.4 “Infertility of women”

The *dare* shared that non-child bearing was a religious and cultural cause of domestic violence. I was interested to learn more of the significance of children to domestic violence.

*A child is an important fruit of marriage. Religiously, a child is a blessing from God to the couple. Culturally, child bearing is one way of growing the family and clan. Non-bearing becomes an issue for a couple. This problem is pointed out to the married woman. It is widely believed among most black Zimbabweans that the woman is the cause of infertility. This causes domestic violence. Women and children become the victims.*

This struck me, as I witnessed the religious and cultural ideas and practices how privileged men were compared to women. What religious and cultural criteria do men and some women use to describe infertility? The criteria informed men to blame women for infertility. In this engagement, *Padare* acknowledged that there was a need to consult the medical system. The consultation could scientifically challenge the religious and cultural ideas about infertility. Science could provide ways the couple could try to increase fertility. In other words infertility could apply to both men and women. Any solutions should engage the couple and their important others.

### 3.3.5 Infidelity, non-condom use

Infidelity and condom use brought a lively conversation in the *dare*. The *dare* admitted that,

*most men culturally and religiously are unfaithful. This is what was revealed by dare. Most men in our culture and sadly religion are unfaithful. In a life time they would have more than one sexual partner. Women are aware of this practice. In marriage an increasing numbers of married women are demanding male spouses to use condoms. In turn spouses are reluctant to use condoms. Instead, male spouses accuse their wives of infidelity and be-friend with prostitutes, associated with condom use.*

*Men do not want to use condoms. Men do not want to collect them even freely from the clinics. In one case a pastor visibly was ashamed to receive condoms that a health worker offered him. His attitude got the attention of other patients. They laughed at*

*him. This demonstrates the attitude of men with regard to condom use. It puts women at the risk of STI's including HIV that causes AIDS. This matter causes domestic violence that affects women and children. Men are reluctant to go for HIV testing. Any request from the married women is answered by verbal insults and a beating.*

### **3.3.6 Women disempowerment**

So, men's infidelity and non-condom use is related to married women's disempowerment in religious and culturally conversations.

*Pastors preach that women must submit themselves to their husbands. They should not contribute in the church. They should not lead in the presents of men, but only in exclusive forums like women's fellowships on Thursdays and Fridays. Culturally women were and are not allowed to differ in cultural forums were men preside. This gives the impression that the married woman is akangwarisa (too clever).*

Any breaking of this expectation would lead to domestic violence.

### **3.3.7 What then keeps married women in abusive relations?**

In view of the men's stories on virginity; over involvement of relatives; *kuroorana wematongo*; infertility; infidelity, non-condom use and female disempowerment. I wondered about why then married women endure domestic violence? The *dare* helped me to understand the religious and cultural factors that informed married women to tolerate domestic violence.

#### **3.3.7.1 The child (ren) factor**

This is how the *dare* storied the religious and cultural factor about child (ren).

*A woman stays in marriage because of her child or children. The woman suffers in an abusive marriage for the sake of her child or children. It is widely believed that most step mothers' ill-treat their step child (ren). This belief informs women to struggle on for the sake of the child (ren). A woman cannot imagine leaving and exposing her child (ren) to serious abuse at the hands of step mothers. The married mother remains on at her own risk.*

So women value children more than their spouses.

### 3.3.7.2 Maintaining same totem

Related to the child (ren) factor was the religious and cultural practices of totemism. Totemism is the idea and practice that identifies a family with a particular animal or bird (Durkheim 1961 cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2013:432). The totem is a symbol. It is the emblem of the clan. 'It is its flag; it is the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from all others.' I was curious to learn the relevance of totemism to domestic violence. (A family in the black Zimbabwean context identifies children with the totem of the father).

*The father determines the family and the clan in which the child belongs. Mwanakomana anonzi ndiSoko, Mhofu, Shumba, Shiri (The son is said to belong to the Baboon/Monkey, Eland, Lion and Fish eagle totem).*

*The woman takes pride in totems. A woman wants her child (ren) to be identified with one totem. A woman does not want to mother children with multiple totems. This makes a woman endure an abusive relationship because she wants to maintain the first totem line. Mixing totems generates ideas that the woman is a prostitute and is the problem in the relationship. To avoid these impressions, the woman endures on in spite of the risk associated with domestic violence.*

The *dare* told me this empathically. This emphasis was connected to ageing and injuries connected to domestic violence.

### 3.3.7.3 Ageing and injuries

The emphasis on totemism was related to the religious and cultural idea about ageing and related injuries caused by domestic violence. This is how *Padare* connected ageing and related injuries with a reason why married women endure an abusive relationship.

*Most women in Zimbabwe fear ageing. An ageing and unmarried woman is looked down upon. She is believed to be possessed by evil spirits which dislike her getting married. Particularly, an ageing married woman fears that no man prefers mvana (Shona word for a woman who has borne children). No man prefers an ageing woman. These factors inform abused and married women to soldier on in marriage.*

*In most cases women are fatally injured in domestic violence. Most women sustain body injuries. They sustain hands, legs, backbone, teeth, and genital parts. Who would want to marry an injured and useless woman? Men want active and uninjured*



*spouses. This means that the married and injured woman endures an abusive relationship. She wants to remain in marriage and be referred to as Mrs SO and SO. There is more value placed on a married than unmarried woman. Most married women value or cherish this religious and cultural expectation, the dare argued.*

#### **3.3.7.4 Positive-HIV status**

Related to ageing and injuries was the HIV positive status of the married woman. In the case of a married woman contracting the HIV virus, indicates that the married woman has endured an abusive spouse. Women did this at the expense of their social, physical and mental health. This is how the *dare* explained it,

*In most cases most married men have multiple sexual relationships unlike their spouses. This puts married couples at the risk of contracting the HIV virus. Generally most men do not want to be screened for HIV. They seem to fear the consequences of multiple sexual relationships.*

*Women are more informed than men with regards to HIV- testing. Women get information from the clinics during ante-, post-antenatal and medical routines. This is different with men who have poor health- seeking behaviour. If a married woman tests HIV positive she would rather stay in the relationship in which she contracted the virus. She has fears of medical and economic benefits. She stays so that she gets money for on-going treatment. She also hangs on for her up keep despite domestic violence.*

In view of the preceding religious and cultural factors, I asked *Padare*, who is benefiting, suffering and witnessing? (See Kotze 2002: 7-8; see section 2.8; 3.2.11) I wondered about the ways *Padare*, facilitated healing and wholeness of the abused married women. I asked these ethical questions to reinforce the effects of domestic violence on married women. I wanted to cause *Padare* to look into the ways they could be of use to abused women. As a result I asked them; in what ways is *Padare* seeking ways to sojourn, healing and wholeness with married women?

### 3.3.7.5 Sojourning towards healing and wholeness

In response *Padare* said

*Padare uses strategies with its members in Epworth, co-opted women organisations and commemorated annual events. Our first step is doing matare once every month. Padare has a total membership of seven hundred men, across seven wards in Epworth. Out of the seven hundred, four hundred and fifty men attend matare regularly. In the wards, the men reach out to their counter parts in beer halls and market places. We are advocating for an end of gender based violence in families. We do individual and group counselling sessions with men. We also provide skills training for men in communities to arrest male idleness that causes domestic violence.*

*Padare also reaches out to boys in and adolescents out of schools. This programme is called Junior Padare. The aim is to catch them young. We engage them on issues of what causes domestic violence? What are the effects of domestic violence? And what ways could boys and adolescents come up with new ideas to reduce domestic violence. If boys and adolescents collaborate with their abused mothers this could in a way contribute to the healing of abused women (mothers)? Thus the Junior Padare programme should instil in the long term ideas and practices which encourage Gender co- existence and support.*

In the community campaigns, *Padare* uses carefully written slogans. These include: *Murume chaiye haarovi mukadzi nevana (A real man does not beat his wife and children); Mukadzi haasi ngoma inorohwa (A woman is not drum that should be beaten); real men are not afraid; ngatifambe! mutsoka dzehanzvadzi dzedu semuenzaniso waambuya Nehanda (Lets walk in footsteps of our sister like mbuya Nehanda, the woman spirit medium instrumental in the Zimbabwe armed struggle). These slogans provoke and challenge men about their male domination ideas and practices. The slogans have won men into the gender movement.*

### 3.3.7.6 Co-option of women Organisations

The second step is,

*Padare invites women organisations to visit their monthly meetings at a central venue. These include Musasa Project; ZWLA, WLSA and Ministry of women affairs.*

*The organisations teach the women' perspectives and effects on gender based violence. Through this forum women are witnessing the stories of women at the hands of abusive men. This approach gives men the opportunity to listen to women who are not necessarily their wives or relations. The approach engages and challenges men about their male domination ideas and practices.*

*Padare refers women survivors of rape and domestic violence to the police; Musasa Project; ZWLA; WILSA and Epworth Clinic. The referrals open up opportunities for the further management of the welfare of women. The survivors get legal and medical services from the mentioned organisations. These services help address the specific needs of women soldiering on in abusive relationships. This caused women to heal socially, mentally; physically; emotionally and also spiritually.*

### **3.3.7.7 Commemoration of related Annual events**

The third step is,

*Participating in the global, regional; national; provincial, district and local community campaigns. The campaigns includes international women' day; day of the African child; 16 days of activism against gender based violence; day against child abuse. These campaigns share information on the effects of gender based violence and child abuse. This shares information and helps the public to buy into ways that bring about wholeness and healing to abused women and children.*

### **3.3.8 Conclusion**

The three *matare* unpacked the religious and cultural factors that inform married women to stay in abusive relationships. The *matare* unpacked some of the effects of domestic violence on most women, children and some men. They shared ways in which they were doing community work with concerned organisations during related annual events. The stories helped us as participants to see the role of religion and culture in constructing and sustaining domestic violence. The stories helped us find ways to sojourn, heal and work towards the wholeness of married women.

### 3.4 My personal story

What follows is my personal story. The story comprises of the religious and cultural ideas that informed me about Zimbabwean marriages. I challenged the ideas and practices around constructions on marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. I use my experiences as a Christian and minister of religion to question and reposition myself regarding negative religious and cultural practices.

#### 3.4.1 Family *dare*

I grew up in a family of thirty nine: thirty four siblings, father and four mothers. My father was Hamudi Pakura; mothers Chemwi, Miriam, Agness and Esinath respectively. Hamudi Pakura was a traditionalist. Hamudi Pakura believed in the clan worship of *Musikavanhu* (Shona word for creator of human kind). He trained us as children into his indigenous ideas and practices at the family *dare*.

At the *dare* it was great fun: we sat in a circle; on bricks; around a big fire; weaving *nhava* (local rope bags); curving *mipini* (home- made hole handles); roasting nuts and maize and were introduced to *ndari/ngoto* (to homemade beer). Among other subjects, he taught us as children about respect as a polygamous family: all the four wives were our mothers, all girls' sisters and boys' brothers. He boasted about polygamy, arguing that many wives and children were a source of labour to till the fields. He learnt about polygamy from his father Mainda Pakura who had eight wives.

The above family stories stuck at the back of my mind. When I left the family *dare*, Hamudi Pakura' voice spoke to my mind. He informed me about polygamy. He was the mentor of all the 20 boys in the family. Then my ten brothers had two wives each.

At ten years when I was in Grade three I started proposing love to girls. Charles (ten), my brother's son and I talked about our girlfriends. Charles and I had three girlfriends each. I recall one day sharing with the family *dare* about our girlfriends and zeal to have more wives than our father. This set the *dare* into stitches of laughter. This shows the extent to which the family *dare* informed me about the religious and cultural practices of marriage. The *dare* socially constructed the religious and cultural ideas which ruled my father, his wives and informed me about marriage.

### 3.4.2 Polygamy

Our homestead comprised of 40 huts. Six of the huts were built in a circle. The 6 comprised of 4 huts for our mothers, one for my father and one a common sleeping hut for boys. Girls shared a sleeping hut with their respective mothers. My fathers' wives took turns to sleep in the father's hut. At the centre of the circle was the site of the *dare*. This was where our family religious and cultural ideas and practices were constructed.

At the *dare*, mothers brought four portions of food on wooden plates to our father. The portions comprised of different menus. Each mother tried to outdo the other. These varieties were the portions that each mother prepared for us boys at the *dare*. The portions were the same on a day when the family slaughtered a goat. At meal time, my father took turns to share meals with his wives. But I noticed his bias toward the fourth and youngest wife. This stirred envy and jealousy in his other wives.

Envy and jealousy shaped the interactions among our mothers. Our mothers took unfair turns into our father's *sikiro* (procreation hut). Our youngest mother had unusual access to *sikiro*. This angered her mates. This was highlighted when they quarrelled in the homestead. One of her mates could tell her about her unrestrained access and favouritism from their spouse. One day I noticed my mother peeping through the cracks on her hut door. She was staring, if not gloating, at Hamudi Pakura and his youngest wife who sat on the veranda. They sat conveniently close to each other.

My father was a drunkard and an abusive man. He either came late or slept at the beer venue in the community. When he came late, he demanded warm meals from his wives. Any delays and cold meals resulted in a beating. He kicked, slapped, punched or pushed his victim or target. As a result the third wife left the homestead. It was alleged by my father and other mothers that she was a poor cook and lazy as well. She left with a large amount of luggage. It comprised of her cooking utensils and clothes. She left her daughter Petudzai behind.

My biological mother Miriam was also ill- treated. She had her thorough share of beatings. She was accused of delaying in serving a meal and providing lukewarm water to wash his hands. But she soldiered on. She courageously moved on for the sake of her biological children "*Maroverwo atayitwa aya zvange zvisikaiti kuti ndikusiyeyi vana vangu muchitambura mega*", she told me in one conversation. The presiding Shona means that she

braved the beatings for our sake. My aunts (brothers' wives) were also beaten for silly reasons.

To some extent, polygamy had some advantages. Polygamy was a source of abundant labour. As a family, we worked manually as a group in our father's, mothers' and brothers' fields. It took us a shorter time to work on these fields. There was also a division of labour along gender roles. However, the negative advantages outweigh the advantages.

### **3.4.3 Thoughts of suicide**

One day Hamudi Pakura and Agness had a heated quarrel and fight. They fought over the alleged abuse of small grains like *rapoko*, sorghum and millet. Hamudi Pakura accused Agness of finishing her granary faster than the other wives. The granary was supposed to last for one year. But it ran out in six months. Hamudi Pakura interrogated her for the alleged misuse. The interrogation grew into a quarrel. Both fought each other. My three brothers and I watched at a distance. This was family violence.

The violence ended when Hamudi Pakura left. He took his bicycle and cycled to a men's meeting place. There they drank traditional beer. Meanwhile, Agness took a rope tied it on to one of the roofing poles. She made a noose. She tried to strangle herself to death. In time my three brothers and I came to her rescue. She nearly suffocated herself, after she kicked the drum beneath her. My older brother cut the rope and she fell on the floor. She had soiled herself. This was an unpleasant sight. This was an ugly scene of domestic violence. The quarrel and fight almost ended fatally. The scene is a piece of many cases of attempted suicide and even some that caused the death of spouses.

### **3.4.4 Conversion to Christianity**

Conversion to Christianity played an important role in the family.

#### **❖ Conversion of Chemwi.**

Chemwi was the first wife of my father. She converted to Christianity in 1984. Reverend Felix Mupara of The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe preached to her. She was the first in the homestead to convert to Christianity. This resulted in the three other wives becoming Christians a year later. The conversions encouraged more communication among the family members. It also reduced conflicts among parents and children. It also resulted in

the conversion of my father, ten years later. The ideas and practices from the Bible became the new source of values in the home.

#### ❖ My conversion and call to ministry

I converted to Christianity in 1987. Reverend Mupara preached about Jesus Christ as my Lord and saviour. Around this time I held on to my traditional religion in *Musikavanhu*. I held both beliefs. But the church provided a good Christian education programme. The curriculum taught me Christian relationships: Christian dating, courtship and marriage. These values challenged my traditional ideas and practices. In 1991 I was called into ministry as a local preacher. In 1997 I was appointed to serve as a local pastor at Mutambara East circuit in Chimanimani. Since then, I have served in 8 circuits.

