



# **Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: A social work perspective**

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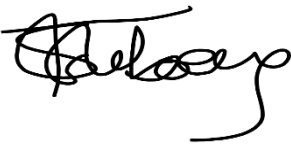
Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work at the  
North-West University

Promoter: Prof M van der Merwe

Graduation: June 2026

## DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I, Funky Segomotso Tsheboeng-Nthutang, solemnly declare that the thesis I am submitting with the title: *Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West: A social work perspective* is my own work. This thesis meets all the requirements outlined for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Social Work. It has not been submitted to any University for a similar qualification.

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### CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

I, **Muchativugwa Liberty Hove**, confirm and certify that I have read and edited the entire thesis, **Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: A social work perspective**, submitted by **Funky S. Tsheboeng-Nthutang**, [orcid.org/0000-0003-4083-6358](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4083-6358), in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree **Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work** at the **North-West University**

**Funky S. Tsheboeng-Nthutang was promoted by Professor M. van der Merwe.**

I hold a PhD in Literature and Language Education and am competent to edit and advise on research practices, specifically coherence, cohesion and grammatical concord.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liberty Hove', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

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## **PREFACE**

This study is presented in full thesis format in accordance with the North-West University Guidelines

As a stand-alone document, the final Victim Empowerment Strategy (5.7) has not been incorporated into the numbered sequence.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to all female victims of partner abuse, more especially those residing in the North West Province where I did my field work. Let the entire world stand, join hands and act against female partner abuse.

To my supervisor and mentor, Professor Mariette van der Merwe, you are indeed a great inspiration. You stood up for me when I had nearly given up, and you encouraged me to keep going. I have no words to describe your leadership and mentorship skills. 2024 was a tough year for me as I experienced countless problems, but you rose on my behalf and encouraged me to rise and shine despite all odds.

To the former Acting Head of Social Development, Mr Mafokane, the former Dr Kenneth Kaunda District former Acting Director, Mr Hlasa, The retired Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti District Director, Mr Setlhauno, Ngaka Modiri Molema District Director, Ms Busiswa Sityi, Khuseleka One-Stop Centre Manager, Ms. Koketso Mothibi, The Service Point Manager for Naledi Service Point, Mr Ramozuli, former Tlokwe Service Point Manager, Ms Steenkamp, The Service Point Manager for Maquassi Hills, Mr Tabile, and all your subordinate officials who took part in the research process, I extend my gratitude to all of you.

To my research assistants, Dr Blessing Magocha, Dr Michael Chambwe and my typographers Mr Bakang Maletse and Mr Goroshi Moremi, I am overwhelmed by your support and kind assistance. May you be blessed going in and going out.

My sincere gratitude to my immediate family. I acknowledge my husband, Dr Lesego Clement "Padda" Nthutang, my daughter, Lerato Tsheboeng, and my first born, Jnr Lesego Nthutang. My family has carried me throughout this journey and their unwavering support cannot be under-estimated.

To my extended families, the Nthutang, Tsheboeng, Gabagopole, Moitsheki, Molete, Mabyane families, I love and appreciate your support during the trying times. Indeed, God was with me as I did not feel deserted because you had my back. I express my sincere gratitude to my mother, Ms. Cecilia Tsheboeng, who has been with me through all. My aunt, Boammaruri Moitsheki, my brother Mooketsi "Mc Mocker" Tsheboeng and my young

sisters, Thopho Seboko, Teto Tsheboeng, thank you for taking good care of me and my daughter throughout this hardship. My dedication also goes to the “late Sis Bessie Dou” may her soul rest in eternal peace. Ms Dou never ceased to encourage me to study and work hard as she believed that the sky is the limit.

To my closest friends and compatriots Dr Tshepiso Molefe, Mr Kagiso Ncholo, Mr Kagiso Mangope, Ms Boitumelo Moga, Mr Kealeboga Monametsi, Ms Sasa “Ozma “Khambule, Senior Superintendent Kelediyakgotla, Senior Superintendent Farouk Motsomi, Superintendent Koketso Rathedi, Sergeant Mokobe, Waddress Tshepi Willie, Warder Rev Mosweu, Rev Kelebogile Ketshotseng, Ms Kgomotso Masibi, Ms Maryjane Legoete, Ms Dineo Mogale, Mr Joe Makutle, Mr Humphrey Moeng, Mr Alfonso Manuel, Mama Bishop Sebonego, Ms Lebo Mosala, Ms Lesedi Motlhageng, Ms Prudence Dinku, your support made me who I am today.

To my Commissioner, Commissioner of Botswana Prison/ Correctional Services Mr Anthony Mokento, Deputy Commissioner for Rehabilitation and Reintegration, DCP Keneilwe Mokwenaotsile, Deputy Commissioner for Custodial Services, DCP Sekano Sekano, Deputy Commissioner for Support Services, DCP Lethata Manne, Divisional Commander South, SACP Shakani Thani, Acting Director, Intelligence, my dearest friend Acting SACP Lady Tausane and all Directors tenable at Botswana Prisons/ Correctional Service Headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana, I am humbled by your support during the last phase of my research. May the good Lord do you good and shower you with more blessings.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the development of a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West province of South Africa from a social work perspective. Female partner abuse is a significant social and public health issue in the province, characterised by multiple, intersecting forms of violence and subjugation. Underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, the study recognises the multifaceted and interdependent dynamics across individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and societal domains that influence experiences of abuse and pathways to empowerment and recovery.

A multi-phase qualitative research process enabled a multi-layered understanding of the research phenomenon and informed the development of the victim empowerment strategy. The population for the study included three groups: 21 female victims of partner abuse, 32 entry-level social workers, and 16 supervisors and managers within the North West Department of Social Development. The districts included were Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati and Dr Kenneth Kaunda Districts. Volunteer sampling was used for the female victims of partner abuse and purposive sampling for the entry-level social workers, managers and supervisors.

To enhance triangulation and crystallisation, three data collection strategies were used: semi-structured interviews, World Café and focus groups. The exploratory phase included a literature review, individual semi-structured interviews with victims of female partner abuse, and World Café sessions with entry-level social workers to identify key elements for the draft victim empowerment strategy. Narrative inquiry guided the semi-structured interviews with female victims of partner abuse, using timelines and resource loss and gain spirals to gather rich data. A qualitative descriptive design informed the World Café process. In Phase 2, the development phase, the researcher compiled a draft victim empowerment strategy based on elements identified from literature, female victims of partner abuse and entry level social workers.

Phase 3 focused on refinement and finalisation of the victim empowerment strategy. The draft strategy was sent to managers and supervisors ahead of focus group discussions. Suggestions for refinement from the focus group discussions were included in the pre-

final strategy that was emailed to the managers and supervisors for their final input. Adaptations were made, and the strategy was finalised.

Thematic analysis identified five primary forms of abuse experienced by participants: emotional, economic, physical, psychological, and sexual. It was found that most female victims of abuse experienced overlapping forms of abuse, which severely affected their mental health, economic stability, and social well-being. Emotional and psychological abuse were the most reported, often manifesting in manipulation, threats, and isolation. Economic abuse included financial control and restriction of access to employment. Physical and sexual abuse included acts of aggression, coercion, and humiliation. Victims faced systemic barriers when seeking support, including limited access to social services, inadequate police response, and lack of safe accommodation. It was evident that the female victims of partner abuse need emotional, practical and psychological support to facilitate recovery and regaining resources. Entry level social workers provided insights into victim empowerment strategies, needs, and challenges while supervisors and managers refined the mission, vision, objectives and various elements of the female victim empowerment strategy.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, provides a robust normative framework for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) by grounding protection in fundamental rights. Section 9 enshrines the principle of equality, prohibiting discrimination based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation, while Section 10 affirms the inherent dignity of every person, which GBV directly undermines. Section 12 guarantees freedom and security of the person, explicitly recognising the right to be free from all forms of violence, whether from public or private sources, and safeguarding bodily integrity and reproductive autonomy.

Based on the findings, the study proposes a victim empowerment strategy aligned with the socio-cultural and institutional realities of the North West province, South Africa. Recommendations are directed towards various stakeholders, particularly social workers who are at the forefront in empowering female victims of abuse. For the police, the study emphasises increased visibility, specialised training, and victim-sensitive responses. The Department of Social Development should enhance psychosocial support services, strengthen referral systems, and develop victim and social worker capacity through

ongoing training and capacity building sessions. The Department of Justice is urged to improve access to justice through simplified legal processes, protection orders, and legal aid for survivors.

This study underscores the significance of adopting an integrated, bio-ecological approach in developing interventions and services for female victims of partner abuse. It calls for collaborative, multi-sectoral engagement to implement a sustainable and context-specific victim empowerment strategy. The study contributes to social work practice, theory, and policy, addressing gender-based violence and victim support in a specific South African region.

***Keywords***

Domestic violence, female partner abuse, intimate partner violence, North West Province, victim empowerment strategy, social work perspective

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# **CHAPTER 1 GENERAL ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

With the global rise in incidents of female partner abuse, social workers engage with the victims of such abuse in their everyday work situations (Detjen, 2023:46; Pisano *et al.*, 2025; Shikongo, 2023:3). Violence against women is deeply entrenched in many societies and often linked to broad inequalities and control rooted in patriarchal and misogynistic foundations manifest in hatred and discrimination against women (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2021). This multi-phase research specifically addresses female partner abuse in the North West Province, South Africa, aimed at developing a victim empowerment strategy to be used by social workers when working with female victims of partner abuse. The development of a female victim empowerment strategy in the North West Province represents a critical endeavour in addressing the pervasive challenge of intimate partner violence. While national frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act and the Victim Empowerment Programme provide overarching guidance, provincial realities demand context-specific approaches that respond to the lived experiences of women in local communities.

In this chapter, the general orientation of the study, problem statement and rationale, contribution of the study, research questions, aims and objectives, brief methodology, definition of terms and the chapter outline are presented.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE**

Although South Africa has established a National Victim Empowerment Programme and related initiatives to address gender-based violence, the North West Province continues to experience a marked absence of comprehensive and contextually relevant strategies specifically targeting female partner abuse. Existing services such as sheltering services, counselling and legal support remain limited in scope, unevenly distributed, and largely concentrated in urban centres, leaving rural communities underserved. Moreover, current interventions tend to prioritise crisis response over long-term empowerment, with little emphasis on economic independence, psychosocial recovery, or female partner participation in programme design. The lack of integration between government departments, non-governmental organisations, and social workers further weakens the

effectiveness of available services. Critically, most strategies are not grounded in robust theoretical frameworks, resulting in fragmented approaches that fail to capture the complex interplay of cultural norms, structural inequalities, and individual experiences that perpetuate abuse in the province. This gap underscores the urgent need for victim empowerment strategies that are holistic, theoretically informed and tailored to the socio-cultural realities of the North West Province. In response to these gaps and the fact that violence against women can be seen as a wicked psychosocial problem, this study seeks to develop a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West Province.

The National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment (Department of Social Development, 2019:10) indicate women and victims of domestic violence as “priority target groups for victim empowerment.” This document also indicates that the incidence of domestic violence is much higher for women than for men. With this in mind, this study focuses on female victims of partner abuse in the North West province. This study targets the gaps identified in addressing female partner abuse. Thorough scrutiny was done on existing policies, legislations and prescripts that seek to address all forms of abuse, including female partner abuse, to check whether they address issues of empowering female victims of partner abuse. Victims should be at the centre stage of intervention processes within the criminal justice and related systems, ensuring that their unique needs and desires are taken into account. Relevant documents are:

The Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998

National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide 2020-2030.

National Intimate Partner Abuse Violence Survey

Criminal Law (Sexual Offense and Related Matters) Act No 32 of 2007

National Development Plan Vision 2030

RSA Constitution Act No 108 of 1996

Every year, the United Nations-driven International 16 Days of Activism campaign (25 November - 10 December) aims to raise awareness about violence against women and children. It is estimated that 736 million women worldwide have experienced physical

and/or sexual violence by partners or non-partners at least once over their lifespan. More than 640 million females from 15 years and older have reported intimate partner violence sometime during their lives. It was estimated in 2018, that globally, in that year, one in seven women were directly impacted by violence from a husband or intimate partner (United Nations Women, 2022).

South African statistics on violence against women are among the highest in the world, and the majority of such cases still go undocumented, unreported and unaccounted for in national reports (Bolarinwa *et al.*, 2023; Sileo *et al.*, 2021). Deane (2024a:89) also refers to the problem of under-reporting and estimates that in South Africa, female partner abuse happens every four hours. According to Mkhize and Booysen (2024:12), annually, more than one million female South Africans are victims of partner abuse, again emphasising that levels of female partner abuse in South Africa exceed the global average, and this abuse is mainly perpetrated by men (Pelowich *et al.*, 2024). Statistics (Statistics South Africa, 2019) affirms that female partner abuse has escalated, and more than 44% of women in South Africa have experienced partner abuse. Also, Statistics South Africa (2019) indicates that 26% of South African women were victims of physical (21%), sexual (6%), or emotional abuse (17%) by a male partner. Some victims experience more than one form of abuse. Between April 2022 and March 2023, a significant number of sexual offences, totalling 53,498 incidents, were reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS), of which 42,780 were rape cases (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2024). Niolon *et al.* (2023:7) state that female partner abuse is a societal ill and a health problem that has affected many South Africans across their lifespan, often beginning already with dating during adolescence. White *et al.* (2024) cite female partner abuse as a major health concern.

It is a sad reality that every year during the 16 Days of Activism campaign in South Africa, the news reports about violence against women continue with predictable and worrying regularity. In 2024, the Deputy President of South Africa, Paul Mashatile in his national address during 16 Days of Activism for no violence against women and children in Rustenburg Civic Centre, confirmed that an estimated 7.3 million women in South Africa have experienced physical abuse and 2.1 million experienced sexual violence by their male counterparts. In the first days after the COVID-19 lockdown in March and April 2020, violence against women intensified, with more than 2300 calls received by a

gender-based violence hotline (Roskic, 2022:1). Violence against women in this time was called “the shadow pandemic” (United Nations Women, 2022).

The problem of female partner abuse is also severe in the North West Province. Keipo (2020) reports that 51% of South African citizens (male and female) have experienced some form of partner abuse, and 76% of men who participated in a SAPS study in 2021 admitted that they are perpetrators of such violence. Fapohunda *et al.* (2021:655) indicate that the North West Province had the second highest incidence of physical violence in the country, with only the Eastern Cape showing a higher incidence. According to the South African Police Service (2025), the North West province had 322 reported cases of female partner abuse in that year, a figure that continues to rise on a quarterly basis.

A report by the Department of Social Development (2019:1) highlights the absence of an oversight body within the South African government to hold state structures accountable to ensure the reduction of female partner abuse. In the SONA (South African State of The Nation Address, 2024), President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised intensification in the fight against female partner abuse through the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence (GBVF) and other measures to promote women safety and empowerment (Ramaphosa, 2024). This was also done by strengthening the criminal justice system, promoting accountability in all the state entities, and ensuring successful prosecutions and protection for the victims of female partner abuse. In a similar vein, the former North West Province premier, Bushi Maape, in his State of the Province address (18 February 2022), pledged to support President Ramaphosa by advancing gender-responsive planning, aligning budgets accordingly, and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation measures.

Despite the promulgation of numerous policies and prescripts, it seems as if the problem of female partner abuse, and gender-based violence cannot be curbed (Leburu-Masigo, 2020:175). There is also a lack of funding and/or insufficient funding to organisations and projects specifically dealing with female partner abuse. Despite the demand for establishing more sheltering services during the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for shelters and other gender-based violence services remain a challenge for DSD due to budget constraints (Mwandacha, 2025).

Female partner abuse is linked to other socio-political and structural issues in South Africa. Poverty and lack of income are social risk factors for gender-based violence, which renders women vulnerable to abuse (Leburu-Masigo, 2020:175; Serrano-Argüeso *et al.*, 2021:26). MacKay and Wu (2023:11) state that poverty limits escape routes, strategies and responses for abused partners. The Quarterly Labour reports have consistently outlined a progressive escalation in unemployment in South Africa, with an estimated 8,2 million people unemployed in the first quarter of 2025 (Dhoba *et al.*, 2025). Unemployment statistics point to many women who are vulnerable to abuse. According to World Health Organisation (2024:3) complex gender roles and behaviours contribute to gender inequalities. Roestenburg and Roestenburg (2016:8) highlight the influence of “a culture of paternalism” and the societal “status of women” as factors that exacerbate female partner abuse. MacKay and Wu (2023:6) refer to the unequal structure brought about by patriarchy with men who “dominate mainstream power.” Contrary to such dominant mainstream power of men, in South Africa, the question can be asked how disempowerment and marginalisation of many males over centuries could have led to frustration and dysfunctional, violent patterns of abuse within families (Berger, 2015:17). Tweeddale (2021:243) views the microsystem, and especially the family, as the primary space where the dynamics of patriarchy are at play.

Gender-based violence has long-term effects on the health and well-being of victims and those who witness such abuse (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2021:1). According to Decker *et al.* (2017:967) the effects of female partner abuse include depression, acute behavioural and at times physical impairments, unwanted abortion, unintended teenage pregnancies, pelvic inflammatory diseases, HIV infections and a multitude of sexual and reproductive health problems. Physical and psychological trauma, fear of rejection and anxiety disorders are further effects of female partner abuse (Abbas *et al.*, 2023:431; Spencer *et al.*, 2025). Female partner abuse leads to multi-dimensional effects in victims, which explains why victim empowerment is a strategic priority. More discussion on the effects of female partner abuse follows in Chapter 2.

The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) is a response to escalating violence in South Africa and can be linked to the National Crime Prevention Strategy (approved in May 1996). VEP, aimed at women and children, was launched in 1998 in Kimberley at a national conference. VEP places a high premium on inter-sectoral and inter-departmental

cooperation in response to the needs of victims (George, 2020). According to George (2020:3), VEP refers to “making a victim of crime heal and move on from the crime with the least possible harm or loss.” (Gogarty *et al.*, 2025:141) links reduction in female partner abuse and achieving gender equality with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 5, respectively. In the Western Cape, the DSD (WCG, Social Crime Prevention Directorate, 2021) lists the following services offered to victims:

“emotional and practical support,

assisting victims with the management of trauma,

ensuring that victims are educated to identify the symptoms of post-traumatic stress,

referring victims to professional services where necessary,

provision of court support services during the criminal justice process,

promoting the rights and responsibilities of victims through advocacy,

ensuring that victims are aware of their rights,

ensuring that ongoing victimisation is prevented and

providing a shelter service”.

According to the document of the Western Cape Government on VEP (Western Cape Dept. Social Development, 2024) under Crime Prevention Directorate, persons in shelters should have access to services such as trauma debriefing and counselling, skills development, and building capacity, all of this from a rights-based approach. This research used these broad parameters, and added to it, based on the needs of victim participants, the input of social workers and literature to develop a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. From a social work perspective, it is essential to recognise that victims cannot be seen in isolation. Interventions should consider their unique contexts, including family dynamics and community influences. This understanding has shaped the theoretical paradigm for this research, which draws on Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory. The theoretical paradigm is outlined in Chapter 2.



In summary, the purpose of this research was to develop and refine a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in a specific province of South Africa. Females who are subjected to abuse by partners are a vulnerable group who must be supported according to the government-driven Victim Empowerment Programme. However, more clarity is needed about exactly what a victim empowerment strategy should comprise.

### **1.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

With the global and national escalation in the incidence of female partner abuse that was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for professional victim empowerment assistance by social workers (Piquero *et al.*, 2021:2). Social workers engage with the victims of domestic violence and female partner abuse in their everyday work situations. Victim empowerment is a core mandate of all the directorates under Specialist Social Services (SSS) of DSD (National School of Government, 2022:23). There are limited directives in policy documents and legislation that stipulate ways to support and provide services to female victims of partner abuse. More than a decade ago, Mhango (2012:237) pointed to the disconnect between policy and service delivery in the context of domestic violence (the then preferred term).

Challenges at local levels have hindered the effective implementation of programmes addressing domestic violence, often due to a lack of capacity, knowledge, and skills among service providers. This disconnect remains prevalent today. (Leburu-Masigo, 2020:175) highlights gaps in the implementation of social work services for female victims of partner abuse, particularly within the National Victim Empowerment Programme. The author calls for social workers to re-position themselves to deal with violence against women, especially in the broader context of poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

In the North West Province, there is a high incidence of female partner abuse, yet currently no detailed victim empowerment strategy to guide social workers in their services to female victims of partner abuse. This study seeks to fill that void.

This research aligns with the call by Nkoana-Mashabane, the Minister in the Presidency (for Women, Youth and Persons with disabilities), who linked the 2020, 16 Days of

Activism campaign with the National Strategic Plan (NSP) of South Africa. She called for “programmatic intervention” to address gender-based violence. This research aligns with three of the six NSP pillars, namely “protection, safety and justice; response, care, support and healing; and research and information systems” (Stonehouse *et al.*, 2023). The research also responds to the call of (Leburu-Masigo, 2020:175) for the social work profession to reposition to implement services to address female partner abuse.

Some research could be found linking victim empowerment with female partner abuse, but with different foci. For instance, research by (Leburu-Masigo, 2020:176) emphasises equipping social workers and women who suffer partner abuse with essential skills, knowledge, and economic empowerment to effectively prevent secondary victimization. Song (2015:528) compares the implementation of victim empowerment strategies and self-identity for victims of female partner abuse in Taiwan. Additionally, several studies (Connelly *et al.*, 2021:4) investigated strategies to combat violence in society, including violence against women and girls. (Aizpitarte *et al.*, 2024:1066) highlights the effects of navigating the court systems on the self-perception of female victims. Ullman (2024:441) examines how people react when victims share their traumatic experiences. A study by Hadjimatheou (2025:6) shows how the police in the UK use disclosure to reduce the influence of perpetrators over victims and assist victims to redefine their own realities. However, none of these studies focus on victim empowerment strategies to be used by social workers when attending to victims of female partner abuse. This research addresses this gap to determine what should be part of a victim empowerment strategy in addressing the challenges of female partner abuse. The research informs social work practice for a particularly vulnerable group of females.

Wyatt *et al.* (2017:309) state that more research is needed to understand why women in certain parts of South Africa are experiencing partner abuse and to contribute towards relevant strategies that guide social workers when dealing with the female victims of partner abuse. The victim empowerment strategy developed in this research aims at enabling social work professionals to assist women who are the victims of partner abuse in the North West province, where the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment is huge. The problem statement led to the following primary and subsidiary research questions:

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Primary research question:**

What are the components of a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West Province from a social work perspective? (End product, finalised in Phase 3)

To answer the main research question, the following subsidiary questions, in phases, were generated.

### **Subsidiary questions:**

#### **Phase 1: Exploratory**

- What exists in the literature about female partner abuse and victim empowerment?
- What are the unique realities, including resources needed, of female victims of partner abuse? (Participant group 1)
- What are the needs of female victims of partner abuse which could be addressed by a victim empowerment strategy? (Participant group 1)
- What components are suggested by social workers for a victim empowerment strategy to address female partner abuse in the North West Province? (Participant group 2).

#### **Phase 2: Development**

- How could the components be compiled into a victim empowerment strategy?

#### **Phase 3: Refinement and finalisation**

- How can a proposed victim empowerment strategy be refined and finalised? (Participant group 3).

## **1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The following aim and objectives guided this research:

### **1.5.1 Research aim**

The aim of this study was to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West Province.

### **1.5.2 Objectives of the study**

#### **Phase 1: Exploratory**

- To conduct a literature review to explore female partner abuse and possible elements for a victim empowerment strategy.
- To explore the experiences of female victims of partner abuse.
- To explore the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.
- To explore social workers' perspectives of components that can be included in a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse.

#### **Phase 2: Development**

- To develop a draft victim empowerment strategy.

#### **Phase 3: Refinement and finalisation**

- To obtain the inputs of social work supervisors and managers on the draft victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To finalise a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province (linked to the primary research question).

In phase 1, the exploratory phase, the inputs of victims of female partner abuse and entry level social workers based in the North West Province were obtained. In phase 2, the victim empowerment strategy was drafted. For this phase, there were no participants. In phase 3, the victim empowerment strategy was refined and finalised with the help of social work supervisors and managers. The strategy is designed for Social Service Professionals based in the North West Province.

## **1.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The study was done in the North West Province of South Africa, where the researcher is based. According to (Statistics South Africa, 2019:11), the North West Province is South Africa's fourth smallest province out of the nine provinces. The North West province shares borders with Botswana (north), Northern Cape (west), Gauteng (east) and Free State (south). Statistics South Africa (2021:1), estimates the North West Province population as close to 4,122,854 in 2021. The province is predominantly poor, severely affected by a lack of infrastructure and amenities, coupled with high population density in towns and villages, and high unemployment (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:720). The majority of the people depend on a cash economy and social grants funded by the government (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:721). The study was conducted in the North West province, as it is regarded as one of the provinces with economic hardships, high levels of illiteracy in women who are less empowered and not employed. These women suffer the consequences of partner abuse as they are entirely dependent on their male partners who take advantage and abuse them.

## **1.7 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT**

This study posits that structural issues of poverty and unemployment, along with high rates of female partner abuse in North West Province, necessitates the formulation of a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in this province. Existing policies do not outline how victim empowerment should be implemented by social workers. It is the assumption of this study that if the voices of victims and social workers who live and work in the North West Province can be heard, a victim empowerment strategy can be generated and compiled, considering their unique needs. Existing literature added a fresh dimension to ensure that the strategy is based on underlying theories related to the abuse of female partners.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology is outlined in more detail in Chapter 3. The study utilised a multi-phase design, which, according to Tener (2025:770), ensures a comprehensive strategy development through exploratory data gathering, drafting, and refinement. The

study had three phases: the exploratory phase, the development phase and the refinement and finalisation phase.

Table 1-1 below summarises the phases that were undertaken to attain the objectives of this study. In the exploratory phase, a literature search and review were conducted, establishing a theoretical grounding and understanding of female partner abuse and possible elements for a victim empowerment strategy. Building on this groundwork, a narrative inquiry research design guided the process of data collection with the female victims of partner abuse using semi-structured interviews. Entry-level social workers were then engaged, guided by a qualitative descriptive design that used World Café sessions to help identify elements for a strategy.

In the second development phase, the researcher developed a draft victim empowerment strategy informed by the data collected in Phase 1. In the refinement and finalisation phase, the draft victim empowerment strategy was the subject of focus group discussions conducted by the researcher with the social work managers, supervisors, and service point managers. The focus group participants, commented via email on the draft strategy, after which the strategy was further refined, leading to a final version of the victim empowerment strategy.

**Table 1-1 Multi-phase research process**

| Phase                             | Participants                    | Design                         | Data collection                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Phase 1: Exploratory phase</b> |                                 |                                |                                                                                                                          |
| Chapter 2                         | Literature review               | No participants                |                                                                                                                          |
| Chapter 4                         | Female victims of partner abuse | Narrative inquiry design       | Semi-structured interviews (individual and face-to face) with visual data collection (timelines, loss and gain spirals). |
| Chapter 5                         | Entry-level social workers      | Qualitative descriptive design | World Café sessions to determine elements of a strategy                                                                  |
| <b>Phase 2: Development</b>       |                                 |                                |                                                                                                                          |
|                                   | Researcher developed a draft    | No participants                |                                                                                                                          |

| Phase                                               | Participants                                                                                                                                 | Design                         | Data collection                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                                     | victim empowerment strategy based on the data of phase 1.                                                                                    |                                |                                   |
| <b>Phase 3: Refinement and finalisation</b>         |                                                                                                                                              |                                |                                   |
| Chapter 5                                           | Social work managers, supervisors, and service point managers read the draft victim empowerment strategy before the focus group discussions. | Qualitative descriptive design | Focus groups refined the strategy |
| Chapter 5                                           | Refined the strategy and sent it to social work managers and service point managers for final comments.                                      |                                |                                   |
| Writing up of the final victim empowerment strategy |                                                                                                                                              |                                |                                   |

The researcher adhered to research ethical considerations and upheld research integrity. Ethical clearance was sought and obtained from NWU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (NWU-00162-22-AI). To work with research integrity, a specific research process was followed as summarised above, guided by research designs and good research practices for data collection and analysis. Study objectives were clearly communicated, the consent of participants was sought, participants were informed of possible harm, precautions were taken, and their confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. More information on ethics is provided in Chapter 3.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Many different terms are used to refer to what was earlier known as domestic violence or even battered woman syndrome. According to Van Niel (2020:1-5) the term domestic violence was gradually phased out as it was acknowledged that abuse occurs in many types of relationships and contexts, not always linked to the home environment. The

terms, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender-based Violence (GBV) is now commonly used. In this study the terms, IPV and GBV are used as well as female partner abuse. Some of the older terms, like domestic violence, are used if authors and participants refer to that term.

### **Domestic violence**

According to the *Domestic Violence Act* no 116 of 1998, domestic violence includes “physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to property; entry into the complainant’s residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence; or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant.” The Domestic Violence Amendment Bill expands the definition of domestic violence to include a variety of relationships, such as customary relationships in the expansion of legal protection to victims (Roskic, 2022:1).

### **Female partner abuse**

According to the European Union (EU) report on violence against women (Picchi, 2022:401), female partner abuse encompasses acts of gender-based violence that lead to physical, emotional, sexual, economic, psychological harm. Female partner abuse restricts women’s freedom of movement, expression, and association in both their private and public lives. The EU report further explains that such abuse negates women’s human and fundamental rights. De Felice (2021:1) describes female partner abuse as a form of violence (physical, psychological) committed by an intimate male partner. Female partner abuse is usually perpetrated by immediate family members and close relatives (Fapohunda *et al.*, 2021:654).

### **Gender-based violence**

According to Shukla (2023:29) gender-based violence refers to intimidation and other forms of abuse that occur within an intimate relationship. It is usually perpetrated by a current or previous intimate partner, in the case of this research, a male one. It shares characteristics with definitions of domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Additionally, Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2021) note that the terms gender-based violence and violence against women are frequently used synonymously, highlighting the overlap between these terms in discussions surrounding this critical issue.



## **Intimate partner violence**

Lyons and Brewer (2022:969) describe intimate partner violence as partner behaviour such as aggression that happens in current or former romantic relationships and that leads to either physical, psychological, financial, or sexual harm. According to Van Niel (2020:2) IPV exceeds physical harm and includes non-tangible actions such as economic abuse and cyberbullying by partners.

## **Social work perspective**

The term social work perspective refers to the integration of various theories, models, and approaches that utilise scientific evidence derived from various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, philosophy, education, and economics. This multidisciplinary framework enhances understanding of complex social phenomena to inform social work practice (Adams & Smith, 2024:45).

## **Victim**

In the context of partner abuse, a victim is someone who has encountered psychological, physical, sexual or economic harm that negatively affects psychosocial well-being (Hornung, 2024:493). The *Domestic Violence Act* No 116 of 1998 defines a victim of female partner abuse as someone “who is or who has been in a domestic relationship with a respondent and who is or has been subjected or allegedly subjected to an act of domestic violence ...”

## **Victim empowerment strategy**

Gambrill (2019:455) defines a victim empowerment strategy as a support mechanism for victims and survivors of crime and violence. Department of Social Development (2019:29) outlines some central functions of victim empowerment for abused women, namely informational and emotional support as well as support in terms of networking and practical aspects.

## **Strategy**

In this study the word strategy is used to distinguish the product of this research from the overall Victim Empowerment Programme which is the term commonly used for the overall victim empowerment plan for South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2019:29).

Victim empowerment is an integral part of the work of the National Department of Social Development and Provincial Social Development Departments, where Victim Empowerment Programmes are operationalised.

## **Trauma**

Kimberly and Parsons (2017:556) define trauma as a serious injury (in medicine, a term used to describe a shock or psychic-emotional injury). Wegrzyn *et al.* (2023:1967) proclaim that trauma is one of the most distressing events or experiences, significantly affecting a person's ability to cope with life's stressors. Additionally, Treisman (2021:34) defines trauma as pain and hurt that disrupt an individual's connection and integration with the environment and with significant people in the systems where they function.

## **1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The study comprises six (6) chapters:

### **Chapter 1: Overview of the study**

This chapter provides an overview of female partner abuse, providing context for the study. The chapter begins with a statement of the problem, elucidating the specific challenges and gaps in existing literature that the research aims to address. The research questions, aim, and objectives are outlined, followed by a summary of the research methodology and definition of key terms.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework**

This chapter presents the theoretical paradigm and topic-related literature underpinning the study.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology, focusing on the research design, sampling, data collection strategies, data analysis, ethics and trustworthiness.

### **Chapter 4: Findings from victims of female partner abuse**

This chapter presents, describes, and analyses the findings based on thematic analyses of the experiences and needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.

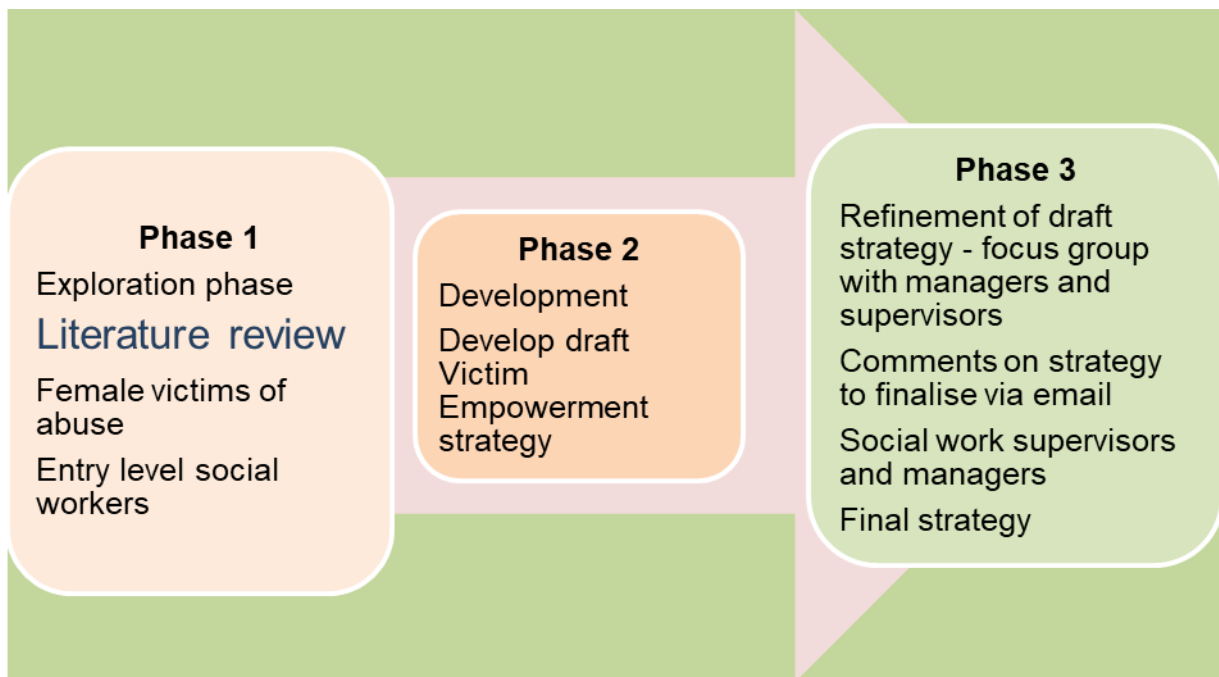
## **Chapter 5: Victim empowerment strategy**

Chapter 5 outlines the input from entry-level social workers that aided the development of the tentative victim empowerment strategy. It also includes the two levels of input of the supervisors and managers when they first helped to refine the draft strategy in focus group discussions and then their email comments on the final strategy. The final victim empowerment strategy and the accompanying workbook is also presented in Chapter 5. The final victim empowerment strategy is informed by both the theoretical and empirical phases of the study.

