

# **Exploring Partner Violence: Experiences of Female University Students in Durban**

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## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Population Studies, in the Graduate Programme in the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was/was not used and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Population Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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## **Abstract**

Intimate partner violence remains an international public health concern and a human right issue. Fewer studies have been undertaken to address the impact of partner violence on the well being of female university students. The focus has been mainly on adults' intimate relationships such as marriage and cohabitation. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the factors contributing to the perpetration of intimate partner violence among female university students in Durban. It also seeks to understand the consequences of partner violence as well as barriers in reducing partner violence among female university. The study used mixed methods of data collection. 15 in-depth interviews and three focus groups discussions were conducted in Durban. Consistent with previous research, this study found that young female university students do experience different forms of intimate partner violence, such as physical violence, sexual and verbal abuse by an intimate partner. It also shows various consequences associated with the perpetration of violence against them. Various reasons were reported as barriers in reducing partner violence against female university students. Young women accept partner violence as normal in intimate relationships. Some cases of violence are not reported in law enforcement institutions by young women which make it difficult to prevent partner violence in intimate relationships. These serve as a cause for concern as it put these women at risk of future violence. There is a great need for intimate partner violence prevention programmes in South African educational institutions including the universities.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IDI</b>	In-depth Interviews
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>KZN</b>	KwaZulu Natal
<b>PSTD</b>	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>UKZN</b>	University of KwaZulu Natal
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is recognized as an international public health concern (Dalal *et al.*, 2007; Dunkle *et al.*, 2004; Silverman *et al.*, 2001) and by some as a human rights problem (Djamba & Kimuna, 2008). A recent study indicates that 15-71 per cent of women experience physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (WHO, 2010). While, another study conducted in 2002 revealed that at least one in five of the world's female population had been the victims of either physical or sexual abuse by a man or men in their live (WHO, 2002). Furthermore, WHO (2010) states that physical violence in intimate relationships is often accompanied by psychological abuse and in one third to more than one half of cases, by sexual abuse. Up to 69 per cent of women around the world reported being victims of partner violence; in Japan alone 57 per cent of women had suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and less than 10 per cent suffered only physical abuse (WHO, 2010). According to Lysova & Douglas (2008) research among university students on intimate partner violence in Russia revealed that 25.5 per cent of students experienced one or more forms of physical attacks; however 23.1 per cent were experiences of female students alone. A further 3.3 per cent of students sustained injuries during the attacks and 32.8 per cent of these students reported being coerced to have sex with their dating partners (Lysova & Douglas, 2008). Also Ghandi *et al.* (2010) indicated that intimate partner violence occurrences are estimated at 7.7 million each year and that the life prevalence of intimate partner violence is 25.5 per cent among females and 8 per cent among males in the general population.

Intimate partner violence occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural group (WHO, 2002). Although women can be violent in their

relationships with men, the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men. This study deals specifically with violence perpetuated by men against their female partners attending university. The rate of violence against females by intimate partners is three to six times that of intimate partner violence against males (Silverman *et al.*, 2001).

Since 1997 the number of reported rapes in South Africa has risen dramatically, due perhaps to both increased reporting and to an actual increase in violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Reported incidences of rape and attempted rape increased by 20 percent from 1994 to 1999, although there were serious concerns about the quality of the statistics (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Furthermore South Africa seems to have the highest incidence of female sexual abuse in the world (Human Rights Watch, 2001). A report by WHO (2002) also revealed that more than 68 per cent of women in Johannesburg in South Africa reported that they had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment by an intimate partner.

South Africa has a high prevalence of intimate partner violence; however women are more likely than men to be victims of intimate partner violence. Lau (2009:1) argues that one in four women in the general South African population has experienced some form of partner violence in her life. Furthermore, the study revealed that a national survey on female homicide indicates that a woman is killed by an intimate partner every six hours. A study reported that 25 per cent of women in the country's population reported having experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lives (Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2003). About 20.1 per cent of women attending antenatal clinics in Johannesburg reported that they been sexually abused by their husband or a boyfriend (Dunkle *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, 15.3 per cent of men who participated in the study conducted by Abrahams *et al.* (2004) in Cape Town reported sexually coercing a female partner over a period of 10 years. Women are more likely than men to be victims of partner violence in South Africa. A study conducted in the Gauteng region found that a woman is killed in that region every six days by an intimate partner (Mathews *et al.*, 2004). Further, they found that of the cases where relationship status could be

established, 50.3 per cent of the women were killed by an intimate partner. Mathews *et al.* (2004) further estimated that 1349 women were murdered by an intimate partner nationally in 1999. Jewkes *et al.* (2009) in their study to try and understand men's health and use of violence, revealed that 42.4 per cent of men who participated in their study had been physically violent to an intimate partner (current or ex-girlfriend or wife), and when asked about physical violence in the past year, 14 per cent of men disclosed perpetration.

Attempts have been made by different scholars to define violence occurring in intimate relationships, for instance Karamagi *et al.* (2006: 285) defines intimate partner violence against women as the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against an intimate partner by current or former male intimate partner. Wakerle and Wolfe (1999) also define relationship or dating violence as any attempt to control or dominate another person physically, sexually, or psychologically, causing some level of harm.

Such behaviors may include:

- Acts of physical aggression – such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating, punching and shoving.
- Psychological abuse – such as intimidation, constant criticism and humiliation.
- Forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion such as non-consensual sex, unwanted touching.
- Various controlling behaviors – such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance, threat to harm self and or others (Wakerle & Wolfe, 1999).

Dating is a central activity in the lives of many young men and women whose identities can be shaped by their intimate relationship experiences (Jackson, 1999). Physical and sexual violence are serious problems affecting young women in high school and college

(Smith, White & Holland, 2003). Hanson (2002:448) argue that “violence disrupts normal development processes in adolescence, processes that are believed to be associated with self-esteem, attitude and behavior. These include body appearances, which are likely to cause eating disorders, and a struggle to establish “self-esteem”. Furthermore, students experiencing partner violence are likely to be affected by poor concentration, lack of motivation and energy, all common reactions to partner violence. Intimate partner violence occurs in adolescent dating relationships impairing social and academic performance. Both dating and intimate partner violence results in depression among both adults and adolescents. Depression significantly predicts future dating violence a year later suggesting that depressed girls may be more likely to enter into and remain in abusive relationships (Helweg-Larsen *et al.*, 2008). Other negative consequences of dating partner violence include premature drop out of educational institutions as well as increased absenteeism (Ramisetty-Mickler *et al.*, 2006). The prevalence of violence, especially physical violence, is most likely to result in injuries including bleeding, bruises, swelling, or severe pain and injuries. Parish *et al.* (2004) found that the prevalence of hitting resulting in injuries was 12 per cent for women and 5 per cent for men.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Research IPV in colleges and universities in a number of contexts reveals that it is higher among these populations. Fossos *et al.* (2007) argue that perpetration of IPV is a growing concern on college campuses across the nation. Approximately one third of students have experienced violence in their dating relationships in the past year, with male and female students reporting relatively equal rates of perpetration. Further, they noted a relationship between the use of alcohol and the perpetration of intimate partner violence. Women tend to experience partner violence more than men in universities. However, Fossos *et al.* (2007) noted that the rates of perpetrating an assault resulting in an injury were overwhelmingly higher for males than females. It is not clear to what extent female students experience IPV in South African universities; however, there is some evidence that it is occurring in tertiary institutions in South Africa. A report by Tolsi (2007) in a national newspaper revealed several incidences of partner violence among dating

university students in Durban. The article documents the experiences of a female student who was stabbed by her boyfriend and another student who was beaten with a kettle. A third student was assaulted with a crowbar. Another female student at one of the university residences in Durban was pulled out of the residence by her hair, beaten by her boyfriend and shoved into his car. Furthermore, several students interviewed by Tolsi (2007) confirmed an incident where two armed men attacked a female student at a university residence.

Even with the recognition of domestic violence as a problem, its negative impact on individuals and society at large, and a substantial amount of literature available on domestic violence and IPV in adult populations in South Africa, fewer studies have been conducted on the female students' experiences of IPV in South Africa. In an attempt to understand female student's experiences of IPV it is also important to understand why young male students perpetrate violence against their intimate partners. Men therefore participated in this study. Research originating from Euro-American contexts reveals that heterosexual adolescent dating relationships are often characterized by physical and sexual violence (Anne-Swart, Stevens & Ricardo, 2002). Research on partner violence among college students indicates that it is a particular threat to college women (Lehrer *et al.*, 2007; Daley & Noland, 2001).

Partner violence exposes students to risk behaviors such as initiating sexual activities at an early age, multiple sexual partners and even alcohol abuse and drug use which themselves increase the chance of partner violence (Ramisetty-Mikler *et al.*, 2006). They further identified maltreatment at home, mental health factors, early sexual acts, and tobacco, alcohol and drug use, causing interpersonal problems with peers and dating partners. Maharaj and Munthree (2007) also stated that sexual coercion plays a crucial role in compelling women to initiate sex at an early age. Further sexual coercion has major consequences such as exposing those who are compelled to have sex to the risk of unwanted and/or unplanned pregnancy, infection with sexually transmitted infections and HIV (Maharaj & Munthree, 2007; Heise *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, Maharaj and Munthree (2007) stated that among young women aged 15 to 24 years, the prevalence of

HIV and AIDS was 9 per cent. These estimates are almost double that of men in the same age group. Women who are coerced into initiate sexual intercourse are most likely to report multiple sexual partnerships (Maharaj & Munthree, 2007; Ramisetty-Mickler, 2006). These women are likely to report unsafe sex practices as they are mainly coerced into sexual intercourse and are thus more exposed to HIV.

The consequences of partner violence among adolescents are severe and may even result in injury. Lehrer *et al.* (2007) found that in Chile, 5 per cent of college students experienced at least one incidence of partner violence resulting in injury. Further, of those who reported more than one incidence of partner violence, about 72 per cent reported receiving an injury. Humphrey and White, in Smith *et al.* (2003), found that 88 per cent of college students in the United States have experienced at least one incidence of partner violence between adolescent age and fourth year of college. Further, 25 per cent of women who were victims of violence reported verbal threats with harm, and 5 per cent were hit with something hard. By the end of the final year of college, the number of victims of partner violence had risen.

There are also various other consequences associated with partner violence. Ramisetty-Mickler *et al.* (2006) report that studies have shown that victims of violence tend to be more absent from school and some drop out prematurely. They state that even though society is becoming aware of adult couple violence, the issue of dating violence among adolescents has not received sufficient attention. They also mentioned that fewer studies have addressed risk factors of dating violence and the mechanism by which they operate. To date no studies have been conducted on partner violence and its consequences among South African university students. Thus, it is imperative for a study of this nature to be undertaken to give some insight into IPV at a tertiary institution. This research seeks to address gaps left open in previous studies. Little is known about how often and how much partner violence occurs on university campuses. This topic will help to create a better understanding of the factors increasing the susceptibility of university students to IPV, and the impact of the violent behaviour on them. The focus is on understanding both

factors associated with the perpetration of violence, as well as the consequences of partner violence.

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

The study seeks to explore the reasons for partner violence on university campuses and to address gaps left open in previous studies. This study will help to strengthen our understanding of the reasons why female students in universities are more susceptible to partner violence as compared to their male counterparts, and how they are being affected by violent behaviours. Lysova and Douglas (2008) stated that understanding IPV among students was important as they are in a formative period of their lives in relation to the habits that they develop with an intimate partner. Understanding partner violence among young people is also important as it is an accurate predictor for understanding why IPV continues to occur in adulthood.

The study has three key objectives which are:

- To examine factors contributing to partner violence among female university students in Durban.
- To examine consequences of partner violence among female university students in Durban.
- To examine barriers to reducing partner violence among female university students in Durban.

### **1.4 Theoretical framework**

Different theoretical frameworks and models have been used in research in an attempt to explain IPV. This study will use the social learning theory in outlining and describing factors responsible for partner violence, with the assumption that the social learning process is in itself a factor influencing partner violence (Luthra & Gidycz, 2006). This theory shed insights into factors underpinning the use of violence in dating relationships by university students, since the social learning theory is an important framework that

may significantly contribute to our understanding of dating violence. A child learns his or her behavior from significant others and from the society at large through the process of socialization. Socialization is the learning process through which one learns his or her social behaviors. Kelly *et al.* (2010), argues that the social learning theory has detailed the way in which people not only react to primary and secondary learning but change their behavior after having observed the consequences of certain behaviour in others.

Wakerle and Wolfe (1999:441) argue that the social learning theory identifies observational learning as a means of acquiring interactional skills, in which the imitated behavior of adult role models will tend to be reinforced in the child. It is a dominant theory in dating and relationship violence research, most likely because it is consistent with the intergenerational transmission hypothesis, which states that an aversive and coercive interpersonal style is learned from previous experiences of violence from one's family of origin. Furthermore, they argue that witnessing or directly experiencing violence as a child places the person at future risk for interpersonal violence due to messages learned about the functional nature of violence, that is, to express oneself, to solve problems, to control and dominate another.

Partner violence as a behaviour can be socially learned through the socialization process. Learning partner violence can be identified as negative socialization because of its impact on the future of children who learn it. The theory states that: "behaviors are learned through the observation and imitation of others," (Luthra & Gidycz, 2006:718). This type of behavior can also be learned through experiencing violence as a child. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) stated that experiencing violence in childhood is a significant determinant of becoming violent as a man, and also the length of the relationship can be associated with receiving violence. People are likely to accept and/or engage in aggressive behaviour when they have personal contact with people who accept or engage in violent actions (Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard & Bohmer, 1987). Ehrensaft *et al.* (2003: 742) also argue that exposure to violence between parents may also teach youth that violence is an acceptable or effective means of solving problems in their relationships. Studies suggest that violence and aggression in dating relationships may well be the mediating link between

exposure to violence in the family of origin and subsequent use of violence in the family of procreation (Cocker *et al.*, 2000; Jackson, 1999; Wakerle & Wolfe, 1999).

According to Simons, Lin and Gordon (1998:467), the most popular explanations of partner violence posit that it is learned from the family of origin through the social learning process. This is the reason why other scholars have referred to social learning as the cause for violent behaviour among couples. The social learning theory describes the learning process as an imitation process where children learn about romantic relationships by observing their parents. This suggests that children exposed to violent relationships in their homes learn that violence is an acceptable behavior and imitate the behaviour as they grow up. According to this theory, the learning process plays a crucial role in promoting partner violence. Children who grow up observing and experiencing violent punishment have an increased risk of relationship violence because the foundations for such violence, while organized in childhood, become activated in adolescence with the onset of dating (Wakerle & Wolfe, 1999). The cumulative effects of exposure to and experience of violence may also be observed, in particular, during the adolescent dating stage.

Drawing on the social learning theory, Luthra and Gidycz (2006) found a strong relationship between alcohol use and violence in relationships. They argue further that individuals observe the contingencies that follow people's actions in a particular situation and apply that information to design a plan of behavior when they encounter a similar action. Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard and Bohmer (1987) also argue that individuals are more likely to accept or engage in aggressive behaviour when they have frequent or close contact with people who find such behaviour legitimate, and even engage in such behaviour. Arriaga and Foshee (2004) found that adolescents were more likely to commit dating violence if their friends experienced dating violence.