My conversion and call to ministry as a minister of religion are important milestones. It helped me to do away with multiple friendships with girls. I went on to cut relations with girlfriends. Some cried and others screamed at me. I was bold and stood by my new conversion story. It dawned on me that polygamy was evil. I had been sucked into believing in polygamy. I witnessed the abuse my mothers and aunts went through. I have shared my polygamous background with my spouse Priscilla *Anesu Nee* Muranda. We have spoken about it at length, allaying her concerns with polygamy. This has helped me to deal with my past and seek for ways of reaching out to polygamous families.

As a minister, I learnt more about the ills of domestic violence. Women and some couples consulted me about domestic violence. Women told me about the abuses they went through with spouses. They told about their problem saturated experiences. Couples shared in challenges ranging from budgeting, extended family problems and extra- marital accusations. These pastoral experiences helped me to understand the ills of domestic violence.

#### **3.4.5 Conclusion**

I owe this research to my personal and professional experiences. The polygamous background inspired me to find ways I may be of use to married abused women. I have dealt with my past and am ready to engage abusive men. I borrow the concepts of *dare* from my past. I used the concept of my family to sit with Priscilla and our children. I also use the concept to sit with men and women; and boys and girls together. This is an inclusive and participatory way of engaging persons in the presences of all parties.

## Chapter Four

### 4 Reflections on *matare*

#### 4.0 Introduction

In chapter three co-researchers and myself told stories about the constructions that informed married Zimbabwean women about marriage; gender based roles and domestic violence. The women (co-researchers) expressed the constructions through stories in the two *matare* on Musasa Project and ZWLA. These two *matare* storied the religious and cultural constructions from the broader Zimbabwean context (see section 3.1- 3.2).

The married Zimbabwean women told stories of the ways they sojourned towards healing and wholeness. The process started from their problem saturated stories. These were stories of pain, bitterness and sleeplessness, battering, punching and kicking among others. In trying to make sense or create meaning out of these experiences of abuse, the women shared the ways they sojourned toward healing and wholeness. These stories become opportunities for women to make meaning or sense of their lives even in the context of their experiences with gender based domestic violence.

Chapter three also shared stories of men from Padare (men's forum on gender). The men told stories of the ways religion and culture had shaped and developed their understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. Their stories were stories of their sojourn of how they accepted the dominant construction of male power and the right to use that power against women towards deconstructing these dominant constructions. These stories are in (section 3.3).

As one of the co-researchers, I told my own experiences with polygamy, family *dare* and domestic violence. In my own story my faith in Jesus Christ played a dominant role in deconstructing the dominant cultural and religious discourses on gender roles and male superiority. Thus how alternative and beneficial religious and cultural constructions informed me. I now use these constructions as my way of being and sojourning with families as their church minister.

It is in the light of the stories told in chapter three that chapter four needs to be read, as chapter four unpacks the co-researchers' dominant themes and social constructions



concerning marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. These themes and constructions formed the content of the discussions with the co-researchers, both women and men. Together, we named and identified the socio- economic, cultural and religious constructions that informed their understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. Each *dare* and I named the specific constructions, relevant to each *dare*.

In this chapter the results of these discussions are summarised. Through these summaries the various constructions become clear which each *dare* named as particular about why, they endured domestic violence. Men named the specific constructions as they understood and interpreted them. This is how men told their stories as they interpreted the impact of socio-economic, religious and cultural factors of married women.

I had wanted to allow the three *matare* to summarise the factors that caused women to endure abusive relations. It was difficult to make an inclusive *dare*. I could not bring them together. They urged that it was time consuming. They had to go to work and/or attend to other compelling commitments. These challenges informed me to reflect on the themes the three *matare* named. In this way I brought words from each *dare* into this chapter. This maintains the concept of co-researching.

To thicken the co-researching and co-constructing other voices will be added to the reflection, inter-disciplinary voices from the various theories on these themes that the study identified in chapter two. This process helped me to situate various voices within the co-research and conceive new knowledge. I present this knowledge in this research for the benefit of co-researchers and other readers.

Narrative therapists talk about bringing other voices into therapy and research (Morgan 2000:47). This process opens up the co-option of invisible persons in research. This opens up opportunities to hear what other voices say about the topic under research. In these opportunities, a researcher can agree or see it differently. So, the inclusion of co-researchers and other authorities helped me in this chapter to talk with various voices. Thus, the conversations enabled me to present the voices of co-researchers, authorities and my stories.

#### **4.1 Summaries of Musasa Project Dare**

What follows are Musasa Project women co-researchers' dominant themes and social constructions of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. These themes and

constructions informed married Zimbabwean women about marriage. The co-researchers also name the ways they sojourned towards healing and wholeness.

- i. The children factor
- ii. Maintaining same totem
- iii. Ageing and injuries
- iv. Women infidelity unacceptable
- v. Basic needs
- vi. Positive- HIV status
- vii. Dignity
- viii. Early marriages
- ix. Virginitv
- x. Pressure from relatives
- xi. Pay for avenging spirit
- xii. Women submission
- xiii. Effects of domestic violence
- xiv. Sojourning towards healing and wholeness
- xv. Commemoration annual events
- xvi. Conduct dare once per month
- xvii. Representatives throughout the country
- xviii. Conduct counselling sessions in provinces
- xix. Girl child network programme
- xx. Community campaigns
- xxi. Co-option of other organisations

xxii. Refers women survivors to police, ZWLA, WILSA and clinics

#### 4.2 Summaries of *dare* with ZWLA co-researchers

What follow are summaries of the dominant themes and social constructions that informed ZWLA co-researchers about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The co-researchers also named the ways they sojourned towards healing and wholeness.

- i. Love
- ii. Conjugal rights
- iii. *Lobola*
- iv. Total stranger in paternal home
- v. Life-long illnesses
- vi. The over- involvement of relatives
- vii. The woman factor
- viii. Economic and educational factors
- ix. Secrecy and silence
- x. Effects of domestic violence
- xi. Sobbing
- xii. Dishonest
- xiii. Suicide
- xiv. Sojourning towards healing and wholeness
- xv. Share on their own when they meet (ZWLA waiting room)
- xvi. Seek for free legal advice
- xvii. Appeal to legislators to outlaw *lobola*

### 4.3 Summaries of *dare* with Padare

What follows are the dominant themes and social constructions that informed men about why married Zimbabwean women endure abusive spouses. The men co-researchers also named the ways they sojourned with women towards healing and wholeness.

- i. Virginitv
- ii. Over- involvement of relatives
- iii. Idea of *kuroorana wematongo* (marrying within the same village)
- iv. Women infertility
- v. Infidelity, non-condom use
- vi. Women disempowerment
- vii. The children factor
- viii. Maintaining same totem
- ix. Ageing and injuries
- x. Positive- HIV status
- xi. Effects of domestic violence
- xii. Sojourning towards healing and wholeness
- xiii. Co-opted women organisations and commemoration of annual events
- xiv. Meet once every month
- xv. Reach out to their counter parts
- xvi. Conducting individual or group counselling sessions with men
- xvii. Provision skills training for men
- xviii. Junior Padare
- xix. Community campaigns

- xx. Co-option of women organisations
- xxi. Referral of survivors to relevant authorities

#### **4.4 Summaries from my personal story**

In my personal story I wrote about my experiences with polygamy; conversion stories of my extended family members (Chemwi, myself and Hamudi Pakura); professional pastoral experiences and my new ways of co-researching with survivors of domestic violence.

- i. Family dare
- ii. Polygamy
- iii. Effects of domestic violence
- iv. Thoughts of suicide
- v. New ways of living in a polygamous family
- vi. My call to ministry

#### **4.5 Reflections with co-researchers and other voices**

In view of the summaries of co-researchers in the three *matare*, I reflect on the shared dominant themes and specific themes to each *dare*. I learn with other voices on what they write concerning the themes coming out of the *matare*. Here, the voices refer to the different authorities who write on similar themes emerging out of the *matare*. This means that I create a research space in which I present the reflections of the *matare*, made visible the shared, unique themes and bring these into conversation with the inter-disciplinary voices that discuss similar themes.

##### **4.5.1 Religion and culture**

Religion and culture in Zimbabwe are key institutions. These institutions are sources of religious and cultural constructions. They socially construct important ideas and practices which inform Zimbabweans on their practices, such as marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The institutions teach its members the acceptable norms regarding marriage, gender roles and male power and authority in the marriage. In the conversations

with Musasa Project and Padare, co-researchers talked about dating and courtship. Their religious and cultural institutions emphasised on dating and courtship with a partner *wematongo*.

*Wematongo* is a Zimbabwean religious and cultural concept. *Wematongo* is based on the view that a young adult must date and court a partner from within his/her local community or religious group. Dating and courtship continues for years and partners exchanged *nhumbi* (cloth) and *mhete* (jewellery) and necklaces. The concept assumes that partners and their families know and relate with each other. I agree with Maguraushe (2014:4) who says that a woman is not simply married to her husband; she is also a 'wife' of the wider patrilineage. This assumes that the shared ideas and practices enrich the relationship of partners and future marriage. So, the religious and cultural *matare* plays a critical role in shaping ideas on dating and courtship before marriage (Herald. 27. 08. 2014).

The religious and cultural institutions stress the importance of virginity. This came out of the *dare* with Padare and Musasa Project co-researchers. Padare co-researchers said a fiancée was expected to be a virgin. This was proved on the first night she slept with her fiancé. A *mucheka* (piece of white cloth) laid on the bed was supposed to be stained with blood, proving that the fiancé deflowered her. This would be presented to the aunts the next morning. It would be met with ululation and dancing. Absence of stains meant that the fiancée was not a virgin (see section 3.3).

I agree with Kambarami (2006:3) who wrote about virginity. Kambarami urges that the custom of virginity holds much value in the Shona culture and in some parts of the country, virginity tests are still carried out up to this very day. The socialisation process in the family which instils patriarchal practices into the young does not end within the family but infiltrates into the other social institutions like marriage, religion, education, politics and the economy.

The custom of virginity is biased towards men. It marginalises women and entrenches male multiple sexual practices. I agree with Kambarami cited in *International Centre for Research on Women* (1996:9). Kambarami urges that many cultures express leniency on male sexual behaviour but are very prescriptive when it comes to female sexual behaviour (International centre for Research on Women, 1996). Males are free to experiment sexually at will before marriage while females have to preserve their virginity for marriage or risk tarnishing the

image of the family. WUA (2015) agrees with Kambarani and Eliot (1986). WUA (2015:72) adds that chastity is demanded from women far more than it is demanded from men.

The Musasa Project women co-researchers said virginity is an asset that every woman is proud of. This is an asset she is bringing to her husband and family. The news was openly shared among her in-laws and the immediate community. The in-laws paid *mombe yechimanda*, *mombe yechimanda* is a cow offered to the in-laws as a token of appreciation for ensuring that his wife preserved her virginity (see Kambarani 2006:3). The bride earned respect from her aunts, uncles and in-laws.

*This earned a married woman support from the husband's relatives. The relatives aligned with the bride against her abusive husband. It made a married woman to hang around, holding on to the support in the face of an abusive spouse, said Musasa Project co-researchers (see section 3.1).*

#### **4.5.2 Cultural and religious pledge/vows**

Culture and religion provides for the exchange of vows. In the preceding text I wrote about the concept of dating and courting *wematongo* and the different types of marriages in Zimbabwe. These constructions provide for an exchange of pledge/ vows. What is a pledge and vow? Turnbull (2010: 1162) defines pledge as a serious promise or commitment. Turnbull (2010: 1725) defines a vow as a formal and serious promise to do something. Freedman (2000: 1361) adds that a vow is a serious commitment and must be fulfilled or “paid”. Culturally, couples exchange pledges and vows. Couples pledge to go through courtship and then marry. They exchange objects, which are symbols that are given as surety that the dating couple would marry. On the day of a cultural marriage husband and wife exchange vows that they would marry each other for a life time.

Religiously, bride and bride groom exchange vows on their wedding day. In most cases, the marriage officer guides the bride and bridegroom in exchanging vows. The marriage officer reads from the church wedding ritual. The officer asks the bride and groom to say the vows to each other as he or she reads from the wedding ritual. Among other vows, a bride and groom vow to stay in love in times of sickness, misfortune, until death. Both kiss, exchange rings, eat cake and celebrate their marriage with the family and friends invited. These religious

ideas and practices are expected to strengthen the vows of the newly wedded couple, which they exchanged before invitees.

The cultural and religious constructions about pledges cause women and brides to suffer and soldier on in abusive relationships. The constructions put pressure on the dating couples and brides. They feel compelled to religiously uphold the pledges. These stories came out in the *matate* with the women and men co-researchers. The stories showed the power of religious and cultural constructions which have oppressed co-researchers (see section 5.5).

*Culturally, a dare was called up to witness a pledge. The dare comprised of the couples aunts, grandparents, uncles and friends. A male date gave his datee a token of love. The token could be a shirt, handkerchief, trouser, bangle or jewellery. In exchange, the datee gave a handkerchief, dress, or wooden plate. Dates exchanged pledges to love each other until marriage. The tokens and pledges served as reminders among relations that the couple are culturally and religiously engaged. This construction oppressed the datee in the event that the date was abusive. The datee suffered since everyone knew that she was engaged to her date, regretted*  
Musasa Project women co-researchers.

Padare co-researchers clarified the ways pledges oppressed women.

*The token of love and pledge meant that the datee was now would be wife. Dates considered it a victory over other male rivalries. Some men would breach their pledges and enter other relations. This pains datees who hold on to the token and pledge. The couple's relations encourage them to endure as they engage the couple to resolve the problems. These problems can persist into marriage.*

*I wedded with my husband before a huge congregation. We exchanged vows in which we committed to love each other in sickness, happiness/ sadness, rich/ poverty until death. But a few days after marriage I returned to my extended family home. I returned to nurse my mother who fell ill. After she recovered, I re-joined my new family.*

*Alas, things had changed. My husband's female relations, sisters and mother-in-law told me to leave. He was silent about it and could not protect me. I was puzzled. I*



*listened to the fresh vows in my mind. I was adamant not to leave. I thought they were joking. I endured their daily abuse. The vows kept me going. I had made a life-long commitment.*

One ZWLA co-researcher explained the ways the vows exposed married Zimbabwean women to abuse.

Mashiri (2013:99) urges that marriage vows at the altar say ‘till death do us part’. This has been interpreted to mean that if your husband beats you up; you must pray and stay in the relationship. The Bible encourages prayer and peaceful relationships. However, persons read and interpret the Bible differently. They tend to interpret prayer and peace differently. They interpret the Bible through the lenses of their dominant religious and cultural discourses. This means the understanding of peace in marriage is not universal rather is context specific.

#### **4.6 Marriage**

Above, I showed the role of religion and culture in dating and courtship among *wematongo*. Dating and courtship lead to marriage. Giddens (1997:140) urges that marriage is a cornerstone upon which many families and even households hinge (see also Mbiti 1980:1; Nyoni 2008:124). Maguraushe supports the same idea. Maguraushe (2014:5) said marriage is perceived as an intertwining of the married couple’s souls and connection of their two families, a spiritual bond which is only broken by either death or divorce (see also Hubbard 2005:30). Marriage in Zimbabwe happens between a man and a woman. There are four types of marriages in Zimbabwe (see section 2.2.4; Mawere & Mawere 2010:3). In the three types of marriage, *lobola* is paid. *Lobola* is the bride price paid by the bridegroom. In the other type, partners live together and break-up while *lobola* has not been paid.

Chidimuro and Aberdeen cited in UK/Zimbabwe – BBC NEWS, (2005) stated that,

‘Bride price is our heritage’. The purpose of it was to preserve and thank the parents of your woman for giving birth and bringing up this beautiful lady who you are going to spend the rest of your life with. I know men who have paid bride price and they are not complaining because the benefits you get from a wife, her care, help and companionship, far outweigh the cost.

*Lobola* is the term used to refer to the process through which the family of a man makes payment in the form of cash, cattle or other goods to the family of the woman whom he intends to marry (see also WLSA, 2001:2; Sithole 2005:7).