## **Chapter 6: Summary, evaluation, recommendations and conclusion**

This chapter provides the summary and conclusions of the study. It also highlights the study's contributions and limitations. The chapter terminates by presenting a set of recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES



### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 focuses on establishing the scholarly foundation of the study by critically examining literature and theoretical perspectives on female partner abuse, with particular emphasis on the North West Province of South Africa. The literature review synthesises national and regional research, policy documents, and empirical studies to illuminate the prevalence, drivers, and consequences of intimate partner violence against women in this context. It highlights the socio-cultural, economic, and structural factors that sustain abuse, while identifying gaps in existing scholarship that warrant further exploration. The subsequent theoretical framework draws upon feminist theory, ecological systems theory, empowerment approaches, and trauma-informed perspectives to provide conceptual tools for analysing female partner abuse. These perspectives collectively offer a multi-dimensional lens through which the complexities of power relations, community dynamics and individual experiences can be understood. Together, the literature review and theoretical framework ensure that the study is firmly anchored in academic discourse and provide a coherent analytical structure for interrogating female partner abuse in the North West Province.

Chapter 1 confirmed that there is an alarming increase in the prevalence and consequences of female partner abuse. This increase is marked by severe effects stemming from both physical violence and escalating patterns of control by male partners, which can lead to permanent disability and even death (Sardinha *et al.*, 2024:1). Cersosimo (2025:7) emphasises that, as indicated in Chapter 1, abuse against women is a global concern and a social determinant of health. While female partner abuse can affect persons of any gender, research has consistently highlighted the disproportionate burden experienced by females as victims, especially in abuse perpetrated by male partners (Ogundipe *et al.*, 2018; Park & Jeon, 2022; Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022; World Health Organisation, 2024).

## **2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature in this chapter is aimed at understanding the research phenomenon, female partner abuse, laying the foundation for the development of a victim empowerment strategy tailored to address such abuse, especially in the North West Province, South Africa. Lim *et al.* (2022:487) assert that literature reviews furnish a thorough overview of existing knowledge within a specific field. By reviewing relevant literature, this chapter seeks to gain a thorough understanding of the current state of female partner abuse (van Riel & Snyder, 2024:334). A literature review serves as a roadmap, helping the researcher to incorporate existing scholarly articles and books and make informed decisions in selecting, focusing on, and refining the research topic. Moreover, the literature presented in this chapter is incorporated as elements in the Victim Empowerment strategy. The findings in Chapter 4 and 5 are also subjected to literature control.

Witt and Diaz (2019:209) argue that social work research at times fails to consider the challenges faced by women in intimate relationships when formulating strategies to assist female victims of partner abuse. Within domestic violence scenarios, it has been recommended that a more integrated approach to empowering women and safeguarding children is required (Peterman *et al.*, 2020).

First, the bio-ecological theory as theoretical paradigm underpinning this study is discussed, looking at the three phases of development of this theory, as well as the input of contemporary researchers on the bio-ecological theory. A brief overview follows on

supporting theories that could buttress an understanding of female partner abuse, namely feminist theory, family systems theory, Conservation of Resource Theory (COR), trauma-informed theory, empowerment theory and self-determination theory. A discussion on trauma counselling includes information on cognitive interventions, and narrative intervention. This is followed by an overview of core components and principles relevant to trauma counselling.

This chapter also focuses on existing victim empowerment programmes and policies to identify key elements that could be incorporated into the proposed victim empowerment strategy. The focus then shifts to the research phenomenon of female partner abuse, and this aspect is further extended in Chapter 4 where literature control is presented with the findings based on interviews with female victims of partner abuse.

While the Department of Social Development's victim empowerment framework provides a national policy foundation, its effectiveness in the North West Province depends on a careful localisation. National strategies emphasise protection, resilience, and service provision, yet rural realities in the province often involve limited access to formal services and greater reliance on community-based support. Cultural practices and indigenous knowledge systems further shape how empowerment is understood and enacted, while traditional authority structures continue to play a central role in dispute resolution and community leadership. Integrating these dimensions ensures that victim empowerment in the North West is not only aligned with national priorities but also responsive to local socio-cultural contexts, thereby enhancing both legitimacy and impact.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL PARADIGM**

Schurink, Roestenburg and Fouché (2021:93) likens theories to the roots of a tree, providing essential support to ensure its stability. Theories play a role in the exploration of diverse perspectives among scholars, enabling critical analysis of the existing body of knowledge. Payne (2020:5) defines a theory as a set of ideas that provides an organised structure for understanding the complexities of human behaviour, social systems, and the dynamics of relationships. Theories organise concepts and principles to make sense of the social work practice domain. This study distinguishes between three key paradigms, namely, the broad philosophical paradigm of pragmatism, the theoretical paradigm represented by the bio-ecological approach, and more specific theories that inform

practice in the context of female partner abuse and trauma. Social work theories provide a foundation for research in the field. Theories enable researchers to formulate hypotheses, design studies, and interpret findings, contributing to the development of evidence-based practices. In other words, theories help practitioners to better understand the world and guide the day-to-day interventions in social work practice.

South African social work scholars provide insights into empowerment from a practice-oriented perspective. In older work, Nel and Roestenburg (2004:113) underscore the importance of inclusion and empowerment in fostering equitable societies. Additionally, the concept of empowerment in relation to gender-based intimate partner violence was also emphasised by Roestenburg and Roestenburg (2016:9). At a policy level, the Department of Social Development's victim empowerment reports illustrate how such practice principles are translated into government strategies, documenting efforts to reduce vulnerability, enhance protection and promote resilience through structured programmes. Taken together, these contributions highlight that empowerment in the South African context is not merely conceptual but operationalised through the interplay of supportive relationships, participatory practice, and policy frameworks aimed at strengthening community capacity.

The bio-ecological theory informed many of the other theories. Most of these theories are rooted in general systems theory and align with the original social work perspective, which emphasises the interplay between the person and the environment (Kinzner & Miserandino, 2023:656). Notably, the resources described in the Conservation of Resources theory are dynamically integrated with this person-environment fit. Additionally, self-determination theory highlights the importance of relatedness, which provides a contextual facilitator for individual and familial development and growth. The bio-ecological concept of proximal processes is evident in many of the other theories and is explored where relevant in the following sections.

## **2.4 BRONFENBRENNER'S THEORY OF BIO-ECOLOGICAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory is a theoretical framework developed by the Russian American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005). Initially known as the eco-systems theory, this framework developed in stages over several decades. Beyond

serving as a theoretical lens for research, the bio-ecological theory offers a fundamental framework for social work practice, enabling social workers to assess, intervene, and provide support in a holistic and comprehensive manner (Schenk *et al.*, 2019:87). Bronfenbrenner understood that individuals are not isolated, but rather their development is shaped by multiple layers or systems, each with its own set of influences. These systems are often depicted as concentric circles or layers, with the individual at the centre (Crawford *et al.*, 2025). It is important to note that authors like Navarro *et al.* (2022:233) and Merçon-Vargas *et al.* (2020:321) criticise the oversimplified interpretation of the bio-ecological theory held by some. These critics argue that many overlook the complexity of the theory, often focusing solely on the well-known concentric circles that represent the different systems. In their article titled, *Bored of the rings: Methodological and analytic approaches to operationalising Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model in research practice*, (Navarro *et al.*, 2022:233) contend that the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model does not always receive adequate attention.

Bronfenbrenner presented the first phase of the ecological theory in his book, *The ecology of human development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory highlights that the true character of an individual develops over time based on the lessons learnt through experiences gained from actively interacting with others. These interactions occur within various contexts, such as culture, religion and socio-economic influences, within the systems namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems (Swick & Williams, 2006). These systems are outlined in the following two figures spanning from the ontogenic system (the person) to the macrosystem, and all those systems influenced by the chronosystem, which considers the dimension of time and how changes over time can impact the various layers of influence on an individual.



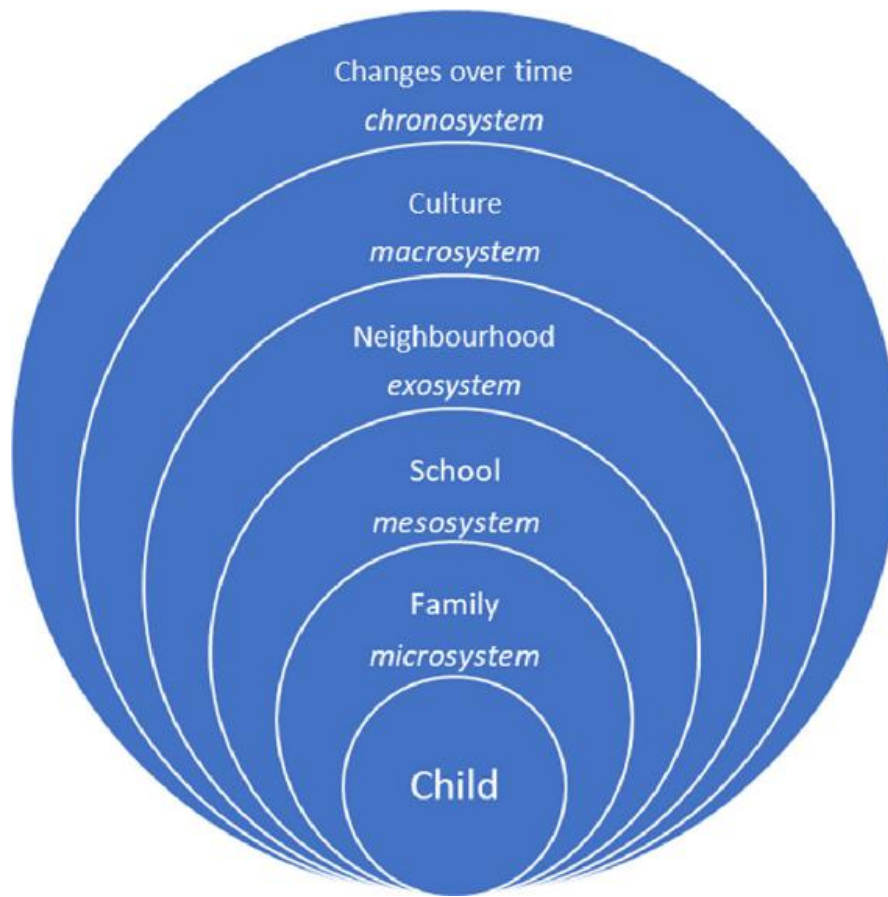


**Figure 2-1 The Bio-ecological framework**

(Source: Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Murphy 2020:198).

The ontogenic system, which encompasses the developing person at various life stages, is influenced directly or indirectly by all the systems illustrated in Figure 2.1. For instance, a victim of female partner abuse may be affected by macro-level policy changes regarding partner violence or budget constraints. Additionally, such a victim may experience stigma, negative attitudes, and indifference within the microsystem where she functions.

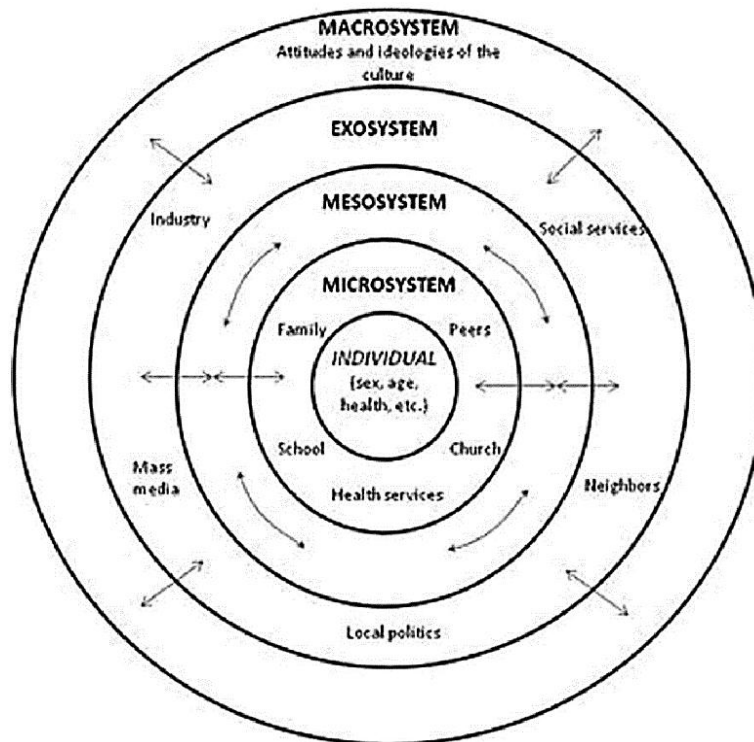


**Figure 2-2 The second revision of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory of ecological human development** (Source: Vélez-Agosto *et al.*, 2017:902).

As illustrated in Figure 2.2 Navarro *et al.* (2022:236) emphasise that in bio-ecological theory, the well-known systems are complemented by the synergistic interconnections and proximal processes, as well as the important aspect of time. These elements contribute significantly to the dynamic relationship between individuals and their environments. After a brief overview of the various systems, the dynamic interplay with proximal processes is described within the framework of the PPCT model.

#### 2.4.1 Microsystems level

Female partners who are abused are exposed to multiple forms of violence at micro, meso and macro levels. The microsystem is the most immediate system of the individual including people, individuals, family, peers, church, health services, and community that directly have an impact on an individual's day-to-day living (Swick & Williams, 2006). An individual's developmental trajectory is inherently shaped by the specific context and synergistic elements of their lived experience (Merçon-Vargas *et al.*, 2020:321). As this context evolves, the personal framework for individual growth also adapts, shaped by an ever-expanding array of influences, opportunities, and sources of insight. In support of

this notion, Crawford *et al.* (2025:20) argue that a person's immediate environment is influenced by interactions within their microsystems, aimed at social or symbolic needs fulfilment while individuals engage in reciprocal proximal processes with those in their microsystems. Merçon-Vargas *et al.* (2020:321) point out that such processes in the microsystem are not always conducive to growth and development. Inverse proximal processes, of which female partner abuse is an example, can stunt growth and have a negative influence on the functioning of an individual and their family. Interventions aimed at female partner abuse should forge safe environments for female victims of partner abuse, in their microsystems, by fostering social interconnectedness and relatedness of the abused females with their significant others (Bermas *et al.*, 2024:128).

#### **2.4.2 Mesosystems level**

Flynn and Mathias (2025:200) assert that the mesosystem represents the second layer in the ecology of human development, focusing on the interactions and relationships between multiple microsystems. These interactions are particularly evident in the context of an abused female partner, as they go beyond interactions in the immediate system, to also include contact with possible systems of help and support. The facets of the mesosystem are for instance workplace, health care settings, community settings, mass-media, and local government (Vélez-Agosto *et al.*, 2017).

Mesosystems transcend isolated dyadic relationships, enabling a broader view of how abuse is perpetuated or challenged across multiple domains. When mesosystems function effectively, they can facilitate coordinated support systems and interventions. However, when fragmented or absent, they may contribute to a woman's isolation, silence, and vulnerability. Therefore, the presence and quality of mesosystemic connections are pivotal in shaping both the experience of abuse and the pathways to safety and recovery.

#### **2.4.3 Exosystems level**

Exosystems contexts have an indirect influence on people (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:133). Systemic limitations such as resource scarcity, high practitioner turnover, and difficulties in recruiting qualified mental health professionals compromise both the accessibility and consistency of care (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:141). For victims of

partner abuse, these limitations can intensify barriers to seeking help, particularly when confidentiality is threatened by the heightened visibility of practitioners within close-knit communities.

#### **2.4.4 Macrosystems level**

The macrosystem represents the broader socio-cultural and ideological context that shapes societal norms, values, and institutional practices (Flynn & Mathias, 2025:200). Within this sphere, female partner abuse is deeply influenced by entrenched systems of violence manifesting through patriarchal norms, gender inequality, and discriminatory ideologies such as sexism and racism. Systemic inequalities often normalise abusive behaviours and silence survivors (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:133). These cultural narratives often normalise or minimize abuse, reinforcing power imbalances and limit women's access to protection, justice, and support. Mestvirishvili *et al.* (2025) is of the view that the macrosystem refers to the overarching cultural ideologies, societal norms, and institutional structures that influence how female partner abuse is perceived, tolerated, or addressed.

In many societies, dominant beliefs such as '*a woman's place is in the kitchen*' or '*marriage is sacred regardless of circumstances*' contribute to the normalisation of abuse and discourage women from seeking help. Cultural norms that label women who leave abusive relationships as '*failures*' or '*disobedient wives*' further entrench silence and endurance. Institutional responses often reflect these macrosystemic values. For example, when police officers dismiss reports of abuse as '*a private family matter*' or when legal systems impose burdensome requirements for protection orders, survivors are left without meaningful recourse. Economic structures that limit women's access to employment, property ownership, or financial support also reinforce dependency on abusive partners. These examples demonstrate how the macrosystem not only shapes societal attitudes but also sustains the structural barriers that prevent women from escaping violence. Addressing female partner abuse therefore requires a critical transformation of the cultural, legal, and economic systems that perpetuate gender-based inequality and silence.

For women from disadvantaged communities, intersecting forms of oppression further exacerbate vulnerability and restrict pathways to safety. Thus, the macrosystem not only

frames societal attitudes toward intimate partner violence but also sustains the structural conditions that enable its persistence. These macro-level forces influence legal frameworks, economic opportunities, and social expectations, thereby shaping both the prevalence of abuse and the societal response to abuse. As Flynn and Mathias (2025:200) suggest, people are not merely “passive recipients” of these influences but are empowered - or constrained - by them in ways that affect their capacity to act. When abuse occurs within a macrosystem that legitimises male dominance or devalues women’s autonomy, it reflects not a lack of awareness but a deliberate enactment of power within a culturally sanctioned framework (Swick & Williams, 2006). Addressing female partner abuse thus requires a critical interrogation of the macrosystemic forces that perpetuate gender-based violence and engender a commitment to transforming the cultural and institutional norms that sustain it.

#### **2.4.5 Chronosystem**

In his later work, Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem, which refers to the temporal aspect (Sheng, 2023:34). In the case of female partner abuse, the time aspect could include previous history of trauma, intergenerational aspects and previous coping and strengths in the life history of the person or family. The three levels of time in the bio-ecological theory includes:

**Microtime** refers to what happens in proximal processes in the immediate time (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:134). This is a relevant timespan during interventions with victims of abuse as it links with counselling skills such as conveying warmth, acceptance and unconditional regard in the moment.

**Mesotime** is about experiences over a longer time (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:134). For victims of female partner abuse, their experiences in mesotime are influenced by on-going abuse and the effects thereof.

**Macrotime** includes experiences over a lifetime as well as intergenerational influences, including broader societal events and tendencies (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2025:134). In the context of female partner abuse, some women might have histories of adverse events during their childhoods or in previous generations, leading to intergenerational trauma.

## 2.5 PROCESS-PERSON-CONTEXT-TIME (PPCT) MODEL OF BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY

The PPCT model emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and their environments, recognising that changes in one part of the system can have ripple effects throughout an individual's life. The researcher concurs with Turner (2017:245) in their assertion that the life narrative of a person unfolds within the nested systems where they are positioned. Interactions and transactions within and between these systems are influential in shaping the life story of each individual. When interactions between key figures in the microsystems are characterised by abuse and violence in relationships, it is termed as inverse proximal processes (Navarro *et al.*, 2022:235), and these processes generate negative and traumatic imprints on the individual's life narrative. Merçon-Vargas *et al.* (2020:9) highlight disruptive force characteristics, like aggression and violence that can lead to disruption and trauma in the microsystem.

The PPCT model outlines the interaction between the four critical elements: process, person, context, and time, as well as understanding the six levels of development to achieve well-informed appreciation of the client (Murphy, 2020:200). The elements of the PPCT model are discussed in more detail next.

**Table 2-1: PPCT model**

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Process</b> | The term "process" refers to the developing person's interactions with family members and their physical environment. In this setting, victims of IPV grow from the relationships they have. Bronfenbrenner considers these basic linkages to be proximal processes, implying that they occur within microsystems of development; they are reciprocal and continue to become more complex over time (Murphy (2020:200).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Person</b>  | In the PPCT model, the term "person" means that a developing individual's character is dependent on both his biological maturity and capacity of intellectual (cognitive) advancement. The person component of the PPCT model in this study emphasises how a person's character, cognitive development, and biological maturity influence how they behave in various relationships (Tudge <i>et al.</i> , 2022:235; Veiga <i>et al.</i> , 2023). Cognitive development affects problem-solving, empathy, and communication skills, whereas biological maturity, such as hormone changes during adolescence, affects emotional regulation and aggression (Tudge <i>et al.</i> , 2022:235; Veiga <i>et al.</i> , 2023). To effectively develop a strategy to address female partner abuse, early exposure to negative relationship models and behaviours, such as violence should be considered. Such experiences can influence personality development by normalising |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                | aggression in relationships. Consequently, a comprehensive victim empowerment strategy should not only focus on emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills but also focus on maladaptive belief systems that might be built on such early experiences in the chronosystem of the person (Murphy, 2020:202).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Context</b> | The environmental systems that impact an individual can be found in the Context aspect of the PPCT model, which is essential to comprehending IPV. From local contexts like peer interactions and family dynamics (microsystem) to more general societal impacts like cultural norms, socioeconomic circumstances, and resource accessibility (macrosystem), these systems encompass a range of contexts (Vélez-Agosto <i>et al.</i> , 2017). An illustration would be someone who grew up in a household or community where violence is accepted and may harbour views that condone or support IPV. Furthermore, factors like financial strain, unemployment, or limited access to social support networks and education within the exo-system might raise the risk of intimate partner violence. These factors also frequently lead to relationship problems. Social norms and culture in the macrosystem, such as acceptance of patriarchal dominance or gender inequality, can further reinforce power imbalances and abusive behaviours (Cersosimo, 2025:7). Hence, the victim empowerment strategy needs to address these interconnected environmental factors that target systemic issues alongside individual behaviours.                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Time</b>    | The time element of the PPCT model focuses on the importance of temporal dimensions in comprehending IPV, illustrating how experiences of violence are shaped not only by broader societal changes but also by the individual's life course, revealing the interplay of change and continuity throughout the lifespan (Vélez-Agosto <i>et al.</i> , 2017). IPV may start off as isolated instances that occur during regular contacts, with patterns of escalation or de-escalation driven by the situation at hand. The frequency and severity of IPV can change over time; for instance, abusive behaviours may intensify over the course of months or years in a relationship (meso-time). Social and cultural changes, such as evolving gender roles, legal protections, and society attitudes on intimate partner violence (IPV), can have an impact on the frequency and type of violence (macrotime scale). IPV is influenced by a range of social and cultural factors, including entrenched disparities in attitudes toward gender equality or the shame and stigma associated with seeking help that can impact how IPV is experienced and addressed. To effectively formulate strategies for prevention and intervention, it is essential to understand that IPV is a dynamic phenomenon that progresses over time, influenced by both temporal and contextual dimensions. |

According to Tudge *et al.* (2022:235) addressing the needs of female victims of partner abuse requires a multifaceted approach grounded in core social work theories and practices. By employing bio-ecological theory, social workers acknowledge that female partner abuse is not merely a personal experience, but also shaped by complex

relationships within families, communities, and broader society. Concurrently, feminist theory highlights the structural inequalities and patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence, especially in contexts where women's voices are marginalised.

## **2.6 THEORIES LINKED TO FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE**

There are many theories underlying female partner abuse. Feminist theory provides a broad critical lens through which to understand female partner abuse, emphasising the role of gender inequality and power dynamics in intimate relationships.

### **2.6.1 Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory highlights the structural inequalities and patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence, especially in contexts where women's voices are marginalised. According to Haaken (2010:36), the 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Brussels was a significant milestone in the struggle against violence and abuse directed at women. This event brought together more than 2000 women from 33 countries, highlighting the global nature of women's rights and underscoring the urgent need for systemic change. At this meeting, participants advocated for a more equitable distribution of responsibilities between men and women, particularly concerning child rearing and financial provision for the family. Women argued that the prevailing patriarchal system and failure to uphold their human rights put them in danger in the very place where they should be safe, namely the family home. Ironically, as women increasingly entered the workforce, the patriarchal system continued to affect them on many levels, manifesting as discrimination, and limited opportunities for career advancement. In this regard, Haaken (2010:36) notes that while the pursuit of economic independence from men was a common objective among feminists, there was no consensus on the challenges women encountered "once they crossed the threshold of the household and entered the labour force." Feminist theory aligns with the philosophy of social work to ensure just and egalitarian treatment throughout in all relationships including when dealing with the female victims of partner abuse (Milliken, 2017:191).

Haaken (2010:37) discusses the widely recognised Duluth model, Power and Control Wheel, that was published in 1993 and was the foundational element of many domestic violence intervention programmes, especially those that recognised patriarchy as a root



cause (Bernardi & Steyn, 2025:44). Shukla (2023:28) argues that the Duluth model is fundamentally rooted in feminist ideology, viewing the sense of entitlement and privilege among men as primary drivers of abusive behaviour. The Duluth model was developed from 1981 by the Minnesota Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, USA. The model was based on the input of various focus groups with over 200 abused women and includes types of abuse as well as power and control by abusers (Rankine *et al.*, 2017:2777).

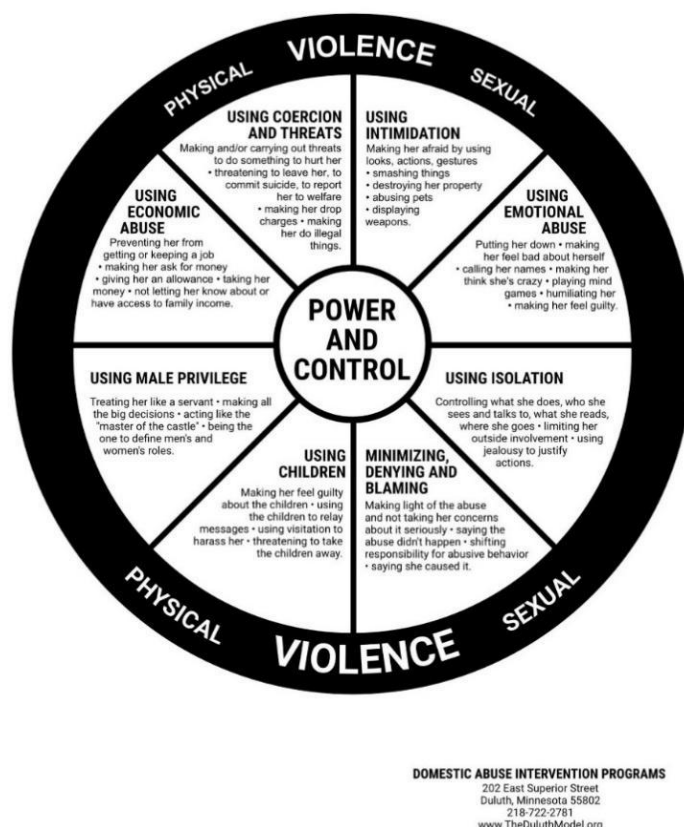


**Figure 2-3 The Duluth model, Power and Control Wheel**

Haaken (2010:39) states that the wide acceptance of the Power and Control Wheel “facilitated the transition of domestic violence from a radical feminist to a mainstream political issue.” The Duluth way of working did not encourage working with perpetrators, viewing abuse as linked inextricably with patriarchy (Haaken, 2010:39). Rankine *et al.* (2017:2777) caution that the Power and Control Wheel were developed mainly with input from white women, with an individualistic and not a collective outlook on abuse. This perspective views perpetrators through the lens of systematic male entitlement,

suggesting that such entitlement fosters an environment where dominance over female partners is not only expected, but often justified.

Contemporary debates around masculinity and toxic masculinity have escalated in the wake of the #MeToo movement, prompting critical reflection on gendered power dynamics and societal expectations. Manley (2023:7) contends that “masculinity is at what feels like a crisis point”, highlighting a broader cultural contemplation of traditional male roles. Sudenkaarne *et al.* (2023:725) refer to “historic power imbalances between males and females” framing toxic masculinity as a “neglected public health problem.” Patriarchy is another term commonly used within feminist theory. In patriarchal societies, men are habitually perceived as superior to women.

In the context of partner violence, feminist perspectives often raise awareness about such relational power dynamics, as well as the oppressive nature of patriarchal structures that contribute to such violence (Shukla, 2023:32). Referring to Hispanic and Latino communities, De Faria (2020:39) cautions that the prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence may be minimised and downplayed in some cultures, particularly in patriarchal societies that adhere to traditional gender roles. Conversely, Bernardi and Steyn (2025:44) caution against a singular focus on patriarchy, arguing that such an approach may obscure other contributing factors. They emphasise that men, too, constitute a neglected population who may experience abuse in intimate relationships, including from female partners.

### **2.6.2 Conservation of resources theory**

Conservation of Resources is a theory developed by Hobfoll in the 1990s. It is generally seen as a theory related to stress and trauma but has been applied in many other contexts such as workplace settings, where it is linked with burnout (Hobfoll, 2011:116). According to Sauber and O'Brien (2020:3055) COR theory offers valuable insights into the effects of intimate partner violence on the well-being of victims. These authors argue that individuals experiencing intimate partner violence are particularly susceptible to resource loss, which can have devastating effects on their well-being. The central premise COR theory is that individuals face significant resource loss when confronted with adversity. This rapid depletion of resources can make it challenging to reverse the downward loss

spiral, and they encounter rapid resource loss. It can be difficult to halt such resource loss and shift towards resource gain spirals.

Hobfoll *et al.* (2018:22) and Holmgreen *et al.* (2017) posit that individuals are continually driven to collect, store and maintain their resource reserves, mostly within social contexts, which means that they must also invest resources. From a bio-ecological perspective, this suggests that personal resources, such as self-esteem, and social or interpersonal and material resources, are cultivated through proximal processes. Hobfoll *et al.* (2018) advises that those with fewer resources to start with are more vulnerable to further resource loss. In the context of female partner abuse, this could be illustrated by an abusive economic relationship. The abused female would have little financial reserves. In the case of accompanying physical abuse, she would have more difficulties escaping the situation than for instance, an abused female with a stable income who are subjected to physical abuse. Furthermore, Hobfoll *et al.* (2018) emphasise that traumatic events and associated resource loss not only affect the direct victims but also undermine the social structure's capacity to support and protect individuals. While Hobfoll *et al.* (2018:117) identify universal resources, the value and management of these resources are ultimately individualised processes influenced by the specific contexts of individuals, families and communities. Stress is often experienced when the resources invested do not yield the gain they hoped for, leading to further emotional and psychological challenges.