The social learning theory represents the most popularly endorsed explanation for dating violence. However, the major limitation of this theory is that it lacks any analysis of

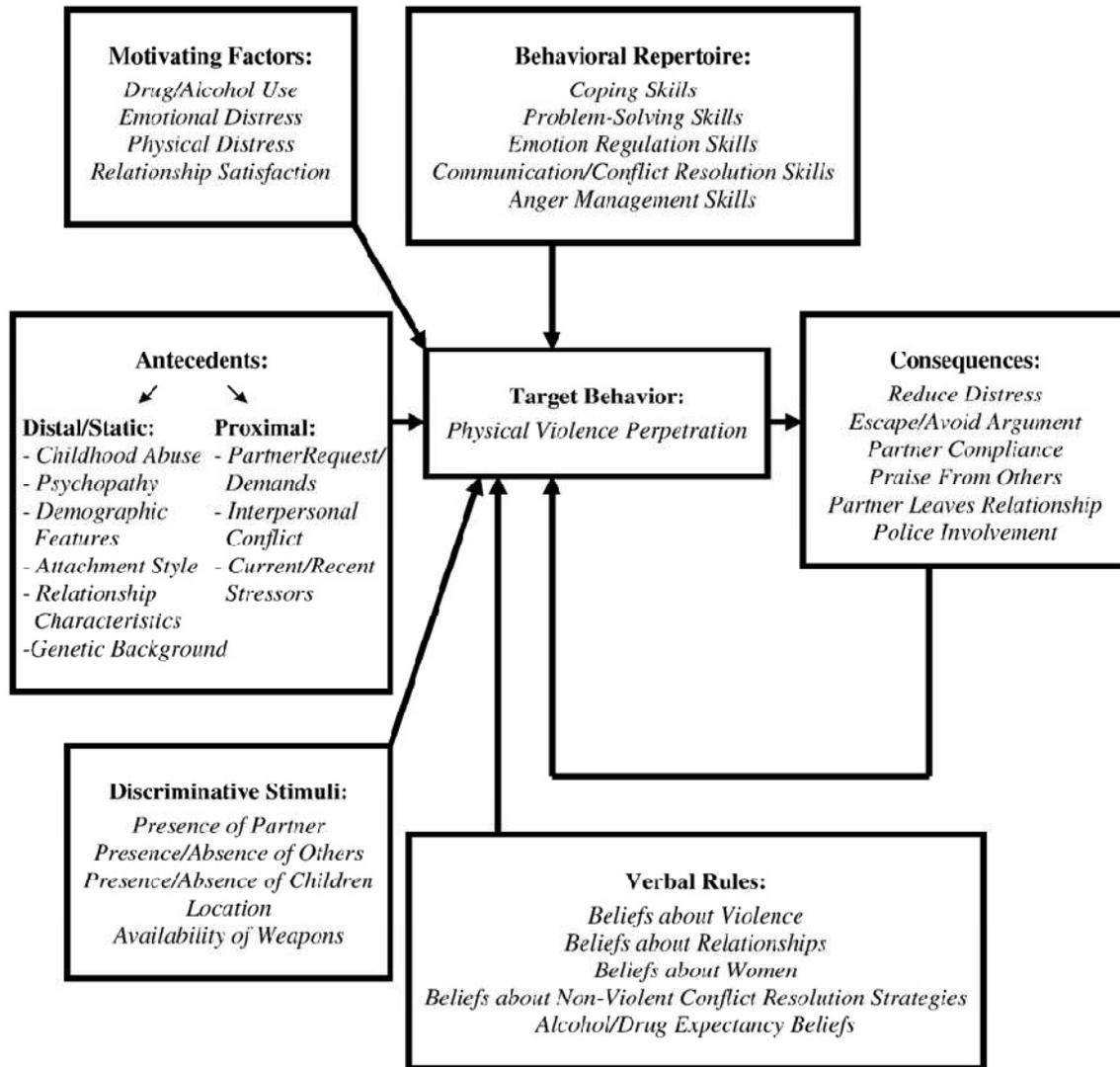
power at the individual or structural level, and presumes people have little agency in the choices they make about their behavior in intimate relationships (Chung 2005: 446).

There seems to be a causal link between IPV and the three concepts which the study aims to examine, i.e. factors contributing to partner violence, consequences of partner violence, as well as barriers in reducing partner violence. Coker, McKeon, Sanderson, Davis, Valois and Huebner (2000) argue that sexual assaults, partner violence, as well as childhood and adolescent sexual abuse, have been shown to have a significant negative impact on mental and physical health as well as significant psychological and economic costs. Furthermore they stated those young adult perpetrators of severe physical partner violence report more alcohol use, more anxiety, depression and psychotic symptoms than their non-violent peers. The female victims of IPV also reported greater anxiety and depression than non-victims.

Even though IPV leads to certain consequences for both victims and perpetrators of partner violence, there are factors that explain the initiation of partner violence, such as alcohol consumption. Jewkes (2002) argue that alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk of all forms of interpersonal violence. Heavy alcohol consumption by men, for instance, is often associated with the perpetration of IPV. Alcohol is thought to reduce inhibition, cloud judgment, and impair the ability to interpret social cues. Furthermore, she noted that men are more likely to act violently when drunk because they do not feel they will be held accountable for their behaviour. In some settings, men have described using alcohol in a premeditated manner to enable them to beat their partner because they felt that this was socially expected of them.

Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between acts of violent behavior and the consequences of these behaviours for both victims and perpetrators of IPV.

**Figure 1.1** Conceptual Framework



Source: Bell and Naugle (2008: 1102)

This contextual framework allow for an analysis of IPV perpetration by identifying and examining different sets of variables that increase the risk for IPV perpetration. Various factors responsible for the perpetration of IPV are shown in this framework. The social learning theory states that IPV is a socially learned behavior from different sources, such as the family of origin and peers. This framework indicates that childhood experiences of violence plays a vital role in the perpetration of violence in an intimate relationship. Also

the framework also tells us that beliefs about women and their roles and statuses in relationships put them at risk of experiencing IPV. The framework work also illustrates consequences of violence in intimate relationships.

### **1.5 Organisation of the dissertation**

The first chapter provides background information on the study as well as the purpose and objectives of the study. This chapter also outlines the theoretical framework for the study. The next chapter reviews the findings of studies on IPV. It looks at results obtained from previous studies. Chapter three discusses the methods of data collection employed in the study, how they are used and why they were selected. Chapter four presents the key findings of the study. This section gives detailed information about the study. It considers the factors that account for partner violence as well as the consequences of partner violence among female university students, and the barriers in reducing partner violence among this population. The last chapter provides a discussion of the findings, and provides suggestions for further research in this area.

# CHAPTER 2

## Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature on IPV with a particular emphasis on dating violence. It looks at results that have been obtained in previous studies and discussed by other social researchers and how best they fit in the framework of this study. It covers factors influencing IPV, consequences of intimate partner violence as well as barriers in reducing it.

### 2.2 Intimate partner violence

IPV usually occurs within relationships when one partner, particularly a man, begins a controlling behaviour and causes a sense of fear in women. Patriarchal social norms also sanction the use of violence by men to discipline and control female partners, and as long as boundaries of severity are not transgressed, violence is viewed as socially acceptable (Seedat *et al.*, 2009).

Many studies have indicated that women experience IPV more than men, for instance Fincham *et al.* (2009) argue that 5.3 million incidences of IPV occurs against women while 3.2 million cases are against men. Women are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of IPV; they are seven to 14 times more likely than men to suffer severe physical injury from an assault by an intimate partner (Ghandi *et al.*, 2010: 343). Gearon *et al.* (2003), in their study on gender differences in IPV, found that 55 per cent of women interviewed had experienced both physical and sexual abuse. Silverman *et al.* (2001) also argue that most IPV acts are directed at women. They stated that the rate of violence against females by intimate partners was three to six times that of violent acts against males. Injuries that result from such violence are significantly more common among females for both adolescents and adult population groups, and approximately 10 per cent of intentional injuries to adolescent girls are reported to be the result of partner

violence. A study by Ramisetty-Mikler *et al.* (2006) also reported that male partners initiated violence 70 per cent of the time, compared to female students, who reported that their female partners initiated violence only 27 per cent of the time. Coker *et al.* (2000) stated that even though males and females appeared to report approximately equal rates of experiencing abuse and perpetration in dating relationships, females were more likely to report severe violence and injuries. Matud (2007) noted that in 48 population-based studies from around the world, between 10 and 69 per cent of women reported physical assault by an intimate partner, and that for many of these women physical assault was part of an ongoing pattern of abuse. In the United States IPV affects women regardless of age. However, adolescents and young women are most vulnerable compared to any other group in the United States and all over the world (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2010).

IPV is not only limited to more established intimate relationships such as marriages and cohabitation, but is also prevalent in dating relationships (Fincham, 2008). Younger women, especially those between 15 and 19 years old, are at a higher risk of physical or sexual violence by a partner in most countries (Matud, 2007).

### **2.2.1 IPV, a global perspective**

Many studies have been conducted on IPV but most focus mainly on the married and cohabiting adult population. Lasern *et al.* (2005) argue that IPV is a global health problem and a human rights issue. Furthermore they found that the lifetime prevalence of IPV among women ranges from 15 per cent to 71 per cent. Gupta *et al.* (2008) also note that global estimates of IPV indicate that 15 to 75 per cent of women have experienced such abuse. McCloskey *et al.* (2005) argue that the prevalence of IPV in sub-Saharan Africa is high even when compared with other developing regions globally. In Zambia for instance, they noted that 48 per cent of married women have experienced some form of partner violence in their lives. Rodriguez *et al.* (2004) argue that in the United States alone at least 1.5 million women are physically, emotionally or sexually abused by their partners each year.

Studies targeting young people have shown that even high school students are at risk of partner violence. Lawoko (2006) for instance argues that Zambian women start experiencing partner violence as early as 15 years old. Matud (2007) notes that IPV arises between couples of all ages however it seems to occur more frequently in younger couples. Furthermore, those between the ages of 15 and 19 were at higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence by their intimate partner in most countries. Smith *et al.* (2004) stated that adolescence (i.e. ages 14–18 years) was a particularly risky time for dating violence. Smith *et al.* (2003) found that 69.7 per cent of girls in Grades 9 through 12 reported being “beaten up” by a boyfriend and 21.3 per cent reported being sexually assaulted. A study on adolescent health behavior in the United States found that 32 per cent of women who had been in heterosexual relationships had been either emotionally or physically abused by their partner (Flisher *et al.*, 2007). Also, Ramisetty-Mikler *et al.* (2006) reported that recent studies estimate 28 to 96 per cent of young adults are victims of partner violence.

IPV is also prevalent among young adults attending colleges and universities. A substantial number of high school and college students experience various forms and levels of violence in their dating relationships. Simons, Lins and Gordon (1998) found that one to three per cent of college students reported that they had experienced severe forms of violence such as beatings or assault with an object. Ramisetty-Mikler *et al.* (2006) found that one in three high school and college students had experienced sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse while in a relationship. In Ethiopia, a study found that nearly 16 per cent of 1378 male college students reported physically abusing an intimate partner or non-partner, and 16.9 per cent reported perpetrating acts of sexual violence (WHO, 2010). Looking at the results shown by these studies on partner violence among youth, one may argue that the majority of youth start experiencing partner violence at an early age, long before they attend university. By the time they reach university level they have already experienced at least a single episode of IPV.

It is important for us to understand that the extent of violence directed at women is high, however we cannot ignore the fact that men also experience violence directed against them by female partners. Studies suggest that although it is true that IPV impacts on women, data from more than 100 surveys of family problems and conflicts show that women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships (Ansara & Indin, 2009; Fincham *et al.*, 2008:260). Wong *et al.* (2008) argue that partner violence against women has received notable attention in South Africa but little research has been conducted on the experiences of men. Wong *et al.* (2008) further mentioned that the lack of attention was troubling when we consider the fact that violence against men by their female intimate partner does exist. Furthermore, they cited for example a 1998 survey in Transkei, South Africa, on the subject of husband battery, which revealed that 2 per cent of subjects saw their mother beat their father, 18 per cent saw or heard female relatives beating their husbands, and 26 per cent saw or heard female neighbours beating their husbands. Some studies found however that a proportion of the violence experienced by male partners may be a direct result of women attempting to defend themselves (WHO, 2010). Ansara and Indin (2009) found that about 10 per cent of women who participated in their study were the sole perpetrators of physical aggression, and for about 20 per cent of these women, this perpetration may be the result of sexual coercion by their husbands.

IPV against adolescent men also occurs, Hanson (2002), found that 44 per cent of female and 16 per cent of male high school students reported engaging in at least one physically aggressive behavior toward a dating partner. Furthermore, Jackson *et al* (2000) who found in his study that 67 per cent of male high school children experienced sexual coercion including unwanted kissing, touching and sexual intercourse by an intimate partner.

### **2.2.2 IPV in South Africa**

IPV is a problem affecting men and women internationally, and South Africa is not the only country with high levels of violence in intimate relationships. As observed in other parts of world the prevalence of lifetime exposure to IPV is higher among South African women than men. Gupta *et al.* (2008) found that more than 27.5 per cent of South African men reported having perpetrated physical violence against their most recent intimate female partner. McCloskey *et al.* (2005) noted that nearly one in 10 women in South Africa reported exposure in the previous 12 months, while 25 per cent reported lifetime exposure to violence by an intimate partner. According to the South Africa Department of Justice, about 25 per cent of South African women have been victims of IPV; furthermore violence against women in post-Apartheid South Africa has been one of the most prominent features (Wong *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore Wong *et al.* (2008) found that 27 per cent of women who live in the Eastern Cape, 28 per cent in Mpumalanga province, and 19 per cent of women in Limpopo, reported physical assaults in their lifetime by a current or former partner. The national crime victimization survey revealed that the highest rate of physical and sexual assaults were committed against younger women (Shibusawa & Sormanti, 2008). In their review of literature, the WHO (2010) observed in one South African study of 928 males and females aged 13 to 23 years, that 42 per cent of females and 38 per cent of males reported being a victim of physical dating violence at some point in their lifetime.

Different forms of IPV among adult and youth populations have been observed in South Africa and it increases with age. For example, a survey of more than 280 000 South African school pupils revealed that about 9 per cent of adolescent girls and boys aged 15 years reported forced sex in the past year. The episodes of IPV rise to 13 per cent for males and 16 per cent for females by the age of 19 years. The first national youth risk behavior survey conducted in South Africa among secondary school learners showed that about 9.8 per cent of learners reported having been forced to have sex (Flisher *et a.*, 2007). These learners mentioned that the violent nature of sexual initiation ranged from emotional intimidation and threats to physical beatings. For instance, 22 out of 24 respondents (92 percent) reported having been beaten up by their partners. Statistics

show that at least one in four women in South Africa has experienced violence, and 40 per cent of men have been perpetrators of this form of violence. It is widely recognized that only a small percentage of rape cases are reported to police in this country, yet South Africa still has one of the highest number of reported cases of rape in the world (Meel, 2008).

Despite the increased attention to the area of dating violence among adolescents, knowledge is still somewhat limited, particularly regarding partner violence among college and university students in South Africa. To date, most of the research conducted on IPV has focused on the female adult population, young adults and adolescents in high schools. This study aims to fill the gaps left in the existing literature on IPV by looking at the experience of female university students in South Africa.

### **2.3 Factors influencing partner violence**

In some cases living in an abusive relationship is a lifetime exposure, for instance Lawoko (2006) state that recent data based on nationally and representative community samples of women in developing countries suggests that the lifetime prevalence of IPV ranges from 11 to 52 per cent. 70 per cent of women in Ethiopia reported having experienced physical violence, while 40 per cent in South Africa reported a 40 per cent prevalence of physical violence in intimate relationships. In some relationships violence is not so common in that it happens once or twice in the relationship. No matter how common or uncommon violence is in intimate relationships there are always factors underpinning violence in relationships.

Mulford and Giordano (2008) for instance, found barriers to communication in relationships as one of the factors causing partner violence among adolescents. They argue that lack of experience in communicating and relating to a romantic partner may lead to the use of poor coping strategies, including verbal and physical aggression. Lack of communication probably because of the couple's age is likely to influence poor levels of trust and jealousy in relationships. This is most likely to happen in relationships

involving adolescents and youth. When matters are not communicated well and the level of mistrust increases, violence is likely to occur as a strategy of solving problems in relationships. In such instances violence is likely to be used as a form of punishment and as an expression of anger (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). Mulford and Giordano (2008) cite anger among adolescent boys as the primary motivating factor for the use of violence in intimate relationships. Where communication is poor, one gender also tends to dominate, particularly in decision-making which often leads to the use of violence.

Dating at an early age had been found to be a factor for a man committing violence against an intimate partner and for a woman experiencing violence by an intimate partner (WHO, 2010). Age disparities could reflect differences in maturity and stages in life between the partners. Such differences, if misunderstood by one or both of the partners, are likely to trigger conflict. Larsen *et al.* (2005) also noted that known risk factors to violence include young age, poverty, low social status, women's disempowerment, stress in daily life, alcohol consumption and jealousy. Lawoko *et al.* (2007) also found that women younger than their intimate partners were at higher odds of experiencing physical IPV than those of the same age as their partners. Younger age is associated with certain forms of IPV such as sexual coercion, forced sex and rape. For instance a report by WHO (2010) suggests that younger women are more at risk of being raped than older women. Partners of the same age are more likely to share similar interests and lifestyles, reducing the risk of conflict.