However, most men abuse the custom of *lobola*. Men see it as a price that buys the woman as their personal property. So if a man co-habits with a woman and does not pay *lobola* he does not love the woman enough. “He feels he does not own her” and disposes of her easily. The woman gets stuck. She worries over ageing and time wasting. She rather endures the abusive relation than find another spouse.

In addition, women co-researchers urged that religion and culture bestows more respect on married women. The women are addressed by their marital surnames and not maiden names. Religion and culture despise single mothers, divorcees, widows and commercial sex workers. The single women are stereo-typed as loose, cheaters, husband-snatchers and bent on destroying marriages. This means that the religious and cultural constructions bestow dignity on married women rather than on single mothers. The construction(s) means that a woman going through domestic violence endures it for the sake of dignity and status, as she knows what will happen to her if she is single again. A man who divorces does not necessarily lose his dignity and status within the community.

These stories resonate with the thinking of some African scholars and feminists. Sithole (2005: 7) observes that *lobola* has sparked a lot of debate among African scholars and feminist writers. Sithole notes that some activists have advocated for its abolition because it is seen as a practice that entrenches the subordination of women. Some argue that the problem is not the practice itself but the way it has been commercialised in modern society. The abolitionist argument links the practice of *lobola* to the unequal power relations between men and women within marriages.

In relation to marriage, the religious and cultural constructions informed co-researchers differently about love. The women co-researchers shared that love should be the main theme of marriage. They urged that love is central to marriage.

*Love is like a seed. Love should be planted, watered and cultivated. Love should be allowed to grow daily. Husband and wife are expected to nurture love in marriage. Spouses should ensure that they reciprocate love with each other. The reciprocation*

*helps each spouse to perform roles and actions that encourage a strong marriage. Women see marriage as a life-long commitment between husband and wife. Love informs women to expect happiness in marriage, Musasa Project and ZWLA co-researchers said.*

Rather, men see love differently. Men propose, pursue and win love.

*Marriage excites men for a few years. They co-operate and reciprocate love with spouses. Thereafter, men leave the responsibility of growing the love to spouses. It seems men slowdown in their marriages. Men shift attention elsewhere. They pursue love with other women. These women become their small houses or rather smell houses. They spend most of their night time in these smell houses. Their love is artificial. Their partners exaggerate everything. They exaggerate the sexual aspects i.e. fore-play and orgasm, welcome, communication, use love portions and menus. This is so artificial so much that men hang around in smell houses, the women co-researcher mimicked.*

I was interested on the constructions of “small and smell houses”. I was curious about the constructions. I inquired from women co-researchers to unpack their understanding of a small and a smell house.

*It is a small house because it is a house running parallel to the main house. It is a relationship running alongside marriage. This house/relationships are manned by whores (prostitute or single mother). It is so small so that men are overwhelmed by the small house. The smallness of the love excites men that they too quickly forget about their marriages. Man only jostles to reality when a small house sends him packing. This follows the small house getting a man who pays more money than the latter.*

*It is a smell house because its parallel activities smack of unacceptable activities. This description means that married women do not accept a small house. The description tells small houses and men that they belong to a bad arduous relationship. It is not acceptable to married women, family institutions and to the sober members of the community or society. This way of talking about small houses sends a clear message*

*from married women to prostitutes, single mothers and men about smelling activities of small houses, the women co-researchers said boldly.*

I consulted with Chingandu (2010:10) and Sykes (1982:823) on the construction of a small house. Chingandu (2010:10) and Sykes (1982:823) say small houses are a form of concurrent relationship. Persons have regular sexual relations with another person, while at the same time continuing to have sex with their current primary sexual partner. In this case the primary sexual partner is the legal wife or the partner they live with, even though not legally married.

This means that a small house is an informal, long term, secret sexual relationship with another woman who is not a man's legal wife, carried on in a house that is a smaller version of the man's own home in the same or another residential suburb. In some cases there are children who do not necessarily use their father's name and in a few cases *lobola* has been paid to the other women's family. For as long as it is practically possible the small house is kept secret from the legal wife, her children and relatives.

Chingandu (2010:11) urges that the payment of *lobola* has given men immunity against reprimand when they engage in extra marital affairs. According to Chingandu, this situation has been necessitated by Zimbabwe's two marriage laws: the Marriages Act [chapter 5:11], and the Customary Marriages Act [chapter 5:07]. It is very clear that this dual system of customary and general law that is used in Zimbabwe has exposed women to diverse negative consequences. The Customary Marriages Act [chapter 5:07] allows men to have as many wives as they want, but does not accord the same privilege to women. This Act bestows power on the husband to sue his wife for adultery but the wife cannot do the same.

However, Marriages Act (chapter 5.11) allows a woman to sue her spouse for adultery.

WUA (2015:88) adds that a small house family unit is that type of arrangement where two adults agree to share sexual rights and live like a normal traditional family. Normally the male-figure of this type of family has a family elsewhere which has better social recognition than this one. His first and customary family usually gains pre-eminence over the small house. However much of what transpires in the small house is almost the same with what happens in his family set up. Most people believe that the small house is a 'microcosm of the macrocosm'. This means that it reflects in a greater part the structure and operations of the customary family.

#### 4.6.1 Economic dependence on male spouse (Early child marriage)

Women co-researchers told about the effect of early marriage.

*A woman is expected to marry when she is above 18 years. If she marries below 18 this is called early marriage. At this age a young woman has studied up to form three or four. This suggests that she is unskilled and does not have a profession or a course through which she can live upon. It is also true for an adult woman who is uneducated and unemployed. This position puts a young woman or uneducated/unemployed women at the mercy of her employed spouse.*

*The male spouse takes advantage of the home-based woman spouse. The husband becomes the bread winner. He provides for the basic needs for his spouse. These basics include food, accommodation, clothes and medical fees. The male spouse determines the family budget, for example what meals, clothes, errands, whose relatives to visit and so on. This makes a woman spouse totally dependent upon the male spouse for money. It creates an abusive environment that most women see as normal. They endure in such abusive relations.*

*Lack of formal skills in women results in few married women being employable in the formal sector. The uneducated women might get work as a domestic worker, informal trader or part time jobs. These roles mean women work in residences, open or gender-mixed market places. These environments annoy male spouses. They suspect that their wives engage in extra-marital affairs and sexual relations with male bosses and fellow male traders. This steers jealousy in male spouses. It makes them murmur and irritatingly complain about almost everything. Most men will then prevent spouses from working in these environments. Thus, women become home bound, dependent and dance to the tune of abusive spouses.*

*The harsh economic conditions inform small houses to 'snatch' married men from their spouses. WUA (2015:71) observes that women in small house pointed out that their first and key reason to be a small house is economic. Life is hard in Zimbabwe. It is difficult for the average woman to make ends meet, even if they are working. The relationship is based on the man's financial ability to meet their economic needs. Women will do everything to keep the well-to-do man.*

Therefore, economic hardships force women to endure in abusive relationship for women in order to get their basic needs.

Harsh economic problems in Zimbabwe challenge the concept of bread winning. Kambarami (2006:4); Maguranyanga (2011:25) and Umemoto (2001:6) share that religion and culture see men as bread winners. They are bread winners in that religion and culture positions men as workers and providers for all family needs (see section 2; section 5.5). The economic hardships are pushing men as well as women out of employment. In some families the bread winners which were male spouses are employed in informal sectors. This defines women as new bread winners.

#### **4.6.2 Paying for avenging spirits**

Women co-researchers said married women stay in abusive marriages to avoid the religious and cultural effects on their families. In the case where a woman is given as a ransom to appease the spirit of a man murdered by any member of their families, she is trapped in her marriage. The married woman endures abuse in order to prevent any suffering of any of their loved ones. If she leaves, it is believed that the avenging spirit fights her extended family members.

Chirawu (2006:5) urges that the concept of *ngozi* (appeasing of avenging spirit) prejudices women. Chirawu insists that it is culturally believed that when a person is murdered. His/her spirit will not rest. It will come back to haunt the family of the murderer. Such a family experiences unexplained deaths, loss of cattle or property and general misfortune. The only way to stop this is to give the family of the murdered victim a young girl as compensation.

The Customary Marriages Act outlaws the pledging of girls for purposes of marriage. But this practice is still taking place among some tribes that value the practice of appeasing avenging spirits. These cases are happening behind the knowledge of the courts. Kambarami (2006:8) adds that to appease angry spirits following murder, a young girl (a virgin) is given to the wronged family as a wife. In all these cases, consent is not sought from the young women concerned but they are forced to comply with cultural traditions (see also Karimanzira 2015:1; Standard 05-05-2013; IPS Correspondents 20-09-2009).

As a pastoral therapist, I disagree with the isolated Zimbabwean practice of girl pledging. Girl pledging is wrong. It violates the girl-child's rights. She has the right to choose, at the

right time and of age, who she would want to date and ultimately her spouse. My position challenges the practice of pledging. Alternative religious and cultural ideas and practices should be sought. The ideas and practices should be ways that benefit and not suffer children. The ways should not offend the morals of the community or witnesses (Kotze 2002:6-8).

One way of undertaking alternative ideas and practice is the blending of the spiritual and cultural practices. I share a story that happened in my practice. In 1999, at a revival a man called Chimuti (not his real name) gave his life to Christ. Chimuti disclosed that 23 years ago he murdered a man. Three ministers of religion and I took him outside the camp meeting. This move was to open up opportunities for him to tell his story in private instead of in front of the amazed congregation. He narrated that he murdered the man and buried him in a shallow grave. At that time, no one had discovered his remains. He had not disclosed the murder to anyone. But his conversion compelled him to confess before God and the congregation.

In consultation with other ministers, we explored the spiritual and cultural implications of his conversion. Spiritually, Chimuti had been completely forgiven for the murder. He confessed his sin and God forgave him. God forgives and forgets our sins. God through the prophet Isaiah invites sinners. *“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool Isaiah chapter 1 verse 18”, The King James Version.*

Legally, the murder case remains unresolved. The victim lies in a shallow grave. The remains deserve a decent burial. The relatives of the victim are grieved over the unexplained disappearance of their loved one. In view of these cultural issues, we encouraged Chimuti to enlist the support of the traditional or cultural leaders. The leaders would mediate and resolve the murder case with the concerned relations. Chimuti was willing to lead the relatives to the shallow grave and exhume the remains. This way of healing could be one way that families may consider to resolve murder cases rather than to condemn a girl child or woman to endure marriages with an abusive spouse.

#### **4.6.3 Marriage of convenience (Ageing and injuries)**

Women co-researchers said religion and culture force ageing women to rush into a marriage of convenience. It is a marriage of convenience in that a woman may marry a man out of fear

of ageing (age phobia). She is vulnerable to domestic violence. She cannot divorce her spouse otherwise she will attract a negative attitude towards her. Ageing and while one remains single invites several socio and cultural questions. Religiously and culturally, an ageing and unmarried woman is seen as one possessed by a male spirit. The co-researchers urge that the male spirit in-dwells in that woman. It repels men from proposing love to a woman. If one ultimately married a man “*Imba yacho hayiiti chin'ai*” the house will not last long. “This means that the marriage does not last”, for example the woman detests carousing and penetration from the spouse. This degenerates into violence from the possessed woman.

The ideas of women co-researchers were confirmed by men co-researchers from Padare.

*Most men avoid ageing and single women. They suspect issues of demon possession. They fear to marry a woman possessed by a male spirit. A man does not want to be a spouse of a woman with a spiritual husband.*

*In addition, women endure abusive spouses or else they are detested by most men. Most men do not want to marry a woman with her own children. If he does, it could be just for a short time. Men suspect the woman spouse could continue to see and be intimate with the ex-spouse.*

The women co-researchers spoke about the other side of ageing and singleness. They urged that not all aged and single women are as a result of demon possession.

*Several reasons explain ageing and singleness. A woman is ageing and single because one may have suffered heartbreak. A woman trusts a man so much that she gives all her emotions, feelings and thoughts to one man. That is putting all her eggs into one basket. When the eggs break then women are affected. This informs one to fear relations or postpone dating for a later stage. Some women become too educated and wealthy, then most men fear proposing them for love and marriage. There is nothing about demon possession in the presiding situations. In spite of any reasons, most women need a life-long spouse and children.*

These are further reasons that a woman will endure an abusive spouse.

I agree with (Mungwini 2008) with regard to women's concerns about ageing and marriage. Mungwini (2008:6) places a very heavy expectation on women. This could have driven them



to marry men for the wrong reason. Some will be almost senile, very old or less sexually active. The women want to be recognised as married. Chirimuuta (2006:27) supported Mungwini adding that marriage is a sacred institution in Shona culture; it is society's expectation that every woman should be married. Parents get worried when their daughters do not get married to the extent of consulting a *Sangoma* (diviner) in order to break the curse as it is believed.

The desire to avoid and escape the curse of being unmarried has also driven many women into polygamous marriages. These marriages are known in most cases to bring no joy to them for their entire lives. This means that ageing and singleness force women to enter and endure abusive marriages.

Mungwini adds that among the Shona it has been found out that women's social recognition and sense of womanhood suffers greatly when they are not married or when they are married but cannot have children. In other words without children they cannot attain 'motherhood' as they will not have 'produced' although culturally society has tried to reduce the effect of such eventualities by extending the denotation 'mother' to any woman who is within the child bearing age and old enough to be a mother. Therefore, the religious and cultural constructions around motherhood force women to endure abusive spouses.

#### **4.6.4 Trapped (Total stranger in paternal home and family of marriage)**

Women co-researchers said in some cases marriage in Zimbabwe abandons a woman into the in-laws family. The dumping exposes married women to endure abusive relations.

*Marriage seems to give away the bride to the in-laws' family. So in the event of domestic violence the woman becomes trapped.*

The above conversation left me wondering. I wondered about the constrictions that make the bride/daughter become a stranger at both the in-laws and her own family of origin? This shapes the confinement of the bride in the family of the in-laws. In the case of an abusive spouse she endures marriage. On the other hand, she is seen as a returnee to her own family of origin. The family of origin expects her to stay most of her time with her in-laws. I challenged women to consider other ways of dealing with this kind of confinement. I insist on who benefits and suffers?

Regarding women being trapped, Clive and Kileff (1997:40) explain that if there is divorce the woman goes back to her parents' home. If she has small children she will take them with her and look after them until the father comes to take them to his own home. If the woman's parents are dead, she will go to her eldest brother and explain her difficulties to him. Moreover, those who lack medical insurance often live in fear of becoming a financial burden to their family. Clive and Kileff stress the concerns that inform married women in Zimbabwe to suffer in abusive relationships.

The marriage rituals construct religious and cultural ideas and practices that oppress married Zimbabwean women. These constructions make a bride exist in her family of origin and join her family of choice where she becomes a stranger. She is a new entrant but not related through blood to the family of choice. I agree with Hatendi cited in Chireshe (2012:29). Hatendi urges that upon marriage the bride leaves her parents and home to join the bridegroom's family-group and she is expected to be subordinate, subservient, industrious and faithful. However, the wife remains an alien (*mutorwa*) in her husband's family on the ground that she was not born in that family, that is, she has no kinship ties with her husband's family.

I also agree with Nyathi (2001) that the marriage rituals uproot the bride from her family and transplant her into the new family. In a case of spousal abuse this causes her to be trapped. The woman in her family of choice is suffering from being trapped by her spouse and in-laws. On the other hand, she fears to return to her family of origin. She bade farewell in a ritual that bundled all her belongings. Nyathi (2001:117) explains one ritual in the Ndebele culture.

The living dead must now be informed about their daughter's departure. The father, who is the link between the girl and the living dead, leads her into the cattle pen. The girl kneels while her father pours bile juice over her. As he does this, he is speaking silently, informing all the known living dead about their daughter who is getting married.

Meanwhile, her father is uttering quiet incarnations,

Here is thine daughter,

I beseech you, ancestors, to look

After her and bless her;

So that she may shine where she goes.

While her father is doing all this, the accompanying bridal party is perched on the cattle pen fence, and they are singing their lungs out.

After the ritual, the bride party leaves for the groom's family. The bride must not look back. The groom's family hosts a party for the bride to welcome her into the new family.