Hobfoll, Dunahoo and Monnier (1995:516) define resources as "...those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies." Hobfoll *et al.* (2018) also use the categories personal, social, and material resources. The resource categories are outlined in Figure 2.4, using different terms identified in the literature for the different categories:

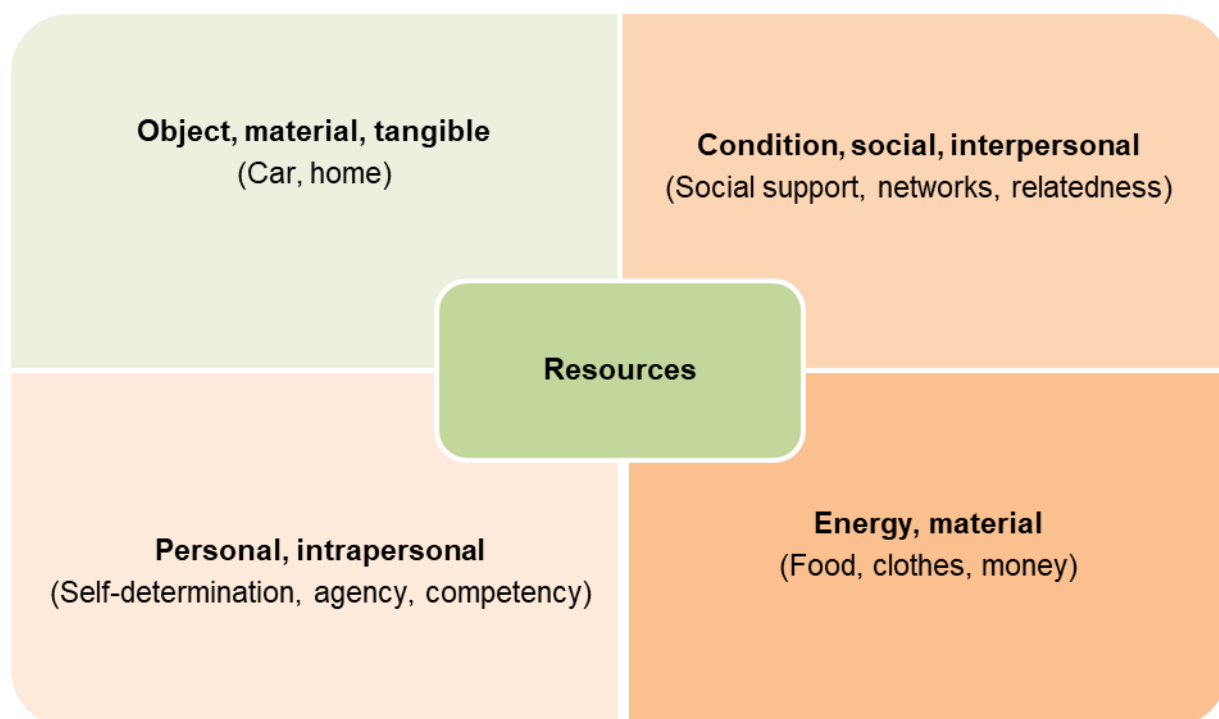


**Figure 2-4 Resource categories based on Hobfoll (2011:117)**

As indicated in Figure 2.4, resources can be tangible, such as energy and object resources, or non-tangible, such as inter- and intrapersonal resources (Holmgreen *et al.*, 2017:22). In Figures 2-5 and Figure 2-6 resource loss and gain are illustrated:

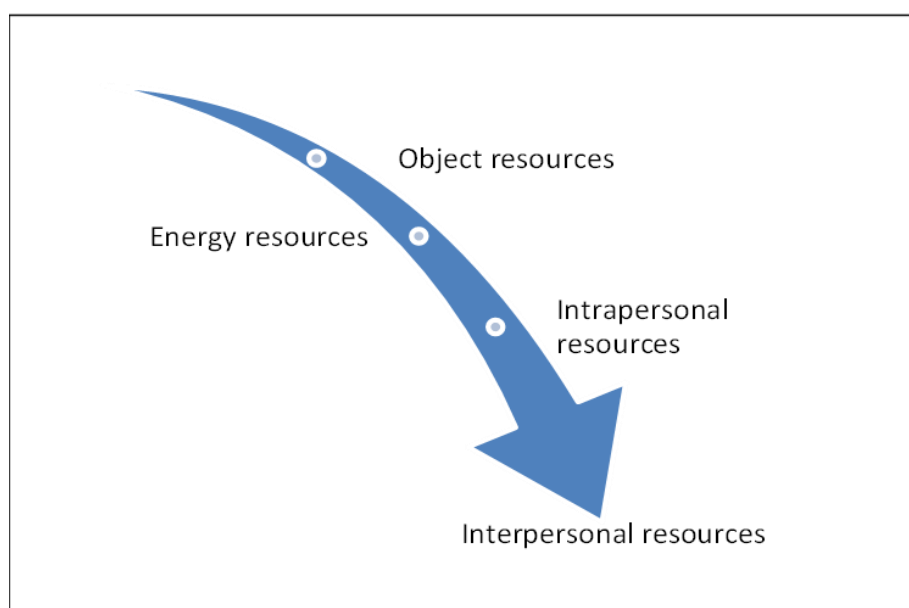


**Figure 2-5 Resource loss**

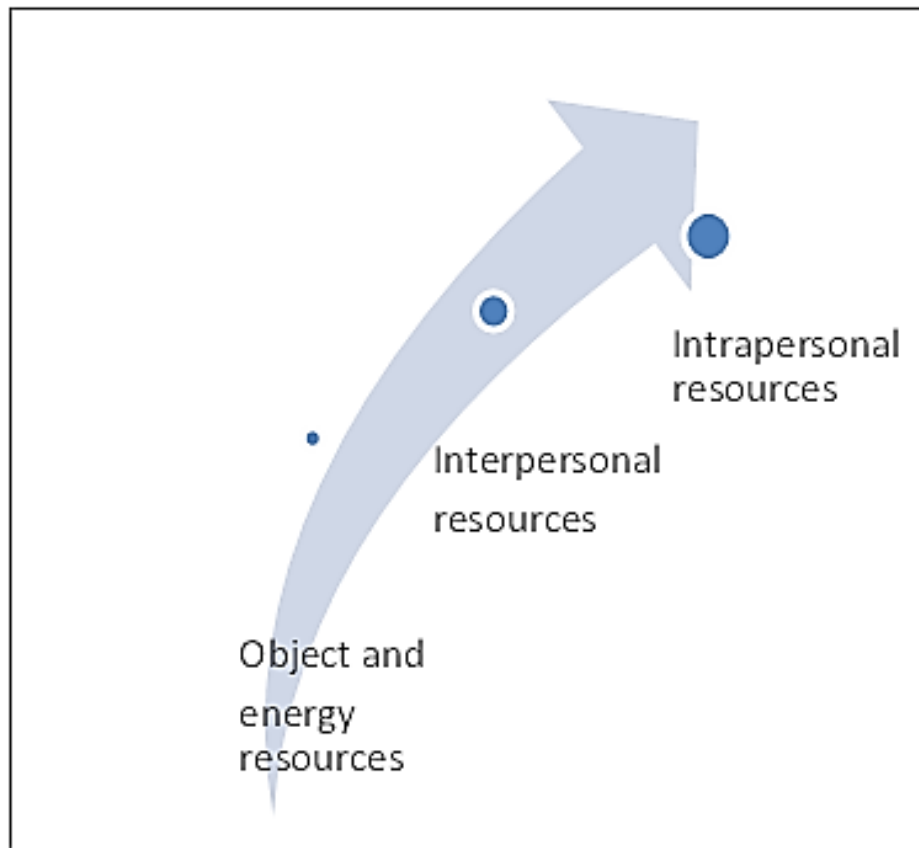


**Figure 2-6: Resource gain**

Resource gain is linked to Hobfoll's (2011:118) concept of "resource caravans" offering a compelling framework for understanding how collective resources, whether personal, social or material, are mobilised and sustained within a given environmental context. This idea underscores the interconnectedness of individuals and their resources, forming resource passageways, suggesting that the strength of these caravans lies not just in the individual resources themselves but in the relationships and communal ties that bind them together, a process that can again be linked to the reciprocal proximal processes in the bio-ecological theory. Family systems theory can also be linked to both COR and the bio-ecological theory, as will be outlined next.

### **2.6.3 Family systems theory**

Family systems fit within the microsystem as described above under the bio-ecological theory. Family systems theory, drawing on the work of von Bertalanffy on general systems theory, proposes that "the family is a set of humans who stand in interrelations to one another" (Becvar *et al.*, 2023:2; Priest, 2021:5). Family systems theory highlights the

interrelatedness of family members, positing that individual behaviours and dynamics cannot be comprehensively understood in isolation. Instead, they should be viewed within the broader context of the entire family system. When considering that each family member's actions potentially influence and shape the lives of the other family members, the adverse effects of partner abuse in the family cannot be discounted. Within the complex web of relationships in families, abuse impacts the direct victim, but also the well-being and functioning of all family members in the immediate household and beyond. Family systems theory explores the intricate ways in which people relate to one another and interact within a family system, by looking at patterns, processes and relationships (Becvar *et al.*, 2023:14; Priest, 2021:5).

Becvar *et al.* (2023:15) discuss the dynamics of family boundaries, emphasising that the rigidity or openness of these boundaries significantly influences the flow of information within the system and to the outside. In the context of female partner abuse, the stigma and secrecy that surround the abuse can lead to further entrenchment of rigid boundaries, effectively isolating family members and cutting off vital support. Priest (2021:9) highlights the concept of autonomy within families, structured by specific rules and boundaries that govern family interactions.

Additionally, Priest (2021:10) notes that families operate as adaptable systems, capable of modifying their rules and boundaries in response to internal pressure or external stressors. This flexibility allows families to manage challenges while maintaining their functionality. However, a critical question emerges regarding how the autonomy of families is compromised in situations of female partner abuse, when family rules and boundaries are disrupted. In such cases, there is a legitimate concern that new rules may emerge, and broken boundaries could become normalised, as the family system accommodates the abuse dynamics through modifying rules and boundaries as directed by the perpetrator of the abuse. This adaptation raises significant issues about the long-term impact on family autonomy and the potential entrenchment of harmful patterns within the family system, placing families in cycles of on-going resource loss.

#### **2.6.4 Trauma-informed social work**

Levenson (2020:289) distinguishes trauma-informed care from trauma-specific care by emphasizing that, rather than focusing directly on the traumatic event, trauma-informed

care centres on understanding how past trauma affects clients' everyday functioning. Trauma-informed practice is critical in social work as it ensures that individuals who have been traumatised receive support that is both sensitive and effective, recognising the broad impact of trauma and fostering an environment conducive to healing and recovery (Levenson, 2020:292).

For this study, it is important to note the preference of Wilson *et al.* (2015:586) for the term "trauma-informed approach" rather than trauma-informed care, as the latter term can carry some weight of a power hierarchy, going against the principle of shared power in trauma-informed practice. The term care can, therefore, inadvertently suggest a power hierarchy, positioning providers as experts over clients. The term "trauma-informed approach" or "trauma-informed practice" reinforces the principle of shared power, advocating for collaborative relationships between service providers and clients. In this study, the terms trauma-informed approach or trauma-informed practice are therefore used, unless authors refer specifically to trauma-informed care.

Trauma-informed practice ensures that interventions are sensitive to the lasting impact of abuse. This includes prioritising emotional safety, trust, autonomy, and cultural humility. The principles of trauma-informed practice are outlined next.

#### **2.6.4.1 Principles of trauma-informed social work practice**

Many organisations have adopted trauma-informed principles (TIPs) to develop coping strategies that help address clients' diverse challenges (Levenson, 2020). Wilson *et al.* (2015:586) did a systematic review to determine the implementation and understanding of trauma-informed practice in the context of domestic violence. The review identified six principles, namely creating an environment where individuals feel safe to express their emotions, restoring autonomy and sense of personal agency, encouraging connection, safe relationships and social support, equipping individuals with coping strategies, responding to identity, culture and contextual influences, and facilitating awareness of and enhancing strengths. These principles and practices, as outlined by Wilson *et al.* (2015:593) are included in Table 2-2.

**Table 2-2 Principles and practices of trauma-informed practice directed at domestic violence**

| <i>Promoting emotional safety</i>                                                 | <i>Restoring choice and control</i>                                         | <i>Facilitating connection</i>                                                                                              | <i>Supporting coping</i>                                                                        | <i>Responding to identity and context</i>                                   | <i>Building strengths</i>                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The physical environment of the organization is designed to minimize triggers.    | Staff foreground survivors' way of telling their story.                     | Staff invest in relationships with survivors.                                                                               | Staff promote an approach to coping that explicitly addresses the effects of domestic violence. | The physical space is inclusive and welcoming to people of all backgrounds. | Staff recognize and value strengths.                                    |
| Staff adopt a nonjudgmental approach about DV in all interactions with survivors. | Staff provide opportunities for survivors to shape the focus of their work. | Staff create opportunities for survivors to connect with each other.                                                        | Staff support survivors in strengthening and developing strategies for coping.                  | Staff are affirming of and responsive to multiple identities.               | Staff provide opportunities for survivors to develop leadership skills. |
| The program develops and communicates policies clearly and safely.                | Survivors have opportunities to influence program services.                 | Staff support survivors' parenting relationships.<br><br>Staff support relationships between survivors and their community. | Staff support a holistic culture of healing.                                                    | The organization is designed to represent the diversity of its clients.     |                                                                         |

(Source: Wilson *et al.*, 2015:593)

Table 2-2 offers a comprehensive overview of how to implement trauma-informed practice to female victims of partner abuse across organisations and within shelters. The principles, often found in literature on trauma-informed practice, are outlined next.

**Safety:** Social workers need to prioritise physical and emotional or psychological safety for individuals and ensure trustworthy, and safe environments where they can share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgment or harm (Levenson, 2020). Treisman (2021:213) refers to the importance of multi-layered safety to enable traumatised individuals to counteract a sense of dysregulation and anxiety. Trauma informed practice should find expression in social work principles through demonstrating a non-threatening warmth and enabling comfort.

**Trust, trustworthiness and transparency:** Kimberly and Parsons (2017:563) highlight that traumatic experiences can significantly undermine trust and lead to feelings of powerlessness (Treisman, 2021:374). Transparency is therefore essential in all decision-making processes and goal-setting for social work interventions (Easton-Calabria, 2022:3). Transparency should be demonstrated through clear communication, honesty, and consistent behaviour. Social workers should keep clients informed about the



services, processes, and expectations in a transparent manner. Moreover, the pace of intervention processes should align with clients' needs. Language used should be age-appropriate and culturally sensitive. Terminology should be congruent with client expectations and preferences (Kimberly & Parsons, 2017:563). It is important to recognise that certain terms, such as *victim*, *battering*, and *abuse*, might be uncomfortable for female victims of partner abuse.

**Empowerment, agency and choice:** Social workers should encourage clients to make choices and be active participants in their own intervention or support plans. To uphold this principle, it is essential to prioritise autonomy, recognise strengths, show respect and facilitate decision-making to enhance a sense of personal agency. Collaboration with victims is crucial to understand their needs, experiences and frustrations (Jumarali *et al.*, 2021:2). Levenson (2020:209) argues that social workers should conduct assessments and evaluations in a way that avoids re-traumatisation and disempowerment. Trauma-informed social work should therefore focus on victims' strengths and resilience, rather than just deficits or problems. Social workers should help clients build on their existing resources and coping mechanisms (Levenson, 2020:209).

**Collaboration and mutuality:** Tarshish *et al.* (2025:227) emphasise a partnership between the social worker and client to enhance collaboration. Levenson (2020:209) asserts that social workers can empower victims by refraining from giving unsolicited advice. Social work engagement skills involve active attention and listening. A social worker must collaborate with clients to set goals and develop intervention plans to ensure a holistic approach. Furthermore, fostering a mutual and respectful partnership is essential, as it values the clients' perspectives and experiences. In this regard, Easton-Calabria (2022:3) refers to "levelling power differences" between staff and clients.

**Recognition of cultural, historical, and gender issues** Levenson (2020:209) underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity among social workers, as well as an awareness of how trauma affects people from diverse backgrounds. Victims' problems need to be acknowledged, bearing in mind historical and gender-related trauma and its impact on individuals and communities. Social workers should approach each client's situation with an understanding of how past traumas shape their current experiences, while also validating their experiences (Kimberly & Parsons, 2017:563). Starns (2025)

indicates that social workers should consider the effects of culture on social work interventions and should have an attitude of cultural humility with a willingness to learn about their clients' diverse cultural backgrounds (Speck *et al.*, 2023:1). Malchiodi (2020:41) emphasises the importance of incorporating cultural preferences into intervention planning and implementation. This perspective aligns with the bio-ecological theory that suggests that one cannot separate individual development from the cultural processes as they are deemed intertwined (Vélez-Agosto *et al.*, 2017:271). By acknowledging the interplay between culture and personal development, practitioners can create more effective and relevant interventions that respect and enhance the lived experiences of those they serve.

**Peer support:** People with shared living contexts, histories, culture and experiences should be part of teams in organisations (Easton-Calabria, 2022:3). Mutual support from others who had experienced abuse can enhance an environment of compassion, empathy and understanding. According to Tutty (2025:2886), counselling in groups for women who have experienced intimate partner abuse offers a vital space for connection and healing. These groups help reduce the isolation that often accompanies abusive relationships, allowing participants to realize they are not alone in their experiences.

Through shared stories and mutual support, women begin to understand that their emotional responses are valid and common. Whether members are still deciding to leave their partners or have already done so, the diversity of perspectives enriches the group process. As Tutty (2025:2886) notes, this sense of shared experience, which Yalom calls the “same boat” phenomenon, can significantly ease feelings of guilt and shame (Rusu & Davis, 2022). Tutty (2025:2887) also highlights that while the structure of group counselling may vary, the emotional benefits remain consistent. Her research found that groups offered some long-term advantages and that the collective support among members was one of the most healing aspects. Ultimately, Tutty (2025:2887) emphasises that the strength of group counselling lies in its ability to create a safe, empathetic environment where women can learn, grow, and reclaim their sense of self. Group counselling for abused female partners offers distinct therapeutic advantages that go beyond individual interventions. As Pratiwi *et al.* (2022:35) emphasise, these group settings allow women to learn vicariously by listening to others who have faced similar forms of abuse. This shared space fosters empathy and helps participants develop

practical solutions to interpersonal challenges. Through collective problem-solving and emotional exchange, women begin to understand their own situations more clearly and feel less isolated in their experiences.

Pratiwi *et al.* (2022:35) also highlight that group interventions enhance social functioning by encouraging interaction among women with comparable struggles. This engagement helps them build confidence and apply new coping strategies more effectively in their personal lives. The group dynamic creates a sense of solidarity and emotional safety, empowering abused female partners to reclaim their voice and rebuild their self-worth. Ultimately, group counselling provides a supportive environment where healing is nurtured through shared understanding and mutual growth.

Speck *et al.* (2023:2) contend that social workers must receive consistent training and capacity building sessions, be thoroughly trained in trauma-informed practice, so they can provide compassionate and ethical support and recognise trauma symptoms, respond appropriately, and have a positive impact on the life of a traumatised female victim of abuse. This could enhance their trauma counselling intervention skills and build resilience through learning activities, concentrating more on coping strategies.

Integrating trauma-informed principles into practice allows for better service to clients who have suffered trauma and assist them on their path to healing and recovery. This approach not only benefits clients but also enhances the overall effectiveness of social work interventions. These elements should form part of a victim empowerment strategy.

### **2.6.5 Empowerment approach**

Social work is fundamentally centred on the principle of empowerment, as highlighted by Kam (2021:329), who views social work as a profession aimed at empowerment. In the context of trauma, Rothschild (2025) reinforces this focus on empowerment by asserting that empowerment is a foundational principle of trauma recovery. Furthermore, Postmus and Stylianou (2023:23) define empowerment as “a theory, an intervention and an outcome” rooted in the belief that individuals can enhance their lives through their ability to exert control over their environments. Together, these insights illustrate the critical role of empowerment, not only in social work practice, but also in the broader context of personal recovery and self-improvement.

Empowerment theory emphasizes the dynamic interaction between persons and their environments, and on building the personal skills and competencies necessary to overcome adversity (Lee & Hudson, 2017:143). Effectively addressing female partner abuse requires a commitment to the empowerment approach within social work and a practice grounded in restoring agency, dignity, and self-determination to survivors. Within the sphere of female partner abuse, the empowerment approach serves as a transformative tool that restores autonomy, encourages healing, and promotes meaningful participation in decision-making. The empowerment approach aligns well with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, which illustrates how a woman's lived experience is shaped by multiple, interrelated systems: from intimate relationships (microsystem) to societal norms and policies (macrosystem).

Female survivors often navigate overlapping layers of marginalisation, including economic hardship, cultural stigma, and inadequate legal support. By acknowledging these systemic influences, empowerment interventions can more effectively respond to the complexity of abuse. The Ubuntu philosophy, with its emphasis on communal care, social solidarity and shared humanity (Taylor *et al.*, 2018:201), further enhances this framework. Ubuntu encourages a compassionate and relational approach to healing that affirms the dignity of survivors and underscores the value of social justice and economic equity. Together, these frameworks inform a holistic, culturally sensitive response to female partner abuse that empowers women not only to recover but also to actively shape safer, more just communities.

As outlined in Figure 2-7, Kam (2021:329) integrates three important concepts in what is called the EPS (Empowerment, participation and strengths) model, whereby the empowerment approach is strengthened with the addition of participation and the strengths perspective. This model underscores the importance of not only empowering individuals, but also engaging them actively in the process, thereby fostering a more holistic approach to trauma intervention. Similarly, Herman and van der Kolk (2020:66) introduce the concept of strength-based empowerment, highlighting the synergy between strengths and empowerment.

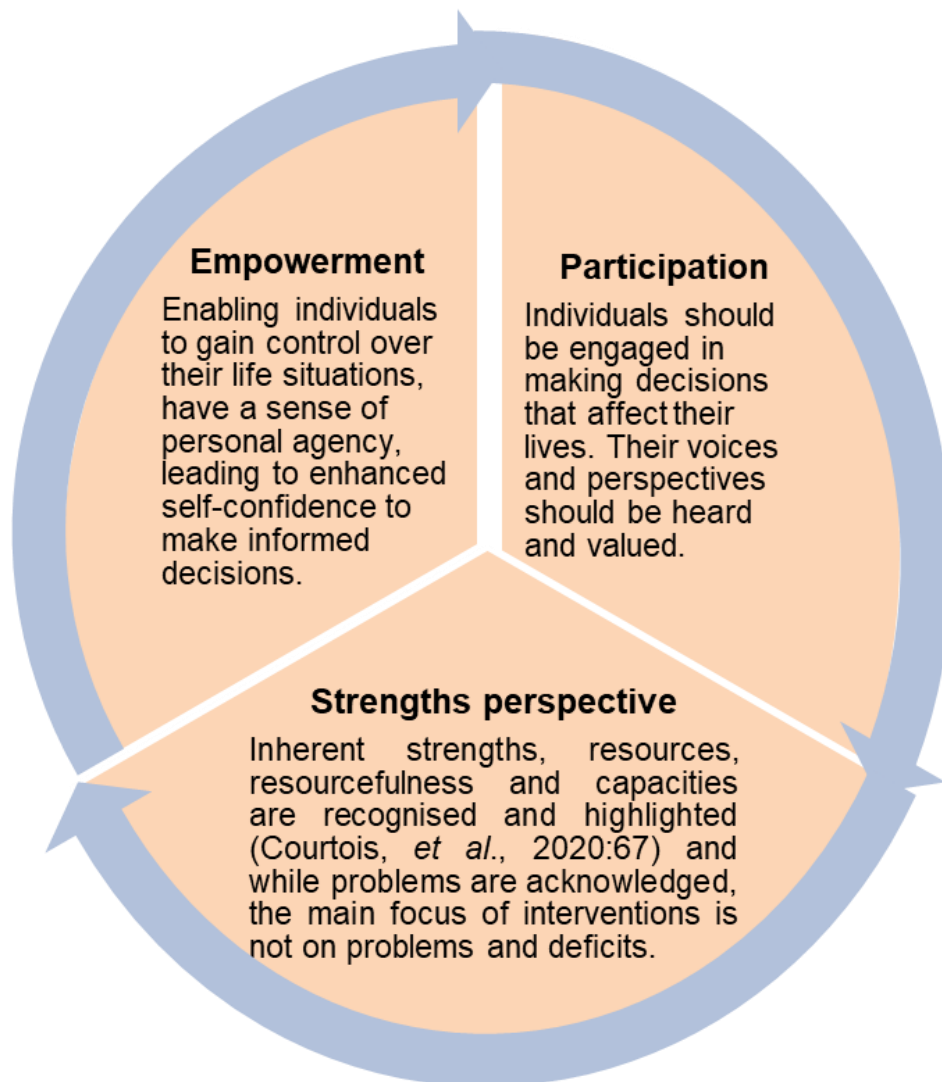


**Figure 2-7 Compiled based on Kam's (2021:333) EPS model**

The EPS model recognises that clients have many interpersonal and intrapersonal resources and strengths. Kam (2021:336) views participation as the mechanism to achieve empowerment, based on the capabilities and strengths of the client. When working with traumatised individuals both the trauma and the rights of individuals should be considered. Tarshish *et al.* (2025:227) are of the opinion that the problem should be outlined and understood in terms of the rights of the client that were violated. Added to this the client's sense of injustice should be validated. In summary, empowerment-focused interventions aim to restore a sense of agency and self-worth, often eroded by abuse, by helping individuals reclaim control over their decisions and lives.

### 2.6.6 Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory offers valuable insights into how female partner abuse affects autonomy, self-determination and relatedness. According to this theory, individuals have three foundational psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Understanding the interplay of these needs can inform interventions addressing the effects of female partner abuse, as fulfilling these needs fosters resilience and recovery. The fulfilment of these needs is significantly influenced by the contexts or social structures in which a person lives and develops (Kirzner & Miserandino, 2023:657). Nikrouy *et al.* (2025:1390) assert that addressing unmet needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness in the context of partner violence can provide valuable insights and offer direction for intervention. The three needs are outlined next:

**Table 2-3: Three needs under self-determination theory**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Autonomy</b>    | Autonomy is linked to personal agency, which is the sense that a person has control over their own life. Van der Kolk (2014:97) refers to personal agency as “owning your life”. Autonomy is eroded by exposure to trauma when a person feels unsafe in their bodies (Van der Kolk, 2014:98). Autonomy is about “feeling self-determined instead of being a pawn at the mercy of forces outside of one’s control” (Kirzner & Miserandino, 2023:657). Self-determination, autonomy and personal agency is clearly severely affected by female partner abuse, with low self-esteem, or feeling inadequate. Interventions should address this need by setting goals with victims in terms of how they could restore their autonomy and self-determination (Nikrouy <i>et al.</i> , 2025:1390). |
| <b>Competence</b>  | IPV diminishes a victim’s sense of competence (Nikrouy <i>et al.</i> , 2025:1390). A diminished sense of competence in victims of female partner abuse can make it difficult for them to move away from the abusive situation, to seek help or to become independent of the abuser (Nikrouy <i>et al.</i> , 2025:1400).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Relatedness</b> | Autonomy and competence happen within relationships (Kirzner & Miserandino, 2023:657). An abuser often employs isolation as a strategy to maintain control over a victim of abuse. Victims’ connections to social support and emotional resources are effectively severed. Such challenges to relatedness can perpetuate the cycle of abuse when victims have nowhere to turn to for help (Nikrouy <i>et al.</i> , 2025:1390).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

The three needs outlined above are either fulfilled or blocked in the systems where an individual functions (Hindman *et al.*, 2025:2; Kirzner & Miserandino, 2023:657). In microsystems, inverse proximal processes, such as abuse, can prevent a person from

flourishing and fulfilling needs regarding autonomy, competence and relatedness. In microsystems, negative proximal processes, such as abuse, can hinder a person's ability to thrive and satisfy these needs. Consequently, an individual's self-determination is significantly impacted by the compatibility, or lack thereof, between the person and their environment or context. When these needs are obstructed, it can lead to a diminished sense of agency and hinder personal growth, underscoring the importance of a supportive and conducive environment for well-being. A person is therefore affected by the nature of fit between person and the environment or context. According to self-determination theory motivation to change is linked to autonomy, when a person feels that they have choice over their situations. Motivation is also linked to competence, when people feel that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to make changes. Furthermore, motivation is linked to relationships with family, friends, peers or professional help (Kirkzner & Miserandino, 2023:657). Hindman *et al.* (2025:3) outline four processes linked to autonomy, relatedness and competence which can affect a person's well-being, namely:

**Table 2-4: Four Processes linked to Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence**

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Need-supportive</b>    | The environment and persons in it, support the person and contribute to the positive fulfilment of the fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Need-thwarting</b>     | The fulfilment of the psychological needs is undermined by constant criticism, physical abuse and isolation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Need-depriving</b>     | In the absence of meaningful connections and opportunities for choice and developing competence, victims are deprived of need-fulfilment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Pervasive contexts</b> | Pervasive contexts can refer to the proximal processes in the microsystem. In a nurturing and supportive environment, people can flourish and fulfil the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Conversely, where home environments are typified by negative patterns of criticism, controlling behaviour and other forms of abuse, victims will not be able to fulfil the needs. Hindman <i>et al.</i> (2025:3) also refer to wider influences situated in the other systems, such as toxic masculinity and the pervasive influences of patriarchy. |

For this study, the following quote by Nikrouy *et al.* (2025:1390) is important: "Recognising the unique challenges posed by unmet autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs can inform interventions and help survivors regain a sense of agency, self-worth, and social connection." Self-determination theory offer direction during trauma counselling and victim empowerment by outlining areas that could be affected by the abuse and that

could then become the focus of interventions, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness.

## **2.7 TRAUMA COUNSELLING**

In the context of victim empowerment, a good understanding of trauma counselling is essential. Knowledge and skill in trauma counselling serve as critical constructs to effectively support female victims of partner abuse. Additionally, integrating social work values, principles, and techniques is vital in the process of victim empowerment. According to Booth and Adlem (2016:24) trauma counselling refers to a planned intervention by a professional that is aimed at assisting a client to talk and explore about a frightening, unpleasant or upsetting experience and articulate fears, and elements of helplessness, so that they can better understand their feelings towards the process of healing and recovery. The conversation is purposeful as it is guided by aims and objectives and framed within social work helping processes (Booth & Adlem, 2016:25).

While it is not the aim of this chapter to outline specific interventions in detail, cognitive and narrative interventions are evidence-based trauma strategies for abused women (Ragucci *et al.*, 2024). Bieling *et al.* (2022:112) have proclaimed that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based intervention in social work practice, having been shown as effective in over 300 surveys covering a wide range of disorders (Bieling *et al.*, 2022:115; Ragucci *et al.*, 2024). These interventions will be briefly outlined, before discussing the components of trauma counselling.

### **2.7.1 Cognitive interventions**

Cognitive interventions are aimed at reframing the meaning assigned to traumatic experiences (Courtois & Ford, 2024:235). Cognitive interventions assist in reframing negative thought patterns and reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, while assertiveness training enhances confidence and communication (Ragucci *et al.*, 2024:1). There are different cognitive interventions aimed at trauma integration. Ragucci *et al.* (2024:1) refer to cognitive behavioural therapy that includes interventions such as psycho-education, anxiety management, including diaphragmatic breathing, discussions aimed at exposure of core traumatic moments, imagery and enhancing problem-solving skills and coping. According to Ellis *et al.* (2025) and



Thomlison and Thomlison (2017:54), CBT is based on the idea that changing negative thoughts into positive ones can help the mind heal. In turn, this mental healing can improve physical health and how individuals relate to their surroundings. A core premise is that altering thoughts, feelings, and daily activities can change emotional responses. For female victims of abuse, these approaches give them the tools to rebuild their sense of self, recover from trauma, and reconnect with the world in a healthier and more empowered way.

For this study, CBT is utilised to help reduce negative behavioural patterns, such as those affecting self-perception in female partners who are abused and admitted to shelters, crisis centres, and the Khuseleka One Stop Centre in the North West province. This approach aims to empower these women by enhancing their coping strategies (Van der Merwe, 2018:71). In addition, Shukla (2023:33) is of the view that CBT offers structured, evidence-based strategies to help survivors heal and cope. CBT explores the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, encouraging insight, accountability, and growth.

CBT has cognitive techniques such as stress inoculation, thought pausing, problem solving, emotive therapy, and cognitive therapy. Additionally, the three most current therapies, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy share the fundamental belief that minimizing unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and experiences fosters resilience (Bieling *et al.*, 2022:117).

### **2.7.2 Narrative and solution-focused interventions**

There is various narrative interventions aimed at trauma integration. Malchiodi (2020:243) applies narrative interventions in the context of arts-based and expressive art interventions and links narrative interventions with “multiple layers of storied expressions.”

According to McLeod (2013:253), Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) focuses on a person’s strengths rather than just their trauma, helping survivors feel more confident and in control of their lives. By recognising past successes, imagining positive futures, and setting small, achievable goals, it builds self-worth and encourages progress. At the same

time, using counselling skills like active listening, thoughtful conversation, and working together to set goals creates a safe and supportive space. These tools help the abused female partners of abuse feel heard, respected, and empowered to make their own choices and move forward with hope.

Instead of forcing women to leave their partners, support services should help them feel stronger and more in control. This includes offering 24-hour hotlines, trauma counselling, safety planning with trained professionals, legal help, and emergency shelters (Willhite, 2025:6). Counsellors should be kind and understanding. As Williams (2024:4) point out, even in abusive relationships, there may have been moments of love or trust. Helping survivors means believing in their strengths and supporting them as they rebuild their lives in their own way.

### **2.7.3 Key components when counselling victims of female partner abuse**

In supporting female victims of partner abuse, social workers must draw upon a range of social work tools and techniques designed to address both the immediate safety concerns and the long-term emotional, social, and economic effects of abuse. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, tools often refer to guiding principles and frameworks such as strengths-based assessments, empowerment models, or culturally sensitive practice while techniques refer to applied methods like case management, advocacy, home visits, group facilitation, and safety planning, (Mishra *et al*, 2023) .These resources are instrumental in victim empowerment and trauma counselling, to create a structured environment where survivors feel heard, supported, and equipped to make informed decisions.

Counselling should be designed to meet each woman's unique needs. Williams (2024:3) suggests using a trauma- and violence-informed approach, which means care should be safe, respectful, and focused on healing without causing more harm. Keepers *et al*. (2024:1024) adds that counselling should include safety planning, emotional support, and help with legal and housing needs. Pollino (2023:2006) attributes specific aspects leading to turning points in the journey of victims to survivors, including social support from family and friends, taking control over the trauma narrative by correctly labelling it and engaging in activism linked to the abuse.

### **2.7.3.1 Counselling skills**

Some of the principles and skills of trauma-informed practice, discussed above, are also relevant in trauma counselling. Şenocak and Demirkıran (2023) contend that supporting social workers through education and training is essential for equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to counsel abused female partners who have experienced violence from male counterparts. By strengthening their professional competencies and self-efficacy, social workers are better prepared to offer empathetic, informed, and effective interventions in complex and emotionally charged situations (Şenocak & Demirkıran, 2023). Training also enhances their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life practice, fostering resilience and ethical decision-making when working with survivors of intimate partner abuse. This foundation ensures that social workers can establish safe, empowering spaces where women feel valued, acknowledged, and supported in their journeys toward healing and recovery.

### **2.7.3.2 Therapeutic relationship**

Shukla (2023:31) outlines key components that should be integral to counselling victims of abuse, of which the therapeutic relationship is the foundation. Social workers can incorporate aspects of counselling that align with social work principles, such as warmth, unconditional regard, and respect for clients.

### **2.7.3.3 Active listening**

For women who have experienced partner abuse, recovery involves more than just leaving the harmful relationship. Recovery also encompasses healing emotionally and mentally. Booth and Adlem (2016:34) emphasise that counsellors and social workers employ a variety of social work techniques, skills and theories that help women understand their situation and make informed choices to improve it. Central to this process is the skill of active listening, which helps build a trusting relationship between the client and the professional.

Essential procedures, such as social work assessments, should be used to identify the effects of abuse on a person's thinking, emotions, and behaviour. Levenson (2020:288) highlights that social workers should deeply attend to the survivors' narrative, paying close attention to their words, tone, and emotional cues, while acknowledging the unique

way they experience and interpret the world. Such attentiveness not only affirms the reality of the female victim of partner abuse but also fosters a safer, more trusting therapeutic environment where healing can begin. Key elements such as trust, safety, hope, respect, cooperation, participation, and shared power are part of trauma counselling.

#### **2.7.3.4 Avoid re-traumatisation**

Within a trauma-informed practice framework, social workers must actively safeguard against re-traumatisation during all interactions with survivors. As Levenson (2020:288-289) points out, effective support begins with de-escalation strategies that help calm rather than agitate the victim, especially during moments of distress. Practitioners should uphold the survivor's sense of autonomy, particularly by avoiding any limitation of her bodily movement, as this can echo past experiences of control or abuse.

#### **2.7.3.5 Cultural sensitivity and cultural humility**

Cultural sensitivity and cultural humility are important components linked to trauma counselling. Social workers must demonstrate sensitivity to the cultural belief systems of victims so that interventions are both effective and culturally appropriate (Bieling *et al.*, 2022:117). Van der Merwe (2018:69) highlights the importance of social workers practising with awareness and humility, remaining open to diversity and cultural difference rather than positioning themselves as unquestionable authorities or experts.

The Fonofale model Rankine *et al.* (2017:2778) holds promise in terms of application with different cultural groups.