Peer pressure has also been cited as another factor playing a role in the perpetration of dating violence. Dahlberg *et al.* (2001:8) argue that the need for acceptance, to get along with one's peers, and to not be seen as different, were important aspects of adolescents' behaviour. Furthermore they argue that adolescents are much more likely to engage in negative activities when those behaviors are encouraged and approved of by their friends. Peers exert more influence on each other during their adolescent years than at any other time of an adolescent's life. Thus peer attitudes and behaviours are critical influences on teenagers' attitudes and behaviours related to dating violence, particularly when they are coupled with weak family environments (Mulford & Giordano, 2008).

The most commonly cited reason for the perpetration of physical aggression in intimate relationships is alcohol abuse (Cunradi, 2010; Ansara & Hindin, 2009). Dalal *et al.* (2007) argue that in South Africa men who admit using force or violence against their partners are more likely to drink heavily. Similarly, existing literature on alcohol consumption and IPV perpetration in college populations points to a positive relationship between the two behaviors (Fossos *et al.*, 2007). Keiter *et al.* (2010) noted that even high school students report drug and alcohol abuse as a contributing factor to the occurrence of violence in dating relationships. The role of men's alcohol use in the perpetration of IPV has been well documented in the literature on IPV. It is therefore important to note that it is not only the male partner's use of alcohol that contributes to the perpetration of partner violence but the female's consumption of alcohol as well as a victim. Ansara and Hindin (2009) found a link between the victim's use of alcohol and the perpetration of violence by an intimate partner. Other studies found that the role of alcohol use in the perpetration of IPV and sexual violence is less clear, and that it does not indicate a casual link. Some studies therefore look at the relationship between the harmful use of alcohol and the perpetration of partner violence (Keiter *et al.*, 2008; WHO, 2010). Alcohol use may, for example, interfere with cognitive processes, contribute to violent behaviors, and be used as an excuse to engage in violence, but does not really cause violence in relationships (Mears, 2003).

Relationship jealousy is also cited as another factor responsible for the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships by some authors. For instance conflict over how much time is spent with each other versus with friends. Jealousy stemming from too much time spent with friends of the opposite sex and possibilities of engaging in new romantic relationships plays a crucial role in the perpetration of violence against an intimate partner, even in dating relationships (Mulford & Giordano, 2008). The relationship between IPV and jealousy was also found in Nigeria by Esere *et al.* (2009) who observed that women whose partners were jealous, controlling or verbally abusive were significantly more likely to report being raped or physically assaulted. For example, the odds of men hitting women significantly increase when the female partner is jealous but

not when the male partner is jealous. Parish *et al.* (2004) argue that violence tends to be one partner's reaction to the other's jealousy and nagging. Accusation of infidelity by the female partner is also associated with the perpetration of IPV. Ntaganira *et al.* (2008) argue that men may use violence in response to their partner's accusations of infidelity. However, they found a positive relationship between male partner's infidelity and the perpetration of violence against their partners. The relationship between infidelity and IPV was therefore positive among both sexes.

Studies point out that a troubling aspect of IPV against women was its social and cultural acceptance of physical chastisement of women and the right of the husband to correct an erring partner (Uthman *et al.*, 2009:2; Abrahams & Jewkes (2005). Furthermore, they argue that attitudes towards IPV are one of the most prominent predictors of the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships. For instance, IPV is greatest in societies where violence against women is a socially accepted norm. Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) also argue that many people, including women, regard IPV as acceptable if it does not injure or leave a mark, thus granting men the right to inflict physical punishment on their partners. WHO (2010) also indicates that women's acceptance of violence is positively associated with being a victim of IPV.

Partner violence lies in the patriarchal nature of society, and ideals of masculinity that are based on control of women and that celebrate male strength and toughness (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). Gender disparities and the patriarchal system grant men license to use violence against their partners and limits women the right to leave an abusive partner. This is the case for young adults and adolescents (Dalal *et al.*, 2007, Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). Matud (2007) blames the unequal position of women in relationships and in society, and the normative use of violence in conflict for the perpetration of violence against women in intimate relationships. Adebunni and Olusola (2007:3) also argue that most of the violence perpetrated against women is based on societal orientation as well as cultural and religious practices. Some men still beat their wives and perpetrate other forms of physical and psychological abuse to prove their masculinity and superiority. This limits participation of women in decision-making in their intimate relationships.

Adebunmi and Olusola (2007) also argue that the misinterpretations of the payment of the bride price, also known as ilobolo, play a major role in the perpetration of IPV. In marriage, the man is generally expected to pay bride price to the family of the bride. This payment of bride price has led to the idea of ownership of the woman. Feminists highlight western society's patriarchal values and view men's aggression towards women as a way in which men attempt to enforce and maintain their social advantage over women (Ronfeldt, Kimerling & Arias, 1998). Markowitz (2001) explains that this is presumably because of greater physical strength and willingness among males to use more severe forms of violence against their partners. South Africa is similar to many patriarchal societies, in which men use their power to impose physical punishment on their wives (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

Wong *et al.* (2008) argued that a cross-sectional study in South Africa showed that IPV against women was positively associated with exposure to violence during childhood, low education, alcohol consumption, and having another partner while still in an intimate relationship with the perpetrator. Literature on IPV suggests that witnessing the abuse of a parent as a child is associated with engaging in several types of violent behavior in adulthood, such as using violence against an intimate partner (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). The law and the socio-economic status of many women put them at risk of IPV by their current or ex-partners. Lower educational attainment for instance is positively associated with acceptance of IPV by many women (Uthman, 2009). Furthermore, respondents with primary or no education were more likely to justify IPV compared to those with secondary or higher education in many societies.

Lower education attainment is likely to reduce women's exposure and access to resources, thus increasing their likelihood of accepting violence as normal (WHO, 2010). McCloskey *et al.* (2005) argue that factors associated with IPV for women in sub-Saharan Africa include having lower education, having many children and having experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Even though lower levels of female

education attainment are associated with increased risk of partner violence, other studies show that higher educational attainment by women than their partners increased their vulnerability to IPV (Dalal *et al.*, 2007; WHO, 2010). In contrast, Rodriguez *et al.* (2008) found the prevalence of partner violence to be higher among women who had graduated from high school. Lawoko *et al.* (2007) found that having a higher education may serve as a protective factor against IPV for many women. Normally it is expected that women with lower levels of education are more susceptible to violence but the study by Lawoko *et al.* (2007) shows that when a woman has an equal or higher education than her partner her chances of being abused increase compared to women with lower levels of education than their partners.

Women who are employed are at a greater risk of having IPV inflicted on them than unemployed women. Unemployed women are often economically dependent on their partners, particularly in developing countries like Kenya, where social welfare support systems do not exist. Lawoko *et al.* (2007) argue that unemployed women, to a higher degree, compared to their employed counterparts, tend to conform to the societal norm in which the husband is seen as the head in the household, thereby reducing the risk of conflict. Uthman (2009) also found that in some countries, such as Benin, Kenya and Madagascar, being married increased the odds of experiencing IPV. Living in rural areas also increased the odds of justifying IPV against women compared to living in urban areas. Lehrer *et al.* (2007) found that low socio-economic status was linked with higher risks of abuse in intimate relationships.

Shibusawa and Sormanti (2008) found the duration of the relationship to be a strong predictor of violence in many relationships. The longer the length of time men spend in a relationship the more likely they are to commit acts of violence. However, a marital duration of more than 15 years was identified as a potential protective factor against male perpetration of IPV in Bangladesh (WHO, 2010:31). A study conducted by Parish *et al.* (2004) on IPV in China found that episodes of violence were higher in relationships of five years or less i.e. 11 per cent compared with 20 to 21 per cent of those in relationships of more than five years. Mutual hitting was most common in relationships of six to 15

years. Seedat *et al.* (2009:1011) found that other social factors driving the problem included poverty and unemployment.

#### **2.4 Consequences of partner violence**

It was stated previously that IPV is a public health concern and has incalculable costs. It limits a woman's personal growth, her productivity, her socio-economic roles and her psychological health (Esere *et al.*, 2009). IPV places victims at risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, sustaining physical and emotional injuries, loss of self-esteem, eating disorders and the fear of being in the same place with an intimate partner. There are many health problems associated with abuse and neglect at all ages. These include consequences of acute trauma, including death and unwanted and unplanned pregnancy, as well as long-term physical and mental problems, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, somatization, suicide, and substance abuse (Ghandi *et al.*, 2010; Lawoko, 2006). These problems are also prevalent among youth who have experienced violence in their intimate relationships. Helweg-Larsen *et al.* (2008) state that those who experience dating violence at some point in high school are more likely to exhibit signs of depression, including feeling sad or hopeless and considering or attempting suicide.

Most victims suffer from injuries which often result from assaults by their intimate partners. IPV and sexual violence against women in adulthood can lead directly to serious injury, disability or death (WHO, 2010). Lehrer *et al.* (2007) observe that about 20 per cent of subjects in Chile reported one or more incidence of violence without an injury and another 5 per cent reported at least one incidence that led to an injury. Physically abused women are likely to have been injured in the head, face, neck, thorax, breasts and abdomen (Campbell, 2002). South Africa, a country not at war, faces a unique burden of morbidity and mortality arising from violence and injuries. These deaths and injuries are driven by gender based violence particularly IPV. Violence and injuries are the second leading cause of death in South Africa. The overall injury death rate of 157,8 per 100 000 population is nearly twice the global average, and the rate of homicide of women by intimate partners is six times the global average (Seedat *et al.*, 2009:1011). Overall the

injuries, fear, and stress associated with intimate partner violence can lead to severe health problems such as chronic pain, including, headaches, back pain, fainting and seizures. Hence it is regarded as a major public health concern (Campbell, 2002).

Lipsky and Caetano (2007) argue that IPV may have a substantial impact on the mental health of victims. In their review, Lipsky and Caetano (2007) observe that the National Violence against Women Survey in the United States estimated that nearly 1.5 million of the 5.3 million rapes, physical assaults and stalking incidents perpetrated against women by intimate partners each year resulted in some type of mental health problem. Partner violence is also associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Sabina *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, they state that rates of PTSD among women abused by a partner ranged from 31 to 84 per cent, thus the greater the frequency and severity of victimization the greater the chances of post traumatic disorders. All forms of IPV, i.e. physical, psychological, verbal and sexual violence, are associated with post-traumatic stress disorders. While some victims of partner violence may experience partner violence in multiple ways, their exposure to multiple forms of abuse may pose an extra burden on their health, therefore multiple experiences of partner violence are likely to lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. Hanson (2002) argue that symptoms of post-traumatic stress, which include poor concentration, avoidance, hyper arousal and lack of motivation and energy, are common reactions to partner violence and may also occur in adolescents, greatly impairing school and social functioning.

A comprehensive meta-analysis of studies conducted in the United States showed that the risk of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder associated with IPV was even greater than that resulting from childhood sexual assault (Campbell, 2002). Depression in women experiencing partner violence has also been associated with other life stressors that often result in domestic violence such as change in residence, having many children, forced sex with an intimate partner, separations, child behaviour problems and marital separations in adult populations (Campbell, 2002).

IPV prevents women from influencing the circumstances of sex, resulting in more frequent sex and less condom use (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010). Women who experience IPV, particularly sexual coercion, suffer among other health consequences, gynaecological problems due mainly to physical abuse and forced and unprotected sex by an intimate partner. Physically abused women suffer gynaecologically more than non-abused women (Campbell, 2002:1332). Differential symptoms and conditions include sexually-transmitted diseases, vaginal bleeding or infection, fibroids, decreased sexual desire, genital irritation, pain on intercourse, chronic pelvic pain, and urinary tract infections.

IPV is also prevalent among pregnant women of different ages. Rodriguez *et al.* (2008) argue that the prevalence is estimated at 5.2 per cent among pregnant women. Furthermore they argue that women who experience abuse during pregnancy are more likely to seek pregnancy care after 20 weeks, and are at greater risk of adverse birth outcomes and maternal complications. IPV occurring during pregnancy is regarded as the leading cause of maternal deaths and other adverse birth outcomes such as low birth weight, abortion, still births and pre-term delivery (Ntaganira *et al.*, 2008). Both pre-term and low-birth weight deliveries are a major source of infant mortality and long-term adverse health complications in children.

IPV is one of the greatest barriers to ending the subordination of women and a factor responsible for the infection of many women with HIV. For fear of violence, women are unable to refuse sex or negotiate safer sexual practices, thus increasing their vulnerability to HIV if their husbands are unfaithful (Uthman, 2009). Studies show that women's vulnerability to HIV is heightened by experiences of physical violence by the intimate partner (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010; Ferdinand, 2009:14). Furthermore, a study in Nairobi, Kenya found that women who were visiting an STI clinic and were living with HIV/AIDS reported a high lifetime prevalence of violence in their intimate relationships (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010).

The use of alcohol is one of the frequently cited factors responsible for the perpetration of violence however experiencing IPV is also associated with drinking problems among people who are victims of such abuse. Rodriguez *et al.* (2008) argue that IPV is associated with adverse health behaviours such as alcohol abuse and smoking. The negative effects and problems associated with IPV are often felt even after leaving an abusive relationship by the majority of victims of IPV. Ford-Gilboe *et al.* (2009) found that past IPV continues to exert direct negative effects on women's mental and physical health at an average of 20 months after leaving abusive relationships, and that the extent of this impact depends on the severity of abuse.

WHO (2010) argue that IPV also has major adverse costs to the economy. For example, in the United Kingdom, one analysis estimated that its annual cost to the economy in England and Wales was approximately £22.9 billion (WHO, 2010). These costs were due to health and legal services given to victims of IPV. Such services included treatment of injuries at hospital and physician services. Some women took time off from work which also affected the economy of their countries in different ways. Further they argue that when the costs of individuals not reaching their full productive potential are factored in, the overall costs to society will be even greater.

#### **2. 4.1 Consequences of IPV among children and youth**

IPV is a global health problem that is associated with physical, reproductive and mental health consequences (Uthman *et al.*, 2009). IPV particularly among married couples can have a negative impact on the behavior of children who observe it. Children who grow up observing violent behavior from their parents learn to accept such behavior as legitimate and use it as a strategy for conflict resolution. Parents' actions are therefore likely to influence partner violence among youth when they grow up (Mears, 2003). This is a concern for South Africa as well because research shows that the effects of witnessing frequent parental conflict as a young boy puts men at risk of being violent towards their own partners in adolescence and adulthood (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). Their peers also observe their violent actions and begin to practice these in their own relationships.

Not only are they likely to repeat the actions of their parents when they grow up but it is also likely to hinder their social development, i.e. their schooling and their upbringing. A study conducted by WHO (2010) found that children's exposure to violence between parents is commonly associated with problems in the areas of social, emotional, behavioural, cognitive and general health functioning.

Some children from families where there is a prevalence of IPV may display increased rates of behavioural and emotional problems that can result in increased difficulties with education and employment, often leading to early school drop out. Adolescents and youth experiencing violence by an intimate partner are likely to perform poorly and even drop out of school or university before they finish their studies. Hanson (2002) argues that dating violence during adolescence has been associated with poor academic performance, substance abuse and later, marital violence. Matud (2007) found that both physical and sexual dating violence among adolescent girls are associated with risk behaviours such as substance abuse, unprotected sexual encounters, unhealthy weight control measures, pregnancy and even suicide. Unhealthy weight control behaviours such as the use of diet pills, laxatives, or vomiting and eating disorders were also very much prevalent among adolescent girls who reported experiencing violence from dating partners (Silverman *et al.*, 2001).