“Heavily laden with their provision, the bridal party returns on their homeward journey. The party leaves behind the weeping bride and her maid (Nyathi 2001:123).” She bereaves her family of origin. She is anxious about her family of choice. This could result in the bride getting ensnared in marriage.

#### **4.6.5 Women endure and work towards breaking over involvement of relatives**

Religion and culture say that when a man marries he marries for the whole clan. Mbiti (1975:102) adds that the woman has one sexual partner but she is involved in chores for the rest of the clan and community. These constructions open up for the over involvement of relatives in the life of a couple. The over-involvement affects the couple or either parties. Padare co-researchers said a family accused its daughter in law of beating her mother in law.

*The husband' family teamed up against the daughter- in - law. They pressured her to apologise and pay a price. The relatives pressured her husband to divorce her or else they would cut off their relationship with him. The husband aligned with his wife. So, the married woman endured abusive relatives.*

*In a related sense, the husbands' relatives could pressure their relation to divorce his wife. They create accusations against the daughter-in-law. These accusations include she is a bad cook, dirty, ugly, prostitute and mean. If her husband does not protect her, then she suffers.*

Connect (2006:22) explains that over involvement means excessive closeness which does not allow individuals sufficient privacy, independence and individuality is discouraged. This can

be frustrating to individuals in the family who might have interests outside the home but are not allowed to interact with the outside world freely.

Musasa Project (2004:109) adds a story of Tarzan who has been married to Fumi for 25 years. They are each aged 45 and 35 years respectively. They have 10 children from the marriage. The eldest is 25 years old. The youngest is 8 years old. Tarzan's mother is staying with them. She is 88 years old and bedridden. She now wears diapers. Tarzan's three sisters are staying with them at their five-roomed house. Some of them have their school-going age children there too. These children have been there for two weeks since school closed.

Fumi is seven months pregnant. The sisters'-in-law expect her to do all the cooking, the changing of pampers for the dying old lady and the cleaning of the house while they gossip about her. Her husband does not sympathise with her. On the contrary, he tells her not to complain because the *lobola* he paid was from some of the sisters. One day she fought with some of the sisters. The other two joined in the fight.

When Fumi made a report of assault to the police, the police said it was a domestic affair and none of their business. They said that after all, the husband was supporting her. She applied for a peace order asking the court to order the sisters to only visit and go back to their own homes, and not to stay there and subject her to verbal abuse and assaults. First, the male clerk of court refused to process her papers alleging that she could not make such an application. He remarked that the pregnancy was affecting her judgement. When she complained to the magistrate in charge of the station, he told her that she was the odd one out as everyone else was family and therefore, entitled to be at the house. He advised her to make peace with the in-laws and behave herself.

The concept of over involvement is described differently by other authorities. It is described as the right of control over married women by the men and his relations. Hubbard (2005:256) urges that the payment of *lobola* is perceived to give the husband and the husband's extended family rights of control over the wife. Hubbard adds that *lobola* may give the husband's extended family rights of control over other female relatives from the wife's extended family. This means that the husband and his relations' over- involvement or right of control over married Zimbabwean women oppresses women and forces them to endure abusive spouses.

#### 4.6.6 Suffering in secrecy and silence

Women co-researchers storied on ways religion and culture silenced them in abusive relationships.

*Religiously and culturally a woman is not allowed kufugura hapwa pane vanhu (raise her arm pit in public). This secrecy and silence they live with it for a life time, the women co-researchers said.*

WUA (2015:72) adds that *tete* (Shona for aunt) plays an important role in the marriage ritual. The roles of *tetes* (aunts) continue to be felt in the quenching out of conflicts and silencing the wife in the marriage. *Tete* have traditionally been very instrumental in arranging marriages and resolving conflicts between two spouses (see also Bourdillon 1976: 31).

*Tete* ensure that the marriage is safeguarded at all costs, sometimes even if it means sacrificing the rights of the woman. Where *lobola* has been paid, it is very difficult to have a divorce because the matrikin will always prod the woman to endure. As Chabata observes cited in WUA (2015:72) one respondent indicated that it is very common to hear the *tete* saying; *Chingotsungirira mwana wehanzvadzi yangu, yeuka kuti murume wako akabvisa pfuma. Kana ukamuramba tinoiwanepi mari yekumudzorera.* (You just have to endure my brother's daughter, remember your husband paid *lobola*. If you divorce him, where will we get money to compensate him his *lobola*?).

WUA (2015:72) urges that the institution of marriage in the African context is jealously guarded. It makes it very hard to have divorces, even when divorce is the ultimate way of ending domestic violence in the home. Women, through the payment of *lobola* are therefore exposed to the whims and caprices of some unruly men. Women are told by their relations to endure the suffering just because *lobola* was paid for them. The relations are therefore seen as promoters of the culture of violence or silence in turbulent marriages. They are never willing to accept back their daughter in the event of a break-up. They always say 'everyone in different marriages goes through such hard times and all they do is to endure'.

WUA points out that although the law provides for women to sue the other woman for adultery, most women are too embarrassed to expose their problems to the public.

This means that the culture of secrecy and silence concerning the causes of injury and pain suffered by many women and girls results in an inefficient use of available services. Treatment will provide only temporary reprieve unless the root causes are addressed directly (Mashiri 2013:101).

Women victims of violence suffer serious health problems significantly more frequently than women who have not been harmed. Among women with comparable health problems, the healing process is slower and more costly for those who have experienced violence than for those who have not (see also Baumgarten, 2003:7).

I agree with WUA, Mashiri and Baumgarten. Religiously and culturally secrecy forces women to endure abusive relations. Secrecy informs women that they must not tell anyone about the hidden emotional and sexual events happening behind closed doors. Secrecy informs married women not to tell their spouses and their relations about their marital trials. Religiously and culturally, their close relations are expected to intervene and interrupt ideas and practices that affect their marriages. In the *matate* I engaged women co-researchers to challenge the idea and practice of silence. As a result women co-researchers re-told stories on ways they could unearth the small details that society thinks must not be disclosed yet affect married Zimbabwean women (see section 4.8 – 4.8.1).

#### **4.6.7 Right of sexual intercourse between husband and wife (Conjugal rights)**

General National News (31 May 2014) observes that one of the most important features of a marriage are the unlimited conjugal rights that each of the parties of the union enjoy. Conjugal rights maybe defined as the rights that a husband or wife is entitled to in a marriage- the right to be intimate with his or her spouse. It is, however not unusual to find a spouse being denied the right for various reasons. The denial of conjugal rights by either party may create tension between couples. This can be the basis for divorce.

I learnt about the religious and cultural importance of sex in marriage from the women co-researchers;

*Religion and culture stress the importance of conjugal rights. The importance means that a woman hangs on to marriage even if the male spouse engages in risky extra-sexual relations.*

WUA (2015:70) say, conjugal rights are very central in all marriages. Women feel that sexual rights should be negotiated. Men sometimes force their spouses to have sex even if they are not ready for it. This agrees with Bergen (1999:4) who urges that men "... are often portrayed as jealous, domineering individuals who feel a sense of entitlement to have sex with their 'property'".

In Zimbabwe women have not been legally protected against spousal or marital rape for many centuries. It was only in 2001 that marital rape was criminalised in Zimbabwe, giving women protection through the Sexual Offences Act.

Maguraushe agrees with WUA and Bergen that a woman is treated as 'a sex slave' by her husband. Maguraushe *et al* (2014:9) reiterates that Zimbabwean women have limited sexual rights. A woman can complain if sexually dissatisfied and say to her aunts that *handina kuvinga sadza pano* (Literally meaning that I did not come here just to eat thick porridge, also implying that I came here to be sexually satisfied by my husband). Maguraushe criticises that most of the time Shona men do what they want, not what the women want. Their husbands have sexual rights hence whatever the man says, the woman is expected to obey.

#### **4.6.8 Welfare and safety of Children**

The women co-researchers said a child or children are important, especially a son in the Zimbabwean religion and culture. The religious and cultural constructions urge that a child comes from *Musikavanhu* (creator) and *vadzimu* (ancestors). In these constructions the responsibility of bearing and nursing of children is more on women than men. In the case of an abusive relation, a woman stays in a marriage for the sake of the children.

Shalon had separated from Innocent. A week later Shalon returned. Innocent said "It didn't take long before she returned home and she informed me that she was only back for the children" (H-Metro 2015:8). This was further supported by Maguraushe *et al* (2014:9) who urged that some Shona women whose husbands are abusive end up insisting that *ndinogarira vana vangu* (I will stay in this marriage for the sake of my children's welfare) in a desperate bid to sustain marriage. She wants to care for the children in the context of both parents. In the event of a separation or divorce, a woman leaves with the children. This protects the children from abuse by the father and/or step mother in her absences.

#### 4.6.8.1 What does the law say about the custody of children?

Musasa Project (2004:95) says sufficient information needs to be provided on this issue. This is an important and common concern in a domestic violence situation. In terms of the Guardianship of Minors Act, a mother has automatic rights to the custody of minor children under the age of 18 years upon the separation of the parents. I was curious about the procedure for the custody of children in the event of a separation or divorce. What follows are the procedures involved. I include the procedure here to show the importance of the legal implications of the child factor.

Step one.

The mother applies to the court to claim her automatic right for custody of children. She urges that it is in the best interest of the children to be in her custody. The Supreme Court in the case of Hackin versus Hackin 1989 (2) ZLR 61 defined what is meant by the term best interest of the child. In determining what is the best interest of a minor the court is enjoined to consider all the circumstances and every aspect of the child's upbringing that is age, sex, health, education, religious needs, social and financial position of each parent and his and her character, temperament and behaviour towards the minor child. (See also Chitongo versus Chitongo 2000 (1) ZLR 76.) The application is filed against the husband and any other party who may have custody of the child.

Step two.

A hearing date will be allocated and a ruling made on that day.

Step three.

The police will usually be directed to accompany the mother to obtain custody once the order has been granted.

The four types of marriage in Zimbabwe have different interpretations on what the law says with regard to the custody of children when there is separation or divorce:

A) Legal resource foundation (2006:6) the marriages under the Marriage Act (sometimes called Civil or Christian marriage): The custodian is the person who looks after and brings up



the children. The custodian makes everyday decisions about the children's lives. The husband and wife share custody of their children while they live together. If the couple divorce, the courts will decide who should have custody, based on the best interests of the child. If the couple separate before the divorce, the wife has sole custody while waiting for the divorce. If the husband wants custody before the divorce, he will have to apply to a court, which will decide what is in the best interests of the child.

b) Legal resources foundation (2006:13) Marriage under the Customary Marriage Act (sometimes called a Registered Customary Marriage): If the man and woman separate, the court decides who should get custody of the children. The court decides what is best for the child.

c) Legal resources foundation (2006:18) an unregistered customary law union (sometimes called an Unregistered Customary Marriage): If the man and woman separate, the court decides who should get custody of the children. The court decides what is best for the child.

d) Legal resources foundation (2006:22) Living together (this includes a man and women who are sexual partners who live together or small house): The woman is the custodian of any children born from the relationship. This is true whatever age the woman is.

However, this is not always the case. The court case of Reggienald Tangirai versus Theresa Hazvineyi Tangirai (2013) case No: HC 30/11. Media Neutral Citation: (2013) ZWHHC 65. Judgement date: 28 February 2013. Reggienald Tangirai versus Theresa Hazvineyi Tangirai in the High Court of Zimbabwe, Harare, 4, 5, 8 June & 5 September 2012 and 28 February 2013.

Following certain unhappy differences the parties separated in 2008. They have not lived together as husband and wife since that date. Upon separation the husband remained with the custody of the three eldest children while the wife retained custody of the youngest child. On 4 January 2011 the husband issued a summons out of the court seeking a decree of divorce, custody of the three minor children already in his custody. The wife while admitting that the marriage had broken down counter claimed for custody of all the minor children.

The husband with regard to the minor children stated that he was looking after the children on his own since the wife left in 2008. He stated that he was also responsible for the children

when the wife was still staying with him. In 2009 the wife left the country and went to Botswana and returned in 2010. She left the youngest child who was in her custody in the rural areas with her parents. The husband states that the last child is now different from her siblings because she has not had access to good schools. It was his plea that he be awarded custody of all four children while the wife has access on alternative weekends and school holidays. The wife testified that she wanted custody of all the children. She stated that in 2008 she approached ZWLA with a view to getting custody of the children. After discussions with the husband they agreed on her getting access to the three minor children who had remained with the husband. She told the court that she should get custody of the children as they are neglected by the husband. Based her argument the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) *Article 3*: which says “*In all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration*” (see also Umemoto 2001:4).

When they visit her they always come with old clothes. At times the children also pass by her house when they come from school looking for food as they will be hungry. She however said sometimes she is not at home as she is in the business of buying and selling goods. In assessing the evidence it was the court’s view that the husband gave his evidence well. He came across as a person who was genuinely concerned about the well-being of his family especially his children. The wife on the other hand did not impress as a good witness. She seemed not to have the interest of the children at heart.

In making an award for custody upon divorce the court must be guided by the best interests of the minor children. This power is granted to the court in terms of section 10 (1) of the Matrimonial Causes Act (chapter 5:13). The provision mandates the court to conduct an inquiry and commit children of the marriage into the custody of the parent best suited to have such custody.

It is not in dispute that the wife has not had custody of the three elder children since she left the matrimonial home in 2008. From that period to date the husband has had custody of the three eldest children while the wife has had the custody of the youngest child. The husband has thus effectively looked after these children for over four years without the assistance of the wife. From the evidence led it was not in dispute that they attend good schools and appear to be doing well in school. The youngest child who has been in the custody of the wife appears not to have fared as well as the oldest siblings. The child was primarily in the custody of the grandparents in the rural areas while the wife was in Botswana.

The question which presents itself is whether it is in the best interest of these children to be removed from husband (father) and given to the wife (mother). While this court accepts the version by the wife that she was evicted from the family home by the husband without the children she has not done anything to try and secure the custody of the three eldest children.

In terms of section 5 of the Guardianship of Minors Act she could have approached any court for their custody as the law recognises that the mother is the best parent to have custody of the children upon separation. In her evidence it has remained largely unclear why she decided to leave them in the custody of the husband.

In the view of the court, this was based on an acceptance by the wife that the husband was a good father and was looking after the children well. The court did not believe the wife when she stated that she did not seek custody because she did not have the resources to look after the children because if she had claimed custody at that point ZWLA would have advised her of her right to claim maintenance.

In the case of *Mutetwa versus Mutetwa* 1993 (1) ZLR 176 (SC) it was held that a father can only get custody of children if he can show that it would be in the best interest of the children that he should have custody. In examining the best interest of the minor children in this matter the court inclined to find that custody should be awarded to the husband. He has shown that he has the best interest of the children at heart. The husband has given them a stable home and a good education in the best schools within his means. The court has not seen the same commitment from the wife. In making this award the court awarded custody of the four children to the husband.

#### **4.6.8.2 Importance of children in Zimbabwe context**

Regarding the importance of children, Mbiti (1975:108) states that in many part of the continent, once a marriage has produced children, it is very rare to see it broken up, since nobody wishes to part with his or her children. Children prolong the life of their parents, and through them the name of the family is perpetuated. Therefore children are the glory of the marriage, and the more a person has the bigger is their glory. That is the traditional view, but of course the economic conditions of modern life are beginning to undermine this view.

Mbiti adds that children add to the social stature of the family, and both girls and boys have their social usefulness in the eyes of their families. Where inheritance is through the father, it

is very important to have sons so that the family line of inheritance may be maintained. They become the heirs, and African people do not wish to die without heirs. Where inheritance is through the mother, the same case will apply to having daughters. This means that the non-availability of children especially a son causes domestic violence. A man uses this reason to indulge in extra- sexual marital relation or marry another wife who is assumed could bear sons.

#### **4.6.9 Mothering children with same totem**

Religious and cultural constructions teach women to mother children with one father. This identifies children with one totem. The female co-researchers said they prefer children to belong to one father's totem. Mothering children with more than one father means that the children belong to different totems. "Children of different totems cause the mother to be labelled a whore or sexually immoral". Religion and culture see the mother as loose, prostitute and of poor endurance. This is in spite of the male abuse women face. As a result, a woman endures abusive relations to keep with the religion and culture's description of a good mother.