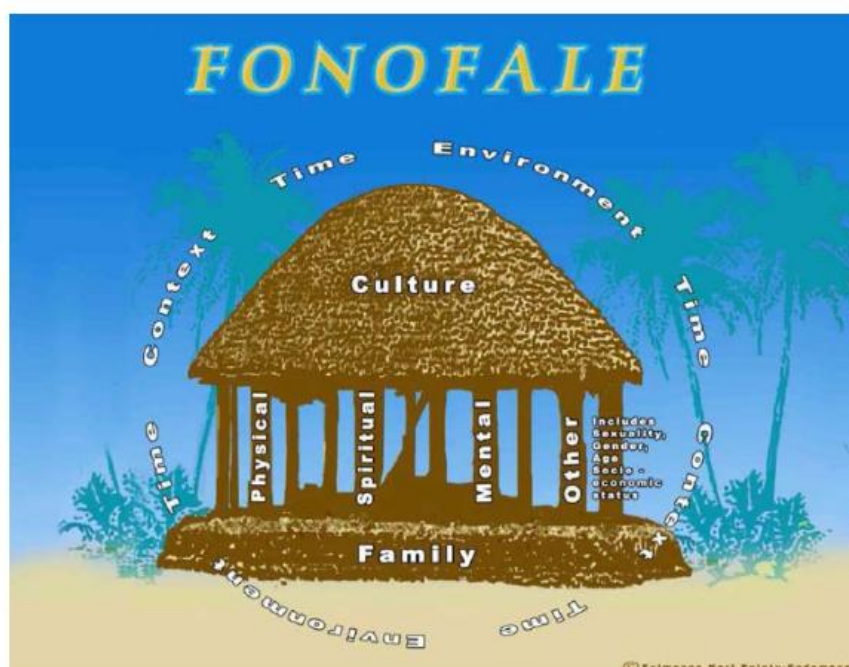


**Figure 2-8 Fonofale model**

(Source: Rankine *et al.*, 2017:2778)

The Fonofale model (Image courtesy <http://www.hauora.co.nz/pacific-health-promotion-models.html>)

The Fonofale model is a well-being framework rooted in Pacific and Māori cultures, exemplified by the structure of a well-being model meeting house. At its core, the model emphasises the family as the foundation of well-being and underscores the collectivity within the community. The roof of the structure symbolises culture and is supported by four pillars, each representing essential dimensions of well-being, namely physical health, spiritual health, mental health and additional aspects such as demographic information, financial status and sexual identity (Rankine *et al.*, 2017:2794). This holistic approach fosters a comprehensive understanding of well-being that resonates with the cultural and communal values of Pacific people. Social workers could apply elements of the Fonofale model in their work with female victims of partner abuse and adapt the model according to the needs of their clients in their specific contexts.

#### **2.7.3.6 Trauma counselling process (phases)**

The counsellor should allow the client to talk about what is troubling them, i.e., the problem at hand. The counsellor has to listen attentively so that she can summarise and

point out areas of concern needing the counsellor's attention and intervention. This phase signifies the client's expectations from the counselling process and mapping an intervention plan together with the client (Booth & Adlem, 2016:37). Booth and Adlem (2016) assert that after assessing the client's situation and problem identification is done, the counsellor then assesses thoroughly as to whether the client can benefit from the counselling session. The client is then made aware of the options to wilfully continue with the session or withdraw from being assisted. The assessment should be helpful to target realistic and attainable goals. The counsellor should apply basic counselling skills to create an enabling environment and rapport with the client. There should be an agreement between a counsellor and the client on the set goals for counselling and task. The principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence should be integrated throughout the process of counselling by the counsellor (Booth & Adlem, 2016:32-33). Booth and Adlem (2016:32) highlight that after an initial assessment is conducted and setting the goals, contracting should follow. A contract needs to be detailed, self-explanatory and serves to guide the activities and expectations of both the client and the counsellor. In this stage, the counsellor demonstrates knowledge, expertise to understand and analyse the client's problem area (Booth & Adlem, 2016:38).

This last phase is the termination phase, where the relationship between the social worker and the client comes to an end. During this phase, the client can make use of the skills acquired, such as communication skills and problem-solving skills and apply them in a real-life situation. This is a crucial stage that requires the social worker to make some direct contacts with other entities for the referral system. The counsellor should make some consistent conversation with the client, reminding about the termination phase that has to end anytime (Booth & Adlem, 2016:38). Based on the literature outlined in this section, the researcher compiled the following figure to indicate core aspects that needs to be included in the counselling process.

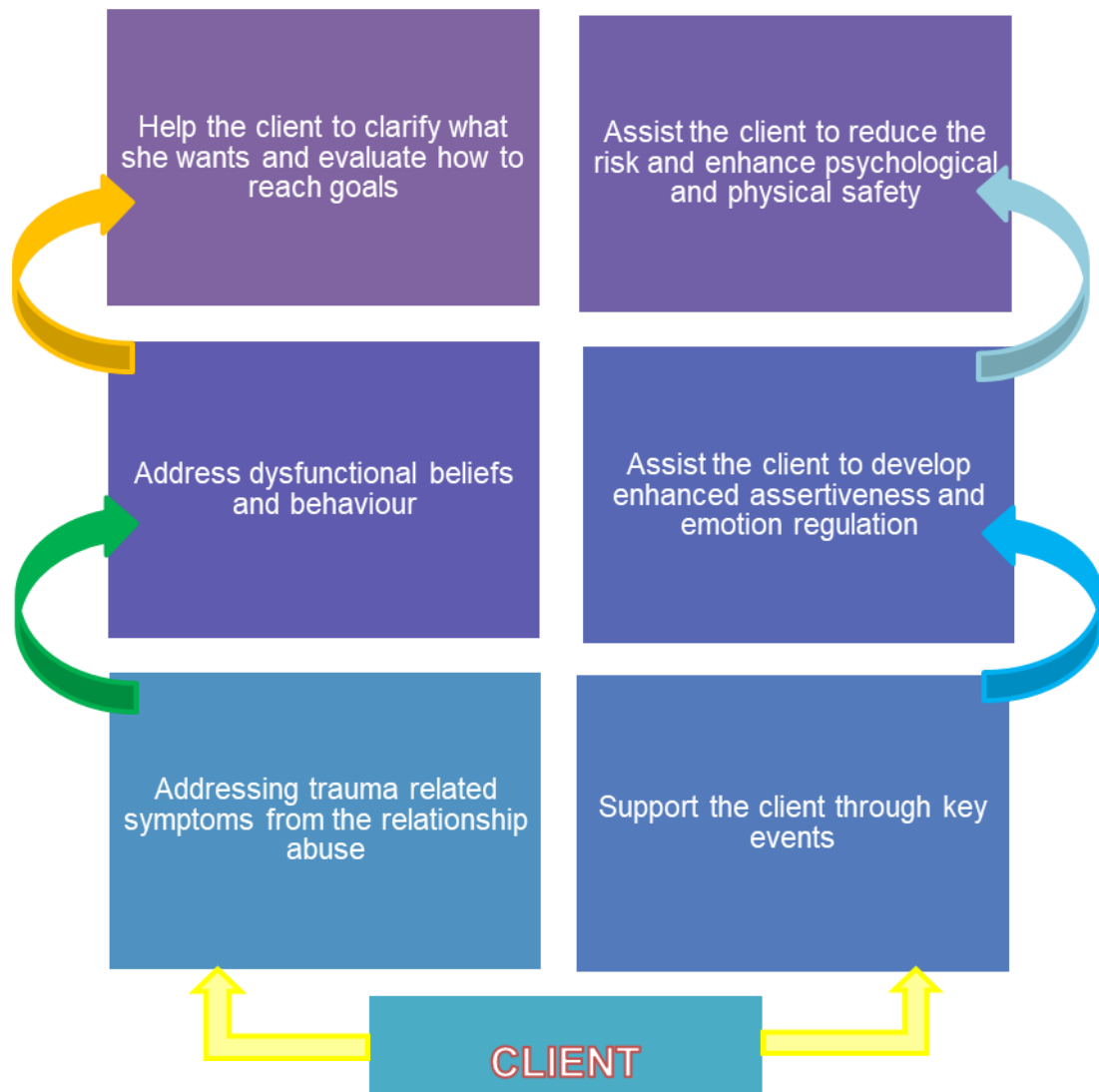


**Figure 2-9: Helping the client who has suffered abuse**

Social workers should apply their counselling skills and knowledge of the social work helping process to contract and set goals, while always making sure that the therapeutic relationship remains strong and supportive of the helping process. Emotional regulation throughout the process should ensure that clients have a sense of emotional safety while working with their traumatic experiences. Social workers should also support female victims of partner abuse through key events, such as returning to their homes, court procedures or starting employment.

Support systems for abused female partners in the North West Province of South Africa must be trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and tailored to each woman's unique

circumstances. Rather than pressuring survivors into immediate decisions, these interventions should prioritize emotional safety, personal agency, and gradual healing.

According to Yadav (2024:6) social workers have a core role to support women who are subjected to abuse by their male partners. Social workers should give emotional support, facilitate access to safe housing and legal resources, and advocate for the rights and safety of the victims. Through counselling, empowerment programmes, and coordinated community responses, social workers help abused female partners to rebuild their lives and navigate the path toward healing and independence.

## **2.8 RELEVANT POLICIES AND LEGISLATION LINKED TO FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE AND VICTIM EMPOWERMENT**

This section describes the various legislative mandates and policy frameworks in South Africa that address gender-based violence. These are the *Domestic Violence Act* No 116 of 1998, National strategic plan on gender-based violence and femicide 2020-2030, National intimate partner abuse and violence survey, *Criminal Law (Sexual Offence and Related Matters)* Act No 32 of 2007, National Development Plan Vision 2030, *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 (Chapter 2 Bill of Rights).

### **2.8.1 The Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998**

The *Domestic Violence Act* No 116 of 1998, which is premised on the foundations of human rights protection, is perhaps one of the more pronounced legal frameworks that deal with gender-based violence (Sibisi, 2023). It is a comprehensive Act that addresses and prevents domestic violence, supports, and protects victims, while setting legal punitive measures for the preparators (Vetten, 2017). This Act primarily offers relief and safety to victims of domestic violence. It defines domestic violence to include all forms of abuse such as physical, emotional, psychological, economic, verbal, and sexual (Terec-Vlad & Buruiana, 2025:47-58). It further provides the setting in which domestic violence occurs, such as in marriages, various forms of dating relationships, and in the family set-up (Sibisi, 2023).

The Act allows for the provision of protection orders. A protection order is a legal instruction given by the courts of law restricting the perpetrator of violence from further contact (violent or non-violent) with the victim (Benitez *et al.*, 2010). Failure of the



perpetrator to comply with the dictates of a protection order may lead to arrest and prosecution. The protection orders are granted by the magistrate's court in response to the applications made by the victims of domestic violence. Depending on the safety needs of victims, these orders may be temporary or final.

Further, the Act accords specific rights to victims. Victims have the right to apply for a protection order without the fear of retribution, the right to get free legal assistance and court processes (Sibisi, 2023). The police are mandated to give help to victims who might require an escort to the hospital, or their residences, where necessary (Vetten, 2017). The police are legally required to attend to cases of domestic violence promptly. The legislation further guarantees victims the right to confidentiality and safeguards them from discrimination or secondary victimisation when accessing support services. Victims of partner abuse are to be made aware of their rights as well as of the protection order application process. The Act also empowers the police to make arrests without a warrant where cases of physical harm are evident (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021).

Regardless of the Act's provisions, it is not without criticism. Key shortcomings include inconsistent enforcement by law enforcement agents who may lack adequate training, as well as resource and logistical constraints especially in remote areas (Wills & Knight, 2015). In addition, Mmamabolo *et al.* (2020:23) indicate that there are some internal and external challenges that the South African Police Service (SAPS) face that affects rendering of a victim-friendly client service. Amongst others, some of these challenges are inadequate capacity of frontline officials, inadequate resources, allocation and mobilisation. A lack of proper management of Victim-Friendly Rooms (VFRs) undermines the provision of support services, and language barriers impede communication and understanding. Additionally, the ambiguity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders leads to confusion, while poor access to information limits the awareness and engagement of affected individuals. The insufficient knowledge of relevant regulatory frameworks, policies, procedures and programmes among personnel further complicates efforts to create a supportive environment for survivors. Externally, the challenges are amplified by poor coordination of the gender-based violence calendar of events and activities. Insufficient cooperation among government departments and relevant stakeholders hampers collaborative efforts to combat GBV effectively.

Victims also encounter challenges to access support, including stigma, fear of reprisal, and emotional ties with the abuser, which further complicate the effective implementation of the Act (Sibisi, 2023). While the Act is a milestone in the fight against domestic violence in South Africa, it is essential to implement measures such as public awareness campaigns, capacity building for law enforcement personnel, and provision of legal support for victims. These initiatives are crucial to ensure that the objectives of the Act are attained.

### **2.8.2 National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide 2020- 2030**

To eradicate gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide through a coordinated national strategy, South Africa crafted a comprehensive framework, which is the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP GBVF) 2020–2030 (Deane, 2024a). The strategy was crafted as a direct response to high incidences of GBV perpetrated against vulnerable people such as women and children (Mofokeng *et al.*, 2024; *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996). This is a strategic plan that originated on macrosystem level and could hopefully filter through to improve lives in the microsystems where female partner abuse occurs.

This strategy's aims to achieve a gender-based violence and femicide free South Africa by 2030 (Deane, 2024a). The main focus is to protect women, children and individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+. In addition, the strategy aims to foster an environment that is safe, and inclusive, while also addressing the root causes of GBV. The strategic plan emphasises the importance of prevention and other supportive mechanisms for the victims, such as justice (Deane, 2024a).

The strategy is built on six key pillars:

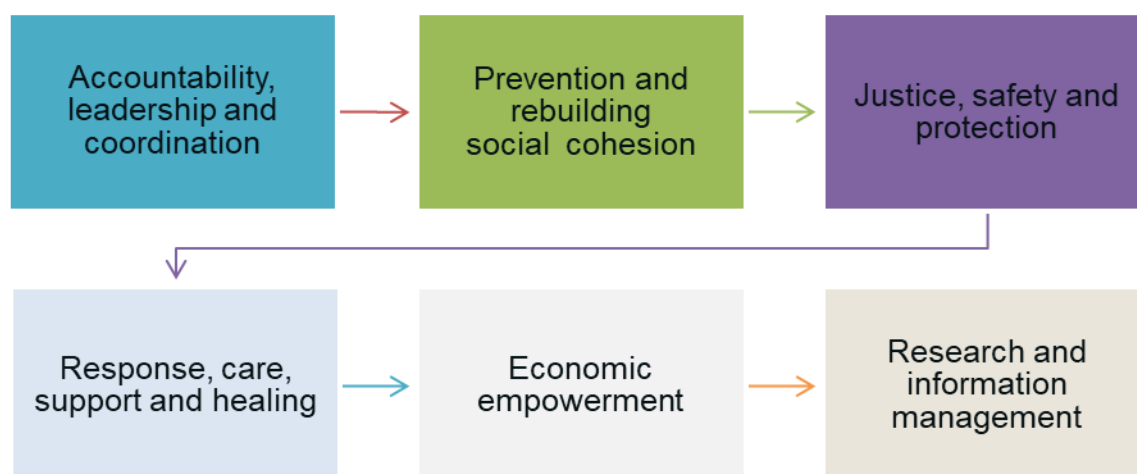


**Figure 2-10: Six pillars of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide 2020- 2030**

In Table 2-5 the six pillars are outlined in more detail.

**Table 2-5: The six pillars of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide**

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Accountability, leadership, and coordination</b> | This pillar deals with government departments, civil society and the private sector making sure that they are accountable when responding to GBV. It primarily focuses on strengthening various structures and the building of the GBV council which is mandated with the NSP's implementation and to make sure that all the sectors work together (NSP RSA, 2020).                                          |
| <b>Prevention and rebuilding social cohesion</b>    | This pillar is underpinned by prevention, so its focus is societal behaviours and norms that lead to violence. There are numerous undertakings under this pillar such as community mobilisation, educational campaigns and promoting men to be part of the fight against violence.                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Justice, safety, and protection</b>              | The aim of this pillar is to make justice accessible for the survivors of GBV by restructuring the legal process and making sure that systems such as the judiciary and police respond timeously and effectively to GBV cases. The restructuring process includes capacity development for law enforcement agents and judiciary as well as prioritising GBV cases and instituting safe spaces for reporting. |
| <b>Response, care, support and healing</b>          | This pillar seeks to provide sufficient support for GBV victims, including psychosocial support, and health care services. The support also focuses on the physical and emotional recovery of the survivors.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Economic empowerment</b>                         | This pillar underlines economic independence for the survivors as a way for empowerment. It seeks to support programs that increases economic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                            | opportunities for women especially those who could be at risk or survivors of GBV.                                                                                          |
| <b>Research and information management</b> | This pillar promotes mobilisation of resources for research and collecting data on GBV incidents as well as monitoring and evaluation of the activities of NSP (RSA, 2020). |

For this research, three pillars are particularly relevant, namely the response to female victims of partner abuse as well as their healing and support provided to them. Linked to their overall empowerment enhancing their economic power is especially significant, as economic abuse is often part of their overall abuse. Additionally, this study aligns with the pillar focused on research and information management in support of data-driven approaches to address GBV.

The NSP is responsible for setting targets and deploys roles and targets to various government departments, civil society, local municipalities and the private sector (NSP RSA, 2020). However, like many government initiatives, the NSP faces implementation challenges that include resources constraints, varying levels of stakeholder commitment, and resistance from the society (Deane, 2024a; Mofokeng *et al.*, 2024). To achieve its objectives, it is essential to address these challenges and foster a culture that does not tolerate GBV.

### **2.8.3 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act No 32 of 2007**

The *Criminal Law (sexual offence and related matters) Act* No 32 of 2007 aims at protecting South African citizens from various forms of sexual violence, enhances the prosecution of offenders, and offers support to victims of sexual crime (De Bruyn, 2018). The Law defines and clarifies a wide array of sexual offences and gives legal guidance on how sexual offences are dealt with. A primary objective of this legislation is to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation, ensuring that South Africa's legal framework aligns with international human rights standards (Ali *et al.*, 2024). By providing clarity on sexual crime definitions, the Act criminalises all types and forms of sexual abuse and provides victims with access to justice and various support mechanisms.

Through this Act, the traditional understanding of sex crime is expanded beyond the confines of rape to include a wide array of offenses (Ali *et al.*, 2024; De Bruyn, 2018),

including all forms of penetration (non-consensual) across all genders. Sexual assault is defined to also cover non-penetrative sexual violations like exposure and touching. Forcing an individual to perform sexual acts on another or on themselves is considered under compelled sexual acts. Children and mentally disabled are also protected (McQuoid-Mason, 2008). The legal age of consent is set and all situations where consent is not legally binding are defined, such as under-age and various incapacitation (McQuoid-Mason, 2008). The Act further criminalises the exposure of minors to pornography and incest. A national register for sex offenders is established under this Act which prohibits offenders from working closely with the vulnerable groups (Hansungule, 2015).

Through this Act, victims of sexual violence are accorded access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) which helps reduce the occurrence of HIV among victims who would have been exposed to HIV infection (De Bruyn, 2018). Health care providers are obliged, with utmost professionalism and sensitivity, to offer immediate medical care and psychological counselling to the victims. The prosecution of offenders is a central focus of this Act. The Act provides guidelines for the prosecution of suspects of sexual offences and enhances procedures for investigations and evidence collection (Hansungule, 2015). The Act prioritises the dignity of victims and seeks to minimise their further victimisation. It mandates minimum sentencing for offences, imposes harsh sentences for repeat offenders, and includes rehabilitation programmes for those convicted (Hansungule, 2015). While the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related matters) Act* No 32 of 2007 is a critical tool in the quest to end sexual violence in South Africa, its effectiveness hinges on several key factors. There remains a pressing need for increased awareness, comprehensive training for officials, protection for victims, and effective operational enforcement to ensure the law achieves its intended outcomes.

#### **2.8.4 National Development Plan Vision 2030**

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030, coined by the National Planning Commission in 2013 (National Planning Commission, 2013), is a strategic government initiative that seeks to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and advance inclusive and equitable economic growth in the country by 2030 (Chigova, 2021). The NDP promotes multi-stakeholder collaboration and presents a long-term vision for South

Africa that addresses the nation's current challenges while laying the groundwork for a prosperous society (Matyana & Thusi, 2023).

The plan has primary objectives which are poverty elimination (through economic expansion and employment creation), reducing inequality (through creating fair access to opportunities and services), and fostering social cohesion (National Planning Commission, 2013). To attain these objectives, the plan is premised around 7 crucial pillars:

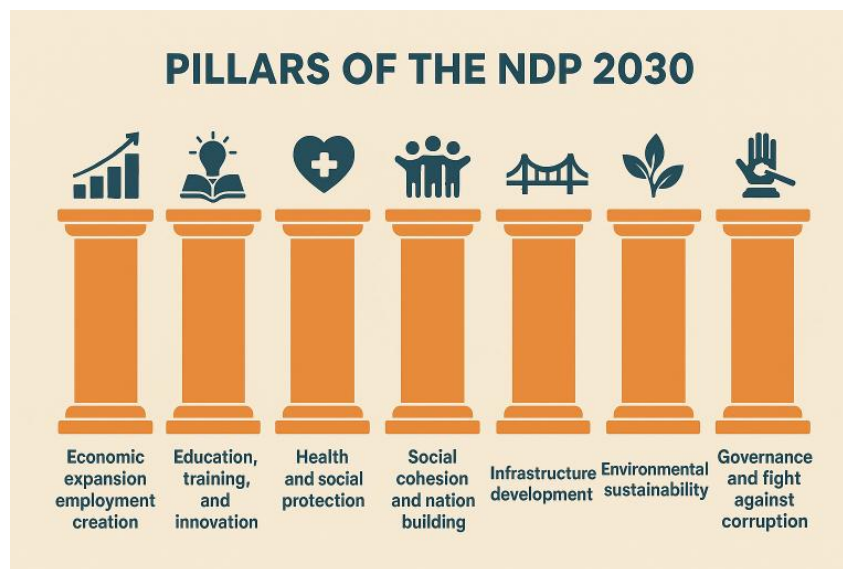


**Figure 2-11: Pillars of the NDP 2030**

Figure 2.11 Pillars of the NDP 2030 (Image created by Co-Pilot based on the 7 pillars of the National Development Plan)

The plan's focus on reducing inequality and fostering social cohesion align with policies and legislation that seek to address gender-based violence in South Africa. The NDP emphasises the need for coordination among the various levels of government (national, provincial, and local) to achieve the established actionable targets with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Mbanda & Fourie, 2020). Additionally, the plan highlights the importance of public and private partnerships also in driving its objectives. The success of the NDP is largely contingent upon the strides that the government makes in issues around economic instability, infrastructure availability, skills, and policy implementation (Mbanda & Fourie, 2020).

### **2.8.5 Constitution - Act No 108 of 1996 (chapter 2 Bill of Rights)**

Chapter 2 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 (Act No. 108), is the Bill of Rights, which guarantees human rights to all South Africans and is a pillar of democracy in the country (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996; Oechsli, 2015). The Bill of Rights protects and promotes the rights of all people such as dignity, freedom, equality and justice and compels the South African government to fulfil these rights (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996). The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the RSA Constitution protects the following key rights in relation to GBV.

**Equality (Section 9):** Every woman has the right to be treated equally, without discrimination based on gender, race, or background. No one may deny her justice or opportunity because she is a woman.

**Human dignity (Section 10):** Every woman has worth. Her dignity must be respected and protected, regardless of what she has been through.

**Life (Section 11):** No person may take a woman's life or endanger it. Her life is valuable and legally protected.

**Freedom and security of the person (Section 12):** Women have the right to live free from all forms of violence. No one may harm, threaten, or imprison them physically, emotionally, or sexually.

**Privacy (Section 14):** A woman's personal life, communication, and safety must be protected. She has the right to make decisions about her body and life without interference.

**Freedom of expression (Section 16):** Every woman can speak out about her experiences and emotions. She should never be silenced, blamed, or intimidated for sharing her truth.

**Freedom of association (Section 18):** Women are free to join support groups, take part in activist movements, and form connections with others who share their purpose or pain.

**Freedom of movement and residence (Section 21):** No one may control where a woman goes. She has the right to leave abusive environments and choose safe spaces where she can heal and rebuild.

**Children's rights (Section 28):** Girls deserve special protection. They must be shielded from harm and given love, education, and support to grow up in safety.

**Education (Section 29):** Every girl and woman has the right to learn. Education empowers her to break free from abuse and claim new opportunities.

**Access to information (Section 32):** Women must be able to get the information they need—about their rights, services, shelters, and legal options—to make informed, safe decisions.

**Access to courts (Section 34):** Survivors have the right to take their cases to court. They are entitled to fair hearings, legal support, and justice.

The South African Constitution is powerful and has a constitutional mandate to protect people from any form of abuse while guaranteeing people's democratic rights. The Constitution reinforces South Africa's constitutional obligation to human rights and social transformation. To foster inclusivity within society, it is the collective responsibility of all citizens and the government institutions to uphold and protect these rights.

## **2.9 VICTIM EMPOWERMENT POLICIES**

Since the origins of VEP in Western nations, the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) in SA has aimed to establish and integrate cross-sectoral and inter-departmental frameworks that provide comprehensive support, protection, and empowerment for victims of crime and violence. As noted by Citaristi (2022), the programme's core objective is to promote a human rights-based culture and contribute to the development of safe and peaceful societies through coordinated, multisectoral responses to trauma and victimization.

Internationally, VEPs have evolved to reflect diverse cultural and legal contexts, yet they share a common commitment to restorative justice, survivor-centred care, and systemic collaboration. These programmes often involve partnerships between government



agencies, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and civil society organisations to ensure that victims receive holistic support—from legal aid and counselling to shelter and reintegration services.

In South Africa, the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) is driven by the Department of Social Development (DSD) in collaboration with various partners to confront the country's widespread levels of criminal victimisation. The programme prioritises women and children, acknowledging their vulnerability and the disproportionate impact of violence in society. Introduced in 2008, the VEP was initially funded by the European Union and supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) until March 2012. This initiative was part of South Africa's broader commitment to its National Crime Prevention Strategy, aiming to strengthen support services and foster a more just and peaceful society through improved coordination and service delivery for victims of crime and trauma.

The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP), as outlined by the (Western Cape Dept. Social Development, 2024), offers comprehensive psychosocial support to female victims of partner abuse, gender-based violence (GBV), and other violent crimes. Through a trauma-informed approach, VEPs empower victims and their families to voice the emotional and psychological impact of their lived experiences, thereby fostering healing and recovery. Moreover, VEPs recognize that perpetrators may also be shaped by histories of trauma and negative mentorship, possibly as victims themselves. As Swick and Williams (2006:376) explain, such behaviour may emerge from dysfunctional interactions across the ecological spectrum—from the microsystem of the home to larger systemic influences.

In the North West province in SA, female partner abuse remains a critical social conundrum, compounded by cultural silencing and limited access to support services. Although the (Western Cape Government, 2024) and Interpol crime data identify South Africa as having persistently high levels of violence, access to this information is often restricted. This lack of transparency hinders public accountability and limits effective community-based responses to GBV. Sudenkaarne *et al.* (2023:429) contend that addressing systemic barriers and expanding community-based interventions are essential, especially in underserved areas like Mafikeng and surrounding communities.

Furthermore, many women in the North West province experience barriers to justice and support, including underreporting, stigma, and inadequate service provision. Despite these challenges, the expansion of VEP initiatives and increased funding for non-profit organisations and victim support centres in the region signal a growing commitment to tackling the systemic roots of abuse. When implemented effectively, VEP offers a vital lifeline for female victims of partner abuse to reclaim their agency and dignity in the face of persistent gender-based violence.

In the North West province, women affected by intimate partner violence often face deep-rooted obstacles, including social stigma, economic dependence, and limited access to protection and resources. To counter these barriers, Victim Empowerment Programmes (VEP) and related support services provide critical interventions such as trauma counselling, shelter services, legal aid, and skills training. These services aim not only to offer relief, but also to enable female victims of abuse to regain control, rebuild their lives, and advocate for their rights. Empowerment in this context, means more than support; it entails creating a pathway for transformation, where survivors are not just recipients of care but active agents of change in their personal and social environments.

## **2.10 PARTNER ABUSE AND VIOLENCE**

This section discusses the various forms of partner abuse and intimate partner violence. The different forms of abuse often overlap and cannot be clearly separated. As outlined in Chapter 1, the *Domestic Violence Act* No 116 of 1998 gave a good description of the types of abuse, indicating “physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to property; entry into the complainant’s residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence; or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant”. Similarly, the Act refers to types of behaviour linked to abuse including stalking, psychological aggression and controlling behaviour.

Nikrouy *et al.* (2025:1389) use the term “harmful experiences within families” to encompass a range of adverse events that may occur in family settings, including violence against women. The Duluth model, Power and Control Wheel, indicate emotional and economic abuse, physical and sexual violence. It emphasises that abusive behaviours extend beyond physical harm, encompassing intimidation, coercion, threats

that control and manipulate the victim's choices and freedom. Additionally, the Wheel illustrates the insidious use of isolation and the exploitation of children to exert power over a partner. Postmus *et al.* (2020:22) refer to the broader concept, coercive control, indicating that abuse in intimate relationships is often linked to a coercive control framework where violence, isolation, intimidation and control forms part of the different forms of abuse. The forms of abuse are outlined in Figure 2-12 and discussed next.



**Figure 2-12: Forms of sexual abuse**

**Emotional and psychological abuse:** Francis and Pearson (2021) define emotional abuse as an on-going and repeated pattern of using force and aggression on another person with an intention to control. Engel (2023:1) describes emotional abuse as a non-tangible act, behaviour or verbal abuse aimed at intimidating, controlling, manipulating, punishing, isolating, and demeaning someone with the intention of human degradation and instilling fear. Verbal abuse can entail insults like the victim being fat and ugly. Added to this, emotional and psychological abuse can include name-calling, public humiliation, harassment, and stalking (Winchester, 2025). Emotional and psychological abuse may

involve passive-aggressive behaviour such as not paying attention to someone or denying them access of communication (Kulow & Granik, 2025; Noor *et al.*, 2024). In line with the Duluth model, Van Niel (2020:3) links psychological or emotional abuse with constant criticism, isolation, coercion and intimidation of a partner. Shukla (2023:29) emphasises the detrimental effects of humiliation on victims. Additionally, Nikrouy *et al.* (2025:1390) discuss the isolating effects of severed connections with friends, family and other potential support systems, which can intensify feelings of despair and loneliness in victims of abuse.

Psychological and emotional abuse are characterised by attacking a person's sense of self-worth, leading to a wider range of psychological complications, like anxiety, low self-esteem and depression (Adebanjo, 2024). Gaslighting is a form of both emotional and psychological abuse that gradually takes course in a relationship. This concept entails a pattern of conduct whereby the abuser deliberately manipulates the victim's perception of reality or denies their experiences. The intention is for the abuser to indoctrinate and expose the victim to confused judgement, and low esteem (Kulow & Granik, 2025; Noor *et al.*, 2024).

**Sexual abuse** includes a range of violations, with rape being a particularly severe form. According to Van Niel (2020:3), sexual abuse also includes situations where a victim is unable to provide consent due to factors such as intoxication or cognitive impairment. Taccini *et al.* (2024) refer to sexual abuse as a conduct that inflicts intimate harm, leading to both physical and psychological damage in victims. Sexual abuse includes rape, sexual harassment, and inappropriate touching. D'Ignazio (2024:27) adds to sexual abuse street harassment, including offensive, sexualised comments or gestures. Kennedy and Prock (2018:512) contend that women in the community have been sexually stigmatized and exploited sexually because of cultural practices and stereotypes.

According to Xu *et al.* (2025:2), sexual abuse within intimate relationships involves a range of non-consensual acts, including sexual harassment, coercion, and exploitation. For female victims of partner abuse, this often manifests as unwanted sexual advances, verbal sexual harassment, marital rape, and defilement as well as situations where employment or advancement is conditioned on sexual compliance. These acts are frequently rooted in power imbalances, where the abuser exerts control over the victim's

body, choices, and autonomy. Female victims of partner abuse face compounded trauma not only from physical and emotional violence but also from the violation of sexual boundaries within a trusted relationship. The abuse is often normalized or concealed due to cultural stigma, economic dependence, or fear of retaliation. This underscores the importance of trauma-informed support services, legal protection and empowerment-based interventions that prioritize survivors' dignity, safety, and recovery.

For many female victims of partner abuse, sexual violence is deeply intertwined with power and control. Acts such as marital rape, sexual coercion, and harassment often occur in environments where cultural and religious norms reinforce male dominance and suppress female agency. According to Szalai (2022), these patriarchal norms are prevalent in various African contexts where female sexuality is devalued in favour of male entitlement, making it difficult for women to seek justice or escape abusive relationships. Such norms frequently undermine legal protections, allowing perpetrators to circumvent accountability and leaving survivors trapped in cycles of silence and victimization.

**Physical abuse:** Physical abuse encompasses a range of violent behaviours that can inflict serious harm on an individual, including punching, shoving, hitting and slapping. Other violent actions include kicking, shaking, burning, biting, hair-pulling, strangulation, and forceful restraint (Winchester, 2025). Additionally, Winchester (2025) notes that physical abuse can manifest in more coercive ways, such as confining a victim to her room or physically restraining her, as well as threatening her with weapons like knives or guns. Intimidation tactics may also include throwing objects at or near a victim to instil fear, along with verbal threats to kill or cause harm. Bailey *et al.* (2024) add intentional burning to physical abuse. Hefti (2022:3) includes female genital mutilation as a form of abuse and even femicide when long-term complications can cause death. The term femicide encompasses a wide range of circumstances, including intimate partner violence, honour-based killings and misogynistic violence. When the victim is a current or former intimate partner, the abuse is specifically classified as intimate partner femicide (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2021). D'Ignazio (2024:27) views femicide as “the culmination of many forms of gendered violence”. The term, femicide, was first used in an 1801 book, referring to the killing of a woman. Then in 1976, a South African activist, Diana Russel, used the term femicide at the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Belgium. Russel linked femicide to misogynistic attitudes based on a deep-seated prejudice, hatred

or contempt by men for women (D'Ignazio, 2024:27-28). Understanding femicide through the lens of misogynistic attitudes links gender-based violence to broader, macrosystem-linked systems of prejudice, inequality and marginalisation. In this regard, D'Ignazio (2024:29) outlines the importance of social action linked to femicide and refers specifically to data activism, that is “the production and circulation of data for social change.” Data activism would imply more targeted data-keeping for more accurate statistics on femicide and other forms of violence against women.

A survey conducted by United Nations Women (2022) highlights that one out of five women in intimate relationships in South Africa has experienced physical abuse perpetrated by their male partner. This statistic declares South Africa as one of the countries that has the highest rate of physical abuse against women in the world. Stigma, fear to lose economic provider, and reluctance of police officers to handle abuse cases are key principles that hinder the victims from reporting Gender Based Violence (GBV) to the officials. Perception of victims that the police officers are not adequately capacitated to articulate on female partner issues and hence they may either treat the female victims of partner abuse casually or become insensitive to the female victims' concerns, thus contributing to the hindrance of the victims to report such incidents to seek justice through the arbitration or prosecution process.

**Economic or financial abuse** - The term, economic abuse, can be traced back as far as the 1980s when it was indicated as a non-physical form of violence in the Duluth Power and Control Wheel (Postmus *et al.*, 2020:1). The term was defined by Adams (2011a) to imply tactical behaviours by an abuser that involve controlling a victim's “ability to acquire, use, or maintain economic resources,” thus, threatening the victim's “economic security and potential for self-sufficiency”.

It was already outlined above that abuse directed at a partner is strongly fuelled by power and control and economic abuse can form part of such power dynamics (Postmus *et al.*, 2020:1). Sharp-Jeffs (2022:7) defines financial abuse within intimate partner relationships as a process through which abusive men exert financial power by coercively controlling their female partners, often withholding economic resources to punish a female partner. Peterson (2020:6) includes control over money and spending, and damage to property as economic abuse. Van Niel (2020:3) outlines the consequences of economic abuse

when victims lose their jobs due to frequent absences caused by abuse. In such situations, the abuser can exacerbate the victim's vulnerability by limiting their access to money or employing various threats to gain complete financial control. Sharp-Jeffs (2022:7) asserted that little has been done to explore the extent of financial sabotage inflicted by male partners on female partners.