Studies show that women who are coerced to initiate sexual intercourse are most likely to report multiple sexual partnerships (Maharaj & Munthre, 2007; Ramisetty-Mickler, 2006). Research shows that sexual violence during childhood is associated with high risk behaviours in adolescence and adulthood, such as unprotected sex and multiple partners. Furthermore, women who were victims of emotional and physical violence in their childhood were more likely to have unprotected sex with a stable partner than those not reporting these experiences (Ferdinand, 2009). These risky behaviours are likely to expose youth to future episodes of IPV and they will continue to suffer from the similar consequences due to ongoing violence as a child and in relationships. A history of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence has been found to be significantly associated with increased health risks and health-risk behaviours in both males and females (WHO,

2010). Flisher *et al.* (2007) found that young women who reported experiencing either physical or sexual abuse or both had significantly increased chances of having engaged in sexual intercourse, having had three or more sexual partners, and having ever been pregnant. IPV and sexual violence increase the risk of pregnancy in early adolescence (WHO, 2010). Furthermore, in South Africa it was found that pregnant adolescents were more likely to have a history of forced sexual initiation as compared to their non-pregnant counterparts (WHO, 2010).

IPV is troubling not only because of the immediate emotional and physical disorders that it causes but the incidence of partner violence are also correlated to the incidence of mental disease and substance abuse, having multiple intimate partners, and the spread of HIV (Wong *et al.*, 2008). Maharaj and Munthree (2007) argue that sexual coercion plays a crucial role in compelling women to initiate sex at an early age. The consequences of early exposure to sexual activities leave victims at risk of unwanted and unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (Gupta *et al.*, 2008; Maharaj & Munthree, 2007; Heise *et al.*, 2002). Among young adults aged 15 to 24 years, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS was 9 per cent (Maharaj & Munthree, 2007).

The consequences of partner violence among adolescents are severe and even result in injury. Makepeace, cited in Simon, Lin and Gordon (1998), found that 50 per cent of female students who experienced aggression in their relationships sustained physical injuries as a result of assaults. Colombini, Mayhew & Watts (2011) argue that partner violence is a serious economic, legal and public health problem that can result in injury and other health consequences even to young perpetrators of IPV. Cocker *et al.* (2000) argue that one of the few studies examining health correlates specific to dating violence has shown that young adult (college-aged) perpetrators of severe physical partner violence report fewer social support resources, more drug or alcohol dependence, and more anxiety, depression, manic, and psychotic symptoms than their non-violent peers. Also suicidal ideation is considered as one of many consequences of IPV among adolescents and youth. According to Silverman *et al.* (2001:578) the pain and

humiliation of those who experience intimate partner violence may play a major role in influencing teens to suicidal ideation and behavior.

## **2. 5 Barriers in reducing IPV**

Leaving an abusive relationship can be very difficult and reasons why people often remain in abusive relationships include fear, low self-esteem, and financial dependence. Children, hope for change, culture, and lack of knowledge on where to find help are some of the many reasons why it is difficult to reduce IPV (Foa, Carscadi, Zoellner & Feeny, 2000:67). Even though many battered women eventually leave abusive partners in an effort to curtail partner violence, their first attempts are often unsuccessful and even after leaving, partner violence may continue in the form of stalking, threats, and physical assault.

Lipsky and Caetano (2007) argue that abused women face several barriers to mental health care, not only due to affordability, accessibility and acceptability of violent behaviours, but also because of gender and power issues, including partners with controlling behavior who prevent their partners from accessing health care and perpetrate psychological abuse that decreases a woman's ability to take action thus preventing a reduction in IPV. Economic resources are a key determinant of better health, yet being in an abusive relationship typically restricts women's economic independence, making employment difficult (Ford-Gilboe *et al.*, 2009). This promotes economic dependency of women on men for their well-being, thus leading to future abuse.

In a WHO (2005) multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence, women were asked if they had ever sought help from official public sector services (police, health services, legal advice, shelter, women's non-governmental organisations, local and religious leaders). It was found that the majority of physically abused women reported that they had never gone to any of these types of agencies due to the fear of stigma, discrimination, and fear of losing their children (Ferdinand, 2009). Bjorkent and Morgan (2010) argue that women are often blamed or seen as responsible for the acts of violence

against them. Thus, an environment of victim blaming and normalization of violence is created in which women feel unable to report crimes of violence against them. They further cited Bunch and Carrillo (1992), who suggested that women are socialized to associate their self-worth with the satisfaction of the needs and desires of others, and are thus encouraged to label themselves inadequate or bad if men beat them.

Attitudes towards violence exist at both a community level and an individual level. Even if individuals personally believe that violence is not acceptable and necessary steps should be taken against it, their actions depends on what others think and the social environment that either criticizes or permits violence as an acceptable behavior (McLaren, 2010). Blame often accompanies partner violence and plays a huge role in failing to prevent violence in intimate relationships. Blame is often shifted from the abuser to the victim. This shift is often associated with stigma, shame and embarrassment for most victims of IPV, thus they choose to remain in abusive relationships. Negative police responses, including failure to arrest the abuser, the victim not being listened to or the situation trivialized, race and socio-economic status, also serve as strong barriers in the reduction and prevention of IPV since most victims find it hard to report the matter to police due to the fear of stigma, lack of action and ignorance from the police (Liang *et al.*, 2005). This stigma is associated with socio-economic status and class of some victims of IPV, for instance women with higher socio-economic statuses such as models, top business women, actresses and many others may find it difficult to report their experiences of IPV due to their status in society. Women's socio-economic status may also force them to be fully dependent on their partners for survival, thus preventing them from escaping violence and seeking help from the necessary institutions (Liang *et al.*, 2005).

It was found that the severity of the previous episodes of IPV serve as a barrier in the reduction or the prevention of episodes of partner violence. WHO (2010) argues that previous exposure to abuse may contribute to future victimization by changing a woman's attitude towards violence, decreasing her ability to recognize risk, lowering her self-esteem, increasing her guilt, shame and embarrassment, and reducing her sexual

assertiveness. Liang *et al.*, (2005) for instance, argue that when violence reaches a certain level of severity, even the support of family and friends may be insufficient to prevent it or stop it from continuing. They further argue that the severity of violence against women can also serve as a barrier in the reduction of IPV. For example, a battered woman's informal support network plays a major role in the reduction of future abuse by an intimate partner. However, for women who had experienced the most severe violence, even informal social support networks did not reduce the likelihood of ongoing violence. Liang *et al.* (2005) also found that most women tended to report abuse incidents and seek help only when the violence reached a severe or crisis level. This therefore undermines the attempts to reduce IPV in relationships.

Liang *et al.* (2005) also argue that language may serve as a strong barrier to the reduction of IPV. Many institutions offering assistance to victims of abuse often use a certain language as a medium of communication, a language that certain victims may not be able to understand. They stated, for instance, that in the United States Vietnamese women were less likely to seek help in areas lacking services in the Vietnamese language.

Anne-Swart *et al.* (2002) argue that despite existing concern about partner violence among adolescents, there appears to be scarce developments of effective prevention strategies in the context of adolescent dating relationships especially in countries such as South Africa. Furthermore, Anne-Swart (2002) noted that evidence suggests that adolescents themselves may not define dating violence as a problem, but perceive violence between partners as an acceptable form of dating behavior and as a sign of love. This perception is likely to hinder these victims of partner violence from seeking help or escaping their violent relationships resulting in future abuse in adulthood. Eaton *et al.* (2007:586) stated that females who were victims of physical violence in dating relationships were most likely to experience similar types of victimization as adults. Anne-Swart *et al.* (2002) argue that if not contained, early exposure to IPV leaves adolescents at risk for future incidents of violence, as the experience of physical violence during adolescence is likely to represent the beginnings of unhealthy patterns of adult male to female relationships.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter touched on different issues related to the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships. Factors underpinning the use of violence in relationships were discussed. Further the chapter discussed consequences of intimate partner violence on victims and survivors as well as barriers in the prevention of these forms of violence. This study will therefore attempt to close the gaps. Even though the existing literature is valuable the aim of this study was to extend this by looking at the experiences of university student in a South African context since most studies of this nature were conducted abroad in developed countries and fewer or none were conducted in African context.

# CHAPTER 3

## Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

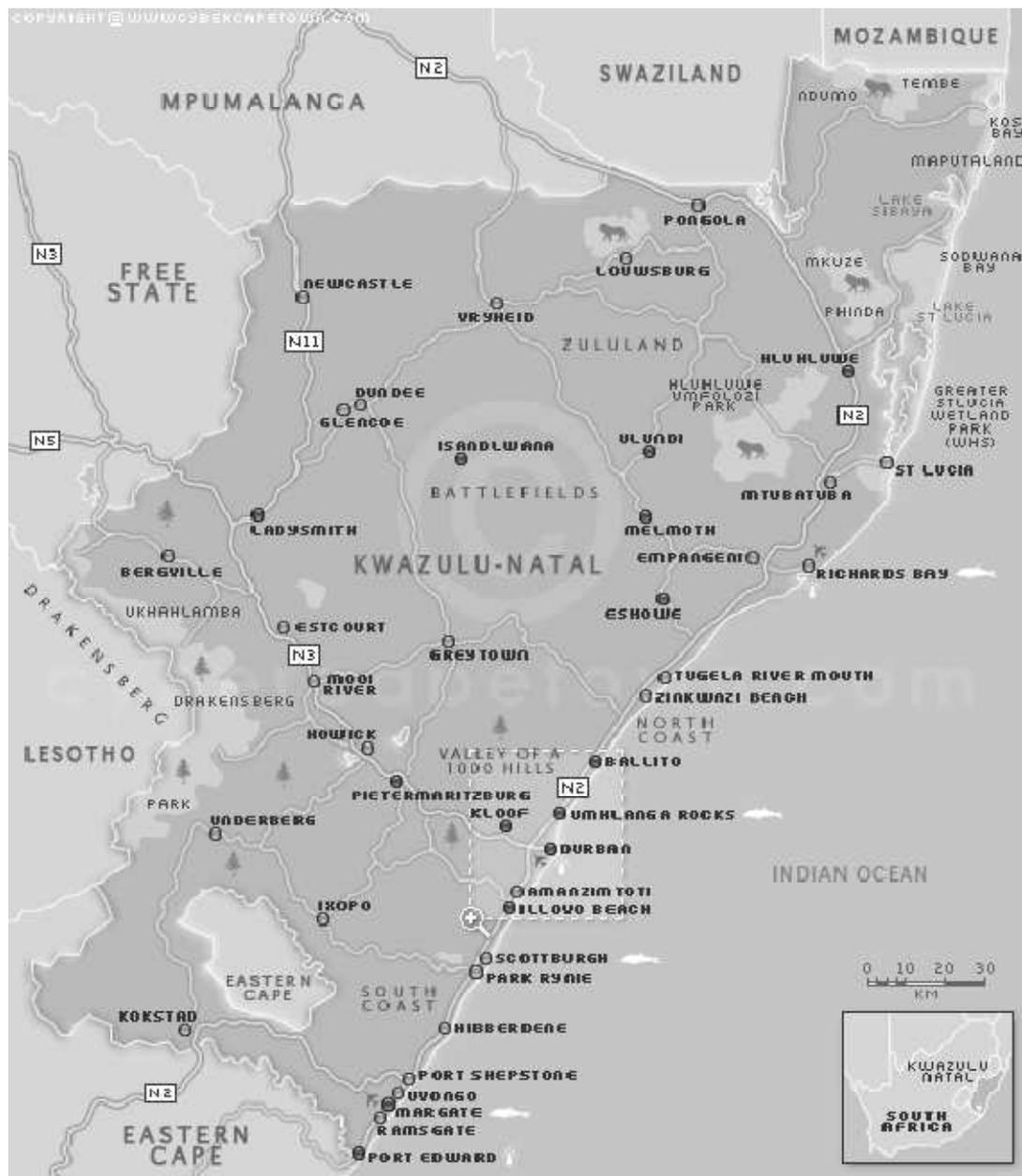
This chapter highlights the research methods used to meet the study objectives. This study was qualitative in nature hence in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data from participants. The target population, the instruments used to collect the data, the data collection methods, and the method of data analysis are all outlined. The chapter first describes the study area, data collection methods and methods used to analyse data. Ethical considerations are critical before conducting a research study, and these were therefore discussed in this chapter.

### 3.2 Study area

#### 3.2.1 KwaZulu-Natal

According to the Statistics South Africa (2010) mid-year population estimates, KwaZulu-Natal has a population of 10 645 400, contributing 21,3 per cent of the total population of South Africa, with women constituting 51.8 per cent and men 48.2 per cent. Pauw *et al* (2005:1) stated that KwaZulu-Natal is the third richest province in South Africa after Gauteng and the Western Cape. In *per capita* income terms the province ranks fourth. Although the people of KwaZulu-Natal are relatively well off, the province is still characterised by high poverty rates, inequalities in the distribution of income between various population subgroups, and unemployment. Poverty and unemployment in South Africa are high in rural areas, given that much of the rural population depends on agricultural activities for their survival. KwaZulu-Natal is divided into eleven district municipalities. These are Ugu, Sisonke, uMgungundlovu, uThukela, Amajuba, Zululand, uMkhanyakude, uThungulu, iLembe, uMzinyathi and eThekweni (Durban).

**Figure 3.1 Map of KwaZulu Natal**



**Source: Marriott (2008)**

### **3.2.2 Durban**

The study was conducted in Durban, also known as eThekweni, a city in the KwaZulu-Natal province, which is one of the four biggest cities in South Africa. The city of Durban, which falls within the eThekweni municipality, is classified as one of only six metropolitan

municipalities in South Africa and the only in KwaZulu-Natal with this status. EThekwini municipality is located on the eastern seaboard of South Africa. Durban is the largest port and urban area on the east coast of Africa and has a population of just over 3 million people. It is also the second largest industrial hub in South Africa.

EThekwini municipality is home to thousands of students from different communities in three universities. This study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed in January 2004 as a result of the merger between the former University of Durban Westville and University of Natal. The new university brought together the rich histories of both former universities. The two universities were among the first set of institutions to be merged in 2004 as part of government's reform aimed at reconfiguring and restructuring higher education. UKZN has five campuses in two major cities, four in Durban and one in Pietermaritzburg, with a total student population of approximately 42000, 20 per cent of whom are postgraduates, and a total staff complement of approximately 4300. The internationalization of the university is focused primarily on its postgraduate enrolments, which are 14 per cent of the total postgraduate enrolments, while international undergraduate enrolments comprise only 4 per cent of the total undergraduate enrolments (UKZN, 2009, date accessed, 07/01/11).

### **3.3 Qualitative research**

The study was qualitative in nature using mixed methods of data collection, i.e. in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative methodology refers to a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc. within their social world, and understanding the mental mapping process that respondents use to make sense of and interpret the world around them (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Holloway (1997:2) defined qualitative research as a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. A number of different approaches exist within the wider framework of this type of research, but most of these have the same aim,

which is to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures. Researchers use qualitative approaches to explore the behavior, perspectives and experiences of the people they study. The basis of qualitative research lies in the interpretive approach to social reality (Holloway, 1997:2). Furthermore, qualitative studies help reveal the insight of what cannot be captured for instance by surveys.

Qualitative methods seek to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack et al. 2005). Furthermore, qualitative methods are typically more flexible, i.e. they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. For example, qualitative methods ask mostly “open-ended” questions that are not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply “yes” or “no” (Mack et al. 2005).

### **3.3.1 Focus group discussion**

Litosseliti (2003:1) defines focus group discussions as small structured groups with selected participants normally led by a moderator. They are set up in order to explore specific topics and individual views and experiences through group interaction. Focus group discussions were selected for this study because they present a more natural environment where respondents can share their experiences based on what has been said by others in a group. Paton (1990) stated that in focus group discussions, respondents can build their arguments on each other’s ideas and comments, unlike in individual interviews which focus on individual beliefs and attitudes that can be easily controlled by the interviewer. It also provides an opportunity to explore new or unique ideas, something that is unlikely to happen in interviews. They also allow for flexibility of examining a range of topics with a variety of individuals, sometimes more directly at less expense than an individual interview.

For this study three focus group discussions were conducted to collect data. One focus group was made up of female students only, the second group was made up of male students only and the third group consisted of both male and female students. Focus group discussions were conducted in either English or IsiZulu depending on the choice of respondents. The focus group discussions were expected to last for no more than one and a half hours each. Three main themes were explored during the discussions, factors contributing to partner violence, consequences of IPV as well as barriers in reducing partner violence. The guiding questions were inclusive in character such as: Have you or anybody you know ever experienced physical violence by a current or an ex-dating partner? Have you ever gotten so angry or frustrated with your partner that you physically hurt her? Do you perhaps know somebody who has done it before to their partners? In your own view what are the barriers in reducing partner violence? What can be done to stop violence against women? What can be done to reduce partner violence?