Durkheim cited by Haralambos & Holborn (2013:432) define totem as a symbol. It is the emblem of the clan. It is its flag; it is the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from all others. The totem is the outward and visible form of the totemic principle or god. Durkheim emphasised the importance of collective worship. The social group comes together in religious rituals full of drama and reverence. Together, its members express their faith in common values and beliefs. In this highly charged atmosphere of collective worship, the integration of society is strengthened. Members of society express communicate and understand the moral bonds which unite them. Haralambos & Holborn (2013:433) adds that the group unites to deal with situations of stress, and the unity of the group is strengthened.

#### **4.6.10 Fertility (infertility cause of domestic violence)**

I learnt from the male co- researchers that infertility is another cause for domestic gender violence. "Men are in search of children especially a son. Culturally, the non-availability of a child in marriage causes men to abuse their spouses. Culture says women are the source of infertility. Every man has the power to father a child."

This view of co-researchers surprised me. I wondered and questioned men co-researchers why cultural constructions blame women rather than men for infertility? Fertility is an issue of both husband and wife. It takes two to have fertilisation. So non-fertilisation should be understood and solved by husband and wife. The religious, cultural or medical solutions should involve all spouses. This process should conclude whether infertility is caused by the ineffective-ness of the ovum, sperm or both. The solution makes the couple a team that they become committed to use the medication prescribed by the religious, cultural or medical practitioners.

The interrogation of the men co-researchers was shared by the women co-researchers.

*Why should men blame women for infertility? What criteria do men use? The western medication is one way that is conclusive about the cause of infertility. Women are more proactive regarding the search for fertility. Religiously, culturally and medically women consult healers more than men. Before religion and culture blame a woman for infertility, she consults as soon as she suspects infertility. Why? Because religion and culture soon blame her and not her spouse.*

Mbiti (1975:108) urges that if no children are born that marriage often breaks up. See also Van de Walle (1968); Fortes (1978); Larsen (1989); Isiugo-Abanihe (1988); and Takyi (2001) cited in Reniers (2003:185). Although arrangements may be made to preserve the marriage, but having children still a major concern. If the wife is barren, then she and her husband may arrange for him to have another wife so that children can be born in the family. If the problem lies with the husband, then a close relative is asked or allowed to sleep with the wife in order that she may bear children for the family. However, the arrangement to raise children with a substitute partner is now rare and a risk since the advent of HIV.

#### **4.6.11 Women are monogamous even in view of spousal infidelity**

The women and men co-researchers agreed that infidelity was a cause for domestic gender based violence.

Culture and religion allow men to have more than one sexual partner or wife. The man marries and pays lobola. The reverse cannot happen in our culture. This makes a man have the right to have multiple relationships. Women know that men have many relations with other women. They have accepted this. It's now normal. But if a

woman cheats or gets merely suspected, it is a taboo. She must be divorced or cautioned respectively.

The Padare co-researchers spelt out the dominant religious and cultural constructions on men's infidelity.

The men co-researchers' constructions were worrisome. It made me see the different ways in which male domination affected married women in Zimbabwe. I used this access to conversations with men when I had a follow up *matare* with women co-researchers. This research privilege helped me inquire about the ideas of women with regard to male infidelity. What follows are some ideas or reactions from women co-researchers.

*Women's infidelity is unacceptable. Men, including most women react angrily to a woman suspected or caught red-handed. A woman is accused of tainting the image or reputation of women. She is accused of not bearing enough or tolerating her spouse's infidelity. The community screams or shouts at a woman who seeks revenge at an adulterous spouse. This religious and cultural reaction to women's response to spousal infidelity, forces married women to stay in abusive relationships.*

*Varume vanonyenga nyenga this means that (men propose women for love anyhow). Varume imbwa (men are dogs). Vanokwata this means that (men eat- do sex- from unofficial places). Varume vanonambura nambura this means that (men lick everywhere- do sex everywhere). These attitudes by men cannot be copied by their spouses. Besides religion and culture do not allow married women to do the same.*

*Varume vanoda vakadzi vane hembe pfupi- pfupi (men like women in miniskirts, almost half naked). This is unusual and surprising. If men want women in miniskirts, school children or college students, they should buy miniskirts and or uniforms for their spouses. Women can wear the attire that moves their spouses. But men do not want to buy these attires for spouses. Lately, some married women are now daring. They are now having extra- marital relations. They are fed up so much that they are ready to handle the consequences of being caught committing adultery. If men can do it why cannot married women do the same? The women asked this question, looking straight into my eyes.*

The preceding question hit me. I realised that women co-researchers were challenging, unpacking or deconstructing the religious and cultural constructions on men's infidelity. I acknowledged their important question. It was necessary to question the constructions. I noticed that it helped them to see and listen to a man who sojourned with them against male domination. As a man, I opened up to learn from them and allowed them to empty their anger, frustration and bitterness on me. I noticed that the women co-researchers saw me as a representative of all men. At the same time, I was aware that I was an individual man. This helped me accommodate their emptying out for their benefit.

I repeated the question women co-researchers asked me. The question left me curious about how other authorities saw men. I consulted with Umemoto (2001). Umemoto (2001:6) regrettably observes that in marriage, the husband can have as many wives as he wants and can have extra marital affairs as a bonus. When such a scenario happens, however, it is the wife who is blamed for failing to satisfy her husband or for failing to curb his desire to do so. "All men are the same" is a favourite phrase of older women as they try to make young women accept the inevitable (male infidelity). Umemoto shares the concerns of my women co-researchers. These concerns also were expressed by Anwasha (2014).

Anwasha (2014:1) insists all women have a staple dialogue when they are pissed. They always say, 'men are like dogs', but there is more truth to the statement 'all men are like dogs' than sexist frustration. Actually, there are more similarities between men and dogs than they would care to admit. Men have some uncanny similarities with the behaviour of dogs.

Dogs are very protective about their 'masters'. But if you let them loose, they end up knocking at the neighbour's door. This dual behaviour is seen in men as well. Men like to keep their women protected but they themselves cannot be trusted around other women. So men like dogs are loyal in a way and hard to trust in another. Anwasha cautions that these similarities are not to be taken literally to suggest that all men are like dogs. Instead, she suggests that the comments be taken with a pinch of salt and a gulp of fun.

Surprisingly, women appear to support male domination rather than challenge the oppressive religious and cultural constructions. One woman critique, Maguraushe makes an important observation, "When a man is having extramarital affairs, the first thing a wife is asked by her aunt is whether or not she had been giving him sex whenever he wanted. Her role is to keep

the marriage going by giving as much sex as possible” (Maguraushe *et al* 2014:9). This would suggest that Umemoto, Anwasha and Maguraushe agree on the role of religious and cultural constructions which inform women to endure abusive relations.

#### **4.6.12 Powerlessness of women especially condom –use negotiation**

In preceding paragraphs, I wrote about men’s infidelity. Co-researchers urged that

*men rather than women indulge in extra marital relations in search of children, especially a son or if a man could not get sexual satisfaction. These religious and cultural constructions are worsened by the men’s non-use of condoms. These practices expose men, spouses, mistresses and children to HIV. Co-researchers said men do not want to use condoms. They urged that they cannot use them on the spouses they paid lobola for. They urged that they cannot eat sweets in their papers- that is to say they cannot use protection. An insistence on condom use by married women results in domestic violence and accusations of adultery.*

In other words non-condom use exposes sexual partners and their loved ones to STIs and domestic violence. Men say unprotected sex as opposed to protected sex results in fertility (Nyoni 2008:137). This unfair power relation between men and women causes suffering to women and children. These effects have been widely noted by researchers. Muchena (2012:4), Chirawu (2006:7), WLSA – Zimbabwe (2002:3) and Mashiri (2013:101) share that non-condom use in sexual relations shows male domination; oppresses women’s power to negotiate for safer sex; exposes women to fatal domestic violence like murder, mutilation, unwanted pregnancies, and life-long STIs like HIV and AIDS (see section 2.2.5).

This co-researcher notes that the introduction of condoms in reproductive health targeted women more than men. Advocates targeted women and gave them information on condom use. These women included commercial sex workers and women patients in clinics. These efforts were wasted as women could not negotiate for safer sex with spouses or partners. So, this means that the approach unfairly empowered women and not their spouses and partners. The latter expressed aloofness, resistance and accused spouses of sexual immorality. However, the Non-Government Organisations (NGO’s) changed their approach. They targeted men’s organisations like Padare and engaged men in communities and work places.



This has increased acceptance of condoms as a way of family planning and prevention of STIs like HIV.

#### **4.6.13 Dependence on husbands for medical treatment (HIV positive)**

Men's infidelity and non-condom use exposes men, spouses, partners and children to HIV. Co-researchers said HIV and AIDS are realities which force spouses and or partners to endure on in marriage.

*Generally, men more than women have multiple sexual relations outside marriage. This exposes men to HIV that they will then transmit to their spouses, partners and children. Men's poor health-seeking behaviour compromises their health. Most men consult traditional or faith healers when they have health problems, including STIs. They only consult western medicine when guchu (concoction), stones, holy water and anointed oil fail them. They are silent about their medical problems, avoid sex with spouses until their problems are too big for spouses or partners to see, said Padare co-researchers.*

*Where should we go after contracting HIV from spouses? Why should we leave to suffer and die a sorry death alone? As women we know no other home than ours. These ideas inspire women to suffer pain and die in their marriages. To leave is to leave men to infect more women. It's not fair for women's extended families to take the responsibility of the care of their daughters. Men and their relatives should. They should pay for the relevant medical expenses like consultation fees, HIV tests and related treatment, as well as the treatment of opportunistic infections (diarrhoea, tuberculosis, skin rash and genital issues). These are sufficient reasons to force most married women to endure abusive spouses, the women co-researchers painfully shared with each other and myself.*

Women co-researchers fired questions at me regarding where they should go and why they must leave to suffer and die alone. Put together I see the role of religious and cultural constructions that inform men into multiple sexual practices; secrecy on life threatening health issues; and the hopelessness, and helplessness that women buy into as a result of religious and cultural constructions of being entrapped.

I agree with NAC (2005a); Mungwini (2008); SAFAIDS (2009) and WUA (2015). The different types of marriages in Zimbabwe are now forms of imprisonment for women (NAC 2005a:8). Marriage is now one of the causes of HIV infection in Zimbabwe. More people are becoming infected in the different types of marriages. Women are the most affected gender as they constitute 60% of the population (SAFAIDS 2009:8; Mungwini 2008:6). This reality creates a context that surrounds marriage and should challenge couples to behave differently. They should consider ways which promote faithfulness and protection of uninfected spouses.

#### **4.6.14 Women Submission**

The women and men co-researchers agreed that women should submit to spouses in marriage. The religious and cultural constructions said that the man is the head of the family. The woman should submit to her spouse. These constructions have forced women to endure abusive relations. They were prevented from questioning and challenging the domination and headship of men in marriage. This male domination from religion and culture ensures the perpetual submission and marginalisation of women in Zimbabwe.

“*Musikavanhu* (God) and *Vadzimu* (spirit mediums) privileged men and not women. On behalf of *Musikavanhu* and *Vadzimu*, men are the head of their families. Most men spell out the rules that govern the daily ideas and practices that guide the relationship of women and children. The woman must strengthen the position of father and the boy-child. This gives men power in the family and communities. No women should question the position and roles of men. Any challenge to men’s power is seen as undermining God and his spirit given authority, “said men co-researchers, who noted that as men from Padare they are opening up more and more, unlike non- members, to the needs of women”.

The women co-researchers urged that religious and cultural constructions force married women into submission. The elderly ensure that the married woman is subservient to her husband, for example, the religious and cultural spirit leaders provide holy water that the married woman must put in her and in her spouse’s bathing water. The woman must use the water pronouncing her husband’s name and all the blessings she so wishes. This ritual does not necessarily change the abusive inter-spousal relations. Rather, it entrenches male domination and female submission.

About domination, Chirawu (2006:7) observes that in Zimbabwe, the dominance approach is clearly illustrated within the realm of culture and religion. Due to inequalities in the economic sphere, most women find themselves at the mercy of husbands for their day to day livelihood. The dominance approach explains why society tolerates men having extra marital relationships but not women. Women are bound to stay in a marriage at any cost. The dominance approach also has its roots in religion. It emanates from the Biblical teaching that wives should submit to their husbands and that the latter is the head of the house.

Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian country. Many women belong to Christian groups within their churches where the message of dominance is preached. It is difficult to compete with religion for space. The first port of call for an abused Zimbabwean woman, just as for the African American woman, is the church but “Most churches are patriarchal and use the scriptures to rationalise that a woman should stay and try to work out the problems of her marriage because she is subordinate under the word of God to her husband” (Chirawu 2006).

Kambarami (2006) agrees with Chirawu. Kambarami (2006:6) urges that patriarchal attitudes are also found in Christianity. These have strengthened the traditional customs, which men use to control women’s sexuality (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). To exemplify, Eve’s alleged creation from Adam’s rib has made women occupy a subordinate position in the church as well as in the family. Women are therefore viewed merely as second-class citizens who were created as an afterthought.

This is to say that if God had seen it fit for Adam to stay alone, then Eve would never have been created and hence women would not exist in this world. Such patriarchal attitudes have seen women being forced to be submissive to males. To make matters worse, once Eve was created she wreaked havoc by giving in to the devil’s temptation and pulling Adam into sin. This portrayal of women as the weaker sex has caused men to treat women as people who have to be kept under constant supervision lest they err.

St Paul’s letter to the Colossians is one example of the letters which Zimbabwean men quote as a justification of their control over women. The woman is expected to “submit to her husband” (Colossians 3:18) while the husband has to love his wife (Colossians 3:19).

Now love is much more difficult to measure than obedience or submissiveness. As a result, men control their women and justify their actions based on Christianity.

I agree with Chirawu and Kambarami that religion and culture are the sources of male domination and female subjugation. These sources of constructions should be deconstructed so that men are freed from domination as well as women from subjugation (see section 4.8 – 4.8.1).

#### **4.6.15 Marriage bestows dignity**

Women co-researchers said dignity is one of the values married Zimbabwean women cherish. Marriage gives a woman in Zimbabwe self-worth and estimation. A married woman unlike a single woman or unmarried woman (unmarried, divorced or widowed) is seen highly and respected. Women co-researchers said this worthiness and high view is the dream of every woman in Zimbabwe. Men respect married women. Unmarried women, including small houses are not respected. Married women see single women as potential threats to their status.

*Men seem to respect most married women. They rarely approach married women for love just single women. In the Shona culture a married woman is sacred- like. She is respected. Men see her highly. Men esteem her. This is caused by the community that addresses her with her spouse's surname. So if a man proposes love to her, this is a social crime. It is taboo. Such a man is scorned, laughed at and mocked. The married woman makes it her agenda should a man bother her for love. She appeals for help from her relations and community. The community responds swiftly. This is the dignity most women expect, a women co-researcher said.*

Mungwini (2008:6) urges that it is culturally inappropriate for a married woman to be a close friend of an unmarried woman. The unmarried are seen as sexual perverts who can, through their influence as friends, drive their married friend into having an illicit affair. There is among the Shona the popular saying that goes *chii chaunodzidza pamukadzi asina murume kunze kwekuputsa imba yako, makuhwa nechihure* (there is nothing good that you can learn from an unmarried woman other than being taught vices that would destroy your marriage such as gossiping and unfaithfulness). In other words an unmarried woman's mind is seen as a devil's workshop of destruction.

Gaidzanwa (1985:33) says that traditional Shona society views single woman as unfulfilled and a hazard to established marriages and unions. Schmidt (1996:170) adds that women

without husbands or children are held openly in derision by society. Women have come to accept marriage as a symbol of status. Angry women often shout, “*Ndiri mukadzi wemunhu mazvinzwa musandiona semunhu wemangamanga. (I am someone’s wife. Don’t take me cheaply).*” This discourse is an open denigration to those without husbands and failed to become wives.