Importantly, Postmus *et al.* (2020:19) point to the fact that victims do not always realise that they are subjected to economic abuse, as cultural norms, patriarchal cultures or family traditions could predicate that males should manage and control the money. According to Johnson *et al.* (2022) economic abuse can adversely affect mental and physical health, have serious financial consequences, affect parent-child interactions when victims cannot fulfil the basic needs of their children and generally hurt quality of life. Postmus *et al.* (2020:9) suggest that financial empowerment should be a core feature of interventions to counteract economic abuse, including financial literacy, financial management, and financial safety, including knowledge about micro-lending.

According to Sharp-Jeffs (2015) economic abuse can be linked broadly to diminished rights of women to own land and properties. Cultural norms rooted in patriarchal ideologies could override formal legal protections, limiting women's access to property and economic independence. This economic vulnerability becomes a powerful tool of control within abusive relationships, as many women may feel compelled to remain with their partners due to a lack of secure housing or land ownership. As such, strengthening the enforcement of property rights for women is not only a legal imperative but also a crucial intervention in the fight against female partner abuse. Ensuring that women can exercise full control over property is a vital step toward breaking the cycle of dependence and enabling survivors to reclaim their safety, autonomy, and dignity.

**Spiritual abuse:** Tenkorang (2025:1463) distinguishes between *spiritual control* and *spiritual coercion*. Spiritual coercion uses religion to harass, intimidate and instil fear in female partners. Spiritual control is linked to behaviour of male partners grounded in their religious belief systems that serve to dominate and regulate their partner's autonomy. This may include prohibiting the partner from participating in religious practices or attending religious church services. In addition, perpetrators may misuse religious texts or selectively quote scripture to induce guilt, shame or humiliate the partner (Mulvihill *et*

*al.*, 2023:773; Peterson, 2020:6). According to Mulvihill *et al.* (2023:773), abusers can also use religion to rationalise and justify their coercive behaviours, thereby further entrenching the victim's psychological and spiritual subjugation.

**Digital or technology facilitated abuse:** Rogers *et al.* (2023:2210) use the term “technology facilitated abuse” for a form of partner abuse where social media, such as video cameras for surveillance and mobile phones, are used to spy on or intimidate partners. Van Niel (2020:3) highlights cyberstalking as a form of digital abuse that is notably absent from the Duluth model's Power and Control Wheel. When the Wheel was initially developed, the pervasive influence of social media and its potential negative effects were not yet recognized. While traditional stalking is often associated with inappropriate and even dangerous behaviours within the victim's immediate environment, cyberstalking extends to the digital realm. According to Van Niel (2020:3) victims can face harassment through various online platforms, including email, texts, WhatsApp, Facebook and more, illustrating how technology can facilitate control and intimidation. This evolution of stalking underscores the need to address modern forms of abuse within established frameworks of understanding power and control dynamics.

The cycle of violence offers a framework to understand the recurring and escalating patterns of control, coercion and harm that characterise partner abuse. This cycle will be outlined next.

## **2.11 THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE**

American psychologist, Edna Walker, is credited with the conceptualisation of the 1980 Cycle of Violence, which outlines three cyclical phases associated with abusive behaviour (Shukla, 2023:30). Following the building of tension, the actual abuse or explosion phase follows and then the subsequent honeymoon or reconciliation phase. Throughout these phases, both the perpetrator and the abused victim may engage in denial and minimising of the abuse (Sangeetha *et al.*, 2022:4). During this cycle, the perpetrator exerts power and control, perpetuating the cycle of abuse (Justice *et al.*, 2022:159). The cycle of violence is outlined in Figure 2.13



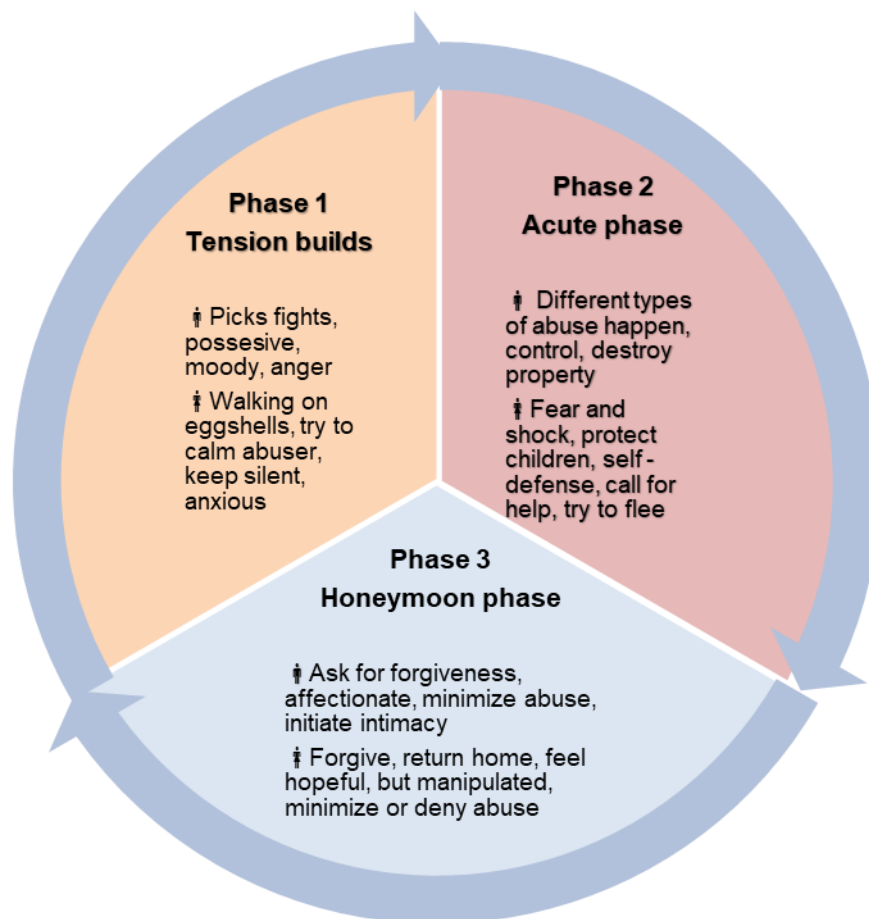


**Figure 2-13 The Cycle of violence (Based on Walker, 1980) cited in Shukla (2023:30) and Sangeetha *et al.* (2022:4)**

As is illustrated in Figure 2-13, during the tension-building phase, the abused female proverbially walks on eggshells trying to placate the abuser and generally wanting to remain unobtrusive. As the tension builds, there may be incidents of verbal and physical abuse like shoving. Trivial accusations and arguments can escalate into violent verbal clashes. During this phase, the man may prevent the woman from attending to her personal care and appearance. Access to social media sites may be restricted and she may be prevented to visit friends and family (Sangeetha *et al.*, 2022:5).

In the acute phase the abuser may use derogatory terms to demean the female. He might destroy her belongings, such as her mobile phone and engage in various forms of physical abuse, including pulling her by the hair, hitting her with his fists, or brutally raping

her. Various weapons may be used in this phase, such as broomsticks, buckles on belts, cords from cell phones or computers (Sangeetha *et al.*, 2022:5).

After the abuse, during the honeymoon phase, the abuser apologises, makes promises, presents gifts, and exhibits caring behaviour by compliments and apparent care (Justice *et al.*, 2022:159; Sangeetha *et al.*, 2022:7)). Women might still believe the perpetrators or be trapped with nowhere to go until the tension escalates again and the cycle continues.

Figure 2-14 outlines more detail linked to the cycle of violence. It is evident from this Figure that denial is a central tenet in the cycle of violence. Denial entails that the abuse is minimised or simply not talked about, until the tension starts building again, leading to another explosion.

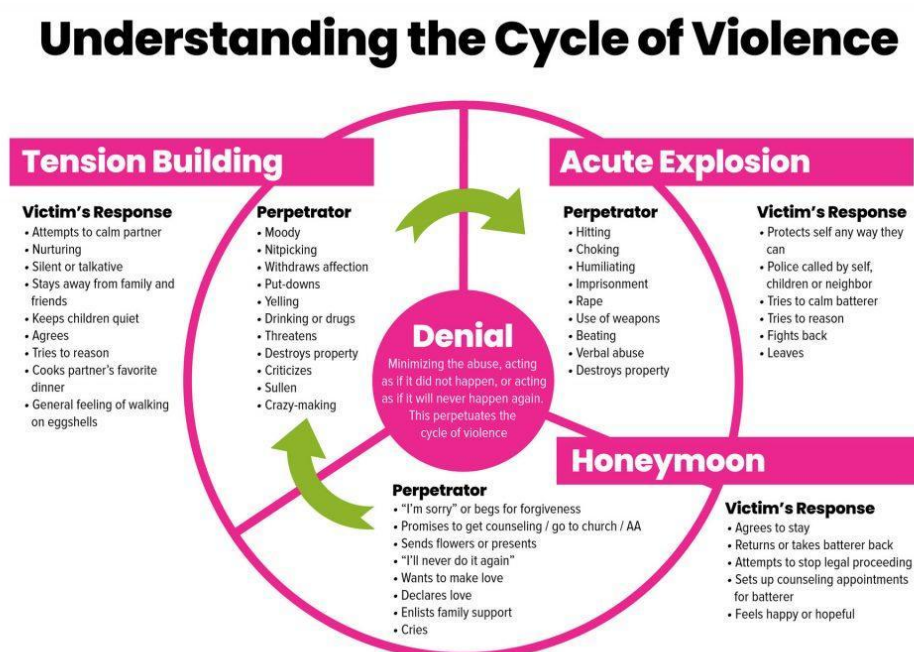


**Figure 2-14: Understanding the cycle of abuse**

(Source: Yoorana, Women's Domestic Violence & Resource Service Inc. <https://yoorana.com.au/articles/the-cycle-of-violence>)

Understanding the cycle of violence enables victims to recognise the patterns associated with the build-up and actual abuse. Enhanced awareness of this process can help them to take proactive measures to enhance their safety by leaving before the outburst or

seeking timely support. Furthermore, understanding the cycle of abuse can validate the experience of victims, allowing them to see their struggles as part of a broader pattern that many others have faced. This recognition can also break their sense of isolation.

Being caught up in a cycle of violence have multifaceted adverse effects. Such cyclical entrapment undermines physical safety and distorts both psychological safety and the sense of relatedness. Autonomy is disrupted and victims may live in chronic fear. Some of these effects will be discussed next, and also in Chapter 4.

## **2.12 EFFECTS OF FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE**

Women who are abused by their partners often face many challenges that make it hard to get help or leave the relationship. These challenges can be emotional, social, or financial. According to Cirici Amell *et al.* (2023:2), survivors may feel scared, ashamed, or still have feelings of love toward their abuser, which makes things more complicated. Cirici Amell *et al.* (2023:4) also explain that many women struggle with anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms, which can affect their ability to make decisions or trust others.

Female partner abuse engenders a range of adverse outcomes that manifest across short-, medium-, and long-term periods. These consequences are multi-dimensional encompassing physical, psychological, relational, behavioural, economic, and sexual domains. The effects are shaped by the nature, frequency, and duration of the abuse, as well as the survivor's developmental stage and their proximity to the perpetrator. Pollino (2023:1997) rightly asserts that there is no "universal template" for how women cope with sexually violent experiences, highlighting the complexity and individuality of responses to trauma. This assertion resonates with the researcher's perspective that the complexity of trauma responses extends beyond sexual violence to encompass other forms of violence against women. The diverse effects and contexts where abuse occurs challenge the assertion that there could be a one-size-fits-all approach to female partner abuse. Abuse and the effects thereof are embedded in and shaped by all the systems where abused women live and function. These systems, ranging from intimate relationships to institutional structures, may either mitigate or exacerbate the effects of abuse. For example, a justice system grounded in trauma-informed practice can support victims in accessing redress. In contrast, a justice system characterised by patriarchal norms and

rigid procedures may obstruct pathways to justice, thereby compounding the trauma experienced by female victims.

According to Winchester (2025) the short-term effects of abuse may include physical injuries and in severe cases, death. Shukla (2023:28) contends that in the most severe cases, female partner abuse may result in permanent disability or femicide. Injuries such as bruises, fractures, and concussions can lead to acute psychological distress, including fear, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation. These effects can impair daily functioning, disrupting sleep patterns, concentration, and social engagement. Carannante *et al.* (2025) further highlight the physiological consequences of abuse, noting its association with dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and heightened inflammatory responses, which contribute to both physical and psychological morbidity. Carannante *et al.* (2025) emphasize that long-term IPV exposure can lead to structural changes in the brain and epigenetic modifications that affect resilience and recovery.

Shukla (2023:28) argues that in the long term, the cumulative effects of female partner abuse can result in chronic health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, and persistent pain syndromes. Psychological trauma may become deeply entrenched, manifesting as complex PTSD or long-standing emotional dysregulation.

Sexual abuse can lead to unwanted pregnancies, or complications during pregnancy and birth such as low birth weight of babies. Sexual abuse can increase the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV and other infections (Van Niel, 2020:4).

Emotional abuse is a pervasive form of abuse with longer-term consequences such as low self-esteem in victims. Emotional and spiritual abuse may lead victims to question their worth and capabilities, creating a cycle where they become deeply entangled in the patterns of abuse. Consequently, victims may come to believe that they somehow deserve the mistreatment they endure, further exacerbating their emotional distress (Tenkorang, 2025:1464; Van Niel, 2020:3). Psychological distress can present as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety (Mason, 2020:9). Shukla (2023:2) refers to the internalisation of abuse by women, leading them to attribute the reasons for the abuse to their own actions and behaviour. Bailey *et al.* (2024) link these mental

tendencies to the theory of battered women syndrome, highlighting that from this mindset, victims believe the abuse is their fault. They fear for their safety and the potential for future acts of abuse compels them to remain silent. The prospect of retaliatory violence amplifies these fears, deterring victims from disclosing their situations and seeking help. Furthermore, Mason (2020:11) links self-blame with social isolation, shame and stigma. These aspects may hinder disclosure of the abuse and lead to problems with relatedness.

Mason (2020:12) also highlights that when abuse has continued for extended periods, victims may fear that the severity of the abuse will be dismissed or deemed illegitimate due to the prolonged nature. This concern often deters disclosure, particularly if it means risking legal consequences for the perpetrator. Such fears may be exacerbated by threats from the abuser regarding the consequences of disclosure.

In the medium term, female partner abuse may lead to relational deterioration, often due to the abuser's use of isolation tactics that sever the victim ties to family and community. Behavioural adaptations such as substance use, self-harm, or risk-taking may develop as coping mechanisms. Sulaiman *et al.* (2025) highlight how controlling behaviours such as restricting movement or access to healthcare are predictive of female partner abuse and its associated harms among women in rural South Africa, particularly the North West province, where the researchers conducted the study.

When the abuser is the primary breadwinner in the household, victims may be reluctant to report the abuse due to the potential loss of household income (Mason, 2020:12). This dynamic contributes to significant economic vulnerability when the female victim is financially dependent on the abuser or denied access to shared resources. Socioeconomic marginalisation often follows, as survivors may face unemployment, housing instability, and poverty due to prolonged abuse and systemic barriers to recovery.

Furthermore, when children are exposed to the abusive environment of their parents, the trauma may be transmitted intergenerationally, shaping their future relational patterns and emotional development. According to McDonagh *et al.* (2025:4), trauma does not only affect the person who goes through it directly. It can also hurt people who see it happen to someone close to them. McDonagh *et al.* (2025) explain that witnessing trauma may lead to symptoms like anxiety, nightmares, and trouble sleeping. The World Health Organisation (2024) also reports that both direct and indirect exposure to violence or

injury can increase the risk of long-term mental health problems, such as PTSD and depression.

Van Niel (2020:1) notes broader societal costs associated with partner abuse, which include increased medical care expenses, loss of income and reduced productivity. These outcomes are not merely individual tragedies but reflect broader societal failures to address gender-based violence, indicating that female partner abuse must be understood as both a public health crisis and a manifestation of systemic gender inequality.

## **2.13 NEEDS OF ABUSED FEMALE VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE**

As outlined above, intimate partner violence (IPV) can lead to both short- and long-term medical, financial, and psychological problems (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Saan *et al.*, 2022), which prompts victims to have a variety of needs to address its effects. Addressing these needs and challenges requires understanding the diverse needs of female victims, which can facilitate independence and a potential escape from the violent situations (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Saan *et al.*, 2022). Based on the literature reviewed, this section outlines four critical types of support that female victims of partner abuse often require, namely emotional support, informational support, networking support, and practical support.

### **2.13.1 Emotional support**

Kindness *et al.* (2017) define emotional support as behaviours aimed at promoting positive emotional states and assisting individuals in overcoming negative ones. Ali *et al.* (2024) consider negative emotional states as feelings of anxiety, stress and depression emanating from recent negative and traumatic events. When delivered with sensitivity to the emotional needs of victims of abuse, emotional support has the potential to foster coping and contribute to overall mental and physical well-being. Kindness *et al.* (2017) further argue that even the perceived availability of emotional support can have beneficial effects for victims of abuse, including alleviation of stressors such as loneliness and emotional isolation.

Added to the above, emotional support has an inherent ability to strengthen the bond between the receivers (victims) and the support providers (Kindness *et al.*, 2017). It

should be noted, however, that regardless of the good intentions of the provider, poorly administered support may lead to negative outcomes such as increasing the victims' stress (Ali *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, Ferreira *et al.* (2023:525) caution that emotional support, while often well-intentioned, may be misdirected, insensitive or ineffective, leading to intensified emotional distress, compromised coping and adverse health outcomes. Ultimately, it is evident that good intentions alone do not guarantee the provision of effective and sensitive emotional support. This underscores the need for appropriate emotional support mechanisms for female victims of partner abuse, directed by good training of social workers. Such an approach could help offset the potential pitfalls of emotional support while maximising its benefits for female victims of partner abuse.

### **2.13.2 Informational support**

Another critical need among female victims of abuse is informational support. According to the World Health Organisation (2024), the pervasive nature of partner abuse necessitates widespread availability of informational resources across key societal sectors, healthcare, public housing, justice, social services, and the general work force. These resources play a vital role in enabling victims to understand their rights, navigate available services, and make informed decisions about safety and recovery. While some survivors engage with formal informational systems, such as law enforcement and community-based organisations, the World Health Organisation (2024) observes that the majority rely on informal networks, including family, friends and peer groups as their primary source of guidance. This emphasises the importance to ensure that both formal and informal sources are equipped to provide accessible, and correct information to victims of female partner abuse.

Information resources play a pivotal role in responding to and preventing partner abuse. As highlighted by the World Health Organisation (2024) many individuals may struggle to identify abusive dynamics, particularly when it manifests in subtle, non-physical ways. Through informational support, different types of abuse may be clarified and red flags identified, which will help victims assess their own relationships and seek support when needed.

Legal information is another informational support need in the context of female partner abuse. Understanding legal processes may empower victims to help make informed

decisions (Wright & Laurent, 2021). Victims do not just require information about their rights, but also legal recourse at their disposal, including how to report abuse, restraining orders, dealing with the police, and the processes of the justice system (Galera *et al.*, 2023b).

Safety information is another critical need for victims of abuse, including safety planning when they seek to leave abusive relationships (Childress *et al.*, 2024a). They would need information on personal safety, crisis hotlines, emergency services and shelters, mental health professionals, counselling, support groups, therapy, and securing important documents (Fraser *et al.*, 2024). Further, information on how to get support services and financial resources can lessen the risk associated with leaving abusive relationships as well as ensuring a smooth transition of victims to safety and eventual self-reliance (Little, 2023).

Since victims of IPV may be subjected to physical and emotional injury, information on access to health and medical care is equally important (Ragavan & Murray, 2023). While most victims will need sensitive trauma-informed care, other victims may need different forms of care depending on the abuse they experienced (Maquibar *et al.*, 2023). For example, victims of sexual assault and abuse will require reproductive health information, which includes sexually transmitted infection screening, and access to contraception.

In summary, the provision of comprehensive informational support across multiple domains, including safety planning, health care access, legal aid and financial assistance, could significantly enhance the capacity of victims of female partner abuse to make empowering decisions, mitigate risks and transition toward long-term stability and autonomy.

### **2.13.3 Networking support**

Networking support is another need of female victims of partner abuse. It was established above that according to Conservation of Resources theory, non-tangible resources in the form of intrapersonal connections are strong protective resources (Hobfoll, 2011). In line with COR, Saan *et al.* (2022) contend that victims of abuse actively seek to replenish their depleted resources, including support from informal networks such as family, friends and colleagues (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These networks play a crucial role in meeting victims'



needs, enabling them to cope effectively with their challenges and facilitating their recovery. The human capacity to endure adversity has long been linked to the strength of social bonds (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), and this principle holds particular relevance in the context of partner abuse (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021; Park & Jeon, 2022). Social workers may need to advocate for changes in the client's microsystems, connecting them with resources or providing therapeutic support to navigate these support systems effectively.

Within a VEP programme, employing mapping techniques including ecomaps, genograms, home and community maps as outlined by Van der Merwe (2018), can help female victims of abuse to understand the inverse proximal processes in their microsystems, and also to gauge the levels of their support within their networks. Such understanding can help them to proactively formulate strategies to break cycles of abuse and violence within their systems. Importantly, recognising inverse proximal processes in past relationships, may empower them to identify similar patterns in future relationships and to disengage from such relationships before they escalate into abuse.

Other studies highlighted that women need networking platforms where they can participate in different activities designed to foster healthy relationships with other female victims of abuse. These environments are essential for learning and developing skills that enhance self-love and boost self-esteem (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These networks can take the form of groups that offer safe spaces to share experiences, exchange ideas and advice, and provide emotional support from others who have faced similar situations (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Such groups could play a significant role in validating experiences, reducing feelings of stigma, and enhancing coping strategies for women experiencing IPV (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Strategies must address early exposure to violence within the chronosystem by targeting ingrained beliefs, strengthening emotional and interpersonal skills, and integrating systemic interventions like the IMAGE programme that empower women through economic and social support (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016).

#### **2.13.4 Practical support**

Previous studies have shown that victims of IPV need practical support to escape and protect themselves from violent situations (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021; Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). In a study with women enrolled in a programme for IPV at a Support Centre for Women (SCW) in Italy, it was found that women need shelter and protection (Albanesi *et al.*,

2021). The same study indicated that women recognised the potential benefits from internships, legal consultancy, and other forms of economic support (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). Another study in the United States with women who had experienced police-reported incidents of IPV, emphasised the need for tangible interventions such as financial assistance, housing support, and employment aid. Dickson *et al.* (2023) contend that fulfilment of these tangible needs is essential for helping women achieve independence from their partners. In addition, economic empowerment provides abused women with resources to assert their rights, which may also reduce the incidence of IPV (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Employed women also highlighted that they needed job training, skills development, and permanent homes.

Women also need law enforcement and legal assistance services, as police are in most cases, the first to respond to IPV and are also the entry point into criminal legal systems. However, in Africa, many government entities fail to respond to IPV and sexual assault, which creates barriers to social change (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016). The problem is also exacerbated by underreporting of violence (Dickson *et al.*, 2023), which results in governments withholding resources needed to address the problem (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016).

Among many needs is the childcare services such as parenting education and support programs (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Information on partner abuse can be disseminated through various public channels, including print media, and community walk-throughs to raise awareness and convey messages that discourage IPV (Ogundipe *et al.*, 2018). Education is essential to promote conflict resolution and encourage individuals to seek help after experiencing abuse (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Practical support should include building awareness, improving economic prospects, financial independence, confidence and freedom to deal with negative socio-cultural practices (Dickson *et al.*, 2023).

## **2.14 LOGIC MODEL – ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED FROM LITERATURE REVIEW**

The reasoning behind the use of the Logic model is outlined in Chapter 3. The following elements were identified based on the literature for inclusion in the victim empowerment strategy.

**Table 2-6: Literature review**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Multi-level intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions should focus on all systemic levels.</li> <li>• Victims should feel safe in their microsystems by fostering social interconnectedness and restoring relatedness</li> <li>• Mesosystemic connections should offer pathways to a new equilibrium</li> <li>• On macro level there should be a critical transformation of the cultural, legal, and economic systems that perpetuate gender-based inequality and silence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p><b>Emotional and psychological healing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills.</li> <li>• Focus on maladaptive belief systems that might be built on early experiences in the chronosystem of the person.</li> <li>• Cognitive behavioural interventions can aid the process of managing thoughts, feelings and behaviour.</li> <li>• Cognitive behavioural interventions should include anxiety management with basic techniques such as breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.</li> <li>• CBT interventions should include psycho-education about the multi-dimensional effects of trauma and traumatic memory.</li> <li>• Self-determination theory could aid the setting of goals for intervention by planning interventions around restoring autonomy and relatedness and enhancing competence.</li> <li>• Victims of female partner abuse should move from contexts where they experience need-thwarting and need-depriving, and goal setting should focus on what they need to move into pervasive contexts where their needs are supported.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Trauma-informed practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principles of trauma-informed practice should be incorporated into all interventions with victims of female partner abuse and their families.</li> <li>• Core principles are enhancing safety, restoring voice and choice, including autonomy and personal agency, restoring relatedness and connections, trustworthiness and transparency in all contacts, facilitating mutual and peer support, and considering cultural diversity and contextual influences.</li> <li>• Elements of the Fonofale model could be used when working with female victims of partner abuse. The application of the model could be adapted according to the needs of clients in their specific contexts.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Psycho-education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial empowerment should be a core feature of interventions to counteract economic abuse. Such empowerment should include financial literacy, financial management, and financial safety, including knowledge about micro-lending.</li> <li>• Victims of female partner abuse should understand the cycle of violence to recognise the patterns associated with the build-up and actual abuse. Enhanced awareness of this process can help them to take proactive measures to enhance their safety by leaving before the outburst or seeking timely support. Furthermore, understanding the cycle of abuse can validate the experience of victims, allowing them to see their struggles as part of a broader pattern that many others have faced. This recognition can also break their sense of isolation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

### **Forms of support**

- Emotional support
- Informational support
- Networking and relational support - Networking support can be assessed using practical techniques such as mapping, ecomapping, genograms, and loss and gain spirals.
- Practical support

## **2.15 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the theoretical foundation of this study. Theoretical paradigms that provide a framework for abuse were outlined. The chapter further delved into the concepts of partner abuse and violence, needs of abused female partners, relevant legislation and policy frameworks governing female partner abuse and the victim empowerment initiatives. The next chapter, Chapter 3, focuses on the methods that were employed for this study.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the methods that were employed to attain the objectives of this study. It focuses on the research design, population and sampling, the data gathering process, and data analysis methods. The chapter further elaborates on the ethical considerations taken and measures implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

### **3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM**

The philosophical paradigm informing this study is pragmatism. Leavy (2024:15) affirms that pragmatism adopts a diverse approach in finding solutions to research problems. In pragmatism, the belief is that for every problem, there are multiple solutions. According to Leavy (2024:16) pragmatism allows for a contextual approach, suggesting that different research contexts need different tools based on what works in research situations. According to Elgeddawy and Abouraia (2024:71) “pragmatism is a paradigm that includes ideas, methods, approaches, principles, or a mix of these to explain a solution to a research problem” and to find out what works in practice. Pettifer and Hughes (2025:1) define pragmatism as a philosophical approach that seeks to integrate the concepts of education, research, practice and policy to inform policymakers of the integrated knowledge to resolve a problem in each scenario. Raye (2023:22) asserts that pragmatism deals with the practical way of resolving social problems. In this study, the World Café research, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with literature control and review, were utilised to formulate a strategy (outlined in Chapter 5) that informs social work practice to respond pragmatically to a complex, real-world problem of female partner abuse.

The theoretical paradigm was outlined in Chapter 2. The research methodology is described next.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology guides researchers to enable them to achieve the set objectives and answer research questions, by collecting and analysing data through optimal usage

of time and resources. Research methodology ensures that the study generates meaningful, appropriate and trustworthy findings. It is important to ensure that research is scientific, ethical and that the research integrity is always maintained. This undertaking is supported by Muthanna *et al.* (2024) who state that all researchers have the responsibility to promote, uphold and implement high research integrity standards. Roje *et al.* (2023:633) also argue that organisational climate, availability of processes and structures play a significant role in implementing research integrity by researchers and the institutions from where they work. Next, the research approach and research designs are outlined.

### **3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH**

#### **3.4.1 Multi-phase research**

Multi-phase, qualitative research (Elston *et al.*, 2022:764) was used in this study, where one phase followed the other and was dependent on the completion of the previous phases. Multi-phase research is flexible, and researchers need to understand the challenges of both concurrent and sequential approaches in as such approaches need enough time, and resources. The multi-phase research in this study followed a sequential process. It was important to first do the literature review and interviews with the victims of female partner abuse, then to get the input from entry-level social workers on possible elements to include in the victim empowerment strategy. Thereafter a tentative strategy was developed, after which the input of managers and supervisors was sought to refine and finalise the strategy.

#### **3.4.2 Logic model**

In line with the pragmatic approach of this research, the Logic model was used in conjunction with the multi-phase process. Logic models have been used for programme development for more than 40 years (Ebenso *et al.*, 2019:97). For this study, the Logic model was used to illustrate the research process and specifically the elements identified from the various participant groups, up to the development of the draft strategy.

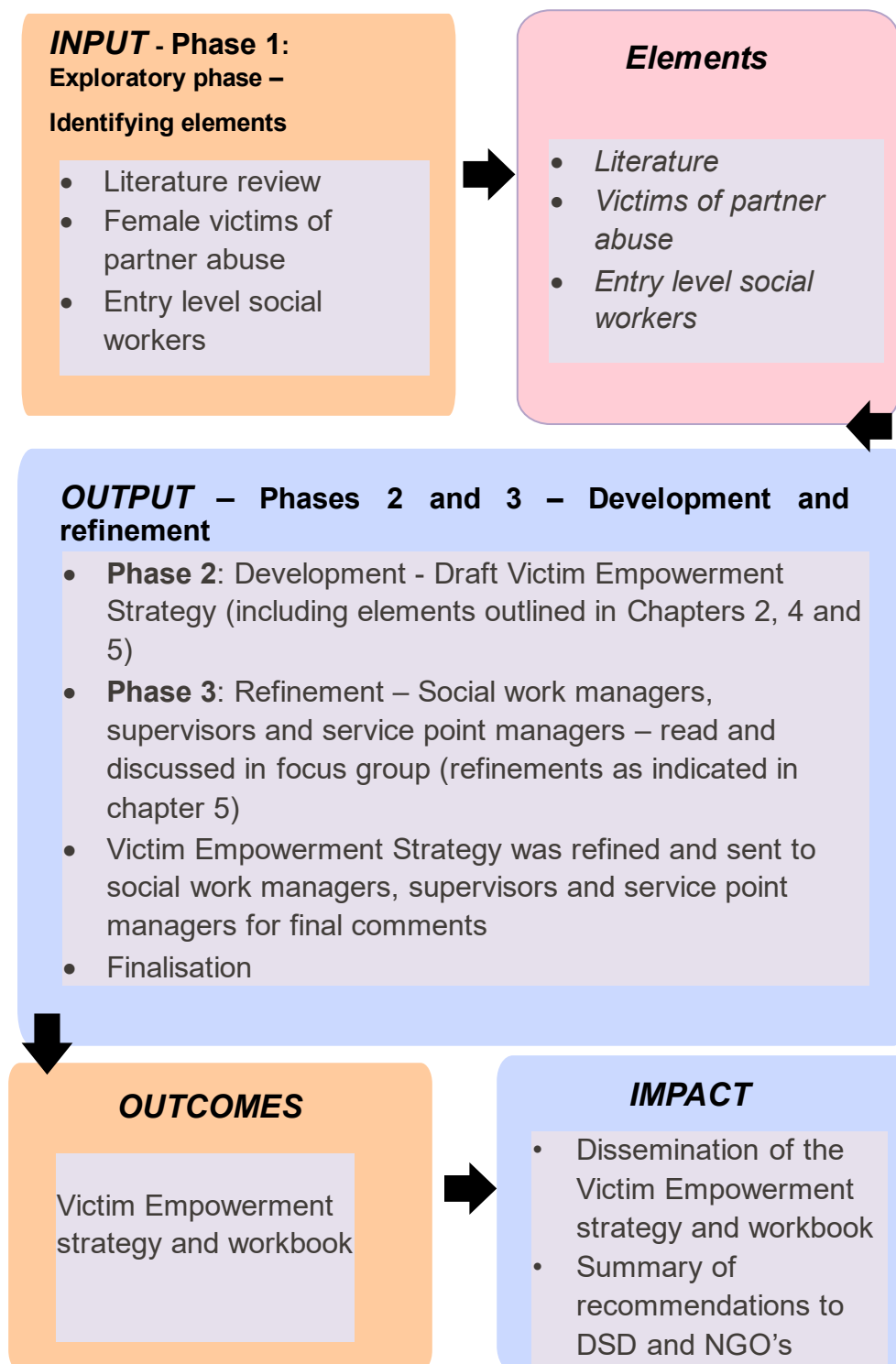


**Figure 3-1: Logic model for development of victim empowerment strategy**

The logic model offers a framework for planning (Halim *et al.*, 2022:134), and the combination of this model with the multi-phase research process provided clarity on how the victim empowerment strategy was put together based on various elements.

### **3.4.3 Research design**

Two research designs were used in this study, namely narrative inquiry for participant group 1 (female partner abuse victims) and a qualitative descriptive design for participant groups 2 and 3 (social workers and social work supervisors and managers).

#### **3.4.3.1 Narrative inquiry**

A narrative inquiry design was used for the female victims of partner abuse. According to Schurink *et al.* (2021:311), narrative inquiry is well-suited to bridge the gap between research and practice by illuminating the stories of participants in many contexts and focusing on many different phenomena. Merriam and Grenier (2019:240) distinguish between different forms of narrative inquiry. This study followed the psychological approach to narrative inquiry, where participants shared their stories of abuse, as it evolved, to clarify their individual realities, including resource loss and gain patterns. In this study, narrative inquiry guided a contextual exploration with a focus on chronosystem aspects. Within a pragmatic approach, the researcher sought to understand the unique realities of female victims of partner abuse when participants told their stories using visual data collection strategies.

#### **3.4.3.2 Qualitative descriptive design**

A qualitative descriptive design was used for the social work participant groups. The qualitative descriptive design illuminates facts and meanings as they are articulated by the participants (Hellman, 2025:277). Colorafi and Evans (2016:16) and Tilman *et al.* (2025:16) assert that “the qualitative descriptive design results in a summary in everyday, factual language that facilitates understanding of a selected phenomenon across disciplines of health science researchers.” Furthermore, according to Villamin *et al.* (2024:2), the qualitative descriptive design offers a flexible framework to employ well-developed qualitative methods to enhance the quality of the research findings. This design also generates data that reflects the experiences and events as articulated by the participants.