### **3.3.2 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews were used as a second method of data collection in this study. In total 15 interviews were conducted. Ten female students and five male students were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. In-depth interviews lasted on average one hour depending on the amount of time each respondent took to respond to each question. They were also conducted in English and IsiZulu depending on the choice of each respondent. They were also inclusive in nature since women who did not experience partner violence also participated in the study.

In-depth interviews provide more depth about a subject or individual case than a quantitative survey; issues can be explored in detail with participants. In-depth interviews involve open-ended questions asked by a researcher to an individual. Interviewers use a topic guide but do not rely on a structured questionnaire. Probing techniques are used to encourage respondents to give a more detailed response. In-depth interviews were used for this study because of their flexibility which allows the researcher to grasp more fully

the respondent's experience of partner violence. They also provide a more relaxed atmosphere for collecting information. People may feel more comfortable having a conversation with a researcher about their experiences as opposed to discussing personal issues in a group and filling out a questionnaire. (see appendix A).

Punch (2005) argues that interviews are a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and construction of reality. They are also one of the most powerful ways of understanding others. In-depth interviews provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. However, there are limitations to using in-depth interviews as they can be time consuming because of the time it takes to conduct interviews, transcribing them and analysing the results.

### **3.3.3 Mixed methods**

For this study a combination of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used. Mixed methods are often viewed as a combination of qualitative and quantitative research in one study. However, mixed methods can also refer to the combination of two or more qualitative methods of data collection such as focus group discussions and participant observations or individual interviews with the aim of getting a better understanding of the matter under investigation. Morgan (1998) argues that the goal of using mixed methods of qualitative research is to use each method so that it contributes something unique to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under study. The goal of combining two methods is to strengthen the total research project, regardless of which method is the primary means of collecting data (Morgan, 1998).

Mixed methods allow the strengths of one method to supplement for the disadvantages of the second method. Morgan (1998) further argues that when focus group discussions are used with other qualitative methods, they can either supplement another primary method or combine with the other method in a true partnership. Furthermore preliminary focus groups can be used as a useful starting point for individual interviews that involve

unfamiliar topics or informants. Alternatively preliminary in-depth interviews can help to generate focus group discussion guides by giving a feel for how people think and talk about the topics that the group will discuss.

It is important to note that even though it is advantageous to use mixed methods of data collection there is a negative side to it as well as these methods require that the researcher be well trained to use these methods, they are also expensive and require a great amount of time to complete because they can be time consuming (Morgan, 1998).

### **3.4 Sampling Strategy**

Students currently studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal were selected for participation in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years. In drawing the sample for the in-depth interviews a snowball sampling technique was used. This method was used because of difficulties in identifying victims and perpetrators of partner violence among university students. This method is considered a purposive sampling strategy; it is designed to identify people with particular knowledge needed as part of a consultative process. It is often used when the desired characteristics are rare. Therefore respondents were purposively selected with the hope that among the sample of respondents who participated in the study some had experienced partner violence at least once in their lifetime or may have known somebody who had experienced or perpetrated partner violence at least once in their lifetime. Snowball sampling uses recommendations to find people suitable for the needs of the project being undertaken. It is not easy to identify people who have experienced partner violence even in a university setting where the population is large; therefore snowball sampling makes it easier to recruit respondents through social networks, with whom contact has already been established.

### **3.5 Characteristics of the Sample**

Both men and women between the ages of 18 and 24 years who were currently enrolled at a university were selected to participate in the study. It was believed that students in these age groups already knew what partner violence entailed even though the researcher defined IPV at the beginning of the interviews and focus group discussions. Women who participated in the study were mainly African from different socio-economic backgrounds, however, they had similar experiences, i.e. ever being abused by an intimate partner or knowing someone who had experienced partner violence. Some of these women had experienced some form of partner violence and some knew someone who had experienced IPV. Some of these young women found it difficult to share their stories in a group setting while others easily opened up without fear. Men who participated in the study had also perpetrated violence against their intimate partner or knew someone who had abused their partners. Unlike female participants the majority of these young men did not find it difficult to share their experiences of IPV even in a focus group setting even though they were not related. They seemed to have extensive knowledge of IPV.

### **3.6 Methods of data analysis**

The technique that was used in analysing data for this study was in the form of transcripts and coded interviews from both focus groups and in-depth interviews. Thematic content analysis was used to explore issues covered during the data collection process. First transcription of data was done and notes taken during interviews and focus group discussions were incorporated into the transcripts. Notes enhanced the quality of data through, for instance, the description of body languages, facial expressions, silences and anger. The researcher then went through the transcripts to correct errors and familiarize herself with the responses so that she could decide whether they yielded the desired information. Responses were then sorted according to categories that emerged from the data, to give a complete picture of what the study sought to achieve.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee. Partner violence is a very sensitive topic so students may feel inhibited to talk about their own experiences of partner violence, the consequences associated with their experiences of partner violence and risk factors such as sexual experiences. Therefore it was important that confidentiality, respect and anonymity of respondents be assured before the interviews commenced and throughout the study process.

An informed consent form was issued to respondents for them to read and sign for their participation in the study; both the researcher and the respondents signed the informed consent form as an agreement of participation in the study. The researcher also made sure that students' real names were not used for the purpose of their safety; only the information they provided was stored as stated by the respondents. Further to that, participation in the study was voluntary and the researcher clearly stated to respondents before and during the course of the study that participants may withdraw from participating in the study or may decide not to respond to any question if they did not wish to do so.

### **3.8 Limitations of the study**

The study aimed to interview women from all racial groups. This however did not happen since the researcher relied on snowball sampling to select study participants. All the women who were interviewed were African students. It was difficult to recruit students of other racial groups since the researcher relied on referrals from other students and no one seemed to know any Indian, Coloured or White students who had experienced partner violence in their relationships. The sample also consisted of a limited number of respondents who directly experienced partner violence in their lives. Therefore the study was not a true representation of all female students who experienced partner violence in their intimate relationships. Participants who knew someone close to them who had experienced partner violence were recruited with the hope that they would have necessary information required to meet the objectives this study. A major limitation was the

sensitivity of the topic as most people found it difficult to disclose information related to their experiences of partner violence. Due to these limitations the results cannot be generalizable to the entire student population in Durban. The contribution of this study is that it provides insights into the experiences of university students. It also gives an insight as to why men perpetrate violence against their female partners. The findings of this study provide a foundation for future research on this topic.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter addressed research methods used to conduct this study. It provided a brief overview of the study area; the qualitative methods used in the study, ethical considerations as well as observed limitations of the study. Mixed methods of data collection were employed in this study, i.e. in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The mixed method approach was useful as it brought together strengths from both methods of data collection to improve the quality of this study as well as the generalisability of the findings.

# CHAPTER 4

## Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter details findings from a study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal to gather insights into the perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV) among female university students. The findings that are presented have emerged from the data obtained through in-depth interviews and focus groups with university students.

### 4.2 Results

#### 4.2.1 Experiences of IPV

##### 4.2.1.1 Physical violence

Participants were asked if they had ever been in a violent intimate relationship with either their past or current intimate partner or if they knew someone who had been in this kind of relationship. Both men and women participants admitted having been involved in a violent relationship or knowing someone who had been in a violent relationship.

A large number of female students revealed having ever experienced physical abuse by their intimate partners. Some women reported that young women get beaten up and coerced to have sex by their partners because of lack of common understanding which creates conflict in the relationship. For instance when partners do not agree on a certain matter it is most likely that one partner resorts to some form of violence in order to get their partner to submit to their demands. In this case the male partner uses his authority to compel his partner to have sex with him or he uses his authority to influence his partner's decision.

*“Yes, my partner hit me a few times, but it was not about having sex. My current partner slapped me as we did not see eye to eye on certain matters.” [ID#6, Female]*

*“Well I have never experienced partner violence myself, but a friend of mine was beaten up by her boyfriend two weeks back in one of the residences that I cannot mention.”*

*Apparently they made an agreement that he does not see her with other men anymore. So it happened that one day he saw her with another guy and there was a conflict between them which led to the beating.” [ID#4, Female]*

Men also admitted that they were involved in violent relationships. Some men reported assaulting or using physical violence as a way of disciplining or punishing their intimate partners. These men felt that it was natural for them to use violence to regulate their partner’s behaviour. Those men who reported that they were not personally involved in a violent relationship however knew someone who had used violence against their partners previously.

*“Guys in the location or township hit their girlfriends all the time and there is nothing wrong with that, if she misbehaves she needs to be put back in her place. A child who does wrong gets punished for it.” [ID#3, Male]*

Men in intimate relationships treat their girlfriends like children. Men believe that when their girlfriends have done something wrong they must be disciplined and punished like parents do to their children. This places young women in an inferior position in their relationships.

Physical aggression in intimate relationships is common and may be associated with the inability to handle misunderstanding in intimate relationships. Where there are misunderstandings in relationships young men believe that using violence is a solution to the problem. Young dating couples often grow up observing from their parents, elder siblings and peers, that using violence is a way of solving problems in intimate relationships and often become violent in their own relationships.

#### **4.2.1.2 Sexual victimization**

Participants also revealed that sexual abuse was common in their relationships. Both male and female participants revealed that sexual abuse does occur in intimate relationships. One male respondent reported that sometimes women refuse to have sex with their partners but their partners are reluctant to accept their refusal and they use all their powers of persuasion to coerce their partner to submit to their demands. Men argued that they do not normally respect the woman's right to refuse sex the first time unless she is adamant that she does not want to have sex. One male participant observed that women sometimes say 'no' but their actions do not show that they mean it.

*“This one time my girlfriend said no twice and then she purred as if she was enjoying it.” [FGD#3, Mixed Group]*

It was also revealed that women, especially young women, engage in sexual relationships with older men who are their primary source of income. These men provide them with transport when they are in need and also take care of their other needs, but they often expect sex in return. In such circumstances women often find themselves being forced to have sex with those men because it is the only way they can return their favours. This was revealed by a female participant in a focus group discussion and it was widely agreed on by the majority of participants in the group.

*“Girls have school boys, finance ministers, transport ministers etc. There are cases where girls hurt their partners' feelings just because they do not provide gifts and money. So the ministers do provide, but expect sex in return for their favours.” [FGD#1, Mixed Group]*

It appeared from the discussions that sexual coercion is common in the intimate relationships of students studying at the university. It was revealed that it was not uncommon for women who said 'no' to sex to be perceived as saying 'yes' where they

do not strongly show that they do not want to have sex. Age difference between intimate partners can also lead to sexual violence particularly where a woman is significantly younger than her partner and is financially or materially dependent on him. The young age of a female can play a major role in exposing her to IPV, particularly when coerced to have sex. When sexual coercion or forced sex occur between young girls and much older men, they are less likely to escape, however if the age gap is not big they are much likely to escape the situation. Normally women have less say in decision-making and this becomes even worse when the age gap between the partners is big.

#### **4.2.1.3 Verbal abuse**

Verbal abuse is also common in intimate relationships. Many participants reported they experienced verbal abuse in their relationships. The abuse ranged from shouting to criticising their partner's body size.

*“A friend of mine was once insulted by her boyfriend for not wanting to have sex, he said she was old fashioned, virginity was no longer important so why was she still keeping it, stuff like that.” [ID#4, Female]*

*“I am currently a size 28 and I have been this size since I was young but my boyfriend is complaining about my body size, I try to eat a lot hoping to gain a little bit of weight and be a size 32 at least but it is not happening, God made me the way I am.” [ID#5, Female]*

Some men may not be satisfied with the physical appearances of their partners and they are not afraid to humiliate them. One woman reported that she was constantly criticised by her partner for being too thin. Some men may also criticise women for their choices. One woman reported that her friend was verbally abused by her partner because she refused to have sex with him. Harsh words are used to demean and belittle women for refusing sex. Delaying the onset of sexual debut is regarded by many as a wise choice but can lead other young women to face intimidation and abuse because their partners are not happy with this decision.

*“Her boyfriend said the only reason why she was keeping her virginity was that she was too big and was scared that he would find her not active in bed.” [ID# 8; Female]*

Keeping virginity until marriage is considered sacred in most religions and cultures, however some women face criticism and verbal abuse from men whom they trust and believe should appreciate their chastity.

### **4.3 Factors contributing to partner violence among university students**

In the present study participants reported various reasons for physical violence occurring in their intimate relationships or that of someone they knew. There were a number of reasons for physical violence including jealousy, accusations of infidelity, and alcohol abuse.

#### **4.3.1 Anger**

The study found that anger was one of the reasons for violent behaviour in many intimate relationships. Anger often leads to violence in situations where a female partner had broken a promise she made to her partner, had done something that irritated her partner or refused to have sex with him. Norlander and Eckhardt (2005: 126) defines anger as an episode consisting of a myriad of physiological alarm responses, escape and attack behaviours, subjective labels of internal feelings and transgression related cognitions that are experienced simultaneously.

*“He hit me because he suspected I was smoking dagga with my friends, and when I denied smoking it he got angry and hit me. I asked him why he hit me and he said he was angry that I lied to him and it was the first time he had hit a woman before.” [ID# 2, Female]*

*“He found out that I was seeing another man, he shook me, threatened to kill me, he pointed a gun at me, but he did not shoot. He took my phone and sim card and never brought it back and that is how our relationship ended. But a few weeks after the break up he was still threatening to kill me, but somewhere, somehow, the whole thing passed.”* [ID#6, Female]

*“I hit my girlfriend because she loved boys too much. We went to my room, I turned my radio volume up and I hit her, I did it that way because I did not want disruptions and public display.”* [FGD#1, Mixed Group]

Some women reported that men became very angry when they refused to have sex with them. Men feel that women should not deny them sex. In many societies both men and women share the notion that men have the right to sex whenever they desire it. Female participants stated that male partners often got angry in circumstances where the female partner refused them sex. Therefore, refusing sex is one of the factors that trigger violence against women in intimate relationships.

*“He was angry because I did not want to have sex with him.”* [ID#1, Female]

One male participant reported that he never hit his partner but instead he humiliated her in front of her class mates because she had irritated him.

*“I spat in her face while everybody was watching because she had irritated me.”* [ID#5, Male]

Anger was commonly reported by participants to be a strong factor associated with many incidences of partner violence. Almost everyone who reported physical and verbal violence in their relationship reported that the perpetrator was very angry and as a result they acted violently towards their partner.

### **4.3.2 Nagging**

Nagging was considered one of the factors associated with violence in intimate relationships. Nagging means to “repeatedly find fault, complain and constantly annoy another person” (Searle, 2008). Many of the men complain that nagging by women results in abuse. One man in a focus group explained that women were constantly nagging them and they like complaining about their own relationships, comparing it to that of their friends. They stated women would actually tell them that they did not love them enough because they did not take them out like their friend who was always going out with her man. This behaviour is likely to cause anger and result in beating.

*“First she goes out with her friends and when she comes back she starts talking nonsense for instance accusing you of not loving her, until you decide to shut her up. Sometimes women do not understand. She will go out with her friends to the malls like Musgrave and when she comes back she nags you about how lucky her friend is for having a man who spoils her, until you get angry and hit her.” [FGD # 1, Mixed Group]*

Most men revealed that they get angry when their partners do not seem to appreciate the love and effort they put in making their relationships a success. According to them, some women do not want to appreciate their own relationships because when their friends’ boyfriends buy them gifts they expect that to happen in their relationships too. They do not want to accept their partner’s financial status. Male partners do not want to hear the same thing over and over because it makes them angry and they say things that do not sound nice to their partners and/or even hit them.

### **4.3.3 Peer pressure**

Peers exert a great amount of influence on each other; they are most likely to influence each other in both positive and negative ways. They observe each others’ actions and repeat those actions in their own relationships. Peers also tend to use violence in their own relationships because they need to prove that they are in control of their

relationships. Having friends who engage in or encourage violence can increase a young person's risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence. The majority of participants in the study, especially the women, agreed that peer pressure plays a crucial role in perpetuating violence in intimate relationships. Peers can go as far as asking you to forgive your partner for physical abuse, which succeeds in perpetuating the cycle of violence.