This means that no woman wants to lose her dignity. Most married women stay in abusive relationships to uphold social worthiness and status. They cannot lose dignity and be laughed at by children, youth and men. They would rather soldier on and survive domestic violence than lose the benefits placed on a married woman. This evaluation of married women left me wondering. I was curious to the extent to which married Zimbabwean women tolerated abusive spouses for the sake of social constructions around dignity. These constructions have caused negative effects on married Zimbabwean women (section 3.2.11).

#### **4.7 Effects of religious and cultural constructions on married Zimbabwean women**

The presiding subsections presented constructions that informed women to soldier on in abusive inter-spousal relations. I learnt about the effects of the constructions on married women and their important relations. They told about the ways the constructions affected them and their relations. I was interested to learn more from the co-researchers. What follows are the effects- saturated stories they shared with each other and me.

##### **4.7.1 Getting an STI or Fear of it**

Women and men co-researchers said partners were at risk of contracting STIs for example HIV or syphilis. Some of the co-researchers said they contracted HIV from their relations with spouses. The women co-researchers said they tolerate spouses who are involved in multiple sexual relations. The relatives of the women told them to soldier on rather than divorce spouses. Women themselves want “their husbands and homes”. So this put them at the risk of STIs. This means that women’s endurance affects them because they are at risk of contracting life-long illnesses.

*Every woman needs a husband. A woman needs to be called by her husband’s name. This bestows dignity and respect on a woman. Most women are prepared to defend and die for this status. Getting an HIV is one risk that women expose themselves to. When the woman gets infected the woman soldiers on. She rather stays with the*

*abusive spouse. She gets medical care, food and accommodation. It is pointless to leave with HIV and burden your family of origin. Mukadzi anofirapo (a woman dies in that relationship), the women co-researchers said.*

The men co-researchers agreed that most men in Zimbabwe are involved in extra-marital affairs. This puts men at the risk of getting HIV. “*Murume chaiye- chaiye anooneka nemavanga* (a real man is seen by scars)” this means that men are proud about being infected with an STI. This proves that a man is daring enough. These religious and cultural constructions show that most men put spouses at risk of STIs. This explains some of the reasons that women buy into negative constructions that affect them and their relations.

Kambarami (2006) comments on Zimbabwe’s gender inequalities. Kambarami (2006:8) urges that married women are expected to be sexually passive and submissive to their husbands. Men are the initiators of sex and also set the conditions for the sexual encounter. Messer cited in Kambarami (2006) states that women are expected to satisfy the sexual desires of their husbands. As a result, when a husband wants sex, the wife should comply. This is part of the marriage contract. This scenario has seen HIV and AIDS spreading like veld-fire because women cannot insist on safe sex measures as men control the sexual encounter.

Chitando (2011:65) observes that patriarchy invests men with power and authority. This leaves women reeling under patriarchal control. The system favours men and disadvantages women. Gender inequality increases the spread of HIV as it forces women to enter into sexual relationships where the power is with men. Women then find it difficult to negotiate safer sex. However, gender inequality does not expose women only to HIV. Men too are rendered vulnerable due to the power that they have. When power is used irresponsibly, it threatens the interests of its owner. When men clients refuse to use condoms because they have financial power, women sex workers in many instances have no choice but to concede to unprotected sex because they need the money.

#### **4.7.2 Death or physical harm**

Enduring domestic violence causes deaths and fatal injuries. The women co-researchers told of stories about women they know who died because of domestic violence. Domestic violence happens for years and one fateful event causes the death of the woman spouse. The

co-researchers shared that male spouses “*plucked off their dread locks, used sharp objects to prick their genitals; battering; kicking; neck-scratching and marital rape.*” These forms of violence cause death, attempted suicide and physical harm: limping, swollenness, difficult gaiety and red eyes. These effects make women lie about their physical state for example I knocked against a wall at night or miss-stepped. In addition to ageing and injuries this forces a woman to endure abusive relations.

#### **4.7.3 Murder cases statistics**

The Zimbabwe Republic Police Headquarters victim friendly unit in their annual report stated that in (2014) about 321 married Zimbabwean women were murdered in gender based domestic violence. In (2015) the number of married women murdered in domestic violence increased from 321 to 546. The ZRP said that the main cause of murder cases was extra marital accusations in marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. Most women were victims of domestic violence regardless of human rights organisations campaigns against abuse. Even the number of murder cases is increasing at an alarming rate but, women continue to endure such abusive marriages (see section 2.6; 3.2.11).

#### **4.7.4 Emotional and mental**

Women co-researchers said the religious and cultural constructions affected their emotions and mental health. The constructions made women feel and think that they are less human than men. The constructions informed women to think that they cannot look after themselves and their children. This made women (unnecessarily suffer and endure abusive spouses). Its little wonder why brave women defend the statures of marriage despite the threat of STIs, death and physical harm (See section 2.6; Section 3.2.11).

#### **4.7.5 Impact on children**

Domestic violence affects children as it affects married women. Children witness parental violence. They see either parent’s nakedness. Children may also witness their mothers’ physical, emotional or mental effects of domestic violence. For example children may see their parent’s, especially mother limping, swollen face, gapping teeth, confusion or withdrawal. These effects spill on to the welfare of the children. Children may develop a negative attitude towards their fathers and their father’s partners or small houses. This affects children’s emotional, mental moods and performance at school. These implications on

families especially children agree with USAID (2009) and Musasa Project (2006) analysis of the effects of domestic violence (see sections 2.8; 3.2.11).

## **4.8 Sojourning**

The co-research process was an opportunity for men and women co-researchers to tell about the religious and cultural constructions on marriage; gender based roles and domestic violence. The co-researchers told about the ways the constructions saturated their respective communities and families. Co-researchers told on ways they bought into the constructions. They told about the thin identity conclusions (section 1.5; White & Epston 1990:38) they used to describe their marriages. They also used problem saturated stories to describe the effects of the constructions on them and their relationships.

In view of the above I wondered about the domination of the social constructions on co-researchers. I wondered about the thin identity conclusions co-researchers used to describe themselves and relationships. These curiosities informed me to participate with co-researchers in ways that deconstructed the dominant religious and cultural constructions on marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. This way of being with co-researchers helped us to question social constructions and open up alternative ways of storing marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

Informed by Kotze (2002:7-8), I asked the women and men co-researchers about whose ideas influenced their understanding of marriage, gender based roles, and domestic violence. Who benefitted from social constructions? Who suffered as a result of social constructions? What did it mean to them, as women, to witness and hear each other stories? These questions helped me to interrogate the power of the constructions that saturated the ideas married women use to “see, think, talk and act” (Madigan 1996:50) about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

This ethical way of being, helped us as co-researchers to sojourn together towards healing and wholeness.

### **4.8.1 Sojourning towards healing and wholeness**

Co-researching with co-researchers opened up opportunities for them to story their life experience about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. They storied their



problem saturated ideas and practices. As co-researchers, we were actively involved in telling and re-telling of the stories. In this process we became one *dare* that sojourned together within social constructions. Co-researchers learned from each other in terms of stories of pain, bitterness, anger; and stories of hope, soldiering on, healing and wholeness. Questioning and reflecting about the dominant social constructions were key processes in the sojourn with abused women towards healing and wholeness.

I agree with Heshusius (1994) on participatory consciousness or awareness. Heshusius (1994:17) urges that in participatory consciousness, relational selves do not come to knowledge by means of separation, but by way of care and love. She calls this relationship the ‘self-other’. This relationship requires an attitude of openness and receptivity to create a greater wholeness. This means that our participation as co-researchers helped us to achieve a deeper level of awareness about religious and cultural constructions that affect married women in Zimbabwe. This helped us to talk about ways of healing and wholeness.

#### **4.8.2 Understanding of marriage, gender roles and gender based violence**

I agree with Morgan (2000:9) who insists that the broader socio and cultural contexts shape its inhabitants. Morgan (2000:9) urges that the ways in which we understand our lives are influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which we live. Some of the stories we have about our lives will have positive effects and some will have negative effects on life in the past, present and future. The co-research engaged co-researchers to question and deconstructs the dominant religious and cultural ideas and practices which affected married women in Zimbabwe (see section 5.3).

#### **4.9 Stories of Enesto Muzerengwa**

I, Enesto Muzerengwa and co-researcher grew up in the rural area of Nehumambi (Pakura) village, Buhera District in Manicaland Province. I was raised in a rural set up. One institution that influenced my ideas and practice was the family *dare*. My 20 brothers, father and I set up the family *dare*. The *dare* was at the centre of the homestead. It was surrounded by huts of my father’s polygamous family. The location of the *dare* showed that the *dare* was an important institution that constructed ideas and practices which informed the polygamous family.

My father Hamudi Pakura taught my brothers and I about the advantages of polygamy. For example polygamy was a ready source of labour. The polygamous family comprised of 39 people, including father, four mothers and 34 children. This made up a strong work-gang which worked in a short space of time on one mother's fields to another and then the father's field. This means that ploughing, planting and harvesting were less time wasting.

Despite the said advantages, I witnessed a couple of disadvantages. The *dare* constructed religious and cultural ideas and practices that strengthened male domination. Hamudi Pakura oppressed his four wives. He drank heavily and returned home late. Upon his return, he demanded warm well cooked meals and warm water to wash his hands. These were difficult demands. This was in the rural areas: there is no electricity, microwaves, electric kettles and enabling environment for the demands. Failure to meet the demands, Hamudi Pakura kicked, punched and scolded his wives who were expected to bring a meal each.

The polygamous family went through conflicts. Mothers quarrelled with each other. Two or three mothers aligned against each other or one mother and her children quarrelled with one or two of the mothers and their children. These conflicts were brought and settled at the *dare*. At the *dare* Hamudi Pakura incited the boys against their mothers, accusing them of poor cooking. I wondered why my 'mothers stayed in such an abusive relationship with my father.

In conversations with two surviving mothers including my biological mother, they shared their reasons;

We remained because your father was abusive. We wanted to protect you as our children. If we had left, the inter-families' conflicts would increase. So, each mother endured for the sake of her children. The presence of mothers restrained children from fights and or quarrels. This helped you to grow, attend school and succeed. It could have been difficult if we left.

My conversion and pastoral experiences helped me to challenge religious and cultural constructions on polygamy, gender based roles and domestic violence. I realised that religion and culture shaped my mind about women for example, I wanted to marry more than four spouses. I wanted to out- do my father and brothers. Conversion caused me to see that polygamy was un-Christian and inhuman. Pastoral experiences exposed me to stories of

women who went through difficult experiences from their male spouses. This means that the conversion and pastoral experiences helped me deconstruct the dominant constructions about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

Chapter four talked about the stories that women and men co-researchers talked about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The chapter did not carry all the conversations with co-researchers. Rather, it carries stories that I filtered through the research aims, objectives and questions. The stories were analysed in view of the co-researcher's ideas, my own personal experiences and views of important theories. The analysis helped the research locate co-researcher's stories within the knowledge that authorities have written. This helped me to see the new stories the co-researchers contributed to the board of knowledge in Zimbabwe on understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence (see chapter five).

## Chapter Five

### 5 Summarises and Conclusions

#### 5.0 Introduction

I summarise chapters one to four. The summaries capture the important aspects covered in the specific chapters. The summaries helped me draw closer to the research conclusion, by reflecting on the preliminary conclusions of each of the chapters.

##### ❖ Chapter one

Chapter one created the context to the whole research. The context gave the environment and boundaries under which I did the co-research. It offered the necessary background to the research as well as the inspiration; formulated the research question; objectives; theoretical frameworks; methodologies; and research procedures. Therefore, the context inspired and motivated the co-researcher.

##### ❖ Chapter two

Chapter two was a literature review. The chapter brought in the works of other authorities. These authorities are voices that spoke and wrote on marriage, gender based roles, domestic violence and other related themes that were important for my study. The literature review helped me to develop the research gap. The gap enabled me to position this research on Marital abuse of Zimbabwean Women. Thus, the gap informed us as co-researchers throughout the co-research.

##### ❖ Chapter three

Chapter 3 contains stories from co-researchers from three organisations; Musasa Project, ZWLA and Padare (men's forum on gender). In this chapter I also told my personal story, which played an important role in the development of the research. Co-researchers' stories unpacked the religious and cultural ideas and practices which made them stay in abusive relations. The stories also told the ways co-researchers deconstructed the religious and cultural constructions in Zimbabwe which shape marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. Deconstruction helped us as co-researchers to share ways co-researchers could sojourn towards healing and wholeness. Thus, chapter three told co-researchers' experiences of culture and religion in marriage and ways they positioned and sojourned.

#### ❖ Chapter four

Chapter four is a reflection of the *matare*. The *dare* summarised co-researchers' stories and reflections with other named voices. The chapter carries dominant themes and constructions that shaped the lives of co-researchers. The dominant themes comprised of the stories of female and male co-researchers. We named the socio- economic, cultural and religious constructions that informed their understanding of marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The reflections named the ways co-researchers deconstructed the constructions which shaped their lives. Thus, the reflections named the constructions that informed co-researchers and ways they sojourned towards healing and wholeness.

#### ❖ Chapter five

Chapter five summarises the whole research. The chapter presents the co-research results, recommendations and conclusion. The presiding aspects answered the research objectives and questions. Thus, chapter five names the co-researchers' results, recommendations in view of the co-researchers objectives and questions.

### 5.1 Research objectives

At the onset, the co-research was based on three objectives. As co-researchers, we wanted to:

1. Understand why Zimbabwean women remain in abusive relationships.
2. Understand how the socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions force married Zimbabwean women to stay with abusive spouses.
3. Seek ways to sojourn with these women towards healing and wholeness.

### 5.2 Research Questions

To understand the constructions that informed married Zimbabwean women to suffer in abusive relations; why they endured abuse; and the ways in which they coped with abuse, the co-research was helped by the three questions below. These questions helped the co-research to achieve its objectives:

- ❖ What cultural-religious, social and economic discourses inform the women to remain in abusive marriages?

- ❖ What role does the religious-cultural construction of gender roles, marriage and domestic violence play in keeping women in abusive marriages?
- ❖ What can be done to deconstruct these dominant discourses in order to empower women to cope with abusive marriages?

### **5.3 Research Results**

I present the research results. The research results are organised under the relevant research objectives and questions. This approach draws the attention of the supervisor, participant co-researchers, readers and interested others to the specific results. This way makes the research results clear.

#### **5.3.1 Socio- economic, cultural and religious reasons women stay in abusive relations**

The first objective wanted to:

- ❖ Understand why Zimbabwean women remain in abusive relationships. To achieve this the co-researcher asked: What cultural-religious, social and economic discourses inform the women to remain in abusive marriages? The first objective and question helped the co-researchers to understand the social, cultural and religious reasons which informed co-researchers about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.
- ❖ The following are reasons which informed married Zimbabwean women to stay in abusive relations or tolerate an abusive spouse:
  1. Economic dependence on male spouse (Early child marriage)
  2. Paying for avenging spirits
  3. Marriage of convenience (ageing and injuries)
  4. Trapped (total stranger in paternal home and family of marriage)
  5. Women endure and work towards breaking the over involvement of relatives
  6. Suffering in secrecy and silence
  7. Right of sexual intercourse between husband and wife (conjugal rights)
  8. Welfare and safety of children
  9. Mothering children with same totem
  10. Fertility (infertility cause of domestic violence)
  11. Women are monogamous even in view of spousal infidelity

12. Powerlessness of women especially condom –use negotiation
13. Dependence on husbands for medical treatment (HIV positive)
14. Women submission
15. Marriage bestows dignity

### **5.3.2 Role of socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions in marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence**

The first objective and question highlighted why married women endure abusive spouses and relations. I now consider the results of the second objective and question: Understand how the socio- economic, cultural and religious constructions force married Zimbabwean women to stay with abusive spouses. What role does the religious-cultural construction of gender roles, marriage and domestic violence play in keeping women in abusive marriages?