### 3.5 SAMPLE SIZE AND MOTIVATION

Strydom (2021:380) indicates that there cannot be prescriptions as to sample size in qualitative research. Therefore, the sample size of this study depended on what the researcher sought to know, the research questions, aim and objectives. Data saturation was understood as a point where the researcher encounters replication of the same type of information (Strydom, 2021:381).

**Table 3-1: Sample size and motivation**

| Sample size                                                                                                       | Motivation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 victims of female partner abuse in the selected victim support centres around the North West Province.         | Data saturation was reached after the initial analysis of transcripts of 21 participants. If data saturation was not reached with 21 participants, more would have been included until data saturation.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| A total of 32 entry level social workers were included, 16 at each DSD service point, in the mentioned districts. | There were two World Café sessions with different entry level social workers. It was important that there were 4 social workers per table (4 tables per session). Each of the two World Café sessions hosted 16 entry level social workers (in total 32) and as planned there were 4 social workers per table. The two sessions were held at Maquassi Hills Service Point and Naledi Service Points. |
| A total of 16 managers and supervisors were included in this participant group.                                   | This was a good sample for four focus group discussions with 4 participants per session. They assisted the researcher with refining the victim empowerment strategy. The small number of participants in each focus group allowed for deep discussions and adequate opportunity for every participant to take part.                                                                                  |

### 3.6 POPULATION

The term research population refers to the “sampling units,” including cases, people or events investigated in a study (Strydom, 2021:228). This study had three sets of participant groups: female victims of partner abuse, social workers at the entry level and supervisors and managers in the North West, Department of Social Development (DSD).

The populations are respectively female victims of partner abuse in shelters in North West Province, entry level social workers involved in the Victim Empowerment Programme

(VEP) in DSD in North West Province (about 540) and social work supervisors, and managers working for DSD in North West Province (90 supervisors and 28 managers).

### **3.6.1 Sampling**

*Positionality of the researcher:* At the time of the research, the researcher worked as a Service Point manager based in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District. To prevent bias and unequal power dynamics, the research setting was the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District and Dr Kenneth Kaunda Districts in the North West Province where the researcher was not working. At the time of the research the researcher was a social worker for 18 years.

According to Strydom (2021:379) sampling entails that a subset from a population is selected in such a manner that what is learnt from this sample serves as a representation of the whole population. Thorne (2025:354) emphasize that the researcher's judgment mostly informs the non-probability sampling method in line with the aims of the research.

In this research, three shelters were included, namely one in the very remote area of Ganyesa, and another one in semi-urban Vryburg, in the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District (Dr RSM District). A more urban area was also included, namely a shelter in Potchefstroom in the Kenneth Kaunda District (KK District). These centres were chosen as they fall outside the researcher's work area and provide a spectrum from rural to urban. The researcher consulted with the Programme Manager at the DSD Head Office responsible for all the Victim Empowerment Centres in the North-West Province. This manager indicated that some shelters were not fully operational and had limited intake of victims, mainly due to budget constraints. Most of these women go back into situations where they are still very vulnerable, i.e., resource-poor areas and back to the homes where the abusers are, as they have no other places to go. It can be dangerous for them to take part in research if the abusers are close by. They have more protection in the shelters. The researcher was able to gain access to all the selected centres in the North West Province as they operate under the DSD and were readily accessible. Table 3.1 below outlines the sampling techniques used for the participant groups.

**Table 3-2: Participant group sampling**

| Participant group                                       | Type of sampling                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participant group 1:<br>Victims of female partner abuse | <p>Volunteer sampling (Strydom, 2021:386) was used to recruit participants at the relevant shelters, to include what Merriam and Grenier (2019:13) call “a sample from which the most can be learned.” Accordingly, volunteer sampling entailed that the victims of female partner abuse at the shelters were informed of the research and then allowed to come forward voluntarily to participate.</p> <p>Everyone in the selected shelter was given a chance to participate by volunteer sampling.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Participant group 2:<br>Entry level social workers      | <p>Purposive sampling was used for this group of participants. Purposive sampling, according to Hitchcock <i>et al.</i> (2021:240) involves the selection of participants based on their experience and suitability for the research.</p> <p>Every entry-level social worker in the 18 service points was involved in the VEP Programme. DSD entry-level social workers were included as they work with the VEP programme. Social workers in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District were not included as it was the researcher’s area of work. Social workers from two districts were invited namely Bojanala District (a more urban area) and RSM District (which is a more rural area).</p> |
| Participant group 3:<br>DSD managers and supervisors    | <p>DSD managers and supervisors were included as they manage the social workers working in the VEP programme. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from the managers and supervisors in the North West Province, DSD. The same two districts were used as for the entry-level social workers to have representation from a rural and an urban district. All the supervisors and managers in these two districts were invited to take part in the focus groups.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

### 3.6.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In social work research, inclusion and exclusion criteria refer to a process where the researcher determines, after a thorough insight of the sample population, which participants can or cannot participate in a research study. According to Severiano *et al.* (2025:59), both inclusion and exclusion criteria are equally important in the sense that they both protect the rigour and reliability of the study. By filtering out participants who could introduce bias, these criteria enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings.

### **3.6.2.1 Inclusion criteria for victims of female partner abuse**

- Women experiencing partner abuse, including women above 18 years.
- Cohabiting, single, married, and divorced women who were victims of female partner abuse and who resided in shelters in North West Province.
- Only women were included, as males would be a different focus.
- Women speaking and able to read, talk and understand Setswana, English and Afrikaans.
- Women who entered the shelter with their children were included, as the dynamic of having had to leave with their children are very much part of the reality of female abuse.
- Women in the shelter were included if they were receiving counselling at the shelter, as the counselling was understood as mainly crisis intervention and follow-up services and longer-term intervention follows once the initial phase of leaving their situations has been managed.

### **3.6.2.2 Exclusion criteria for victims of female partner abuse**

Non-South Africans were excluded as migrant residents may have different experiences of female partner abuse, as other variables linked to their migrant status might influence the findings.

Persons with disabilities might have different variables impacting on their experiences of abuse.

Persons who were in their first week of stay at the shelter were excluded as they might still have physical injuries and might struggle to adapt to the new environment.

Prospective participants who had been diagnosed with COVID and were in isolation were excluded due to the risk of infection of the independent person and the researcher. There was also a risk of contamination of the interview space, which was avoided with this exclusion.

During the writing of the research proposal in 2021 – 2022, many precautions still had to be taken for COVID-19 risks. However, when the interviews were conducted in 2023 these risks were mainly over. No participants showed any indications of infection with Covid-19.

#### **3.6.2.3 Inclusion criteria for entry-level social workers**

- Social workers at the entry level (newly employed and with less than five years of work experience) registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). Entry-level social workers are junior social workers who work directly in the field of social work.
- All the entry-level social workers were engaged in the Victim Empowerment Programme at DSD.

#### **3.6.2.4 Exclusion criteria for the social workers**

- No social workers in the district where the researcher worked were included to prevent bias and power imbalance.

#### **3.6.2.5 Inclusion criteria for social work supervisors and managers**

Managers and supervisors employed by the North West, DSD.

Social work supervisors of Grades 1 and 2 (graded according to years of experience).

Service point managers.

Social work managers holding strategic positions working in the field of victim empowerment.

#### **3.6.2.6 Exclusion criteria for the managers**

- No managers or supervisors in the district where the researcher worked, were included to prevent bias and power imbalance.

## 3.7 RECRUITMENT

### 3.7.1 Permission

The process of obtaining legal authorisation and goodwill permission commenced after the research proposal was approved by two scientific committees and ethics approval was obtained from the NWU-HREC (NWU-00162-22-AI).

#### 3.7.1.1 Permission for the study (legal and goodwill)

Legal authorisation was needed from the Head of Department (DSD) in North West Province to include the social workers and the victims at the shelters in the research. For participant group 1, goodwill permission was obtained from the Centre Managers of the shelters. For entry level social workers, the service point managers at the different service points gave goodwill permission, and the district directors provided goodwill permission for the managers and supervisors to take part. The legal authorisation and goodwill permission letters are attached as Addendum A. The authorisation information is summarised in Table 3.3:

**Table 3-3: Legal authorisation and goodwill permission**

| GROUP                      | PERMISSION                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participant group 1</b> | The legal authorisation was granted by the Head of the Department (DSD) as well as goodwill permission by the Centre Managers for the selected shelters.                                  |
| <b>Participant group 2</b> | Legal authorisation was obtained from the Head of Department (DSD) as well as goodwill permission from the Service Point Managers for the selected entry-level social workers.            |
| <b>Participant group 3</b> | Legal authorisation was obtained from the Head of Department as well as goodwill permission from the District Directors for the managers selected to participate in the research process. |

Various role players were included in this research, and they varied for the different participant groups. The gatekeeper was the Head of the Department (DSD). The Head of Department ensured that the request to conduct the research reached all the District Directors and Service point managers who permitted the participants.

The mediator (Centre manager) was a go-between for the female victims of partner abuse and the independent person who introduced the research topic, and the purpose for conducting the research with the participants. A summary of the role players is included in Table 3.4.

**Table 3-4: Gatekeepers, mediators, and independent persons**

| Group | Gatekeeper                    | Mediator                               | Independent person                                   |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Head of the Department (DSD)  | Centre Manager                         | (Post-doctoral fellow at the North-West University). |
| 2     | Head of the Department (DSD)  | Service Point Manager of each district | (Post-doctoral fellow at the North-West University). |
| 3     | Head of the Department (DSD). | District Director                      | (Post-doctoral fellow at the North-West University). |

The role of the independent person was to issue consent forms and manage the entire recruitment and the process of informed consent. The independent person also signed a confidentiality agreement form. The independent person was a post-doctoral fellow at the North-West University (Mafikeng Campus). The independent person was not working for the DSD and did not have a stake in the research process. One of the duties of the researcher was to ensure that the independent person was well trained on research ethics and process flow during the research study.

### **3.7.2 Recruitment and informed consent**

Recruitment is a meticulous process that must be followed exactly as approved by HREC. Recruitment in social work research refers to identifying individuals who are potential participants and of ensuring a representative sample in a research study (Jones *et al.*, 2020:1).

According to Padgett *et al.* (2025:391), informed consent is a crucial aspect in research ethics because participants have all the details explained about confidentiality and the significance of ensuring that all aspects of confidentiality are adhered to. The process of informed consent commences by implementing the principle of autonomy to all the

research participants, allowing them to make informed decisions whether to participate in the research study. All the participants in this study were sensitised on the clear intentions of the study, duration of the research study, the potential risks, and the benefits of their participation in the study, as well as what was expected of them.

### **3.7.2.1 Participant group 1 (victims)**

#### **Recruitment**

The mediator (centre manager) was asked to provide a flyer with information to all the women at the shelter. A copy of the flyer was sent to HREC for approval and is attached as Addendum E.

The women at the shelter who were interested received the informed consent form so that they could get clarity on what exactly the research entailed. After five days, the mediator enquired from them if they were willing to participate. Five days was a realistic timeframe, as there was movement in and out of the shelter, and if too much time elapsed, they might not have been in the shelter anymore. Those who agreed to participate were contacted telephonically by the independent person to make appointments.

The researcher and the independent person went to all the selected centres personally to carry out the research fieldwork. Upon reaching the shelter, the independent person introduced himself to each participant individually and told them again about the research topic, as well as the reasons for conducting the study. The independent person was a go-between for the participants and the researcher.

#### **Informed consent**

Before the start of each individual semi-structured interview, the independent person read the informed consent forms (Addendum B), individually, to the participants in the language of their choice, English, Afrikaans or Setswana and ensured that everyone understood the forms before signing. The participants were informed by the independent person of the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time from the process.

When the participants confirmed that they were satisfied and that they fully understood what the research was about and their rights, they were asked to sign the informed consent forms in the presence of the independent person who also co-signed. The signing



of the informed consent forms was done in a private room with a “Do not disturb” sign on the door. Covid-19 safety measures were adhered to.

### **3.7.2.2 Participant group 2 (entry-level social workers)**

#### **Recruitment**

Eight social workers at entry level were included from two districts, in a total 16 participants. The mediator provided information about the research to all the entry-level social workers in the district at a staff meeting and supported this with a flyer where information was provided. The flyer was approved by HREC and is attached as Addendum E. The social workers who showed interest in taking part, received the informed consent form to read at their convenience, so that they could be fully informed about what was expected of them. They had a week to decide, after which the independent person emailed them to ask if they had considered participation. The independent person then made an appointment for the World Café with those who agreed to participate.

#### **Informed consent**

The informed consent process was without coercion, undue influence, inappropriate incentives, or inducement. The independent person read the informed consent forms (Addendum B) to participants, in the group, to ensure understanding by all. Each participant went to an independent person, signed the form and the independent person co-signed. This process was done in an access-controlled room with a “Do not Disturb” sign on the door. Depending on the levels of COVID infection at the time of informed consent, relevant safety measures were adhered to.

### **3.7.2.3 Participant group 3 (social work supervisors and managers)**

#### **Recruitment**

The district manager (mediator) of each chosen district, informed managers and supervisors of the research at a general office meeting and gave them an information flyer. This flyer was approved by HREC and is attached as Addendum E. Those who showed interest received the informed consent form to read at their convenience, to enable them to make an informed decision. After a week the independent person emailed

them to ask about their decision. The independent person then arranged a time for the signing of the informed consent forms and the focus group discussion for those that agreed to participate.

### **Informed consent**

Respect for human dignity was ensured by explaining to all participants the significance of signing the form and allowing them time to sign, by going individually to the independent person, who co-signed. The signing of the informed consent forms was done in an access-control room with a sign on the door. Depending on COVID infection levels, relevant COVID precautions were taken.

## **3.8 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION**

Data collection strategies are techniques used for data collection. To ensure crystallisation, more than one data collection strategy should be used to proverbially highlight more than one side of the crystal (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:142), which is a metaphor for the research phenomenon. Crystallisation is also called triangulation. Meydan and Akkaş (2024:1) define triangulation as an approach that uses several data collection sources to enhance, confirm and authenticate research findings. This can include various strategies such as interviews and surveys. In this study, three participant groups with three data collection strategies enhanced crystallisation.

### **3.8.1 Participant group 1: Semi-structured interviews**

Data was collected using individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This formed part of Phase 1 of the research process aimed at exploration.

Semi-structured interviews are regarded as the ideal data collection strategy for sensitive issues (Braun & Clarke, 2022:80). An interview guide (Addendum F) was used to direct the interview as suggested by Poth (2023:240). According to Braun and Clarke (2022:79), open-ended questions can provide detailed responses and prompt the participant to discuss what is important to them.

At the start of each interview, after the process of informed consent, the researcher introduced herself, the topic, as well as reasons for conducting the study. The researcher

used probing during the semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

The researcher was the primary source of data collection. Visual data collection strategies were used during the interviews, namely timelines, and loss and gain spirals. According to Olmo-Extremera *et al.* (2024:2), visual methods elicit honesty when participants can express their experiences, emotions, and thoughts while externalising the topic under discussion. Arts-based data collection methods helped to open complex phenomena and “represent as justly as possible a multi-layered, complex and often disorganised voice into a form that is accessible to the linear world of academic research” (Caldairou-Bessette *et al.*, 2020:2). This way of working links with the pragmatic paradigm of this study using tools that helped to unlock the realities of the participants practically with visual data collection strategies.

### **3.8.2 Timelines**

Participants were instructed to chronologically outline the patterns and frequency of abuse, beginning with the earliest incidents and progressing to the most recent events. They made drawings of houses on a timeline to represent their living situations during the periods of abuse, indicating who resided with them at those times. This approach allowed them to identify any support they received within the household. Kolar *et al.* (2015) and Luyts *et al.* (2025:200) have used timelines with marginalised groups, including female immigrants subjected to domestic violence. Figure 3.2 shows an example of a timeline from their research:



- How long have you been in the abusive relationship? Can you indicate the events (or some of them) on the timeline?
- Tell me more about the different instances of abuse?
- Who supported you in the household, broader family, and community?
- Tell me what you usually did after abuse happened?

An example of a timeline was shown to them.

Birth



**Figure 3-3: Example of a timeline**

An example of the timeline of a participant in this study is included below as Figure 3.3. From the timeline in Figure 3.3 it is evident that the abuse spanned about 20 years. The participant also indicated support received and some of her feelings.

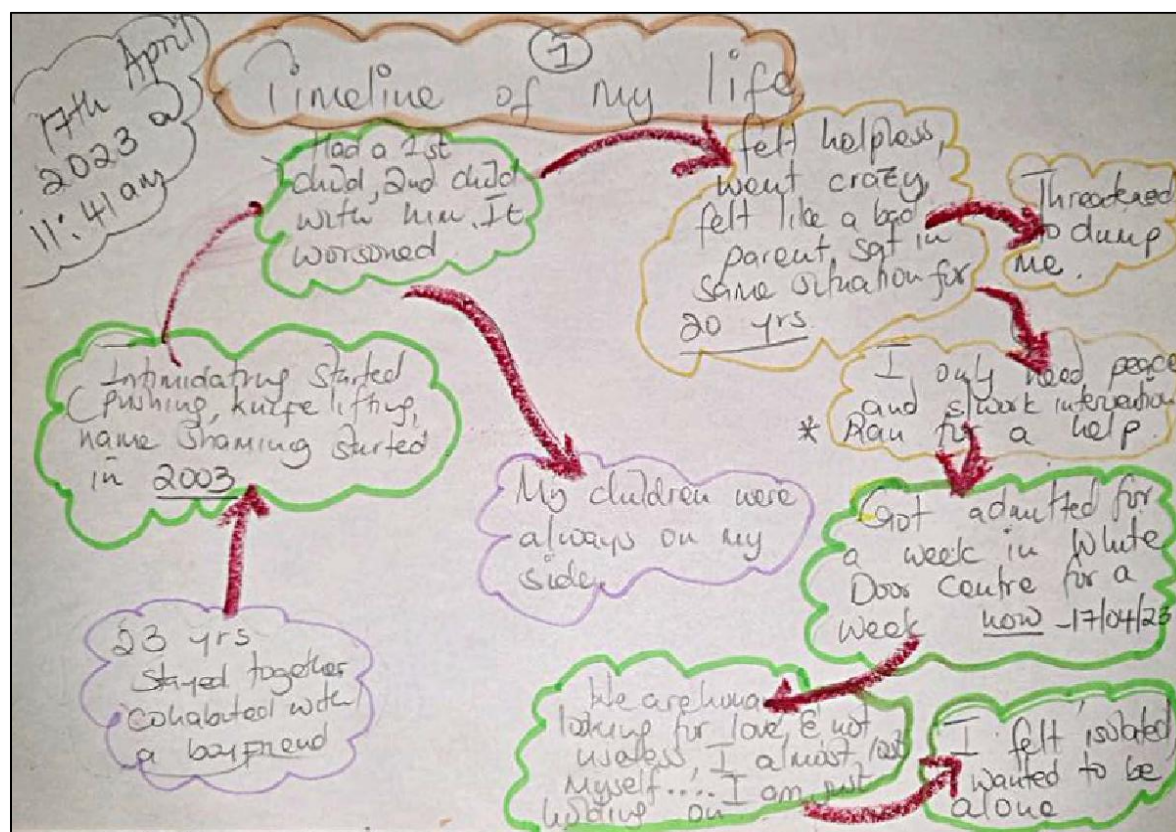


**Figure 3-4: Timeline of participant 4**

The researcher made a summary of information gained from the timeline of Participant 4, in Figure 3.4. This example shows how the timeline enabled the participant to give an overview of a specific instance of abuse by discussing what happened during and after the event.

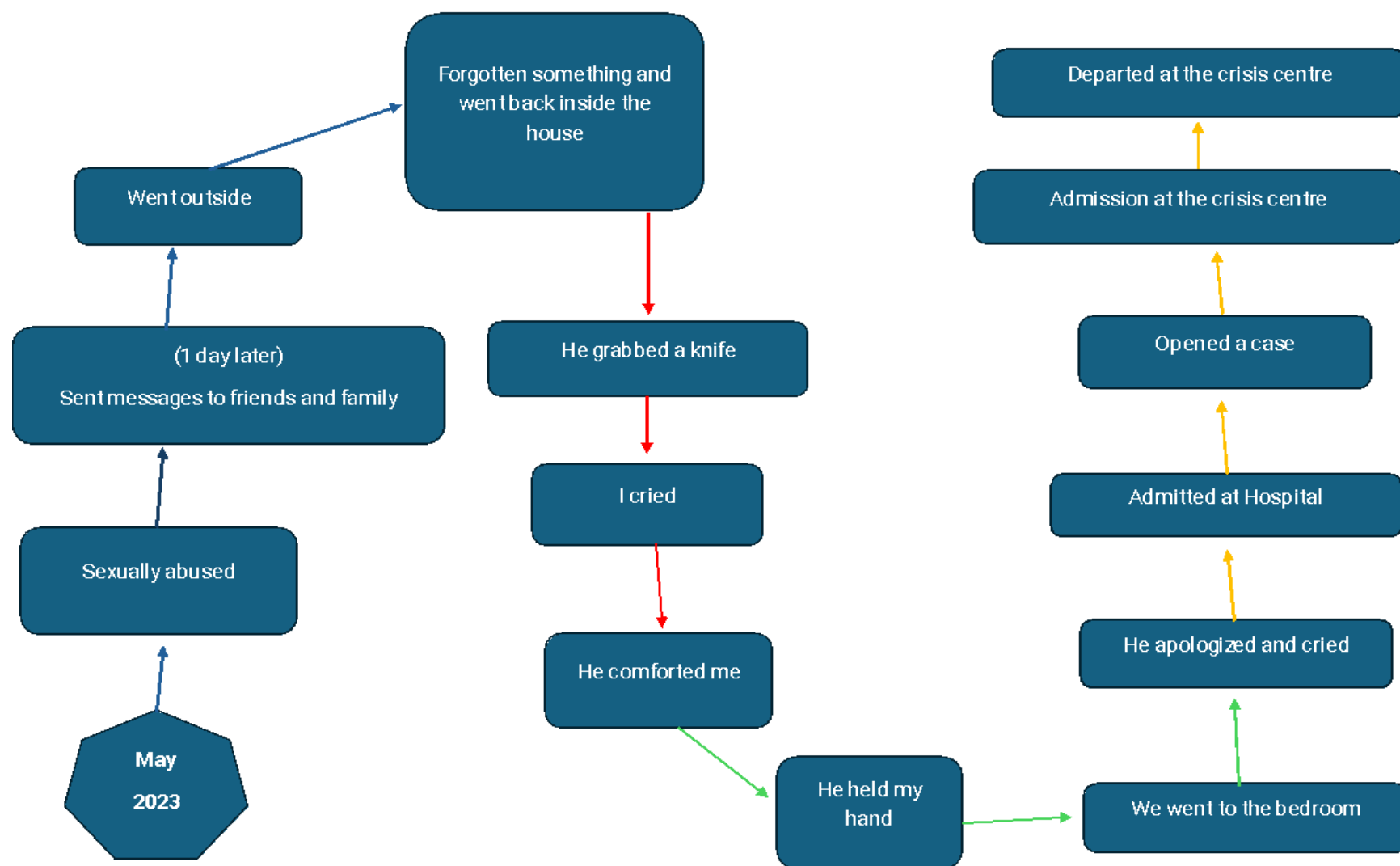


Figure 3-5: Timeline of Participant 3 outlining an incident of abuse

Not all participants understood the concept of the timeline so well and some were hesitant to draw. It seemed as if this was linked to lower school education and literacy. Despite this, rich data was obtained from the timelines. Data obtained from the timelines is fully discussed in Chapter 4.

### **3.8.3 Loss and gain spirals**

When doing a preliminary literature review, the researcher studied the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory as this held some important keys to victim empowerment. More information on COR has been added in Chapter 2. Therefore, loss and gain spirals were used for data collection, to understand loss and gain processes and the needs of participants better and to see if resource gain could be an important part of social work interventions. In situations of stress and trauma, it can be taxing to find enough resources to counteract rapid spirals of resource loss (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018:103). Drawings of resource loss and gain spirals were used to explore what participants value as resources, what they have lost, how the loss process is experienced by them, and what they can envisage as resources that can halt the resource loss cycle and put them in a gradual resource gain cycle. To make the loss and gain spirals more practical, the researcher used a plastic spiral (see photo) with upwards and downwards motion, to illustrate how resource loss can pull a person down.



**Figure 3-6: Photo of spiral used in the research**



In Figure 3.6 a participant's views on resource loss and gain are captured. Some of the resources are non-tangible, like the need for support and to keep hope alive, and some are tangible, like financial help.

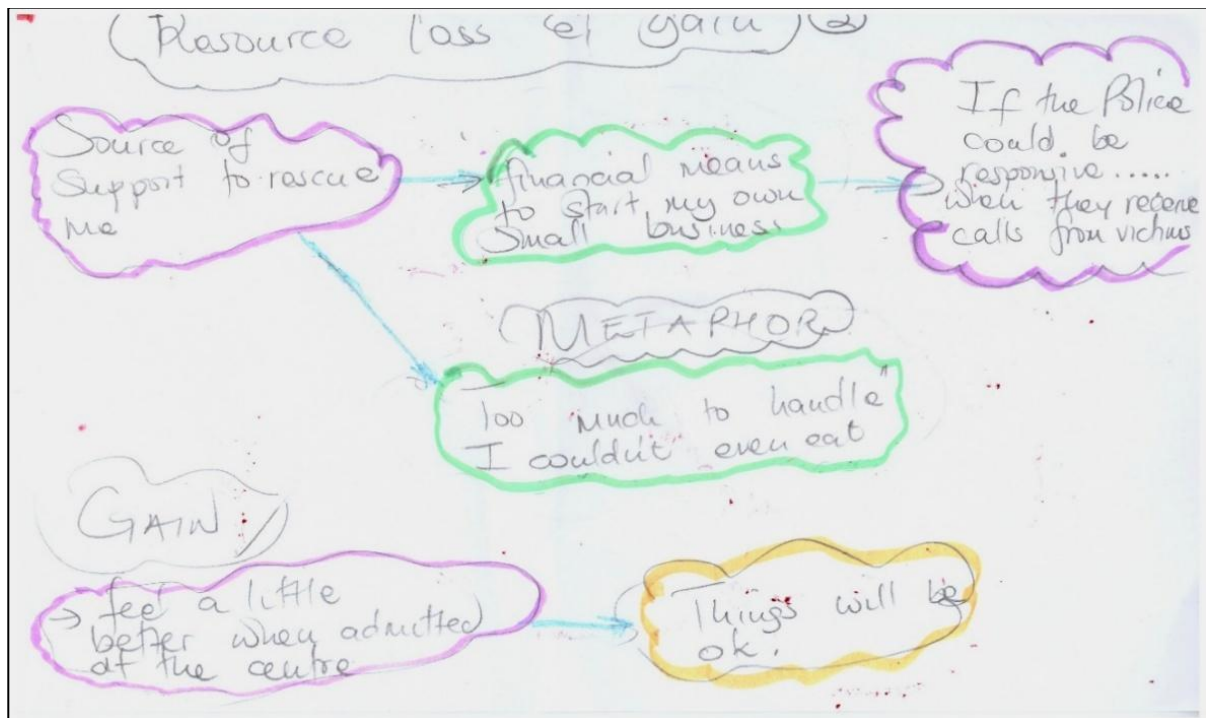


**Figure 3-7: Resource loss and gain spiral of participant**

The following discussion questions guided the resource loss and gain exploration:

There was a brief discussion on what resources are. The following questions were then asked:

What resources do you value? Probe – energy, object, interpersonal and intrapersonal resources.

I have an example of a spiral here. You can see that it is moving downward.

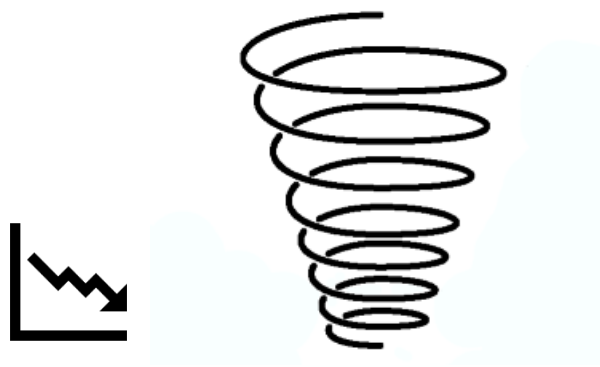


**Figure 3-8: Spiral moving downwards**

When we go through difficult times, we often lose resources, and this can be a fast process. Let's talk about resources you have lost due to the abuse. We can then write them on the downward spiral.

To feel better and to start living with less stress, it is necessary to gather resources, to know what resources we need. Let's talk about what you need to feel better and live with less stress. We do not always have all those resources, but if we know what we need, we can make plans to stop the loss of resources and to build good resources.

- What resources do you have? (Probe object, energy, interpersonal and intrapersonal)
- What resources do you need?
- What plans can you make to get those resources?
- Who can help you to get such resources?
- How can you make sure that you keep those resources and do not lose them again?

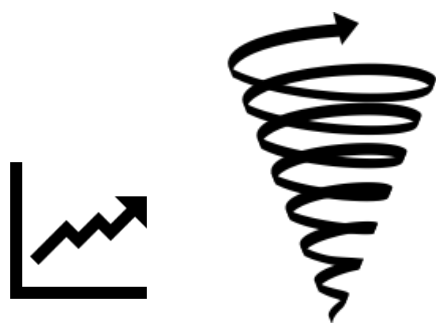


**Figure 3-9: Spiral moving upwards**

Although not all the participants could understand the concept of resource loss and gain clearly, despite the efforts of the researcher to explain it practically, the insights gained through this exploration aided the process of understanding what female victims of abuse need in terms of help, to empower them to halt resource loss and initiate resource gain. Most of the discussions on resource loss and gain were verbal rather than portrayed in the form of drawings. These discussions were transcribed and thematically analysed.

Finally, the following questions were asked:

- What kind of assistance have you received from social workers employed by the Department of Social Development or other organisations?
- What do you need from social workers in terms of help?
- What other sources of support can be helpful?
- How was it for you to use (i) timeline, (ii) loss and gain spirals? to talk about your experiences of female partner abuse?

The facilities where the interviews took place were the shelters in the boardrooms. Privacy was ensured by placing a sign on the door cautioning others not to enter. Water and refreshments were available.

### **3.8.4 Participant group 2: World Café research method**

The World Café formed part of Phase 1 of the research aimed at exploration. The World Café research method offers a hospitable space where data can be collected when participants enter a conversation around tables. A particular question is discussed at each table, with the support of a facilitator (Jolly *et al.*, 2021:2). For this research, the seven (7) World Café design principles were adhered to namely, setting the context, by clearly defining the purpose of the gathering, fostering an inviting and comfortable environment, engaging participants with meaningful questions to stimulate conversation, actively encouraging everyone to take part, welcoming a variety of viewpoints, facilitating a collective listening process to identify shared insights and insights, and lastly reflecting on collective discoveries (Glyde, 2025).

The two World Café sessions were aligned with the following research question: What elements are suggested for a victim empowerment strategy to be used by social workers to address female partner abuse in the North West Province? During the process of World Café, the researcher introduced herself and the purpose of the study. The independent person gave a summary of how discussions should unfold. The participants got participant numbers before the World Café. Field notes and a tape recorder were used to gather the responses from the participants.

Sixteen entry-level social workers working in the VEP Programme were included in the two separate World Café sessions, totalling 32 participants. Each round table comprised four participants and there were four tables. The entry level social workers rotated until they had addressed all the questions at each of the four tables. Each World Café lasted for 60 to 90 minutes.

Biographical information was obtained on each of the participants.

| Participant number |
|--------------------|
| Gender             |
| Nationality        |
| Age                |
| Current occupation |
| Level of education |
| Municipality       |
| District           |

### Questions at the different tables

#### Table 1: the focus was on ...

- What, according to your understanding, is victim empowerment?

#### Table 2: the focus was on ...

- In your experience, what are female victims of partner abuse face with? (Probe: challenges in their environment; reactions because of female partner abuse)

**Table 3: the focus was on...**

- What do you as a social worker, the DSD and the government already do to help female victims of partner abuse and what more can be done in the context of victim empowerment to assist them to cope?

**Table 4: the focus was on...**

- What elements will be needed in a victim empowerment strategy?

Participants had the questions before the World Café. They then wrote on paper what they wanted to contribute to answering the question. They wrote their participant numbers on the paper. Then they discussed their views in the group around the table after which a representative of each table presented their conclusions to the whole group. All participants could then again add to the discussion in the bigger group.

**Participant group 3: Focus group discussions**

Before the focus group discussions, Phase 2 of the research process was attended to where the tentative victim empowerment strategy was developed, based on the literature review and the input of victims of female partner abuse and entry level social workers. The secondary research question addressed in this phase was: How can the components be compiled into a victim empowerment strategy?

According to Geyer (2025:361) focus groups engage in a group discussion on the research topic. In this part of the study, focus groups were used because of the advantage that they have to explore topics that may not be easily explored in one-on-one interactions (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021:5). The focus group discussions were linked to Phase 3 of the research, namely the refinement and finalisation of the victim empowerment strategy. The focus groups were aimed at answering the following research question: How can a proposed victim empowerment strategy be refined and finalised?

Participants received the draft victim empowerment strategy before the sessions. The researcher facilitated the three similar focus groups discussions around the proposed victim empowerment strategy. There were 4 participants in each focus group discussion. According to Geyer (2025) focus groups can have between 3 and 15 participants. The

focus group discussions lasted between 60 – 90 minutes. The following questions were addressed and followed up with probing:

How can the proposed victim empowerment strategy (that you have read) be refined?

- Can you comment on the Introduction of the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy?
- Please comment on how Victim Empowerment is defined in the proposed strategy. Can you suggest refinements?
- Various elements are outlined in the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy. Please comment on those in the text.

Any other suggestions on what victim empowerment strategies can be applied to reduce the prevalence of female partner abuse in the North West province?

### 3.8.5 Refinement

After the focus group discussions, the strategy was refined and emailed to the managers and supervisors. They received the following framework on which to comment and could also add additional comments.

**Table 3-5: Framework for supervisors and managers to comment on the victim empowerment strategy**

| <b>ELEMENTS/<br/>COMPONENTS</b>            | <b>COMMENTS</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Vision                                     |                 |
| Mission                                    |                 |
| Objectives                                 |                 |
| Education and awareness                    |                 |
| Emotional and psychological healing        |                 |
| Building and informal support network      |                 |
| Building a network of professional support |                 |

| <b>ELEMENTS/<br/>COMPONENTS</b>      | <b>COMMENTS</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Skills development                   |                 |
| Legal empowerment                    |                 |
| Advocacy and policy change           |                 |
| Temporary shelter                    |                 |
| Financial independence               |                 |
| Continual assessment and improvement |                 |

Their final comments were considered when the researcher refined and finalised the strategy as outlined in Chapter 5.