*“Friends and peers are very influential and sometimes you do not disagree with what they are telling you because you are scared that they will think you are stupid.”[ID#3, Female]*

*“Sometimes I advise my friends to be patient and remain in their abusive relationships, which is wrong because I as a peer am influencing my friends to make wrong decisions about their lives. I make the situation look normal while it is not.”[ID#4; Female]*

*“Peer pressure does contribute to partner violence especially among boys because they can influence each others’ behaviour and attitude. They do not mind telling a friend that their girlfriend is a bitch and they must hit her so that she will learn to respect him. And girls can also tell you that if your partner hits you he loves you or sometimes you see them being submissive to their intimate partners and adopt the same behaviour because you think it is acceptable.”[ID#10, Female]*

Young people’s social networks have an impact on the perpetration and acceptance of violence in their intimate relationships. Having friends or peers that are experiencing violence in their romantic relationships is a factor contributing to the perpetration and acceptance of violence. This could cause young people to accept violence as a normal part of their sexual relationships. It appeared in the current study that in certain cases partner violence in dating relationships was aggravated by peers who exert pressure on their friends’ decisions to use and accept violence. Young men use violence to show dominance and control of their relationships and also to avoid being labeled as ‘stupid’ by their friends and peers for letting their girlfriends get away with their wrong doings. The study also found that it was not only male peers who influence each other to use and

accept violence as a way of disciplining and punishing their partners' mistakes in their relationships, female peers also influence each others' decisions to accept violence. Female peers are likely to advise each other to accept the use of violence as a punishment for something wrong they have done.

Men also agree that peer pressure influences the decision to use violence in their relationships. One male participant explained that when he was growing up violence against women was common and many men believed that it was acceptable to beat women. In some cases men use physical violence in order to prove to peers that they are in control of the relationship.

*"I do not believe in hitting a woman but I can tell you that where I live most guys hit their partners and it is regarded as normal. Sometimes men hit their partners because they want to prove a point to their friends."* [ID#8, Male]

Young people often remain in violent relationships because they want to please their peers and not because they are happy or comfortable with the situation. They are reluctant to seek professional help because they often get advice from peers who use their own experiences to influence others' decisions. Youth are much more likely to engage in violent behaviour when such behaviour is encouraged and approved by peers.

#### **4.3.4 Control and respect**

In some cases young men use violence in their relationships to exert their authority over their partners. This study found that young men use physical coercion in order to have more power and to earn respect from their partners. Some men believe that in order to make their partner respect them they had to hit them. One participant in a focus group discussion reported that the best way to boost a man's ego was to hit his partner. They believed that they would earn respect from their peers as well. The best way for them to achieve that status was by making their partners submit to their orders through the use of

violence. Women on the other hand felt that their partner hit them because they wanted to evoke fear, so that they could be in control of the relationship and the decision making processes.

*“Men believe that if they hit you, you will always be scared of them.” [FGD#2, Female]*

*“The best way to boost your ego is to hit your woman. It is not that we want them to be afraid of us, sometimes you want to make sure that your voice is heard. The only way to make sure that this happens is to hit her because you want to own her.” [FGD#1, Mixed Group]*

*“You feel better after hitting her and leaving a mark on her body because you know she will always respect you and remember that if she misbehaves she will get punished again.” [ID#1, Male]*

In cases where violence was used the perpetrator would argue that he could not control his temper. However, the latter statement suggest that scars and injuries left on the body of the victim during abuse serve as a reminder to the victim that if she does something to disrespect her partner she will be punished. This indicates that patriarchy still exists in intimate relationships and a great deal needs to be done to end male dominance in intimate relationships.

The unequal position of men and women in relationships and in society, and the use of violence in conflict, puts women at greater risk of being abused by an intimate partner. Male dominance in intimate relationships makes women susceptible to violence. There is also a commonly held belief that the woman should respect the man and abide by his rules and when she deviates she must be punished for her disrespectful behaviour. Sometimes men use religion to justify their acts of violence against their partners. One male participant reported that it may seem wrong to hit a woman but it was acceptable to do so because even according to the Bible a woman must obey, respect and listen to the

orders of the man as he is the master. Religion was used to justify the authority of men over women.

*“It is wrong to hit a woman, but according to the Bible a woman is under her man she is a child to her man, if she makes mistakes her man has to punish her.” [ID# 4, Male]*

Young men often find themselves under pressure to demonstrate their masculinity and dominance in intimate relationships. Thus, they feel that forcing their partner to submit to their demands earns them respect in society.

#### **4.3.5 Alcohol**

The study found that the use of alcohol was strongly associated with the perpetration of partner violence, even though some participants reported that their partners were not violent towards them when they were intoxicated. The majority of participants believed that alcohol does play a significant role in the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships. This emerged mainly when the researcher was probing for reasons associated with the perpetuation of violence in intimate relationships. The use of alcohol and drug abuse also leads to violence by an intimate partner. One female participant stated that she was beaten up by her partner because she smoked dagga with her friend and her partner did not like that.

*“Alcohol does contribute to violence in a relationship and is often used as an excuse for violence by perpetrators. They say they were not thinking clearly, they were drunk, and it would not happen again.” [ID#1, Female]*

*“Alcohol does play a major role in the perpetration of violence because even us as women we justify our partners’ evil deeds by saying that he was drunk when he abused us.” [ID#3, Female]*

*“For some people violence becomes a norm especially if they both have been consuming alcohol. They will fight all the time particularly when they are drunk.” [FGD#2, Female]*

One participant argued that some people become more relaxed after consuming alcohol and it is much easier to socialise with them. However, some people turn into monsters after consuming alcohol, as they become violent and difficult to socialise with. Some even become sexually aggressive after consuming alcohol.

*“It depends how that person carries himself when he is drunk. Some women prefer their partners drunk because they are fun and loving, while some become violent when drunk and can even force you to have sex with them, and if you don’t want to, they hit you.”*  
[ID#2, Female]

Some respondents reported that their own experiences of abuse were not associated with the use of alcohol. They explained that they were not abused by an intimate partner who had consumed alcohol.

*“He is not violent even when he is drunk. He becomes quiet and creates this distance between us.”* [ID#6, Female]

Alcohol was also commonly viewed by the majority of women in violent intimate relationships as a factor responsible for violence in intimate relationships. They felt that if their partners did not use alcohol they would not become violent. Men also revealed that alcohol does contribute to problems in intimate relationships. They felt that the consumption of alcohol was associated with the initiation of problems in many relationships, further stating that when most people are intoxicated they do not think clearly and they lack common sense and become violent. There are situations where other methods of resolving conflict can be used in a relationship however after the consumption of alcohol the use of violence becomes inevitable.

*“The use of alcohol is the beginning of problems, because when drunk you do not think straight and it can make you violent” [FGD#3, Male]*

These findings are in line with those found by Jewkes (2002), who argues that alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of all forms of interpersonal violence. She observed further that heavy alcohol consumption by men is associated with IPV, since alcohol is thought to reduce inhibitions, cloud judgment, and impair the ability to interpret social cues. Men are therefore more likely to act violently when drunk because they do not feel they will be held accountable for their behaviour.

#### **4.3.6 Jealousy and feeling of insecurity**

Some young women often find themselves being abused in their relationships because of their partners’ insecurities. A man who is always insecure is dangerous because he is likely to use violence against his partner because of the fear that she will abandon him for another man. Jealousy and insecurity can manifest itself in the form of physical and verbal abuse. Edelati and Redzuan (2010:498) define romantic jealousy as a strong negative feeling resulting from the actual or threatened loss of love to a rival.

*“My partner always accuses me of cheating, I stay at the residence and he is not a student. If he ever phones me and finds that my phone is engaged I am in trouble. He will think that I was busy on the phone with another man. Also when he tells me that he loves me and I do not reply he thinks that I have found another man and I am fooling around with him. He is insecure and jealous.” [ID#3, Female]*

*“My friend’s partner never trusted her, he actually wanted her to be by his side all the time because he felt that if he was not with her, she was with another man, and that if she spends more time with friends they will make her do wrong things.” [ID#5, Female]*

*“A friend of mine was beaten up by her boyfriend because he saw her with another guy a male friend. He did not want her to have male friends because he did not trust that they could have an honest relationship that does not involve intimacy.” [ID#4, Female]*

Jealousy does play a major role in the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships. Male participants also reported incidences where women were beaten up because they had other male friends. This is often associated with lack of self-confidence and the fear of losing their partners to other men. The negative consequences of this could be the use of violence against their partner. Respondents felt that the discovery that the person you love with all your heart was sleeping with someone else is something some people cannot handle, they respond to such problems by being violent to those people who have hurt their feelings.

*“I hit my partner because her friend told me that she was sleeping with another man and was pregnant with his child.” [ID#2, Male]*

*“A guy who stays next door to my room at residence hits his partner because he does not want to see her talking to other men.” [FGD#3; Male]*

Some men do not find it easy to forgive their partners for cheating on them, thus they end up being abusive towards them and making them pay for what they did. Retaliation therefore contributes to the perpetration of violence against women in intimate relationships and is something that needs to be challenged by encouraging open communication where partners share their pain and feelings with each other. Retaliation was however not prevalent in this study, and none of the participants reported it as a reason for abuse in their situations.

#### **4.3.7 Multiple partnerships/ promiscuity**

Multiple partnerships have been considered one of the factors contributing to violence in intimate relationships. It was found that violence was also used in relationships as a form of punishment where a female partner was found to be involved in more than one relationship. When the male partner suspected that his girlfriend was involved with another man, he asked her if it was true or not, and when he finally found proof that she was lying, he physically abuses her.

*“I fought with my girlfriend because she was involved with someone I was close to. One day I was coming from the shops and I found her with my friend and asked her what was going on. She lied and my friend admitted they were involved. I got angry and hit her.” [FGD#3, Male]*

In cases where a young female is involved in multiple relationships she is likely to face physical violence by both partners. Sometimes when men find out that the female partner has other partners he will use violence to punish her for her promiscuous behaviour.

*“I went to check on my girlfriend this one time and I found somebody else waiting for the same person. We then decided to hit her together because she thought she was smart to have us both at once.” [FGD#3, Male]*

The study found that it was not acceptable for women to engage in multiple partnerships and if they were found by their partners to be involved with other men while still in a relationship with them they are likely to get punished. Women, however, do not have the power to punish their male partners for being in multiple partnerships as it is acceptable for them to have more than one partner. It is also women who are punished even in situations where they get involved in sexual relationships with their partner’s friends. The friend does not normally get beaten up for his involvement; he will just get away with his behaviour.

#### **4.3.8 Forced sex**

Forced sex is one the factors contributing to both sexual and physical IPV. When a woman does not want to have sex with her partner she is more likely to be beaten up and ultimately ends up being sexually abused by her partner. This means that women experience multiple forms of violence at the same time. In this study male and female respondents revealed that refusal of sex is likely to lead to sexual violence. Male partners

often find it difficult to accept that their partners do not want to have sex at that point in time, thus they end up forcing themselves sexually onto their partners.

*“I was beaten up by my boyfriend. We were both coming from school, He asked me to accompany him to his place, and he started to kiss me. He wanted us to have sex and I said ‘no’. He then went to close the door and told me I can’t go home and when I told him ‘no’ again, he pushed and slapped me once while he was on top of me. I screamed and he told me it did not matter, even if I screamed no one could help me at his house.”[ID#1 Female]*

One man in the focus group further stated that he would never let a cow run away from him while he had the knife in his hand, it must rather run away with a wound. (*angeke inkomo ibaleke nenxeba ummese ngiwuphethe ingamane ibaleke nenxeba*), meaning that when he has told himself that he will have sex that day he cannot let his girlfriend go without having sex with her.

Another man revealed that sometimes girls used their monthly menstrual cycle as an excuse for avoiding sex with their partners. When his partner does that to him he forces her to sit over a bucket filled with boiling water so that the hot steam can block the menstruation and then they have sex. In the case where she totally refuses to have sex with him, he chases her out of the house knowing very well that the dogs at home will chase her until she comes back to him and agrees to have sex with him. Young women are coerced into having sex and if they refuse their personal preferences are not taken seriously by their partners. Young men are still growing up with the belief that they have a right to demand sex.

The desire to have sex is one of the significant factors contributing to intimate partner violence. In many cases women were either beaten up severely by their partners or were insulted because they did not want to have sex. For instance, one female participant stated

her friend was told by her partner that maybe she did not want them to have sex because she was overweight. Not even their menstrual cycle could protect them against the risk of violence. Some men used painful methods to ensure that their partners submitted to their demands.

#### **4.4 Consequences of IPV**

IPV impacts on its victims in a number of ways and is likely to have psychological and other health consequences. It may result in loss of self-esteem, weight loss, fear of being alone with their partner and even termination of the relationship.

*“Sometimes things work out after the fight between you, and sometimes they do not, depending on the nature of violence.” [FGD#2, Female]*

##### **4.4.1 Termination of the relationship**

The study found that some couples decide to terminate their relationships after the act of violence, for a number of reasons. Some women are afraid of being with the same partner who has previously abused them, and other women are afraid that the behaviour is likely to be repeated and therefore they are unable to continue with the relationship.

*“I ended my relationship with the man who called me a bitch. He was surprised to hear that I had heard him, then I told him I do not allow anyone to hit and insult me, therefore we broke up.” [FGD#1, Mixed Group]*

*“Some women cannot stand the abuse, they will leave and go on with their lives, and you lose the person you love because of violence.” [ID#1, Male]*

These two statements reveal that it is not always the case that women remain in abusive relationships. Some women are empowered to take a stand against any form of abuse against them particularly in relationships that do not involve marriage.

Sometimes the use of violence in intimate relationships is likely to lead to a lack of trust and fear. One respondent reported that after her partner tried to force himself on her, she never felt safe in his presence again because she was afraid he would repeat his behaviour. This led to the termination of the relationship. If the relationship does continue it is likely to lead to lack of trust between partners.

#### **4.4.2 Low self-esteem**

The majority of victims of partner violence reported feeling less important after being in violent relationships and some felt that they were not appreciated. Furthermore, they may have a hard time trusting others and being in the relationship. Some women felt that they were constantly being monitored by their partners and this had eroded their self-confidence. They were afraid of speaking publicly about it because it might lead to abuse. Sometimes women blame themselves for triggering the acts of violence by their partners.

*“I lost my self-esteem after the first time asking myself why I let him abuse me like that. I ended up being too scared of him even if he did nothing to frighten me.” [ID#1, Female]*

*“I am seriously worried about my weight because I do not even know what to do about it anymore. I do not know how to change the way I am into something that he will appreciate. Another thing is that in order for him not to insult me I no longer have the freedom to speak freely with other people on the phone because he will accuse me if he finds my phone engaged. I now have to give him first preference over other people. These are some of the consequences of being in this relationship.” [ID#3, Female]*

Acts of violence in relationships are also likely to lead to isolation of victims from the outside world. A violent partner is likely to be jealous about his partner’s social interactions and will regulate the movement of his partner. He may keep her from seeing or talking to family or friends, or even prevent her from going to school. She may have to ask permission to do anything, talk to anyone, go anywhere, or see anyone.

#### **4. 4.3 Physical injuries**

Many women reported that it was not uncommon to sustain injuries. Physical injuries were one of the health consequences of IPV. Female students who experience physical violence in their relationships sustained physical injuries as a result of the assault. This is one of the major health consequences of violence in relationships. Sometimes the injuries affect their physical appearances so they end up with facial injuries. Sometimes the injuries are so severe that they require medical attention.

*“I had facial injuries. I had bruises and a swollen mouth therefore I did not attend my classes the following day.” [ID#1, Female]*

*“I know a couple that use knives when fighting. They always go to hospital because of injuries from stabbing.” [FGD#1, Mixed Group]*

*“My aunt was severely injured after having a fight with my uncle and was admitted into hospital. They nearly got divorced; however they got help in time which prevented it.” [ID#2, Female]*

One male respondent who admitted to abusing his partner however stated that abusers often make sure that the injuries are not visible to others. This meant that if he had to hit his partner he hit her in places that are not visible. He said he hit parts on her body that did not show injuries to anyone except herself because he did not want public displays.