The second objective and question explained how the socio-economic, cultural and religious discourses forced married women to stay with abusive spouses. The social, economic, cultural and religious sectors collectively constructed ideas and practices that influenced married women. The dominant ideas and practices oppressed married women into submission, naivety and an inferiority complex. The dominant constructions informed married women about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

#### **5.3.2.1 Dominant constructions about marriage**

Marriage is a cultural and religious ritual. Zimbabwean communities and society socially construct their understanding of marriage and the relevant rituals. Before marriage, a young unmarried man and woman dates and court each other within their immediate communities, culture or religion (*wematongo*). The two exchange pledges and tokens like handkerchief, trouser, shirt or dress. The pledge and vow are signs of commitment to marriage. The two either marry in accordance with the cultural or religious custom. The pre, during and post marriage rituals oppress married women more than men (see Chapters 3 and 4). These social, cultural and religious constructions blindfold and force women to endure marriage.

It was discovered that the socio- economic and religious institutions keep these dominant discourses in place. The institutions socially construct ideas and practices that inform married women about marriage. The girl child and ultimately the married woman are culturally and religiously taught to uphold marriage. The religious and cultural ideas and practices informed married Zimbabwean women to stay in abusive marriages. This means that the socio-

economic, cultural and religious discourses informed how married women thought and acted with regard to marriage.

What follows are specific ways why women endured abusive spouses and relationships.

1. Economic dependence on male spouse (Early child marriage)

Female and male co-researchers said some women marry when they are below 18 years (early child marriages). The young married women did not finish their education, often not even primary education and certainly not secondary or tertiary education. This made the women to be unskilled and unemployable in the formal sector. These realities mean that the women were economically dependent upon their spouses. This means that they often have to endure abuse for their economic survival. .

2. Paying for avenging spirits

Women endured marriage to prevent the effects of avenging spirits on their families of origin. The women would have been given as a ransom to appease avenging spirits. This means that staying in marriage saves one's family members from misfortunes or death.

3. Marriage of convenience (Ageing and injuries)

Ageing and marital injuries affect women. An ageing and unmarried woman feels like a social outcast. A woman who has separated or divorced is a cultural or religious outcast. Worse, a scarred and disabled woman due to domestic violence is an outcast and unmarriageable. The presiding discourses force women to enter into marriages of convenience. So in the event of domestic violence the married woman endures an abusive spouse or relationship.

4. Being Trapped (Total stranger in paternal home and family of marriage)

The marriage rituals construct that a father surrenders his daughter to her husband and the in-law-family. This means that the daughter detaches herself from the family of origin and should become a permanent resident in her family of marriage. In the case of marital problems, the married woman is trapped. The in-laws are against her. Her extended family does not expect her to return but to soldier- on. This forces women to endure difficult marriages.

5. Women endure and work towards breaking the over involvement of relatives.



Married women expect love, joy and peace in marriage. But not all marriages are warm, joyful and peaceful. The expectations make women hopeful in abusive marriages. They endure and strive to break the over involvement of relatives in their marriages.

#### 6. Suffering in secrecy and silence

Socially, culturally and religiously, women are expected to suffer in secrecy and silence. This means that they are not supposed to expose the abuses they suffer to anyone. This means that they suffer from abuse in marriage.

#### 7. Right of sexual intercourse between husband and wife (Conjugal rights)

Women enter and stay in the marriage for conjugal rights. Culture and religion disallow women to consider or indulge in extra marital sex. This forces women to condone abusive spouses for sex. Culture and religion pardon men rather than married women for adultery.

#### 8. Welfare and safety of Children

Women are concerned about the welfare and safety of children more than men. In the midst of the storm of abuse in marriage, most women prioritise children. They would suffer abuse rather than expose their children to abuse by step- mothers or fathers.

#### 9. Mothering children with same totem

Culture and religion force married women to mother children from one father. Society labels women who have children from other men as loose and prostitutes. No woman wants these stereotypes, so they endure abusive spouses.

#### 10. Fertility (infertility cause of domestic violence)

Social, religious and cultural constructions say that children bind together a husband and a wife. Infertility is blamed on the wife and not the husband. The woman is accused of infertility. So, the woman holds on in the hope that she bears children. This is in spite of the fact that the man could be infertile. The western medical solutions are only acquired after so much abuse.

#### 11. Women are monogamous even in view of spousal infidelity

Generally, married women in Zimbabwe are monogamous. Culture and religion expect women to stick to one husband. This construction is expected even in the face of the husband's infidelity. This forces women to endure abusive spouses.

#### 12. Powerlessness of women especially on condom-use negotiation

In view of the social and cultural worthiness of marriage, married women are powerless. The powerlessness is socially constructed. The powerlessness prevents married women from negotiating for safer sex. This puts them at the risk of STIs including HIV.

#### 13. Dependence on husbands for medical treatment (HIV positive)

Given most women' dependence on men for their economic welfare, they also depend on their husbands for their medical needs. In the case that a married woman is terminally ill or on life-long treatment, she endures an abusive relationship. She fears leaving and having struggle to finance the life-long treatment (see section 4.6.1; 5.5).

#### 14. Women submission

Cultural, social and religious institutions force married women to surrender or submit to men. The institutions make rules and laws which facilitates the submission of women. The institutions strengthen and defend the domination of men. This means that married women submit to their husbands even in times of abuse in marriage.

#### 15. Marriage bestows dignity

Culture and religion place a high value on marriage. The construction means that a married woman is more dignified than a single, separated or divorced woman. This expectation pressures women to aspire to be married and remain married. This informs women to make every effort to endure abusive relationships. Culture and religion see an unmarried woman as worthless, a prostitute or loose.

### **5.3.3 Constructions about gender based roles**

Socio-economic, cultural and religious discourses give more privileges to men than women. The discourses put men in control. Men define and describe the roles for women. Male dominance gives women peripheral and dirty roles. Men occupy a high ranked position or play executive roles. This means that culturally and religiously men are more powerful than

women. The constructions on gender roles in Zimbabwe inform how women respond to abuses in marriage.

Cultural, economic and religious discourses say that a man is a bread winner. A man works so hard to provide for his spouse and children. These constructions caused the co-researchers to be dependent upon men. As mentioned above, married women relied on their spouses for economic and medical needs. The women were forced to dance to the tune of men. In these responses, women showed how gender constructions informed their submission and dependence upon men. However, women co-researchers challenged the gender role construction (see section 5.4).

#### **5.3.4 Domestic violence**

Women co-researchers were subjected to physiological, emotional, sexual and physical abuses. These include mocking, slurring, kicking, punching, plucking off hair which makes them sustain bruises. Despite this, the women were forced to tolerate abusive spouses and relationships.

#### **5.4 Deconstruction**

The first, second objectives and questions named why and how discourses affected married women in abusive relationships. The third objective sought ways to sojourn with these women towards healing and wholeness. To achieve this co-researcher asked: What can be done to deconstruct these dominant discourses in order to empower women to cope with abusive marriages? Thus, the third objective and question helped deconstruct the dominant discourses that affected married women in marriage.

So, what is deconstruction?

Derrida (cited in Wolfreys 1998:16) argue that deconstruction is the pulling or setting apart of ideas and meanings (constructions) that people make about dominant themes in their specific context. Derrida further urges that constructions/ ideas are not innocent. They are laden with specific meanings. Derrida helped us as co-researchers to understand that marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence are not innocent and laden with specific meanings.

Rather, the constructions are made up of dominant religious and cultural ideas and practices about marriage, gender and violence from within Zimbabwean communities and society. These religious and cultural ideas and practices were pulled and set apart (see chapter 3). This

agrees with Morgan (2000). Morgan ( 2000: 45) urges that deconstruction is the discovering, acknowledging and ‘taking apart’ the belief, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story, see also (Gergen 1985:3; Burr 2003:46-56).

Male domination, gender roles and domestic violence are seen as normal practices by most Zimbabweans. This explains reasons why the women and male co-researchers could not see anything wrong about the power imbalances between men and women. I agree with Morgan who urges that the beliefs and ideas that are assisting problems are often regarded as ‘taken for granted’, as ‘truth’, or as ‘common-place understandings’. The cultural beliefs that have assisted the problem to come into the person’s life, and the beliefs and ideas that are assisting in sustaining the life of the problem become more available for questioning and challenging. This means that deconstruction was a central part of this co-research.

So, why is deconstruction important? How did it take place?

Deconstruction unpacked the dominant gender based discourses that oppressed the abused married women in Zimbabwe. I used questions and conversations in *matare* with co-researchers to examine the marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. We defined, pulled them apart and traced their history. Through *matare* we considered the context in which marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence existed. We explored the ideas and beliefs that sustained the problem story and the history of the ideas.

Whose knowledge is it that makes your understanding about marriage? The above question was one way I used to learn from co-researchers about their understanding of the role of the ideas, thoughts, views, beliefs or values in Zimbabwe that shaped marriage. This question helped men and women co-researchers to understand the role of social constructions about marriage in Zimbabwe. Men and women co-researchers confessed ignorance about what made up their understanding of marriage. I used their stories to bring to their attention the role(s) of religious and cultural constructions about marriage. The attention caused them to see the roles of religion and culture in shaping their ideas and practices about marriage.

The cultural institution of *dare* (Shona for men’s meeting place) is the context where dominant cultural constructions are socially constructed. Men are the dominant gender. They meet to define the roles of men, boys, women and girls. Their constructions create ideas and practices through which men define themselves and women (Padare 2000). These ideas and

practices oppress women and girls. They reinforce and perpetuate male domination (see chapter 3).

On the other hand, co-researchers understood the role of the church in constructing dominant religious ideas and practices about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. In most churches, men are in decision making positions. In these positions men define the position of men and women. The constructions are male driven and dominated. Men do not tolerate any attempt by women to deconstruct male domination in church activities. Men react by making rules that uphold and perpetuate their domination.

In view of the role of men in the institution of *dare* and church, I borrow ideas from Meylahn (2012: 61-70) about deconstructing dominant common language of discourses. Meylahn proposes the metaphor of a five dance movement to deconstruct dominant discourses. Meylahn urges that a dance is repetitive and circular (not linear). He says his metaphor of a dance comprises of listening, interpreting, discerning, re-authoring and embracing. Meylahn's metaphor of dance is informed by ideas from Keifert (2006:58); Roxburgh & Boren's (2009:136).

Meylahn (2012:61-63) proposes the movement of active listening and interpreting. Meylahn urges that active listening happens when one enters the community. S/he listens to the narratives (stories) and to the various layers of the narratives. The listener interprets or makes meaning out of the stories within the broader context. The first layers of narratives are the narratives that are freely shared. It means listening and interpreting to the history of the community and how it changed. These narratives freely shared form the common shared language of a community, which captures the norms, values, histories and dominant themes of a community.

Meylahn helped me to understand what the two narrative co-researchers told about marriage, gender roles and domestic violence. Co-researchers told two levels of narratives. In the first level, co-researchers told about stories they heard from other women and men about marriage and gender roles within their cultural and religious (church contexts). These stories made up the constructions people in Zimbabwe generalise about marriage, gender roles and violence. These stories made up part of the stories related by co-researchers in chapter 3.

In the second level of narratives, Meylahn identifies stories communities share once they have learnt to trust the listener. Each individual listener has his/her own common language

that they are part of – a language of norms and values, and one need to be aware of this language and how this language influences how one listens to others. Meylahn helped me to find useful ways of relating with co-researchers. I sought a deeper level of relation/awareness with co-researchers (Heshusius 1994:17). I became aware of the generalised or taken for granted ideas and meanings of the first level stories co-researchers told. I was in this position because I am a Zimbabwean and a victim of gender roles or domestic violence (see personal story in chapter 3).

This awareness informed me to get closer to co-researchers. It made women and men co-researchers open up their personal stories. They entrusted me with stories of bitterness, bereavement, regret, endurance, fear and suffering. They willingly told these stories.

I was aware of my own personal stories and kept them out of their stories. This made their personal stories (not my own shadows) visible. The stories changed from first to second level narratives. I and co-researchers changed from first to second level narrative listeners. Thus, as co-researchers we told and interpreted the dominant common language in Zimbabwe about marriage, gender roles and violence and deconstructed the excluded and new stories of healing and wholeness.

Meylahn (2012:65-66) proposes the movement of discerning and re-authoring.

By discerning, Meylahn proposes ways of understanding and challenging dominant discourses from within the broader social context. He brings a shift from inviting dogmatic meanings from a higher authority or myth. Meylahn helped me focus on the social constructions of the dominant discourses about marriage, gender roles and domestic violence. As co-researchers we shifted from forcing meanings about God regarding marriage/gender that culture and religion impose on communities and society in Zimbabwe.

The shift helped co-researchers to challenge the role of culture and church in constructing male domination over women; normalisation of domestic violence and passing on of domination from generation to generation. Discerning further widened the cracks of the domination language in Zimbabwe about marriage, gender roles and domestic violence. Men from Padare (men's forum on gender) told about ways they are engaging men through workshops and commemorations towards reducing negative cultural ideas and practices. Women co-researchers challenged the church's interpretation of the headship of men and female submission.

Meylahn (2012: 31) urges that the church is in the world but not of the world. The church is a social phenomenon and should be relevant to the world. Meylahn (2012:31) critiques the church's fundamentalism. Meylahn describes fundamentalism as absolute truths which are derived from the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible and literal interpretations of the Biblical texts) and/or conservatism. Conservatism means the conviction that one has the right truth [dogma], not necessarily from a literal reading of the Bible.

The church uses absolute, literal and conservative interpretations of the Biblical texts. For example the understanding of the church about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The man is seen as the head of the house. The woman is seen as a subordinate. This literal understanding of the Pauline teaching makes men oppress women through male biased ideas and practices.

Regarding the re-authoring movement, Meylahn challenges the church to find new ways of widening the cracks of the dominant common languages of culture and religion. This opened up opportunities for co-researchers to talk about their oppression and shadows of their survival, sojourning in view of domestic violence. Meylahn urges that Jesus Christ focused on the outcasts: women, children and the sick. Jesus brought about the marginalised, the shadows, and the stories of those who do not fit in to the dominant common language. This new way of telling new stories of healing and wholeness empowered co-researchers to re-author their understanding of marriage and gender roles.

#### **5.4.1 Who benefitted?**

Question one identified that the ideas and practices that made up marriage in Zimbabwe came from religion and culture. The second question was thought provoking. It set the agenda on beneficiaries of the religious and cultural constructions. I asked the men and women co-researchers to identify who benefitted from the social constructions. Men said they benefitted. Religion and culture privileged them over women and girls. Women said their role was to uphold men's authority. They understood that men and boys defined the ideas and practices that shaped marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.

Poling cited in Kotze (2001:103) urges that patriarchy has become reified in theologies, ideologies, organisations and institutions. Patriarchy positions men in relations of power that are taken for granted to such an extent that abuse is entertained under the guise of leadership, care and protection. Patriarchy socialises women to believe that they need men to protect and

lead them, leaving them either to resist or to be “trapped in dangerous situations because the men they depend on are abusive”. Patriarchal ideologies and institutions silence women’s and children’s voices, thus perpetuating the abuse of power.

Men co-researchers from Padare confessed that male domination was wrong.

*Challenging unfair dominance over women inspires the core beliefs and values of Padare (men’s forum on gender). As men, we are advocating for men and boys to name and undo the dominant ideas and practices that oppress women and girls. This approach makes up our monthly men’s meetings in the community and stakeholder meetings with women’s organisations. These meetings include specific gender-focused agenda meetings that run throughout the year. For example commemoration of gender based violence against women and girls.*

*These activities open up opportunities for men and women to see ways they could be of use to each other. Men are challenged to see the oppressive religious and cultural constructions. They are challenged to understand the ways men unfairly benefit from religion and culture. Men gained skills on ways they could preoccupy themselves other than become idle. These skills help them move away from preoccupation with domestic violence and gained skills in negotiation and relation building. These activities were shared with women’s organisations, said the men co-researchers.*

I used this conversation with men in the *matare* with co-researchers from ZWLA and Musasa Project. ZWLA and Musasa Project authorities acknowledged the role of Padare in working with them.