The facilities for the two social work participant groups were at a central and spacious boardroom in the chosen districts. Data collection was done when participants convened in one place for departmental meetings. Water and refreshments were available.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS**

Thematic analysis was used in this study, aligning with the perspective of Braun and Clarke (2022), which describes thematic analysis as an adaptable, straightforward and widely accessible approach to data analysis. Thematic analysis was used for all the data sets, except for the final refinement suggestions received via email, as the supervisors and managers at that point commented on a very specific strategy and their comments were directly linked to the content of the strategy. Each data set was analysed and presented separately. In Chapter 4, the views of the victims of female partner abuse were presented. The input of entry level social workers and the refinement by the managers and supervisors were outlined separately in Chapter 5. The final comments of the managers were also indicated in Chapter 5. Thematic analysis is a much-used form of qualitative analysis in social science research. It encompasses the process of obtaining meanings and themes from transcripts in qualitative databases.

Atlas.ti was used for coding the transcripts from the interviews with female victims of partner abuse. Figure 3.10 shows an example the Atlas.ti coding for this study:





- Reviewing of themes to ensure that the findings stay on track with each research objective and research questions.
- Naming and defining the themes.
- Finalising the analysis
- Writing up the report, interpretation, and literature review to find answers to the problem of the study.

The analysis was mainly aimed at answering the overall research question, namely, What are the components be of a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West Province from a social work perspective? To answer this question the input of all the participants was brought together in Chapter 5, and elements identified in literature were included.

### **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In research, ethics encompasses the values and principles fundamental to research objectives, delineating the responsibilities of the researcher to participants, the institution and towards the researcher (Jensen *et al.*, 2025:92). This study addressed essential ethical issues to safeguard the rights and welfare of both the participants and the researcher (Mirza *et al.*, 2023:442). Acknowledging the complex and multifaceted challenges associated with ethical issues in studies including human participants, this research adhered to several key ethical considerations: voluntary participation, no harm to the participants, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Firstly, the risks and benefits are outlined.

#### **3.10.1 Risks and benefits**

As mentioned above, during the approval stages of this research, COVID-19 pre-cautions were necessary and also a requirement from NWU-HREC. The researcher was ready to incorporate such pre-cautions by adhering to COVID-regulations in terms of sanitising, keeping a distance, wearing masks and screening temperature. However, when the field work was done in 2023 such pre-cautions were not necessary anymore. The risk level of

the study was medium as the victims of female partner abuse were seen as a vulnerable population.

**Table 3-6 Participant group risks**

| <b>Risks</b>                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Justification</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Precautions</b>                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participant Group 1: Victims of female partner abuse</b>                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Trauma could be reactivated                                                                                                                                              | It was important to include female victims of IPV in this study as their input was necessary to develop a victim empowerment strategy. It would have been unethical to develop a strategy about them without hearing their voices. | The researcher arranged a follow-up session for every participant by social workers at the shelters.                                                                    |
| Physical discomfort and tiredness during the interview                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Regular body breaks were given. Water and snacks were available.                                                                                                        |
| <b>Participant Group 2: Entry level social workers</b>                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| COVID-19 added to the workload of social workers. In 2023 they were still dealing with backlogs and found it difficult to fit the research in their daily work schedule. | The input of the social workers added value to the development of the victim empowerment strategy due to their expertise on ground level.                                                                                          | The World Café was combined with work meetings when they travelled to a specific venue. They did not need additional travel time.                                       |
| Physical discomfort and tiredness.                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | The researcher included leg stretching and a break during the World Café session for refreshments. Bottled water was provided.                                          |
| Confidentiality could not be guaranteed, and respect was needed in the interactions.                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Ground rules were determined including participants should keep to the topic, give each other a chance to talk, not to interrupt and not to share personal information. |
| <b>Participant Group 3: Social work managers and supervisors</b>                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Similar to the entry level social workers, COVID-19                                                                                                                      | The input of the supervisors and managers added value to                                                                                                                                                                           | The focus groups were combined with work meetings                                                                                                                       |

| Risks                                                                                                                                                                              | Justification                                                                                                                | Precautions                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| also increased the workload of social work managers and supervisors. Due to COVID-19-related backlogs they found it difficult to fit the research into their daily work schedules. | the refinement of the victim empowerment strategy based on their expertise.                                                  | when they have travelled to a specific venue. They did not need additional travel time.                                                                                           |
| Tiredness - Professional social workers have heavy workloads and reading the research documents could be a tedious process.                                                        | The final victim empowerment strategy could be used by DSD and there was a need to involve the personnel in the development. | Information was sent to the participants well in time and they were requested to read the information prior to the focus group.                                                   |
| Physical discomfort                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                              | The researcher incorporated leg stretching and a break during the focus group session for refreshments. Bottled water was available.                                              |
| Social risks must be minimised such as lack of respect for others.                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                              | Ground rules were determined. This included that participants should keep to the topic, give each other a chance to talk, not to interrupt and not to share personal information. |

### 3.10.2 Anonymity

Anonymity of data was maintained by concealing the personal details of the participants in the transcripts. This enabled the participants to communicate freely knowing that their information would be kept anonymous. The participants were given numbers as signifiers and these numbers were used to differentiate their responses including the writings, timelines, or loss and gain spirals. Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:124) caution that no participant should be identifiable by their data to preserve anonymity.

### 3.10.3 Confidentiality

Padgett *et al.* (2025:391) states that ensuring confidentiality is always a priority. However, in group settings this is not always possible and should be supported with group rules. Participants in the focus group discussions and World Café were asked to keep to the

topic and to not share personal information. Participants' data sets were always treated confidentially. The biographic information of the participants was kept confidential and stored away from transcripts. Participant numbers were used on visual material.

#### **3.10.4 Privacy**

Privacy refers to the management of conditions under data is collected (Strydom & Roostenburg, 2021:124). The venue where the data collection was conducted was private and interruptions were managed by indicating on the door that other people should not enter.

The researcher ensured that all the information provided by the social workers was kept on a laptop with a password only known by the researcher so that no one could access the information received from the social workers to ensure, confidentiality and privacy.

#### **3.10.5 Avoidance of harm**

Female partners who have experienced abuse and who participated in the research, were supported through trauma-informed counselling, peer support, provision of sheltering services and empowerment programmes, with careful measures taken to avoid re-traumatisation. Apart from protecting them from abusive partners, the fact that they were in shelters during research participation, offered them access to the range of services mentioned, thereby limiting possible harm.

#### **3.10.6 Incentives/reimbursement**

Participants who were victims of female partner abuse were given mugs and a packet of tea as a token of appreciation. They received refreshments and bottled water during the interviews. Entry-level social workers and social work supervisors and managers did not need to be reimbursed for petrol usage, as the data collection was combined with an official gathering, when they had to travel to the venue in any case for official meetings. The researcher contributed out of pocket by purchasing snacks, tea, and bottled water. Incentives in the form of pens were given to all the participants in Participant groups 2 and 3 as a token of appreciation. The Time, Inconvenience and Expenses principle (TIE) was considered throughout the research study. The women in shelters had time available and had no expenses linked to the research. The social workers gave of their precious

time, but for a good cause, namely expansion of practice-based knowledge for a vulnerable group. The inconvenience was limited by linking the data collection to departmental meetings.

### **3.10.7 Storage and archiving of data**

Data storage and archiving help the researcher to easily retrieve, protect, manage, and access data collected. All recordings of interviews, World Café and focus group discussions were transferred to a password protected computer and deleted from the recording device. The researcher saved the data collected on a personal laptop, in an external hard drive and in an internet account which was password protected. Hard copies of transcripts, visual data and the external hard drive were locked in a cabinet in the researcher's office. As stated above, biographical information and informed consent forms were stored separately (away from transcripts) in another locked cabinet. The researcher made sure that all transcripts were anonymised.

After completion of the study all hard copies and electronic data on a data stick, will be couriered to the study supervisor. The study supervisor will give the data to the administrative person, tasked with data management, who will record the receipt of the data. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the office of Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) in Wellington. The office has an alarm system and security gates. After five years the data will be destroyed by shredding hard copies and deleting electronic copies.

### **3.10.8 Monitoring**

Monitoring reports were provided to HREC at pre-set dates to ensure that the ethics clearance remained active throughout the research process. The NWU-HREC personnel were available for consultations as needed, and they provided strong support throughout the research process.

## **3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Stahl and King (2020:26) trustworthiness refers to the ability to produce findings that not only merit attention but also have significance and relevance that deserve consideration in the broader context. Nieuwenhuis (2019:143) states that trustworthiness

is an essential part of research across the research process, including data collection, analysis and writing up the findings. To establish the trustworthiness of a study, Poth (2023) use terms based on the older work of Lincoln and Guba, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These four criteria to consider in ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research are represented below.

### **3.11.1 Credibility**

Ahmed (2024) defines credibility as the development of good relationships and earning participants' trust that empowers researchers to uncover deeper layers of their experiences, actions, and perspectives. Additionally, Ahmed (2024) describes credibility as the truth of the data as viewed by the participants and analysed by the researcher. Credibility was ensured through crystallisation as three participant groups were used with diverse data collection strategies.

As suggested by Tisdell *et al.* (2025:282) the researcher used reflection by writing down her thoughts, the research process and possible bias when working with possible themes and sub-themes. The researcher knew the North West Province well, as she worked there. She bracketed pre-conceived ideas by striving for awareness of such bias in her reflection and by discussing possible bias in study supervision sessions. As suggested by Elgeddawy and Abouraia (2024:71) the researcher was attentive to avoid biased language, i.e., not using the word subject, but rather participant. The researcher asked the language editor to also be mindful of possible bias in language in the final dissertation.

### **3.11.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to or have relevance in broader contexts beyond the specific settings or populations involved in the research (Tisdell *et al.*, 2025:303). Transferability depends on the readers who can apply research findings to their own contexts (Tener, 2025:770). In this study thick descriptions were provided of research methodology and the data collection and analyses processes. According to Tener (2025:770) thick description entails describing in detail the participants or setting of a study. The concept of transferability encourages readers to relate the findings of a study to their own

experiences and work contexts (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:144). The section below discusses dependability.

### **3.11.3 Dependability**

According to Chen *et al.* (2021), dependability entails that it is evident that findings would be more or less similar if research is conducted with the same participants and same contexts. Dependability is ensured through robust research methodology and the implementation thereof, and the analyses and recommendations of the study to ensure that they are firmly grounded in the data received from participants (Christou, 2025; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:145). In this study dependability was ensured by providing a comprehensive description of the processes involved, including the research approach, and design, data collection strategies and data analysis (Abu Bonsra *et al.*, 2025). The researcher kept track of the research process, she used reflection and kept a record of data collection and analysis of the entire research process.

### **3.11.4 Confirmability**

According to Amaniampong *et al.* (2025) confirmability is a “degree of neutrality” or how participant input led to the findings of a study. The criteria critical for ensuring confirmability include triangulation, an audit trail, and reflexivity (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024; Kocaman, 2025). Triangulation or crystallisation was achieved by using multiple methods, data sources and theoretical perspectives to enrich findings (Amaniampong *et al.*, 2025). To further ensure confirmability the researcher documented the process in an audit trail, including data, notes on the research and analysis processes and information on the development of data collection strategies (Kocaman, 2025:317). To foster reflexivity, the researcher engaged in critical self-reflection concerning potential biases by keeping a reflexive journal. This diary served as a platform for the researcher to document regular entries throughout the research process, thus enabling a deeper understanding of positionality and its effects on the research process (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024:185; Amaniampong *et al.*, 2025).

## **3.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the research processes involved in data generation and analysis. A multi-phase, qualitative research methodology ensured the

collection of rich and relevant information from three participant groups. The rationale for utilising this multi-phase process was outlined in relation to effectively addressing the research questions. Additionally, the chapter outlined the population, sample size, and sampling techniques utilised in the study. The pragmatic philosophical paradigm, research design, data collection techniques and the thematic analysis were outlined. Lastly, ethical considerations and trustworthiness were discussed. The fourth chapter will present the findings from the first participant group, specifically focusing on victims of female partner abuse.



## **CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The present study sought to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West Province. The previous chapter presented the research paradigm, approach, design, data gathering methods, data analysis and ethical considerations.

This chapter presents the findings of multi-phase study aimed at developing a victim empowerment strategy for social workers assisting female victims of partner abuse in the North West province, South Africa. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study utilised semi-structured interviews with female victims of partner abuse to explore their abuse-related experiences and identify their needs.

The data presented in the present chapter relate to the following research objectives, designed to:

- To explore the experiences of female victims of partner abuse.
- To explore the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.

This chapter reports on the first data collection phase of the exploration phase of this multi-phase research, namely the semi-structured interviews with female victims of partner abuse, as outlined in Figure 4.1.

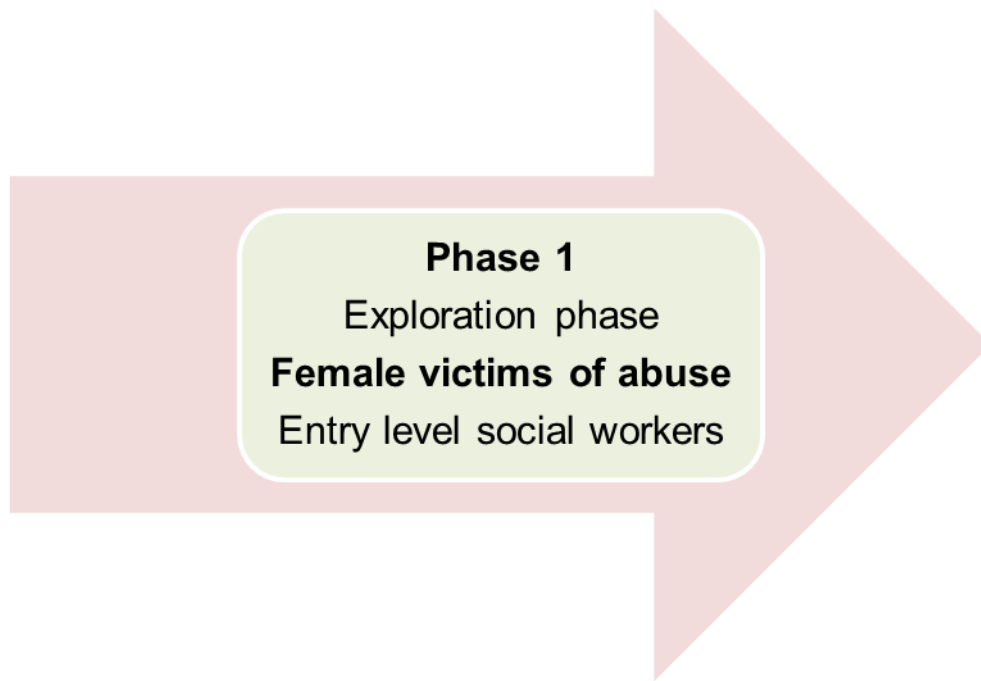


**Figure 4-1: Multi-phase research – exploratory phase with first participant group, female victims of abuse**

At the end of this chapter the Logic model will be used to summarise the elements for a victim empowerment strategy derived from literature and the female victims of partner abuse. The demographic profile of the research participants is presented in the following section.

## **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

As shown in Table 4.1 below, the researcher interviewed 21 female victims of partner abuse and numerical numbers from participants 1 to 21 were used as signifiers to ensure anonymity. Of the 21 participants, 16 were blacks, 2 were whites, and 3 were coloureds. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 66 years.

**Table 4-1: Participants' profile**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Level of education</b> | <b>Employment status</b> | <b>Marital status</b> | <b>Type of abuse</b>                          |
|-----------|------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1         | 20         | Black            | G9                        | No                       | Partner               | Physical abuse, economic abuse                |
| 2         | 38         | Black            | G6                        | No                       | Partner               | Physical, emotional abuse                     |
| 3         | 40         | Black            | G10                       | No                       | Married               | Physical, emotional abuse, economic abuse     |
| 4         | 46         | Coloured         | G12                       | No                       | Divorced              | Physical, emotional abuse                     |
| 5         | 53         | Black            | G11                       | Yes                      | Married               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 6         | 33         | Black            | G12                       | No                       | Partner               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse |
| 7         | 33         | Black            | G12                       | No                       | Partner               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 8         | 32         | Black            | G9                        | No                       | Partner               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse |
| 9         | 42         | Black            | G10                       | No                       | Partner               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 10        | 40         | Black            | G12                       | No                       | Single                | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 11        | 66         | Black            | G5                        | Pension                  | Married               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 12        | 52         | Black            | G12                       | No                       | Married               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 13        | 22         | Black            | G10                       | Yes                      | Partner               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 14        | 47         | Coloured         | Tertiary                  | Yes                      | Married               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 15        | 28         | Black            | G6                        | No                       | Single                | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |
| 16        | 45         | White            | G10                       | No                       | Married               | Physical abuse, emotional abuse               |

| No | Age | Ethnicity | Level of education | Employment status | Marital status | Type of abuse                   |
|----|-----|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 17 | 34  | Black     | G5                 | No                | Single         | Physical abuse, emotional abuse |
| 18 | 30  | Coloured  | G12                | Yes               | Single         | Physical abuse, emotional abuse |
| 19 | 35  | Black     | G11                | No                | Divorced       | Physical abuse, emotional abuse |
| 20 | 36  | Black     | G12                | No                | Single         | Physical abuse, emotional abuse |
| 21 | 25  | White     | G12                | Yes               | Single         | Physical abuse, emotional abuse |

**Table 4-1, Abuse-related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in North West province**

Most of the participants attended secondary school and completed Grade 12. Only one had attained a tertiary education. Most of the participants were unemployed; only 5 were employed, and one was on a pension. Of the 21 participants, 6 were single, 7 were living with a partner, 6 were married, and 2 were divorced.

The thematic analysis of the transcripts generated various themes and sub-themes. The first themes focus on understanding the experiences of the female victims of partner abuse as well as what they were exposed to, namely the types of abuse and the effects of the abuse. The types of abuse are outlined in Table 4.1. The effects of abuse were outlined in Table 4.2.

**Table 4-2 Themes for Participant Group 1**

| Themes                  | Subthemes                         | Categories                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme 1: Types of abuse | Emotional and psychological abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coercion</li> <li>• controlling</li> <li>• denied communication</li> <li>• divorce</li> <li>• false accusations</li> <li>• illtreat women's children</li> <li>• intimidation</li> </ul> |

| Themes                                   | Subthemes                                                                                              | Categories                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                          |                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>restricted freedom of movement and association</li> <li>stalking</li> <li>insulting, threatening to harm verbal abuse, violent threats</li> <li>children exposed to partner abuse</li> </ul>                                                                       |
|                                          | Economic abuse                                                                                         | Financial abuse (P12,15,16), financial dependency (P2,16), forced to leave job (P8,19), arson/destruction of property (P9,16), forced out of house/forced relocation (P4,7,8,9), forced to leave school (P19)                                                                                             |
|                                          | Physical abuse                                                                                         | Being beaten/fighting (P1,2,5,8,11), bodily harm (P14,19,20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                                          | Sexual abuse                                                                                           | Cheating/extramarital affairs (P12,16), child molestation (P9,11), forced to be intimate (P6,9)                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Theme 2: Effects of female partner abuse | Anxiety and depression (P6,13), contemplating suicide (P8,9,15), fear (P11,19), feeling useless (P3,6) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Theme 3: Needs of female victims         | Emotional support                                                                                      | Counselling (P7,9,14), to be stress free (P3), forgiving oneself (P20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                          | Informational support                                                                                  | Educate women (P4,5), court of justice (P1,3), Unit Witness Protection Act in South African Police Services (P6)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                          | Practical support                                                                                      | Provide safe shelter (P3,15), assist children in school (P9), accommodation/adequate housing (P1,2), support with basics/social amenities (P2), employment/income generating projects (P5,9,20), long jail terms for perpetrators (P11,17), protection order/protection from perpetrators (P1,15), police |

| Themes | Subthemes  | Categories                                                                                                              |
|--------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|        |            | visibility/quick response from SAPS (P3,4)                                                                              |
|        | Networking | Women support groups (P4,6), support programs, follow- ups (P5,14), family support (P8,14), SAPS to engage women (P5,6) |

Advocating for a systematic design approach, Kordaczuk-Was (2025:81) points to the importance of understanding the complexities of the research phenomenon to ensure that programmes and strategies are contextually responsive. The input of female victims of partner abuse was invaluable to illuminate the research problem.

The data revealed several key themes including types of abuse, effects of female partner abuse, lived experiences of female victims of partner abuse and their support needs as well as socio-cultural and contextual factors influencing partner abuse and victim empowerment in the North West province. These themes informed the development of a tailored victim empowerment strategy which is presented in this research.

#### 4.3 TYPES OF ABUSE

The participants indicated that they experienced different forms of partner abuse, such as economic, emotional, physical, psychological and sexual abuse. These forms of abuse can erode a victim's sense of self-worth, autonomy, mental and physical health (Camp, 2022; Nikrouy *et al.*, 2024a; Nikrouy *et al.*, 2024b). The abuse is worse when one has a disability, as was explained by participants who had different forms of disabilities (Breiding & Armour, 2015; García-Cuellar *et al.*, 2023). These forms of abuse manifest in various ways, as illustrated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4-3: Forms of abuse**

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotional and psychological abuse | Coercion (P1,8,16), controlling (P6,8,12), denied communication (P9,17), divorce (P4,19), false accusations (P8,3), ill-treatment of women's children (P7,1,3), intimidation (P4,3,9), restricted freedom of movement and association (P3,6), stalking (P4,9), insulting/threatening to harm/ verbal abuse/ violent threats (P6,8), Children exposed to partner abuse (P4,5) |
| Economic abuse                    | Financial abuse (P12,15,16), financial dependency (P2,16), forced to leave job (P8,19), arson/destruction of property (P9,16), forced out of house/forced relocation (P4,7,8,9), forced to leave school (P19)                                                                                                                                                                |
| Physical abuse                    | Being beaten/fighting (P1,2,5,8,11), bodily harm (P14,19,20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Sexual abuse                      | Cheating/extramarital affairs (P12,16), child molestation (P9,11), forced to be intimate (P6,9)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

By exploring the various forms of abuse encountered by the participants, a clearer understanding emerges, illustrating the nature of their experiences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the complex nature of their abuse and supporting those affected in a Victim Empowerment strategy.

#### **4.3.1 Emotional and psychological abuse**

Ness (2023) emphasises that emotional abuse can be viewed differently by diverse cultures and beliefs. Emotional and psychological abuse is a complex and multidimensional issue that influences multiple systems such as intimate relationships, families, workplaces, and broader societal structures (Cheguvera & Arur, 2025:1). Emotional abuse is a pervasive and insidious form of partner abuse that deeply affects the psychological and emotional well-being of participating female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. Unlike physical abuse, which leaves visible scars, emotional abuse causes invisible wounds that can gradually erode a victim's sense of self-worth, autonomy, and mental health (Nguyen, 2022:7).

Emotional abuse is characterised by a range of manipulative and controlling behaviours aimed at undermining the victim's independence and self-esteem, ultimately creating a climate of fear, dependency, and helplessness (Cheguvera & Arur, 2025:1). This notion

is supported by Hamel *et al.* (2023:314) who state that emotional abuse is intended to destroy and diminish the self-esteem of a female partner through coercive behaviours, jealousy, threats and intimidation. Furthermore, there is growing concern over child trauma, which occurs when children and adolescents witness or experience abuse first hand causing long-term psychological harm that may last until adulthood.

In this study, emotional and psychological abuse manifested in various forms, each contributing to the overall degradation of the victim's emotional and psychological state. These forms of emotional abuse are outlined next, namely coercion, control, denied communication, false accusations, ill-treatment of women's children, insults, intimidation, jealousy, lies, parental denial, restricted freedom of movement, stalking, threatening to harm, verbal abuse, violent threats, and restricted freedom of association and female partner abuse traumatising children who witnessed abuse of the mother.

#### **4.3.1.1 Coercion**

P8 highlighted that emotional abuse often involves manipulation and pressure from their partner, which includes manipulating them to do things against their will. Sometimes, P8 is coerced into admitting having done something even if it is untrue. In some instances, they are forced to lie by their partners (P1). As explained by the participants, coercive behaviour manifests in many forms, including threats, humiliation, assault, and the removal of autonomy. Such coercion serves as a tactic for abusers to dominate their partners, restricting their partners' freedom of movement and communication while isolating them from their social networks. The following quotes from the interview transcripts depict the participants' experiences of coercion:

*Which means I had to admit again as I admitted that we are in a relationship [being forced to admit that she was in an intimate relationship with another man]. P1, with tears in her eyes narrated with a lowered gaze, 'I should admit that I slept with the man. What it meant was that whatever he accused me of, even if it's not true, I should admit it. I thought that maybe if I did that, he would be merciful to me, but things got worse.'* (P8)

*He would force me to tell him. Speaking with conviction, 'I would think about a fake person that I had an affair with, that during the week that person came to me'. He*



*asked me how I would be in love with another man when he was my partner and that I slept with that person before I came to him'. (P16)*

In all the above instances, coercion serves as a powerful tool of emotional abuse, stripping the victims of their agency and self-determination, in line with what was outlined in Chapter 2 in the discussion of self-determination theory. This abuse not only inflicts immediate emotional harm but also undermines the victim's ability to trust their own experiences and judgments (Dichter *et al.*, 2018:598). Hamel *et al.* (2023:314) argue that female partners who are the victims of emotional abuse experience psychological trauma, that can lead to mental health issues and even extreme outcomes like disability or death. Addressing coercion in the context of emotional abuse is crucial for developing supportive interventions and resources for victims in the North West province.

#### **4.3.1.2 Controlling**

Participants P8 and P12 indicated emotional abuse through controlling. Their partners control their movements, shopping behaviour, and sometimes their association with other people in the community where they live. They are micromanaged to the extent of being asked to report any of their routines, including going out of the house for any errands. The controlling behaviour sometimes involves children who are compelled to vouch for their mothers as was explained below:

*'So usually, he doesn't want me to go anywhere and if I need to go somewhere, I must inform him, even if I'm going to a shop about 2 meters from where I am. I must tell him that I'm going to buy this and that at the shop and report to him when I'm back. There were too many complications, but I thought he'd be OK as time goes on.'* (P8)

*'Usually, when he called me at night from his workplace, he would want me to wake my daughter up to tell him how many of us were in the house. Just imagine me waking up my daughter just for her to tell him who else was in the house besides her and me.'* (P12)

These examples reflect how controlling behaviour is a means of exerting power and dominance over the victim, creating an environment where their every move is monitored and regulated (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:234). This type of emotional abuse not only stifles

the victim's independence but also erodes their self-esteem and sense of agency. Addressing controlling behaviour is crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions for victims in the North West province.

Controlling also manifested in denying communication. The female victims of partner abuse shared that they have been denied the freedom to communicate by their partners. They are forced not to talk to other people including their relatives and friends and in some cases their communication devices are forcefully taken away so that they do not talk to anyone even seeking help when they are abused. The male partners deliberately deny their female partners communication so that their abusive behaviour does not get reported to either the police or other people. Some of the participants reported that they were violently denied communication and harshly punished if they dared to communicate with other people. Below is the evidence from some of the participants:

*'And I didn't have the chance to go to the police station. He switched sim cards, put mine in his phone and his in mine and I didn't know my contacts off my head. I couldn't call anyone to tell them what's been happening and to call the police. And I didn't want to ask kids to call their aunt because she would call the police'.*  
(P9)

*'I wasn't free to talk to anyone when I was at the tavern. If I did, he would beat me'.*  
(P17)

In addition, female victims of partner abuse in the study experience coercion and controlling behaviour, in the form of being forced to leave school. Being forced to leave school not only strips victims of their immediate education but also creates perpetual financial dependency in the long run, exacerbating victims' vulnerabilities (Adams *et al.*, 2023). This is evidenced below.

*'I lost my education, because I fell in love with him when I was attending school, in Grade 11. He made me leave school because of his lies'.* (P19)

*'Yes, that he will support me, and I'll lack nothing. Later on, I realised that leaving school wasn't a wise decision. I asked him to allow me to go back to school after having a child. He refused'.* (P19)

These excerpts demonstrate how the abuser's control extends to situations outside the home, where the victim is prevented from engaging in normal social interactions. The threat of violence for speaking to others serves as a mechanism to isolate the victim and suppress any attempts to reach out for help or connect with others. This restriction not only reinforces the abuser's dominance but also exacerbates the victim's sense of isolation and helplessness, while also becoming a threat to relatedness. In the discussion of self-determination theory in Chapter 2, relatedness was outlined as one of the core determinants of well-being and as a fundamental psychological need.

#### **4.3.1.3 Divorce**

The participants of this study voiced that most of the abuse resulted in divorce. They expressed that they suffered emotionally because of their partners' decisions of bringing another woman in their union. The emotional strain of making the decision to divorce is compounded by the need to rebuild one's life independently, often under challenging circumstances. Below are some of the excerpts from the data:

*'When I was 36 years, he got a second wife. I left him with that one, telling him that I didn't want to be in a polygamous marriage'. (P4)*

*'I decided to come back home [to her family] because the way this person is abusing me means he doesn't love me anymore. I told him that I'm going back home and that we'll finalise the divorce while I'm home'. (P19)*

Divorce involves not just the legal dissolution of a marriage but the emotional manipulation and trauma that accompany it. In abusive relationships, the prospect of divorce is often clouded by threats, coercion, or the abuser's actions that leave the victim feeling they have no choice but to end the marriage, even when it results in significant emotional and social hardship. This type of abuse exploits the vulnerabilities associated with divorce, including the fear of loneliness, societal judgment, and the daunting task of starting over, making it a particularly insidious form of emotional control (Jopp *et al.*, 2023:93).

#### 4.3.1.4 False accusations

Linking closely with coercion and controlling behaviour, the female partners (P3, P5, P8) also expressed that they are emotionally abused by being repeatedly accused of the things that they never committed such as having affairs with other men. From their explanation the false accusations emanate from the male partners' insecurities and jealousy, thinking that their partners are having affairs with other men. Further exacerbating the control, abusers unjustly accuse their partners of infidelity or other misdeeds, often leading to verbal abuse and violent threats that instil fear and anxiety in the victim as is clear from the following statements:

*'He got in the house and accused me having an affair with a certain man that I don't know him and saying that he saw me with him. I told him that that is not the case.'* (P5)

*'So that time, he used to tell some people about a man I had an affair with. That man was our councillor. As you know councillors from time to time talk to people in the community. So, he told this person that he's blind because he could not see that I had a relationship with the councillor'.* (P8)

*'He was a very jealous person. He used to accuse me that I had boyfriends at work because that time I was working at... [name of workplace not included to protect anonymity]'.* (P3)

As highlighted by the participants, false accusations constitute a significant form of emotional abuse experienced by female victims of partner abuse who participated in this study. This form of abuse involves the abuser making unfounded or fabricated claims about the victim's behaviour, typically to control, belittle, or isolate them (Hill, 2020). False accusations as a form of emotional abuse serve to manipulate, control, and degrade the victim, creating an environment of constant scrutiny and suspicion. This form of abuse can lead to significant emotional and psychological harm, damaging the victim's self-esteem and mental well-being (Hill, 2020; Lux & Gill, 2021:810). Addressing false accusations is crucial for developing comprehensive support systems and interventions for victims in the North West province.

#### **4.3.1.5 Ill-treatment of women's children**

P7 indicated that emotional abuse also involves children and, many times, manifests itself in the form of beating children of partners from their previous marriages. The participants (P1, P3) stated that they are emotionally hurt when their children suffer at the hands of their partners. In some cases, the females become helpless, and others put themselves in danger as they try to protect their children. Ill-treatment of children serves to further destabilise the victim's sense of security and well-being. By threatening or directly harming the children, the abuser exerts additional pressure on the victim, reinforcing their control and the victim's sense of powerlessness. The following statements explain what female victims of partner abuse went through.

*'What hurts me is that O is not his child. I'm thinking maybe that is why he's doing those things, taking back the clothes he's bought with his own money'. (P1)*

*'He told me that my son is now selling drugs and still at school although he's not even smoking, is not drinking, he loves soccer. So, I told him to speak to this child. It's OK you can talk to him. But then he started getting violent, he wanted to beat the son so myself and my daughter sprang in the middle'. (P3)*

It was evident that ill-treatment of women's children from previous relationships was a common occurrence among the participants, and it affected both the children and their mothers.

#### **4.3.1.6 Verbal abuse, intimidation and threats of violence**

Female victims of partner abuse also explained that they suffer emotional abuse in the form of threats and verbal abuse perpetrated by their partners. From the explanations of P6, these threats of harm are meant to instil fear and control. The female participants also highlighted they have lost confidence and sense of self-worth because of the emotional abuse they suffer in the form of insults and humiliation which sometimes take place in public places and in the presence of the children. Below are some of the excerpts from the data that validates this explanation:

*'He then forced me to take those remedies and beat me and insulted me in front of the children and abusing me verbally and no longer giving money for our needs. And everything changed completely'. (P6)*

*'I've lost respect in front of [all] people because of the way he abused me and insulted me in front of people, his vulgar language. He's lowered my dignity and brought reproach in my family' (P8).*

Linked to the effects outlined above, Hamel *et al.* (2023:314) state that emotional abuse has long term effects that include the long-lasting impact of chronic psychological abuse.

The victims of female partner abuse, especially P4, explained that they experience intimidation from their partners. They are intimidated so that they do not divorce even if they are being abused. Some (P3, P9, P19) explained that their partners threaten to embarrass them if they choose to divorce. And others (P19) explained that they are intimidated with dangerous weapons such as guns. They are threatened of consequences such as death or the death of their loved ones. The excerpts below amplify this:

*'He didn't show much, but he was always raising his voice, intimidating, and it progressed as we continued living together. I used to leave him and come back several times and the more I left and came back, the worse it got'. (P3)*

*'He asked me if I still want us to end our relationship. When I said yes, he told me that he was going to make my life miserable and that was going to embarrass me in front of people.' (P9)*

*'When we got there, he bought four bullets and said two are mine and the other two are for my younger brother that I stay with in the house. He said after he has killed us, he will put our bodies in the black rubbish bags he has bought, and he will throw us away on the rubbish dump and he will tell people that the last time he spoke to him was when he asked me to bring the child to him and that I sent the child to him with some people. I just kept quiet.' (P19)*

Based on the findings of this study, intimidation is a severe form of emotional abuse experienced by female victims of partner abuse, characterised by the abuser's use of

threats, aggressive behaviour, and psychological tactics to instil fear and maintain control over the victim. In support of this statement, Beckworth *et al.* (2023) deduced that coercive control is mostly performed by male partners with the acute intention of controlling and dominating a female partner. Intimidation as a form of emotional abuse effectively coerces and controls the victim through fear, using both overt threats and subtle aggressive behaviours to undermine their autonomy and well-being. The cycle of violence, as outlined in Chapter 2, is also evident from the participant quotes. Addressing intimidation is crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions for victims in the North West province, aiming to alleviate fear and provide a pathway to safety and recovery.

#### **4.3.1.7 Restricted freedom of movement and association**

Linked to controlling behaviour, the female victims of partner abuse experience emotional abuse because they are restricted from freedom of movement as well as association. Their partners deny them opportunities to go out and meet friends, relatives and even do shopping and social events such as weddings. They are also forced to stop associating with their relatives and friends and, on top of that, they are not supposed to be visited.