#### **4.4.4 Low academic performance**

Even though the majority of students who participated in the study mentioned that their experiences of violence in relationships did not lead to their dropping out of university, they mentioned however that it had negative impacts on their academic performance. Female participants reported low academic performance due to these problems and some even reported the suspension of their studies. This was due to the fact that they could not attend classes with injuries and bruises.

*“She did not quit her studies but she received poor results and actually started bunking her lectures.” [ID#5, Female]*

Intimate relationships are not meant to destroy the lives of people involved in a particular relationship however some people end up suffering negative consequences and find themselves losing things that are of important value to them. IPV can have a negative impact on the academic performance of students. Some women reported that their poor performance ultimately forced them to drop out of university which was something that could have been prevented if they were not in abusive relationships.

#### **4.4.5 Eating disorders**

Abused women are more likely to suffer from eating disorders. A significant number of participants reported that after experiencing abuse most women were likely to either gain or lose weight because of the changes in the way they ate due to the stress caused by violence in their relationships. Violence often leads to psychological problems and people deal with these problems in different ways. Some women tend to eat more than usual when they suffer psychological problems associated with IPV while others eat less. Sometimes eating disorders were associated with complaints raised by their partners about their physical appearances.

*“I normally find myself losing my appetite, and often if you do not eat a balanced meal you lose weight even though it is not major.” [ID#3; Female]*

*“He always complained that I am too skinny and there was a time where I began eating a lot more than I normally do hoping to gain weight and wear at least a size 32 but unfortunately God created me the way I am. I cannot force myself to look bigger.” [ID#5; Female]*

Violence may even lead to a reduction of love and/or termination of a relationship and even to heavy alcohol consumption. One female participant grew up in a violent home

with her relatives who acted as foster parents after her mother's death. She stated that the situation in her home had a major effect on them as children to such an extent that they did not know who to turn to in the household because there was always tension in the house. They never really got the love they deserved from their parents. The couple experienced such major problems that they eventually ended up sending the younger child to boarding school so that they would not be affected by the tension between them. They also ended up sleeping in separate bedrooms with the woman always having injuries from the beating and the man drowning his sorrows in alcohol.

This study also intended to find out if intimate partner violence can be associated with unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among university students. It was found that none of the students reported that IPV led to pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections. However, one participant noted that she knew someone who had miscarried due to verbal abuse she was getting for falling pregnant with an unplanned child.

#### **4.5 What are the barriers in reducing IPV?**

With the legislation on domestic violence that has been passed and implemented in South Africa, there is still a high prevalence of domestic violence, IPV and dating violence (WHO, 2011). The majority of victims of partner violence often find it difficult to leave their violent partners for different reasons, such as fear of further violence, financial dependency on a partner and other reasons. Leaving an abusive relationship can be very difficult and there are many reasons why a person stays, for instance certain victims of IPV remain in the relationships because the abuser promises that they will change and that the abuse will not happen again. Many victims believe this is true, and they hope that the abuse will end and things will get better. When the abuser comes to apologise for their actions, the victims often forgive them and take them back, but after a while they continue with their violent behaviour knowing very well that they will be forgiven. This came out strongly in interviews with study participants.

*“When they come to apologise women normally allow them back in their lives which is not good because it exposes them to future violence because he knows that after a while he will apologise and she will forgive him for it. Another thing is we don’t report these cases to the police. We keep quiet about it as if it is normal and meant to happen to us because we deserve it.” [ID#1, Female]*

It is not uncommon to find that when men come to apologise for their abusive behaviour they are often forgiven. Women who experience abuse in their intimate relationships have reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship. They often have a hope that the abuse will not happen again, as their partners were abusive towards them because of alcohol. They forgive their partners because of the hope that violence will not be an ongoing problem or sometimes they forgive their partners with the hope that they will change because they were able to accept it.

#### **4.5.1 Accepting IPV as a norm**

Acceptance of violence among female students is one of the troubling factors hindering the prevention and reduction of IPV. This study found that attitudes towards partner violence were one of the most prominent factors influencing partner violence. The majority of students reported that accepting violence as a norm in dating relationships served as a barrier in reducing partner violence. They felt that victims often keep quiet about violence in their relationships and think it is normal for them to be submissive to their partners who physically abuse them. This behaviour often leads to further violence and future abuse as adults. Violence is also acceptable to these women and is seen as a way of their partner disciplining them for their wrong doings.

*“Some people have accepted that violence is a sign of love and is meant to happen which is wrong. Some women choose to keep quiet about it because they believe that they will not find other men who will love them. There is a friend of mine who used to say she does*

*not want a man that would not hit her because sometimes she asks for it by making mistakes on purpose so that the boyfriend will get angry and hit her.” [ID#3, Female]*

*“Accepting violence in relationships as normal encourages men not to keep acting violent towards us. Taking no action against violence in your relationship means that you are indirectly encouraging other women who observe your situation to remain in abusive relationships.” [ID#7, Female]*

*“A lot of women tend to depend on their partners especially when they do not come from a well off family, and they don’t have money to take care of themselves. So they believe that they should continue being in abusive relationships so that they can look presentable to other people yet they are hurting inside.” [ID#6; Female]*

Financial dependency of women on men for survival plays a crucial role in women remaining in abusive relationships. Some women remain in violent relationships because they do not want to lose their source of income.

In some instances female children learn to accept violent behaviours from their parents who socialise their children from an early age to believe that men are more powerful physically and women are submissive, which often leads to young women accepting violence as normal. One participant stated that her mother told her that she must not hit a man back.

*“I grew up telling my mother that if a boy hits me I will hit him back, and my mother told me that I must not hit a man back.” [ID# 8, Female]*

#### **4.5.2 Low self-esteem**

Participants also reported that low self-esteem also leads to further or future violence in current relationships and even in new relationships. Victims of IPV, particularly women, often lose their self-esteem and as a result they end up remaining in abusive relationships without seeking help to end or escape violence in their relationships.

*“Low self-esteem contributes to further victimization of women in relationships because they end up believing that it is their fault that they get beaten up even in new relationships.” [ID#1, Female]*

Low self-esteem often results in self blame and the acceptance of violence as the norm. Women with low self-esteem feel that there is nothing they can do to change their situation, which makes them far less likely to leave abusive relationships than women who have high self-esteem and can stand up for themselves. Perpetrators of IPV tend to take advantage of women who have low self-esteem, realizing that the victim will want and need them no matter what they do to them. This serves as one of the major barriers in reducing IPV.

#### **4.5.3 Not reporting intimate partner violence**

Participants felt that if violence is contained within the relationship and not reported, it is most likely to lead to the repetition of abuse and even more cases of partner violence. The majority of participants stated that people who are victims of partner violence do not take necessary actions against those who abuse them especially if it is someone close to them, e.g. intimate partners and family members.

*“After my friend was beaten up she thought that she deserved what she got for breaking a promise and that led to another beating, even though I do not have the full story, but she was beaten again. Yes, the first beating led to the second one because I noticed that she did nothing about it so it was ok for him to beat her.” [ID# 6, Female]*

*“If you do not report the problem it gets severe over time and the perpetrator does not stop because he knows he will be forgiven for his actions and he does not learn any lessons out of such behaviours.” [ID#1, Female]*

*“The more you keep quiet about violent abuse in your relationship the greater the chances of being abused again.” [ID#4, Female]*

One female student mentioned that her friend did not report her abuse because she felt that she would put the future of her partner in jeopardy. She feared that it was going to be a serious case and her partner would not have been allowed to write the examinations, he would be suspended from his studies, and she could not forgive herself for that.

*“She never reported her case because she feared that the case would be serious and her boyfriend could be refused to write exams and be suspended from the university. She said she could not forgive herself if something like that was to happen to him, all she wanted to do was to give him a warning.” [ID#5, Female]*

The majority of abused women who participated in this study reported that they had spoken primarily to friends about their abuse, however very few contacted the police or risk management at the university and very few ever sought other forms of help such as counseling. It is important that people who experience violence in their relationships seek relevant assistance so that violence can be prevented, as it appeared from the interviews that if violence was not reported it was more likely to continue.

#### **4.6 Recommendations of the students**

Several recommendations were made by study participants on what can be done to reduce IPV among university students. Their responses ranged from encouraging communication among dating couples, greater awareness campaigns, group discussion and debate forums. These recommendations were meant for men as perpetrators and women as victims of abuse in intimate relationships.

In situations where partners had a difference of opinion, women often found it difficult to share and communicate their thoughts and feelings. This inability of women to communicate their feelings was seen as a barrier in the reduction of IPV. The difficulty of solving problems without using violence in intimate relationships also served as one of the barriers in reducing violence in relationships. Clearly young dating couples are not

aware of other problem-solving methods in intimate relationships that can be used as an alternative to violence. They do not use communication, respect for one another and understanding as ways of solving problems in their relationships. The inability to control anger increases the likelihood that youth will resort to partner violence in order to solve their problems. The study therefore found both partners should be encouraged to communicate in relationships.

*“I think communication in relationships should be encouraged so that women can express themselves easily and I believe that can build their self-esteem and violence can be reduced. Women should be encouraged to report such matters to the police and not be scared to do so.” [ID#7, Female]*

*“Talking, honesty, and trusting each other are important in relationships.” [ID#2; Male]*

Most male participants stated that it was important for both partners to respect each other and have a common understanding. They felt that if male dominance in relationships could be discouraged, IPV could be reduced since men and women are equal in the eyes of the law, thus there should be equality in decision-making in intimate relationships as well.

*“Partners should respect one another and make time for their partner when he or she needs them.”*

*“It is important to be involved with someone who understands you and has similar interests to yours in order to prevent misunderstandings that can lead to violence in your relationship.” [FGD#1 Mixed Group]*

*“Partners need to know and understand each other very well so that it can be easy for them to communicate matters. Honesty is very important for people involved in a relationship; these together prevent violence in relationships.” [FGD# 3; Male]*

Open communication should be encouraged in order to prevent violence in intimate relationships. These were some of the common recommendations raised by both male and female participants in focus groups and in-depth interviews as a basis for the prevention of IPV.

Students felt that they needed more education programmes that would deal specifically with violence in intimate relationships and also encourage young men and women to seek help when they are experiencing violence in relationships, both as victims and perpetrators. This came out strongly during discussions and in some interviews. Furthermore they stated that even though there were currently educational programmes in place not all students had access to such information, thus students felt that it was important to have accessible programmes that would address issues of violence in intimate relationships. Such programmes should equip youth with skills on how to avoid violence in their relationships. The students hoped that such programmes would allow them to have discussions and debates on factors contributing to violence between men and women and also teach them how to handle their emotions and deal with their problems in a non-violent manner.

*“I think we need group talks where both genders will be present because sometimes the problem lies in the lack of communication. I will be happy if this can be taken to the next level and not end between you and me or you and other individuals. I will be happy if house committees can organise such gatherings where maybe the security officers representing the university can be present to tell us what steps we can take if we encounter such problems and maybe other structures where students can get help if they encounter such problems.” [ID#4, Female]*

These quotes indicate that little has been done to educate youth on issues pertaining to violence in intimate relationships. It is important to have public education programmes in place where youth of both sexes will be given lessons on how to prevent violence in their relationships as well as how they should treat each other as equal partners.

Participants stated that it was imperative to speak out when one is experiencing abuse in a relationship, and that we need to deal with the stigma associated with reporting partner violence. Participants stated that people experiencing partner violence needed to have strong sources of support where they could feel free to talk about their problems without being judged for their experiences.

*“People need to speak about abuse and their problems in intimate relationships; they can visit clinics or speak to their trusted friends. If they are severely abused they can report the matter to Risk Management Services in their respective campuses and institutions.”*  
[FGD# 1, Mixed Group]

It is often difficult for both victims and perpetrators of violence to seek help when they are experiencing IPV because of the stigma that is often associated with violence in intimate relationships. Thus it was highlighted by some of the study participants that both victims and perpetrators of violence should seek help so that it can be reduced and prevented.

Some students stated that women need to stand up for themselves and stop being dependent on men for their survival. This was very prevalent among female university students who engage in relationships with men for financial reasons. They also felt women should learn to put their own needs before their partner’s needs.

*“It is important to know what you want; you must be able to make your own choices and decisions without relying on your partner. You must be able to stand up against your partner’s abuse, show that you don’t like the way he treats you because if you do not tell him he will never know.”* [ID#4; Female]

*“Seventy five per cent of women remain in abusive relationships because their partners give them money. They love guys with money and status, and as long as they have that they don’t mind being beaten up.” [FGD#3, Male]*

Participants spoke generally on this issue and both men and women who participated in the mixed focus groups agreed that women who were financially dependent on their partner were less likely to challenge violence in intimate relationships. This meant that men use both physical and financial power to abuse their female partners.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter summarises the key findings of the study that sought to understand experiences of female university students in violent relationships. Both male and female students who participated in the study reported having ever experienced violence in their own relationships or knew someone who had such experiences. They shared their beliefs about the main reasons for IPV. Various factors were associated with the perpetration of violence in relationships. It was found that it was not only women who needed to challenge violence in their relationships but men as perpetrators also needed to seek help. It appeared that IPV has negative consequences on the lives and well-being of victims as they suffer from severe injuries or early or premature drop out from the university. Students also terminated their studies because they were performing poorly academically due to the fear of their abuser and the psychological impacts of IPV. Men who abused their partners also did not win because they ended up losing people that they love. Most participants felt that if violence was contained in a relationship it might lead to further violence, and that needed to be discouraged.

It was also found that lack of communication may perpetrate the cycle of violence. Thus partners in a relationship were encouraged to communicate with each other so that violence could be prevented. It was found it was also not the responsibility of one partner to respect the other but that both partners needed to respect each other so that violence could be prevented.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **Discussions & Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to look at factors responsible for perpetration of violence against female university students. The study also intended to look at consequences of intimate partner violence against women and barriers in reducing this form of violence against female university students. The study draws on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with young female and male students in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The results of the study were then organised into themes that arose from the discussions with students.

The findings of this particular study may not be generalized to the entire female university population of South Africa because they are based on a small sample. However, they provide insights into IPV. They are similar to the results of existing literature on IPV.

### **5.2 Discussion**

Little is known about young people's experience of IPV among university students in South Africa as many studies tended to focus mainly on domestic violence in the family and amongst adults. However, many studies of this nature were conducted mainly abroad, particularly in the United States, where it was found that dating violence was common among college and university students. Fincham *et al.* (2008:260) found that it would be incorrect to believe that IPV is limited to more established intimate relationships, such as marriage or cohabitation, and many studies have documented the widespread prevalence of dating IPV in Canada and the United States. Furthermore, they noted that partner violence among college dating relationship was not a problem facing only North America, but was a worldwide phenomenon.

Both interviews and group discussions gave more insight into factors contributing to all forms of IPV. Men's desire for sexual intercourse was reported by many as a major contributor to both perpetration and abuse in an intimate relationship. Women found themselves being beaten up, insulted and forced to have sex with their partners. It was found that often when a woman does not want to have sex with her partner she is likely to be punished and forced to have sex. These findings are similar to those of the study conducted by Silverman *et al.* (2001) who found that about 6.4 per cent of students were both physically and sexually abused by their dating partner. Lysova and Douglas (2008) also found that university students are victims of coerced sex and that it often comes in the form of threats. However, most participants felt this was often caused by the lack of understanding and communication between partners in a relationship. Maharaj and Munthre (2006) found that engaging in sexual practices at an early age was associated with the lack of confidence to negotiate safer sex.

Various factors were reported by study participants as factors contributing to IPV among youth in universities. It appeared that violence was used in other relationships as a mechanism for solving problems. Physical violence in some intimate relationships is used as punishment for mistakes made by another partner. Societies often distinguish between just and unjust reasons for violence (Krug et al, 2002). Furthermore, they distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable amounts of aggression. The belief of just reasons refers to the right the man has to punish a woman for her misbehavior (Uthman, 2010). This study found that nagging, often associated with a female partner comparing her relationship with those of her friends, was a contributing factor in the perpetration of IPV among students. Men do not often understand this behavior and their misunderstanding results in anger, and they resort to violence against their partners. Jealousy and lack of trust were also found to be major contributors to violence against female university students. Edalati and Redzuan (2010:502) found an association between jealousy and the use of violence in dating relationships stating that "romantic jealousy tends to bring about the most painful negative effect in relationships." Furthermore she found that jealousy involves what you have, what you do not want to lose and fear of losing it.