*Authorities said they were partnering with Padare to engage with men over the dominant religious and cultural constructions that see men and boys as beneficiaries’ over women and girls. Participation between men and women based organisations is one way to go. The way opens up possibilities for constructive conversations between men and women. It explores ways men could listen to the needs of women, said ZWLA and Musasa Projects.*



### 5.4.2 Who suffers?

The first and second questions established the social constructions and men as beneficiaries. The third question who suffers was important. The question pierced many co-researchers. The question caused men to feel the unfairness of social constructions on women. It caused a sobering discomfort in men that they repositioned themselves and re-told new stories. The new stories proposed ways that men could question their religious and cultural privileges for the benefit of women and girls. This way of sojourning with men co-researchers helped us to see ways men could work toward the healing and wholeness of abused married women.

Then I gave back to the men co-researchers to deconstruct with women co-researchers. Here, giving back means I shifted attention from men to women co-researchers. I wondered about who suffered from the religious and cultural constructions that shape marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The question opened a can of worms. The question helped women to tell their experiences of abuse and ways they could sojourn on. The question helped women to tell of their pains, wounds, regret, persecution, vulnerability and illness stories.

*Women suffer from the dominant social constructions. They are victims of male domination. They are seen as less important than men. They are expected to be silent when they should speak out or speak out loudly. The constructions force women to see marriage as a MUST. Every woman must aspire to be married and suffer on. They must suffer on for the sake of the marriage status and children. Married women must suffer on even when their relationships are risky and deadly, women co-researchers ignorantly shared with each other and myself.*

This conversation made me uncomfortable as a man. I witnessed and felt the ills and effects of polygamy and domestic violence. Since my adolescence and to date, I have deconstructed most of the dominant social constructions that shaped my ideas and practices about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. This put me in the position that I should endeavour to question and deconstruct dominant religious and cultural constructions.

In view of the role of the church, I agree with one Aboriginal social worker, Lilla Waston cited in Kotze & Kotze (2001:4). Waston challenges a foreigner visiting Australia. “*If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your*

*liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*” These words inspired me not as an expert of women’s liberation. Religion and culture has privileged me as a man but it is not a right over women. I use my privilege to collaborate with co-researchers to deconstruct the dominant common language in Zimbabwe about marriage, gender roles and domestic violence.

This challenges me as part of the church to find ways with women that creates a conducive environment in which both genders deconstruct dominant discourses. So, the liberation of women is in the liberation of men. This resonates with the notion that liberation of the oppressed also liberates the oppressor (Freire 1970:28; Isherwood & McEwan 1993:75 cited in Kotze & Kotze 2001:4). I used this positioning to wonder about women’s humility and subservience in face of male domination.

I acknowledged that the women co-researchers were unaware victims of social constructions. I questioned why women endured senseless pain at the expense of contracting STIs, emotional, mental, physical injuries and even death. I questioned women co-researchers who benefitted from the injuries and death? These curiosities saw women co-researchers reflect on their abusive contexts. This made women go into useful silence which helped them to find ways they can prepare themselves to challenge abuse or existing abusive relationships.

### **5.5 Sojourning towards healing and wholeness**

Meylahn (2012: 67) proposes the movement of embracing. Embracing relates to opportunities for communities to experience and hold on to the liberating Triune God (The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). I was informed by the embracing movement. It helped me and co-researchers to thicken on ways they could sojourn towards healing and wholeness. We were able to crack the domination common language that saturated their understanding of marriage, gender roles and domestic violence. The co-research helped co-researchers to continually question culture and religion (church) about who benefits and suffers from gender based roles and violence?

The concept of co-researching and *matare* (reflecting team) created the African and Zimbabwean space for co-researchers to collectively tell stories of hope. The concepts encouraged women into mutual interdependence and solidarity towards healing and wholeness (Kotze & Kotze 2001:38). Women co-researchers identified with each other. What affected one affected the other. The strength of one is the strength of the other. This resonates

with the *Ubuntu* philosophy. “I am because we are. I am because we participate together” (Mbiti 1998:145).

Combs & Freedman (1996:237; 1999:27) agrees that taking steps towards relational identities and relational selves is possible in community with others. Having audiences to witness these steps that people take towards living their alternative story and taking back their lives from the effects of the dominant story can be a step in support of these dreams. Weingarten (2000:389-402) cited in Kotze & Kotze (2001:38) talks about how resistance to dominant discourses should not be faced alone. Every voice needs a community of listeners to make small steps possible. In this co-research, co-researchers co-constructed one another according to their new values, beliefs and ideas.

So, the curiosities and questioning about women’ situations helped them to find a collective voice in sojourning towards healing and wholeness. As women shared their experiences, they shared on the various abusive relations (see section 3.1- 3.2). They learnt from each other on ways each woman soldiered on. This same- talk on problems and solutions caused women to tell new or alternative stories (see section 2.9.2). They told stories on ways they can challenge male domination and tell new stories of soldiering on amid dominant social constructions.

*As women we have gone through a lot of suffering at the hands of religion and culture. Increasingly we are finding ways of telling men off. We are more assertive in the face of male domination. Most women are seeking counselling from professional women and men. Women are seeking for legal counselling around separation or divorce. These services empower women to soldier on in abusive relations. This turns around women’s stories from victims to victors, victims to survivors. It gives women an edge over men who don’t seek counselling. The edge surprises abusive men as women push for condom use, HIV testing and mediation from family members or ministers of religion.*

*As women we want to push for the abolition of the religious and cultural practice of lobola. We want the government to outlaw lobola. It informs men to see women as commodities and objects of their love. Now as breadwinners we can afford to reimburse the lobola they paid. We can even marry them or marry more than one male spouse as they are doing to us. We can stay in separate rooms and even bring other male visitors or clients. All these efforts should deconstruct male domination,*

*dominant ideas on marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence*, said women co-researchers in display of confidence, soldiering on and defiance of male domination.

This display of confidence and readiness showed that women co-researchers were ready to sojourn towards healing and wholeness. I agree with Kotze & Kotze (2001:3) when they write on transformation. “Transformative relationships (mutual transformation) come about when ‘there is the power’ of empathy and compassion, of delight in others, and strength in the solidarity of listening to others, bearing together stories of pain and resistance.”

Transformation occurs when one feels the pain of another person who is oppressed, examines the different standards of justice, acknowledges one’s own pain and finds joy in listening to others, challenges meanings and ‘experiences’ delight in the complexity of what emerges see also (Kotze & Kotze 2001:3; Welch 1990:135). This demonstrates that the women co-researchers conversations gave them power as they shared their pain and sources of strength.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

I present recommendations in view of the domination of socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions and the effects of discourses on married women co-researchers in abusive relations. The co-research recommends that:

- ❖ Religious including the church, economic and cultural institutions and organisations deconstruct the dominant discourses about marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.
- ❖ Husbands and wives deconstruct the dominant discourses which inform and make up marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence.
- ❖ Parliament to outlaw child marriages in Zimbabwe.
- ❖ Infant, junior, secondary and tertiary education to initiate and to consolidate gender education in peoples and students.
- ❖ Parliament to legislate on fair laws about *lobola*.
- ❖ The courts speed up prosecution of perpetrators of gender based violence and crime.
- ❖ Every victim or survivor of domestic violence seek and/or offered pastoral counselling from qualified professionals.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The research noticed that married women presented stories about helpless submission, dignity, conjugal rights, toteminism, fidelity, powerlessness and gender role- related benefits. The co-researchers showed naivety, ignorance and helplessness, regarding marriage, gender based roles and domestic violence. The research wondered who benefits and suffers from gender biased and based marriage roles and violence?

These wonderings and curiosities made the co-research to deconstruct the dominant discourses. The co-research caused co-researchers to reflect on the seriousness of the effects of gender based roles, marriage and domestic violence. The discourses were then taken for granted knowledge about marriage and domestic violence. Married women saw the ways in which they bought into the dominant discourses. They saw the ways used to force them into naivety, helplessness, powerlessness and senseless submission.

The deconstruction process helped co-researchers to unpack the socio-economic, cultural and religious constructions. Married women took the responsibility to unpack the discourses. Co-researchers were able to see the ways they were now bread winners. How they can take advantage of commemorations that empowered women. They were ready to challenge socio-economic, cultural and religious institutional ideas and practices. The challenges could wound male domination, for example the concept of *lobola*.

In summary, chapter five presented the co-research results and recommendations. The results answered the research objectives and questions. The results contribute new knowledge to the existing board of knowledges on marriage, gender based role and domestic violence. The co-research presented recommendations. The recommendations are ways the dominant discourses could be further deconstructed. The results and recommendations are useful for the co-researchers, related institutions, organisations, readers and any interested users.

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## Appendix 1

### Demographic Information

Sex:

Female		Male	
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Marital Status:

Single		Married	
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Age:	Tick
18- 25 years	
26 – 34 years	
35 – 40 years	
41 – 50 years	
51 – 55 years	

Highest level of Education:	Tick
Certificate	
Diploma	
Bachelor	

Masters	
Other	

Category: Christian

Non-Christian

How do you prefer your information referenced?

Write my name as: -----

Use a pseudo- name as: -----

Prefer the researcher to give me one: -----

### **Research questions for a focused group conversation (women)**

- 1) Understand why married Zimbabwean women remain in abusive relationship(s)?
- 2) Understand what role religion and culture plays in them staying in abusive relationship(s)?
- 3) How these factors affect married Zimbabwean women in their relationships?
- 4) Seek ways to sojourn with these women towards healing and wholeness.

### **Research Questions for a Focused Group Conversation (Men)**

1. What religion or culture informed their ideas of women and who benefits from these ideas?
2. Who suffers from these ideas?
3. As men witness these factors and effects on women what does it mean to them?

## Appendix 2

### MARITAL ABUSE OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMAN: A PASTORAL COUNSELLING. INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.

Thank you for your interest in this research on Marital abuse of Zimbabwean woman: A pastoral counselling. The research title, aims, question, inspiration and my commitment to the research will be introduced at the *dare*'s meeting. These elements will be negotiated with the three organisations that return the information sheet and consent form (see appendix A & B).

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Practical Theology. The aims and question of the research are as follows:

#### Research aims and question

The research aims to:

Unpack the religious and cultural factors that inform married Zimbabwean women to endure abusive spouses.

Unpack the ways these factors affect married Zimbabwean women in their relationship.

The question that will focus this research is:

What religious and cultural factors inform married Zimbabwean women to endure abusive spouses; and how do these factors affect them and their relationships?

#### Co- researchers needed for the research

Five co- researchers will take part in *dare* (focused group conversation). Co- researchers will tell the *dare* the factors within their religion and culture which informs them to endure abusive spouses. The co - researchers will explore the ways religious and cultural factors affect married women and their relationships. It will also unpack the factors and the effects religion and culture has on married women who are in abusive relationships.

What will be required of co- researchers?



Co - researchers will give consent for me to access their information during the *dare*. The information is for use in a research project. If you decide to take part in the research, you will be asked to attend two *dare* for one and half hours. After every *dare*, co-researchers will receive a summary. You will be asked to read your summary, make any necessary comments, improvements and feedback about *dare* stories. The other co-researchers will make further comments and clarification.

The *dare* will be conducted in local languages. Despite the *dare* in local languages, the report will be written in English. Therefore, all summaries and any correspondents will be prepared in English. At your request it can be translated into local languages.

No financial or any form of payment will be made for co-searching in this research.

#### Free co-researching

You are free to withdraw from the research without any consequences to you.

#### Confidentiality

The information obtained during the *dare* will be discussed with my co-researcher Prof, Dr. Johann Meylahn. The information will be used in the report. With your prior consent, the *dare* will be audio-taped. However, should you wish that I rather make notes, I would be happy to do so? I will provide you with a summary of the *dare* meeting. Your comments, improvements and/or feedback will be included in the final report. This information will be locked up. It will be destroyed after the completion of the research. I, Enesto Muzerengwa, my co-researchers, will have access to the audio-tapes and notes taken during the *dare*.

#### Results of the study

The results of this research may be published. At your request, details (names and places) will be distorted to ensure your anonymity. You will have the choice to use your own name or a pseudonym of your choice. You are welcome to request a copy of the results of the research.

#### Questions for co-researchers

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the research either now or later, please feel free to contact me. Enesto Muzerengwa

Telephone: 263-773466712 Email: [emuzerengwa@gmail.com](mailto:emuzerengwa@gmail.com)

Or my supervisor, Prof, Dr. Johann Meylahn at the Department of Practical Theology,  
University of Pretoria

Telephone: +27(0)124203397. Email: [johann.Meylahn@up.ac.za](mailto:johann.Meylahn@up.ac.za)

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Department of Practical Theology,  
University of Pretoria.

## Appendix A

### MARITAL ABUSE OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMAN: A PASTORAL COUNSELLING.

#### CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I have read the information sheet, concerning the research and I understand the research aims and question. All my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the research is totally voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without any disadvantages.
3. I understand that my personal information (including tape-recordings) will be kept. Confidential and can be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. But that any raw data the research depends on will be retained for ten years.
4. I will receive no financial gain or any form of compensation for participating in the research.
5. All the personal information I have supplied will remain confidential throughout the research.
6. I am aware that Enesto, his supervisor, Prof, Dr Johann Meylahn will have access to all relevant material.

I am willing to participate in this research.

(Signature of co- researcher) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of co- researcher in capital letters (Signature of witness)

## Appendix B

MARITAL ABUSE OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMAN: A PASTORAL COUNSELLING.

### CONSENT FORM FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. I have read the summary of the research.
2. I had the opportunity to improve the information, i.e. making corrections, additions and comments about my personal story.
3. I agree that my corrections, additions and comments be included in the research.
4. I have read the final summary of *dare* and agree that this is an accurate and satisfactory account of the research process. I therefore, give permission for the summary to be used in the research report.
5. I understand that the information obtained during *dare* may be included in an article format for publication. I understand that should I decide that I do not wish the information to be published, I am able to withdraw my permission at any stage of participation in the research.
6. I hereby give my permission for information concerning myself to be used in the research and in the publication. I understand that my confidentiality will be preserved throughout the research, in the written report and in the publication. I also understand that any information that may lead to my identification may be used or included in the research or publication.
7. I prefer the following name to be used in the research or any other publication resulting from the research.

Name to be used: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of co- researcher) \_\_\_\_\_



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Professor J. Meylham  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0002  
Republic of South Africa

27 February 2015

RE: Rev. E. Muzerengwa

This is to confirm that the above mentioned has visited Musasa's offices. I hereby confirm that Musasa will gladly assist the researcher in whatever way he may need our assistance.

We however request a copy of the final version of the research.

Regards,

Vimbainashe Njovana-Mutendereki

Programme Officer - Counseling, Shelter and Legal Services

*Zero Tolerance To Violence Against Women*

Board Chairperson: Mrs S. Gudyanga  
Board Members: Ms S. Makomva, Ms I. Matambanadzo, Ms J. Muderedzi, Mr L. Hikwa, Mr C. Mbetu  
Executive Director: Mrs N. Musanhu

## Permission Letter 1 - Musasa Project

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**ZWLA**  
ZIMBABWE WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Justice and Equality for All

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Our Ref: PM/ob

25 February 2015

University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
**SOUTH AFRICA**

Dear Professor Johann Meylahn

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AT THE ORGANISATION**

We refer to the above matter. We wish to state that Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association is amenable to be interviewed by Reverend E Muzerengwa as part of his research in Masters in Family Therapy. We will provide him with the relevant information concerning the abuse of women within marriage in Zimbabwe.

We however request to be availed with a final copy of the research findings as this will have an influence on our work.

Yours faithfully

**Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association**

HOTLINE: +263 776 736 873 / 782 900 900

**Permission Letter 2 - ZWLA**



## PADARE / ENKUNDLENI MEN'S FORUM ON GENDER

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3 March, 2015


Professor J Meylham  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0002  
Republic of South Africa

**RE: Rev. E Muzerengwa**

This is to confirm that the above mentioned has visited Padare/Enkundleni/Men's Forum on Gender's offices. I hereby confirm that Padare will gladly assist the researcher in whatever way he may need our assistance.

We however, request a copy of the final version of the research.

Regards

  
**Kelvin Hazangwi**  
**National Director**



**"MEN of quality are not afraid of equality, REAL MEN ARE NON-VIOLENT"**

### Permission Letter 3 – Padare

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