Most studies found that peer pressure was one of the major contributors of violence in dating relationships (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). The isolation of women and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men's violence, predict higher rates of violence in intimate relationships. (Krug et al, 2002). It was found in this study that peer pressure contributes to the perpetration of violence in intimate relationships of female university students. Young females accept violence as normal in their relationships because they observe from friends who have been abused before. They also take advice from friends to forgive their abusive partners. These friends also encourage them not to leave their partners because they believe that violence occurring in intimate relationships is normal and that it is a sign of love. Men also assault their partners because they want to prove to their friends and peers that they are in control of their relationships. These findings are consistent with the results of other studies on IPV. Krug *et al.* (2002) for instance argue that people who have friends who engage in violence in relationships increases the chance of experiencing violence in their own relationships. Furthermore they argue that encouraging violence can increase a young person's risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Alcohol and drug abuse were also reported to be causes of IPV in relationships of young female university students. Men tend to be violent towards their partners when they are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Alcohol does not only contribute to violence when it has been consumed by the perpetrator but also when the perpetrator suspects that his partner had been using drugs or was drinking alcohol. These findings are consistent with those of the studies conducted by Fossos *et al.* (2007) who found a positive relationship between young college men who consume large amounts of alcohol and the perpetration of IPV. It was found that although alcohol and drugs may facilitate and increase violent outbursts these were not real causes of violence in relationships. It was found in this study that it depends on how an individual carries himself when he is drunk. Some people become violent when drunk while some become friendly and easy to associate with.

Multiple partnerships and involvement with older men commonly known as 'sugar daddies,' and jealousy were found to be among some of the strong factors contributing to IPV. Women are expected to remain faithful and if they are found to have another partner they are more likely to be punished for their behaviour. Men on the other hand enjoy the liberty of having more than one partner because it is seen as an acceptable behaviour. The study found also that female university students get violated by their partners for being seen with other men and for breaking the rule of not being seen with male friends. Makepeace (1981), cited in Edalati & Redzuan (2010:498), found that jealousy was the most frequently implicated starter and initiator of IPV. Female students also tend to expose themselves to abuse by getting involved in intimate relationships with older men with the intention of getting money, food and clothing.

This study also noted that violence in young adults' relationships, including university students, was associated with maintaining male superiority, control and respect in relationships. This supports the results shown in studies which found that patriarchy and male dominance contributed to violence in most relationships. Uthman *et al.* (2010) argue that IPV is linked with ideas of male superiority over women. Patriarchy as a traditional value which regards women as inferior to men is one of the critical factors in shaping abusive behavior toward women in relationships. Male ego was found to be important for some participants hence they resorted to the use of violence in order to protect their egos. One may argue that young men grow up observing and/or being told that they are superior to their women, and that they should therefore control their female partners. Men also use physical violence to gain respect and to solve problems in relationships.

IPV is a major public health concern (Silverman *et al.*, 2001: 572). It is associated with various consequences, and may harm victims physically, sexually or psychologically, and the consequences may affect the rest of their lives. Not all injuries are physical; IPV can also cause emotional harm, and often victims suffer from low self-esteem. Partner violence may damage an individual's self-esteem, confidence and affect their development and functioning. It may also result in physical injury, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and/or death. Those who experience IPV are at higher risk of

experiencing further abuse in future relationships. This study also found various consequences associated with IPV among female university students. They reported sustaining physical injuries such as bruises, fear of being in the same place as the perpetrator, termination of relationships, physical injuries, suspension of studies and poor academic performance in their studies. This study also found that experiencing IPV as a student is associated with poor academic performance. Most victims do not attend lectures as they do not want to be seen with cuts and bruises on their faces. Due to these consequences they end up performing poorly in their studies.

The study found that victims of IPV lose their self-esteem and they feel less important in their relationships. They often become victims of self blame, blaming themselves for allowing their partners to be violent towards them. Low self-esteem can manifest itself in a sense that victims blame themselves for provoking their partners to act in a violent way. It also appeared that people who are victims of IPV experience eating disorders, thus they end up gaining or losing weight because of the situation they find themselves in, and others reported eating more so that they could gain weight in order to please their partners.

Leaving an abusive relationship does not usually happen overnight; it takes most women a long time to leave abusive relationships (Krug et al, 2002). However, younger women often leave abusive relationships sooner. This is consistent with the findings of this study. One female participant reported that the moment she heard her boyfriend insulting her, she decided to terminate her relationship with him because of the unpleasant things he said about her. It was found that violence in intimate relationships results in one partner being scared to be in the same place as the perpetrator because of the fear that the violent behaviour will be repeated. Thus, the female partner will resort to terminating the relationship.

The study also looked at barriers to reducing IPV among female university students. It was found that accepting violence as a norm was one of the major factors hindering the

prevention of IPV in intimate relationships by female university students. Student participants argue that violence was seen by other victims as a sign of love, men who abuse them do so in order to demonstrate their love and affection for them. Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) also argue that research on violence committed against intimate partners has shown that many people, including women, regard such violence as acceptable if it does not injure or leave any visible marks. Furthermore, in a survey conducted among female residents of three provinces in South Africa, more than a third of the respondents agree that a man beating a woman was a sign of love (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

It was found that young women accept violence as a norm, and do not take action against it, which is likely to expose them to further abuse. In many instances victims of IPV do not seek help and they do not report that they are being abused. This means that violence is contained as both partners are not getting help to prevent it. It was found in the study that female students sometimes did not report the violence because they feared that their partners would be suspended from their studies, and they would not be able to forgive themselves for being responsible for their partner's failure to continue with their studies. Women, including female students who are victims of partner violence, often blame themselves for being beaten or forced to have sex thus they do not report the matter to police or seek any form of assistance from their communities. In this study participants found that violence perpetuates violence in intimate relationships.

It also appeared in the interviews that the role parents play in socializing their children according to gender roles does contribute to violence in intimate relationships as adults. For instance, a parent telling her daughter that she must not hit a man back when they are fighting encourages boy children to be violent towards their sisters and later towards their partners. The social learning theory suggests that behaviour is learnt in the family of origin where children observe the actions of their parents and imitate these in their own lives. The findings suggest that those women who observed violence in their parents' relationship were more accepting of violence in their relationships.

Participants were then asked what they thought should be done to reduce IPV against female university students with an intention of getting recommendations for the prevention of violence against female students. The study found that there was a consensus among male and female university students that lack of good communication could lead to violence in intimate relationships, and that it is important to encourage proper communication strategies between partners to prevent violence in relationships. They felt communication should be encouraged as it could serve as a medium for reducing IPV. Female students found it difficult to express their feelings openly in their relationships, and they could not complain about their partners' actions because they might get punished for being disrespectful to their partners. When the age gap between partners is big, it was also often difficult for the younger partner to be vocal in making decisions because they may be treated like minors by their partners. Communication is therefore important in reducing partner violence.

Participants believed that if there was open communication between partners it would be easy to overcome problems. They felt talking would help reduce violent episodes since partners would be able to show each other their mistakes without the involvement of violence. Respect was also viewed as one of the key elements in the reduction of IPV. They believed that it was not the responsibility of a woman to respect a man, but both partners must respect each other. Men stated that it was important to respect each other as partners in a relationship and that they were against male dominance. They also believed that people involved in an intimate relationship should know and understand each other very well as that would help to minimize violence in relationships. They felt when two people understand each other, they are able to communicate matters, unlike in a situation where the one partner does not really understand what the other wants from their relationship. Understanding helps in making decisions that will be suitable for both partners, rather than abiding by the wishes of the other person and not sharing your own opinions. Furthermore, they argue that people involved in an intimate relationship must understand each other's interests and dislikes. This would help to reduce violence in relationships because both partners would know when they are behaving in a way that could cause violence in their relationship.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Violence between young dating partners remains an understudied phenomenon compared with IPV between adult partners. Therefore it is recommended that more studies of this nature be undertaken to add more insight on this subject as it is important in making informed policy decisions and in the implementation of effective programmes intended to reduce and prevent partner violence. An effective prevention programmes for IPV needs to be implemented in universities, focusing on public education, as was suggested by study participants. It is also important for universities to have secondary prevention strategies essential for early detection and the treatment of vulnerable female students, and counselling should also be made easily accessible to all those who need it. The Department of Education, in collaboration with other departments such as the South Africa Police Service, the Department of Social Development, Department of Justice, educational institutions such as high schools, colleges and universities, and non-governmental organisations, need to implement programmes that will help fight violence against women at all levels of society. The existing programmes focus mainly on issues concerning older women and children but not specifically on youth involved in intimate relationships. More programmes targeting youth experiencing IPV should be implemented.

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# Appendix A

## In-depth Interview Guide 1

### Exploring partner violence: Experiences of female university students in Durban

#### In-depth interview guide for female students

##### 1. Theme: Factors contributing to partner violence

1.1 Some people experience violence in their dating relationships. Others are coerced or forced to have sex. This is not easy to talk about, but I'd like to discuss this with you to find out if this is a problem for female university students in Durban. Have you or somebody you know ever experienced violence by a current or an ex-dating partner?

Probe for:

- Being hit
- Slapped
- Pushed
- Grabbed
- Physically hurt in any way
- Other

1.2 What was the relationship with the perpetrator?

1.3 When did this occur?

1.4. What were some of the reasons associated with the incidence?

Probe for:

- Jealousy and mistrust
- Anger
- Drug and or alcohol use

1.5 Have you or anybody you know ever been forced to have a sexual intercourse when you did not want to? Could you tell me what happened?

Probe for:

- Were you threatened or
- pressured or
- hit to have sex
- forced into sex without the use of protection

1.6. Have you or somebody you know been verbally hurt by a dating partner

Probe for:

- insulted
- complain about the weight
- being accused of promiscuity/multi partners

## **2. Theme: Consequences of Partner Violence**

2.1 What are some of the problems you encountered after experiencing partner violence or do you know some one who suffered any problems after experiencing dating violence.

What were the consequences associated with those problems?

Probe for:

- Bruises and or injuries
- Weight loss problems
- Stress and depression
- Suicide/suicidal thoughts
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Drop out from university

## **3. Theme: Barriers in reducing Partner violence**

3.1 What are the barriers in reducing partner violence?

Probe for:

- Alcohol consumption
- Peer pressure
- Accepting partner violence as legitimate
- Low self esteem
- Not reporting violence

3.2 What can be done to prevent partner violence in tertiary institutions?

## **Exploring partner violence: Experiences of female university students in Durban**

### **In-depth interview guide male students**

#### **1. Theme: Factors contributing to partner violence**

Sometimes relationships are hard to maintain and control such that violence men can end up using violence. Different forms of partner violence may be used for instance others may use physical and or verbal abuse and the use of force to have sex. I'd like to discuss this with you to find out if this is a problem for female university students in Durban what we might do to help them.

Have you ever gotten so angry or frustrated with your partner that you physically hurt her? Do you perhaps know somebody who has done it before to their partners? Can you tell me what happened?

Probe for:

- Hit
- slapped
- Grabbed
- Pushed
- Physically hurt her in any way.

What were some of the reasons for doing it?

Probe for:

- Influence of Alcohol
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Multi partner suspicion

Have you ever engaged in a sexual intercourse with someone who did not want to? Or do you know someone who has ever engaged in sex with their partner when they did not want to.

1.4 Has it ever happened that you or anybody you know got frustrated or angry with your partner that you verbally abuse her?

Probe for:

- Insult
- Embarrass her in public
- Use threats

- What were the reasons for that?

## **2. Theme: Consequences of Partner violence**

2.1 In your own view what are the consequences of partner abuse? Does partner violence have any effect on the victims?

Probe for:

- Bruises and or injuries
- Weight loss problems
- Stress and depression
- Suicide/Attempted thoughts
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Drop out from university

## **3. Theme: Barriers in reducing partner violence**

3.1 In your own view what are the barriers in reducing partner violence?

Probe for:

- Increased alcohol consumption
- Lack of communication between partners
- Jealousy
- Childhood abusive upbringing
- Peer education

## **In-depth Interview Guide 2**

### **Exploring partner violence: Experiences of female university students in Durban**

#### **In-depth interview guide male students**

##### **2. Theme: Factors contributing to partner violence**

Sometimes relationships are hard to maintain and control such that violence men can end up using violence. Different forms of partner violence may be used for instance others may use physical and or verbal abuse and the use of force to have sex. I'd like to discuss this with you to find out if this is a problem for female university students in Durban what we might do to help them.

Have you ever gotten so angry or frustrated with your partner that you physically hurt her? Do you perhaps know somebody who has done it before to their partners? Can you tell me what happened?

Probe for:

- Hit
- slapped
- Grabbed
- Pushed
- Physically hurt her in any way.

What were some of the reasons for doing it?

Probe for:

- Influence of Alcohol
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Multi partner suspicion

Have you ever engaged in a sexual intercourse with someone who did not want to? Or do you know someone who has ever engaged in sex with their partner when they did not want to.

1.4 Has it ever happened that you or anybody you know got frustrated or angry with your partner that you verbally abuse her?

Probe for:

- Insult
- Embarrass her in public
- Use threats

- What were the reasons for that?

## **2. Theme: Consequences of Partner violence**

2.1 In your own view what are the consequences of partner abuse? Does partner violence have any effect on the victims?

Probe for:

- Bruises and or injuries
- Weight loss problems
- Stress and depression
- Suicide/Attempted thoughts
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Drop out from university

## **3. Theme: Barriers in reducing partner violence**

3.1 In your own view what are the barriers in reducing partner violence?

Probe for:

- Increased alcohol consumption
- Lack of communication between partners
- Jealousy
- Childhood abusive upbringing
- Peer education

## Focus Group Discussion Guide 1

### Exploring partner violence: Experiences of female university students in Durban

#### Focus group discussion guide for Female Students

##### Introductory paragraph

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in your ideas about female students' experiences of partner violence on campus. I am more interested in understanding factors contributing to partner violence, consequences of intimate partner violence among students on campus as well as barriers in reducing partner violence.

The Following issues will be covered

- Have you or anybody you know ever experienced physical violence by a current or an ex-dating partner.

Probe for hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing, kicking

-What were some of the reasons associated with the incidence?

- Have you or anybody you know ever been forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to? (coerced, molested)

-Could you tell me what happened?

- Have you or somebody you know been verbally assaulted by a dating partner? (Insulted, weight complains, threatened). Why?

- What are some of the problems you encountered after experiencing partner violence or do you know some one who suffered any problems after experiencing dating violence?

- What were the consequences associated with those problems? ( bruises, injuries, unwanted pregnancy)

- What are the barriers in reducing partner violence? ( Alcohol use, low self esteem, accepting violence)
- What can be done to prevent partner violence?

##### Wrap Up

Thank you very much for coming and talking to us about your views today. The information you gave us will be very helpful, and we hope that it will be used to help reduce partner violence in the universities as well as in the communities we live in.

Is there anything that you'd like to ask us?

## **Focus Group Discussion Guide 2**

### **Exploring partner violence: Experiences of female university students in Durban**

#### **Focus group discussion guide for Male Students**

##### **Introductory paragraph**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in your ideas about female students' experiences of partner violence in Durban. I am more interested in understanding factors contributing to partner violence, consequences of intimate partner violence among students in Durban as well as barriers in reducing partner violence.

##### **The following issues will be covered**

Have you ever gotten so angry or frustrated with your partner that you physically hurt her? Do you perhaps know somebody who has done it before to their partners? Probe ( hit, slap, push, grab)  
-Can you tell me what happened? Why? (Probe for alcohol abuse, anger, frustration, jealousy, drugs)

Have you ever engaged in sexual intercourse with someone who did not want to? Or do you know someone who has ever engaged in sex with their partner when they did not want to. Why?

Has it ever happened that you or anybody you know got frustrated or angry with your partner that you verbally abused her? (Insult, threaten, embarrass in public).

What are the consequences of partner abuse? Does partner violence have any effect on the victims?

In your own view what are the barriers in reducing partner violence? What can be done to stop violence against women?

##### **Wrap Up**

Thank you very much for coming and talking to us about your views today. The information you gave us will be very helpful, and we hope that it will be used to help reduce partner violence in the universities as well as in the communities we live in.

Is there anything that you'd like to ask us?