*‘There were times when I couldn’t even go out. I had to sit inside. He didn’t want me to speak to people’. (P3)*

*‘He didn’t want me to go wherever I wanted to go. I used to visit my family at Joburg or go to weddings, baby showers and so forth. And he also wanted me to leave some of my friends, and he didn’t want my friends to visit me or for me to visit them’. (P6)*

Restricted freedom of movement and association is a pervasive form emotional abuse, that links with controlling behaviour and coercion, aimed at isolating the victim and making her more vulnerable. In terms of self-determination theory outlined in Chapter 2, such isolation affects relatedness that is one of the three core psychological needs (Kurzner & Miserandino, 2023:657; Nikrouy *et al.*, 2025:1390).

#### **4.3.1.8 Stalking**

The female victims of partner abuse were also emotionally abused through stalking whereby their partners repeatedly go uninvited to their partners' workplaces to check what they are doing and who they are talking to. They also regularly follow their female partners to observe their movements and their associations, thereby violating the freedom of movement of the females. The following statements by some of the female victims attest to this.

*'I worked for seven years there and that time he would come to check me at work and if he found me talking to male customers then when I got home, he started accusing me that I have an affair.'* (P4)

*'Sometimes I would take a taxi home, and he would have a problem with me sitting in the front seat. I wouldn't notice that he saw that I was in the front seat, but he was stalking me, telling me places where he saw me.'* (P9)

Through coercion, control, intimidation, and various other abusive tactics, perpetrators create an oppressive environment in the microsystem that erodes the victim's sense of identity and autonomy, leaving deep and lasting emotional scars (Beckworth *et al.*, 2023; Hill, 2020; Lux & Gill, 2021).

#### **4.3.1.9 Cheating/extramarital affairs**

The participants explained that cheating betrays their trust and exposes them to emotional distress and potential health risks, such as HIV and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's). They also highlighted that extramarital affairs within an abusive relationship further exacerbate feelings of worthlessness and rejection, compounding the psychological harm inflicted on the victim.

*'And in that process while I was pregnant, there was another lady coming there, who was one of his friend's girlfriends. And I got him cheating with this girl, they were smoking dagga together.'* (P12)

*'Having affairs with young girls also hurt me deeply. He told me he loved me when he married me and then did all those hurting things to me.'* (P16)



Cheating is a form of betrayal and can result in many issues such as divorce and sexually transmitted diseases.

#### **4.3.1.10 Children exposed to partner abuse**

The participants of the study highlighted that the exposure of children to domestic violence is a significant and distressing aspect of abuse. The exposure of children as witnesses to violence not only harms the mothers but also deeply affects the psychological well-being of the children (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:246). The trauma experienced by these children can manifest in various ways, often leading to long-term mental health challenges (Van der Merwe, 2024:2). The findings show that being exposed to violence in the home can lead to feelings of anger, helplessness, and a distorted understanding of conflict resolution among children (Chester & Joscelyne, 2021:5250). The trauma experienced during these formative years can leave deep emotional scars, affecting the children's mental health and their ability to cope with stress and future interpersonal relationships (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:246). Below are some of the excerpts from the data that vividly explains children's exposure to partner abuse as experienced in North West province.

*'And that [female partner abuse] affected our three children, three boys, as they saw what their father did in front of them. And the 22-year-old was the most affected so much that he one time told me that he was going to stab his dad to death, because he said that his dad will come from nowhere and started beating you and accusing you of a lot of things in front of me.'*(P4)

*'It affected the boys mentally, until now. Even if we can say we are OK, but the boys have been affected mentally.'* (P5)

Exposure of children to partner abuse compounds the suffering of the mother, who must grapple with the additional burden of her children's emotional distress. The mental health implications for these children, such as anxiety, depression, and potential aggressive behaviour, underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the trauma and support both the children and their mothers in healing from the abuse (Palmieri & Valentine, 2021:45). Children are negatively affected by traumatic events that are encountered by their mothers, and this culminates in poor parenting and poor upbringing

of the children whose mothers experience female partner abuse (Hazer & Gredebäck, 2023). The long-term psychological effects on children who witness domestic violence highlight the pervasive and intergenerational impact of such abuse, necessitating comprehensive support systems to help these children recover and lead healthy, productive lives.

In summary, emotional abuse in the context of partner abuse in the North West Province encompasses a diverse array of behaviours that collectively serve to erode the victim's psychological and emotional stability.

#### **4.3.2 Economic abuse**

Economic abuse is a prevalent aspect of intimate partner violence, involving tactical behaviour by an abuser to control the victim's capacity to obtain, use, or retain economic resources (Adams, 2011a; Adams *et al.*, 2024). The participants of this study exposed that they also experience economic abuse which, according to them, involves control of money, buying power and finances. They explained that their intimate partners have control over their access to economic resources, and it has affected their capacity to support themselves and their children. Financial abuse has also resulted in financial dependency on the perpetrator of partner abuse (Adams, 2011b). The following themes emanated from the data described below: financial abuse, financial dependency, forced to leave job, SASSA cards, stopped financial support.

##### **4.3.2.1 Financial abuse**

Based on the excerpts from the data collected from female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, financial abuse is characterised by various controlling and manipulative behaviours where the abuser exerts control over the victim's financial resources, limiting their independence and creating a situation of financial dependency and hardship (Adams, 2011a; Adams *et al.*, 2024). According to Sharp-Jeffs (2015) financial abuse happens when men seek to regain financial control they previously possessed by legal default. The excerpt below is a description of financial abuse:

*'He's not even home currently. He left in 2020 saying he was going to look for work. He lies to us saying he's sent money to us, which I never get. When we report him for maintenance, he leaves his job. Recently he was working at B....*

*We managed to get the numbers of his boss so that we could report him for maintenance. He left the job, and his boss said he didn't know where he was.'*  
(P16)

*'He would take the children's grant. I'm a person who drink[s] alcohol when I have money, to make myself happy. He would take my money and beat me and tell people that I'm always drunk and use children's grant.'* (P15)

*'... Financial abuse is when he doesn't want you to work but on the other [hand], he only gives you small money or buys stuff for you.'*(P12)

Based on these experiences of the female victims of partner abuse they have tried to seek legal recourse through maintenance claims to address financial abuse, but the perpetrators use various ways to evade financial responsibility such as deliberately leaving jobs. This pattern of behaviour reflects a deliberate effort to withhold financial support, leaving the victim and their family in a vulnerable financial position (Adams, 2011a; Adams *et al.*, 2024). In other incidences, the partners would take the children's grant—a government allowance intended to support their welfare and use it for their own purposes. Other female victims of partner abuse (see Table 4.2) experience a form of financial abuse where the abuser restricts their ability to work, thereby curtailing their financial independence. At the same time, some partners only provide minimal financial support, or occasionally buy items for them, which creates a dynamic of dependency and control. This shows that financial management remains gendered, with men positioned at the heart of financial control and traditionally expected to assume responsibility for monetary matters (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). This financial abuse leaves the victim with limited access to resources and perpetuates her reliance on the abuser. Adams *et al.* (2024) found that there are generally more economic restrictions in abusive relationships when perpetrators have access to financial and other assets.

#### **4.3.2.2 Financial dependency**

Nine participants explained that they have been financially abused because they depend on men for financial support to buy food, pay school fees and procure other basic commodities. They explained that in some cases they endured abuse because of fear of losing financial support even if it put them in jeopardy, as also outlined by Sharp-Jeffs

(2015). Financial dependency was sometimes used as a mechanism by the perpetrators of violence to subdue and subjugate their partners into perpetual abuse (Adams *et al.*, 2024). Financial dependency, as described in the data, involves a significant reliance on a partner for essential financial support. This dependency culminates in difficult decisions, emotional distress, and an inability to adequately provide for oneself and one's children. The lack of financial independence creates a situation where the individual feels trapped and vulnerable, often having to navigate challenging circumstances with limited options for self-sufficiency (Adams *et al.*, 2024; Sharp-Jeffs, 2015). The following excerpts give evidence.

*'His family asked me to get him released [from prison]. I did that, also thinking that I depend on him for food and to help my children. I was thinking about that, without knowing what would happen afterwards.'* (P2)

*'I'm overwhelmed by this whole situation. I just want him to help me financially to support our school-going child. Because the fact that the child wears torn uniform and shoes, makes the child reluctant to go to school.'* (P16)

In the first excerpt, P2 describes how she was pressured by her partner's family to secure his release from prison, despite not fully understanding the consequences of her actions. Her decision was influenced by her financial dependency on him, as she relied on him for food and support for her children. Financial dependency can therefore lead individuals to doing things they do not want to do. For example, P16 expresses the emotional burden she faces because of her financial dependency, particularly in supporting their school-going child. Therefore, financial dependence may directly stem from financial abuse, highlighting its inseparability from women's comparatively lower economic status (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015).

#### **4.3.2.3 Forced to leave job**

Economic abuse, as described by the participants, occurs when a partner exerts control over a woman's employment and financial independence by forcing her to leave her job. The victims of partner abuse (P8, P19) explained that such abuse undermines their ability to earn an income, isolates them from their workforce, and increases their dependency on the abusive partner. Based on the explanations by the participants of this study, the

female victims are pressurised by their partners to leave their jobs by either accusing them of engaging in inappropriate behaviour or false promises that they would be well looked after if they quit their jobs and stay at home. The abusers use manipulative and unfounded accusations to coerce the victims into leaving their employment, thereby stripping them of financial independence and reinforcing their dependency on the abuser. The abuser sometimes manipulates the situation to justify his control over her employment. Below is a description of economic abuse based on the excerpts:

*'He made me leave that job, saying that it makes me do naughty things and that I should leave it and come stay with him. I made that decision and left the job. And even here in the farm as I was working, he wanted me to leave the job and stay at home because I'm not there to work, but I was there for me'. (P8)*

*'No, he stopped me from working there. He told the manager there to release me from work because I have a small child, and no one is looking after the child'. (P19)*

Being forced to leave a job as a form of economic abuse leaves the victims more vulnerable with no means of income to take care of their needs and those of their dependents (Glinski, 2024; Postmus *et al.*, 2020:261).

#### **4.3.3 Physical abuse**

Physical abuse remains a pervasive and devastating form of violence against women, as was evident from the participants in this study. This abuse manifests in various brutal and life-threatening forms, leaving lasting physical, emotional, and psychological scars on the victims (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:1). Physical abuse manifests because of destructive behaviours, including drug abuse by the perpetrators (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:246). As a result, victims of female partner abuse experience various forms of physical abuse such as being beaten, pushed, and shoved as well as strangling and arson (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:1; Sardinha *et al.*, 2022). In some instances, the victims of partner abuse are forced out of their accommodation.

The abuse also extends beyond physical harm to include destruction of property. The different forms of physical abuse faced by participants in this study are outlined next, including the broader social and systemic factors that cause them.

#### **4.3.3.1 Arson and destroying property**

Some participants (P9, P16) in this study highlighted that they experience physical abuse in the form arson and destruction of property. The female victims of partner abuse indicated that in some instances the partners set their houses on fire to intimidate and publicly humiliate the victim. In addition, the arson becomes both physical and psychological attacks designed to inflict maximum harm. Arson is, therefore, a weapon of fear and domination, aimed at eradicating the victim's sense of safety and security within her own house. In some cases, arson is used as a means of economic and psychological abuse. The perpetrators damage household items and even sold some belongings, thereby undermining the victim's ability to maintain a stable living environment for herself and her children.

The excerpts below consolidate this evidence:

*'After just 30 minutes someone called my sister asking her where I was because my house was on fire. We got out of the house and told my sister that that man is the one who set my house on fire because he told me that he was not done with me and that he was going to embarrass me in front of people.'* (P9)

*'He's damaged a lot of things in the house. He has broken the door, sold some of the things and the shack at the back. If the older [child] comes home, she won't have a place to sleep in. How will I buy and repair all those things with the only R2000 that I'm getting?'* (P16)

While this form of abuse causes immediate physical and economic harm, it also has lasting psychological effects, as it erodes the victim's sense of security and independence, trapping them in a cycle of fear and dependency (Douglas, 2023:27).

#### **4.3.3.2 Being beaten/fighting**

Almost all the participants shared that they have been beaten by their partners in most cases using open hands, fists, guns, axes and boots and they suffered various forms of injuries, bruises, blue eyes and some were even hospitalised (P4). The beating normally takes place in the homes where they live with their partners and in some instances, it takes place in public places. In addition, the beating happens regularly regardless of

police intervention. These results are almost similar to what Nevhutanda *et al.* (2023:5) found in their study done in two provinces of South Africa. Below are some of the statements by the participants that vividly explain how beating happened:

*'I was just enduring that life, being beaten, getting him arrested, to be released from prison. I was always nursing wounds from his beatings.'* (P2)

*'He started beating me and punching me on my eye and closed the gate saying that I was not going to go out of the gate because that was my last day on earth.'* (P5)

While the participants explained how they experienced being beaten by their partners, they underscored that drug abuse, especially alcohol, was a catalytic factor (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:236). The majority of the women explained that their partners beat them mainly under the influence of alcohol and drugs with some of them highlighting that their partners would hardly do that when sober. P11 indicated that physical abuse happened when her partner smoked crystal meth and 'nyaope.' The following verbal quotations reveal the drug abuse by the partners:

*'He always does these bad things when he is drunk. But he doesn't always do them when he is sober.'* (P1)

*'That night we never slept, and he started to beat me, something he always does whenever he was drunk. I was so used to them that I didn't seem to feel them.'* (P8)

The findings show that being beaten as a form of physical abuse mostly manifest as result of destructive behaviours such as alcohol abuse or smoking illicit substances.

#### **4.3.3.3 Forced out of the house/ forced relocation**

Participants who were victims of partner abuse outlined the experiences of being forced out of the house and forced relocation as forms of physical abuse that involve the coercive displacement of victims from their homes, often under threat or duress. These actions not only strip victims of their immediate safety and security but also sever their connection to

familiar environments and support networks, exacerbating their vulnerability and diminishing the sense of relatedness. For example, they are locked outside the house, which is a clear assertion of control and power by the abuser, effectively rendering the victim homeless and dependent on external help, such as the police, to retrieve essential items. This form of abuse isolates the victim and disrupts the routine and stability of her children's life, illustrating the profound impact forced displacement exerts on the family unit. Seven of the participants (P4, P7, P8, P9, P12, P17, P20) also highlighted that they have been forced to involuntarily relocate, driven by the need to protect themselves from further harm. The flight from the home is not merely an act of self-preservation; it represents a forced and traumatic severance from the victim's environment, leaving her to rely on the kindness of acquaintances for shelter. Below are some of the verbatim vignettes that speak to this.

*'I went to the police station and told them that he had locked me outside and my child is going to school tomorrow. So, I'm just asking you to help me take my child's uniform out.'* (P7)

*'I sneaked away and ran as fast as I could. One dog walked with me but when it saw that I wasn't going back, it went back to him. When he saw it, he realised that I had run away. He called me but I never went back and just ran away until I got to one lady that I knew.'* (P8)

*'That's when I came to stay here. But he came to fight with the social workers. Sometimes I would have come to this side to take medication, and he would call me that time, as if there was someone who communicated with him and told him where I was. He would say to me I can see you; you are walking on a passage'.* (P9)

*'...I managed to run away and came to stay here in [shelter] for my own safety. My children were the ones who encouraged me to leave and go live somewhere else.'* (P4)

Forced out of the house or forced relocation as forms of physical abuse involve the coerced displacement of victims from their homes, often under duress or threat of violence. These acts not only destabilise the victim's living situation but also heighten



their vulnerability by severing ties with their home, community, and support networks. The psychological trauma and ongoing fear associated with such displacement contribute to a cycle of abuse that extends beyond the physical act of relocation, often leaving victims in a state of perpetual insecurity and anxiety.

#### **4.3.3.4 Bodily harm**

The findings of this study show that bodily harm is the most overt and devastating form of physical abuse experienced by female victims of partner abuse in North West province. It involves the intentional infliction of bodily injury or physical suffering, often through acts of violence that not only cause immediate pain and harm but also leave lasting physical and psychological scars (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:15). The following accounts from female victims of partner abuse in the North West province illustrate the brutal nature of physical harm as a method of control, punishment, and domination within abusive relationships.

*'He choked me and I felt like I was breathing my last. I grabbed his private parts sometimes and he begged me to leave him. I was running outside when caught up with me and we fought again; he twisted my neck and I collapsed. And he left me. I stood up when I felt better. He got into the house.'* (P14)

*'He told me that he's had anger since he was young. His first abuse was when he kicked me on my tummy when I was pregnant. I told his parents every time he'd abused me. His family also asked that I don't tell my family, that they'll solve those problems.'* (P19)

*'He started by slapping me and it escalated to the fists. And there was one occasion when he forced himself on me after he had beaten me.'* (P20)

The findings highlight that bodily harm as a form of physical abuse encompasses a range of violent behaviours that inflict direct bodily injury and pain on the victim (Nevhutanda *et al.*, 2023:5). These acts of violence are often characterised by their severity, frequency, and escalating nature, leaving victims in a state of constant fear and vulnerability. The bodily harm inflicted in abusive relationships is a powerful tool of control, used by abusers to dominate and oppress their partners, resulting in profound physical, emotional, and psychological consequences for the victims.

#### **4.3.4 Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is a particularly traumatising and severely violating kind of abuse that female victims of partner abuse endure in the North West province. According to the participants (see Table 4.2), there are several ways that this type of abuse presents itself, and each one exacerbates the victims' exploitation, dehumanisation, and agony. The prevalence of sexual abuse in intimate relationships is a serious assault on the victims' dignity and emotional health, in addition to being a violation of their sexual liberty. Participants reported that forced intimacy, rape, early marriage, child molestation, cheating, and sexual assault are examples of sexual abuse.

##### **4.3.4.1 Child molestation**

The findings of this study also confirm that female victims of partner abuse experience their girl children being molested by their partners. Child molestation is a harrowing aspect of sexual abuse and early marriage, where young girls are exploited sexually by older men, often within the context of abusive relationships or coerced relationships. Masa *et al.* (2024:203) define child molestation as a serious crime that has life-long effects on the mental and emotional well-being of a minor. These practices rob the victims of their childhood, subjecting them to sexual violence and control at a vulnerable age, with long-lasting effects on their physical and psychological health (Jones, 2021). The following excerpts from the data illustrate this.

*'He then started with my three daughters. He liked them. But one day I caught him touching one of my daughters on her waist. He didn't find any wrong when I confronted him, telling them that what he was doing to my daughter is what he should do to me, not my daughter.'* (P9)

Child molestation is a complex and deeply troubling form of sexual abuse, that profoundly affects both the victimised child and their mother. The trauma resulting from such abuse can lead to severe emotional and psychological consequences for both parties.

##### **4.3.4.2 Forced to be intimate**

In many cases, participants were forced to be intimate with their partners against their will, a clear violation of their bodily autonomy and consent. This forced intimacy often

degenerates into rape and sexual assault, where the victim is subjected to non-consensual sexual acts, leading to severe physical injuries, emotional trauma, and a deep sense of violation. These acts of sexual violence are used as tools of control and dominance, further entrenching the victim's subjugation and powerlessness within the abusive relationship.

*'We were already sleeping when he came back. He woke me up and wanted us to have intimacy. I told him that I was tired because the whole day I was cleaning and cooking and taking care of the children. He lifted his hand to beat me. I realised that he was angry and accepted it.'* (P6)

*'We got home, found the kids in the sitting room watching TV. We went to the bedroom, and he pointed the gun me, asked me to undress and said to me that he wanted to enjoy sex with me as it [is] done in pornographic videos, and that I should make the same sex cries that people make in those videos. Because he had a gun, I had no choice.'* (P9)

The experience of sexual abuse in its various forms leaves deep psychological scars, with victims often struggling with feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation. The convergence of sexual abuse with other forms of abuse, including physical and emotional abuse, creates complex and multifaceted trauma that requires comprehensive support and intervention (Narang *et al.*, 2019). Sexual abuse among female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province is a grave and pervasive issue that manifests in multiple forms, each contributing to the ongoing victimisation and trauma of the women involved. Addressing sexual abuse within this context requires an understanding of its various manifestations and a commitment to providing holistic care and justice for the victims.

The preceding section addressed the abuse-related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in North West province. Participants experienced various forms of partner abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, economic abuse (financial dependency, forced to leave job, stopped financial support etc.), physical abuse (arson, being beaten, destroy property, fighting, forced out of house, forced relocation), and sexual abuse (child molestation, forced intimacy and early marriage). The following section focuses on the effects of female victims of partner abuse on female victims of partner abuse.

## **4.4 EFFECTS OF FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE**

The internalisation of the effects of abuse can lead to a loss of confidence, dignity and self-esteem, leaving the victims feeling weak and powerless. Female partner abuse resulted in anxiety and depression (P6,13), contemplating suicide (P8, 9,15), fear (P11,19), feeling useless (P3,6).

Female partner abuse has pervasive and devastating effects that profoundly impacts the mental and emotional well-being of female victims of partner abuse (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:2). The findings of this study show that participants who endure abuse often suffer from a range of consequences, manifesting in various symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and trauma. These effects affect the general quality of life and hinder the capacity of victims to function in daily situations. Such problematic management of everyday tasks can have a negative effect on needs fulfilment in terms of feeling competent (Nikrouy *et al.*, 2025:1390), as outlined in self-determination theory in Chapter 2. Chronic stress is brought on by the constant strain and can seriously harm mental health (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:235; Nevhutanda *et al.*, 2023).

### **4.4.1 Anxiety and depression**

Due to the ongoing emotional manipulation, threats, and intimidation they endure, female victims of partner abuse often feel anxiety and depression (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:235). The findings of the study show that anxiety and depression are profound manifestations of female partner abuse. In the context of the participants of this study, these mental health conditions emerge as direct consequences of the sustained emotional and psychological trauma inflicted by abusive partners. The pervasive nature of this abuse not only disrupts the victims' daily lives but also severely impairs their mental and emotional well-being. The participants highlighted that the overwhelming stress caused by the abusive relationship resulted in the need for medical interventions, stressing the severity of their abuse. The reference by one participant (P13) to her brain being 'messed up' and her occasional "loss of mind" vividly captures the debilitating effects of anxiety and depression, demonstrating how these conditions can erode a victim's sense of self and overall mental functioning. Below are some of the participants' descriptions of anxiety and depression.

*'It affected me a lot because I started to have anxiety and depression, and I was given medication for it.'* (P6)

*'I've lost a lot of weight, because I think a lot and become emotional and cry. My brain is also messed up so much that I lose my mind sometimes.'* (P13)

Anxiety often manifests as a persistent state of fear, worry, and hypervigilance, leading victims to struggle with feelings of safety and security. Depression, on the other hand, is characterised by deep-seated emotions of sadness, hopelessness, and a diminished interest in life (Bulut *et al.*, 2021:168).

#### **4.4.2 Contemplating suicide**

The study's findings demonstrate that contemplating suicide is a serious psychological reaction to the extreme emotional and mental stress that female victims of partner abuse endure. According to the participants P8, P9 and P15, this reaction frequently results from extended exposure to different types of abuse, which leaves victims feeling notably helpless, depressed, and feeling that there is no way out of their predicament. Victims of female partner abuse in the North West province reported thinking about taking their own lives to end their agony. As an illustration, one participant (P8) shared her sense of powerlessness by saying,

*'I constantly wonder myself what I should do—should I attempt [to kill] myself or something else. I drink a lot because of this.'* (P8)

Another participant described a moment of near suicide, where she was on the brink of ingesting a harmful substance:

*'I took a cupful of it [poison] and wanted to drink it ... He [partner] came out from the bedroom when I was about to drink it'.* (P15).

This incident underscores the acute distress and the serious risk of suicide among abused women, who may feel trapped and see no other way out of their abusive situations (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021; Nevhutanda *et al.*, 2023). P8 indicated coping in non-constructive ways by drinking and contemplating suicide.

*'My feelings are not OK. I always ask myself what I should do, should I commit suicide or what should I do. That is why I drink a lot because I don't think about a lot of things when I'm drunk.'* (P8)

In one instance, the perpetrator of the abuse committed suicide.

*'After 3 weeks the police came and told me that they had been looking for that man, but they found, and he had committed suicide [the perpetrator]'*. P9

Some victims of severe psychological abuse may consider or even try suicide because they believe there is no way out of their predicament (Aizpurua *et al.*, 2021:235; Nevhutanda *et al.*, 2023). These accounts emphasise the critical need for comprehensive psychological support and intervention for victims of partner abuse. Without such support, the risk of suicide remains alarmingly high, as victims may feel that it is their only option to escape the relentless abuse and the psychological toll it takes on their well-being.

#### **4.4.3 Fear**

Female victims of partner abuse (P11, P19) voiced that they experience fear, that manifests through a pervasive sense of dread and anxiety that impacts various aspects of their daily lives. This fear is often a direct result of abusive experiences and can significantly undermine a victim's sense of security and well-being. For many women, fear is a constant and debilitating presence. One participant (P19) described her heightened anxiety and vigilance, saying,

*'I can't sleep at night, fearing that this man might come in any time ... I can't even go to the shops without always checking my back'*. (P19).

This fear extends beyond immediate threats, affecting everyday activities and interactions. The constant vigilance reflects how the abuse has instilled a deep-seated fear that prevents P19 from feeling safe even in mundane situations.

Another participant expressed a generalised fear of men because of her abuse:

*'He's not arrested; he still goes to work. And what is worse, I'm scared at night. And I fear men in general. I do understand that men are different. But I fear any man since this incident.'* (P11)

This broad fear indicates that the trauma from the abuse has generalised, leading to a pervasive mistrust and apprehension towards all men, not just the abuser. It is evident how abuse creates an environment where the victim feels unsafe and distrustful, significantly affecting her interactions and daily life as also outlined by P19.

*'My father has gone back to his family. So, I'm only staying with a young boy who goes to school and my child. I'm afraid even to check jobs on Facebook. Because if he sees someone requesting to be my friend on Facebook on my page, he already concludes that he's my boyfriend.'* (P19)

These excerpts illustrate that fear is not limited to the immediate threat of the abuser but also includes an ongoing, generalised anxiety that affects various aspects of life. This abuse manifests as a constant state of alertness and insecurity, disrupting the victim's ability to engage in normal activities and affecting her overall quality of life. Addressing this fear requires targeted social work support to help victims regain a sense of safety and confidence.

#### **4.4.4 Feeling useless**

One of the profound effects of abuse experienced by participating female victims of partner abuse in the North West province is the sense of feeling useless. P3's experience highlights the intense emotional distress caused by feeling undervalued. She reflects on the impact of her partner's behaviour, stating,

*'So, we are not useless. Stop making a woman feel useless. Because I almost lost my sanity. I almost lost my sanity, just because of a man, holding on to him.'* (P3).

This statement underscores how the demeaning treatment from her partner nearly drove her to the brink of insanity. The relentless feeling of worthlessness instilled by her partner contributed significantly to her psychological suffering. Similarly, P6 provides insight into the detrimental effects of feeling useless in her daily life and responsibilities. She shares,

*'I was deeply hurt, very much, to the extent that I had lost a lot of weight. I was drinking a lot and not looking after my kids and I was like a useless mother, reckless and not taking my responsibility as a mother seriously and passing on that responsibility to my mom.'* (P6).

This excerpt reveals how the internalised sense of inadequacy led to severe emotional and physical consequences. The feeling of being a "useless mother" not only impacted her self-esteem but also resulted in neglect of her own well-being and her responsibilities towards her children.

The pervasive feeling of uselessness experienced by these victims reflects a broader pattern of abuse where perpetrators undermine the victim's sense of self-worth and efficacy. This abuse leaves deep psychological scars, often manifesting in severe emotional distress, mental health challenges, and an erosion of the victim's self-esteem. It is clear from the input of the victims that the three fundamental needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are severely affected by the abuse. A victim empowerment strategy should incorporate interventions aimed at restoring autonomy, competence and relatedness.

In conclusion, female partner abuse is a complex problem that causes severe and lifelong harm to female victims. The sub-themes, each stressing a different aspect of the multi-dimensional impact on the victims' life, demonstrate the emotional and mental toll of this abuse.

#### **4.5 NEEDS OF FEMALE VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE THAT COULD BE ADDRESSED IN A VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE.**

The second objective of the present study strove to explore the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy in the North West province. Intimate partner violence (IPV) can lead to both short- and long-term medical, financial, and psychological problems (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Saan *et al.*, 2022) which prompts victims to develop a variety of strategies to address such effects. If these needs are addressed, they facilitate independence of women and may help them escape the violent situations (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Therefore, this section outlines the needs of female victims of partner abuse as found in the thematic analysis of the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with these women.

The participants outlined various needs to address partner abuse, such as practical support (accommodation, employment etc.), informational support (education, court of



justice etc.), emotional support (counselling etc.) and networking (women support groups, follow- ups etc.). The participants' responses on the needs to address partner abuse show that women in North West experience various forms of abuse which calls for multi-sectoral input to address it. Responses from different participants on the needs of female victims of partner abuse are presented in the themes below. Table 4.4 below depicts the main themes and categories indicating the participant numbers of those who indicated specific needs.

**Table 4-4: Needs of female victims**

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotional support     | Counselling (P7,9,14), to be stress free (P3), forgiving oneself (P20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Informational support | Educate women (P4,5), court of justice (P1,3), Unit Witness Protection Act in South African Police Services (P6)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Practical support     | Provide safe shelter (P3,15), assist children in school (P9), accommodation/adequate housing (P1,2), support with basics/social amenities (P2), employment/income generating projects (P5,9,20), long jail terms for perpetrators (P11,17), protection order/protection from perpetrators (P1,15), police visibility/quick response from SAPS (P3,4) |
| Networking            | Women support groups (P4,6), support programs, follow- ups (P5,14), family support (P8,14), SAPS to engage women (P5,6)                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

#### **4.5.1 Emotional support**

One of the needs for female victims of partner abuse is emotional support. Kindness *et al.* (2017) define emotional support as a spectrum of actions aimed at boosting positive emotional well-being while assisting individuals in overcoming and alleviating negative emotional states. For clarity, Wills (2001) considers negative emotional states as such feelings of anxiety, stress and depression emanating from recent negative and traumatic events. When emotional support is administered correctly to victims of abuse, particularly in ways that are sensitive to their feelings, it has the potential to improve positive emotional states such as coping and sound mental and physical well-being (Ferreira *et al.*, 2023). Kindness *et al.* (2017) further argue that just the perception that someone has emotional support positively affects victims of abuse as it leads to the diminishing of

stressors like loneliness. Participants indicated that they need counselling, to be stress free and forgive themselves so that they could regain confidence and self-esteem.

#### **4.5.1.1 Counselling**

Some participants indicated that they need counselling for them to deal with the abuse that they have been subjected to by their partners. In addition, the participants indicated that counselling is offered in some shelters, but it is not sufficient. Interestingly, participants also think that men who are in most cases the abusers need counselling too so that they can manage their anger and not indulge in fighting and other abusive tendencies in solving problems or exerting power. This perspective underscores the dual role of counselling in both healing the victims and potentially reforming the abusers, thereby breaking the cycle of abuse. The following quotations proffer the different reasons why female victims of partner abuse need counselling:

*'I think just as we are given counselling, the same should be done to them to be encouraged to stop abuse. If he has a problem, if he is still angry on a certain day, he should wait for the next day to calm down and to say what his problems are, without fighting.'* (P7)

*'The only thing that I wished could be included in K..., is intense counselling, that we don't just sit in the chalet the whole day, sad. Even if there is one day where all the victims could come in a hall or something and [they are] given counselling, it could be better. That different situation could be discussed and how the victims could interact with other women outside the centre.'* (P9)

*'I think giving them counselling and encouragement from time to time and making them realise that whatever they've gone through will pass.'* (P14)

In this study, counselling emerges as a vital need for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, offering a pathway to emotional healing, empowerment, and recovery. The traumatic experiences these women endure leave deep psychological scars, necessitating professional support to help them process their trauma, regain self-esteem, and rebuild their lives. The excerpts from victims highlight the significance of counselling not only for their own recovery but also as a preventive measure to address the underlying roots of abusive relationships. Counselling is therapeutic and assists

female victims of abuse to manage, handle and deal decisively with the emotional responses, destructive behavioural thoughts and assist them to develop healthier coping mechanisms to face their problems (Mihaila, 2025:421).

#### **4.5.1.2 To be stress free**

In addition, some of the participants (P3, P21), expressed the need to be stress free. For female victims of partner abuse in the study, the need to be stress free is a fundamental aspect of their recovery and well-being. The prolonged exposure to abuse often leaves these women in a constant state of anxiety, fear, and emotional exhaustion. As expressed by P3, the overwhelming desire for peace of mind and relaxation is crucial for them to regain control over their lives and to fulfil their roles, particularly as mothers and individuals.

*'I don't even know what I need. I just need peace of mind. I need to be relaxed, to be stress free. If I can just get that for now, so that I can be a better mother and a stronger person. That would be enough.'*(P3)

The above demonstrates that victims of female partner abuse want a break from abuse so that they can be stress free so that they become better mothers.

#### **4.5.1.3 Forgiving oneself**

One participant (P20) also highlighted that there is a need to forgive themselves and those that have wronged them. This is because some of the victims blamed themselves for the abuse that happened to them. They thought they had contributed in some way to their abuse when in fact they did nothing to deserve abuse. The statement below by one of the participants speaks to this:

*'To forgive myself and whoever has hurt me ... [inaudible]... a lot of issues.'* (P20)

Forgiving oneself as a form emotional support allows the victims to take away the blame for the abuses they have suffered (Miller, 2018).

#### **4.5.2 Informational support**

Female victims of partner abuse need informational support. Informational support should be available at different systemic levels. In the micro- and mesosystems, information could be available at safe houses, churches and welfare organisations. Westbrook (2008:237) contends that since the crisis of female partner abuse is pervasive, there is a need for informational resources to be available at the various organisations involved in interventions for female partners of abuse. While some victims of female partner abuse make use of the formal informational systems such as the police and community agencies, most of the victims utilise the informal information networks (Westbrook, 2008:237).

According to the findings of this study, informational support is necessary for female victims of partner abuse as emphasized by participants. According to the interviews, informational support includes giving victims the skills and tools they need to negotiate the intricate webs of protection, justice, and rehabilitation. The participants also clarified that to be empowered to make decisions and seek the help they require, they need informational support to improve their knowledge of their rights, access legal remedies, and protective measures. This assistance ought to take many forms, including education, and a division within the South African police force that additionally offers support regarding information.

##### **4.5.2.1 Educating women**

Female victims of partner abuse could be assisted with parenting (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Education plays a crucial role in conflict resolution and help-seeking after being abused (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Education aids building awareness, improving economic prospects, reducing financial dependency, raising confidence and/or freedom to deal with negative socio-cultural practices that influence women's autonomy to deal with IPV (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Information resources may play a pivotal role in the fight against IPV and help prevent it. Information on IPV may assist would-be victims in ascertaining what constitutes abuse, as some might not be aware since it may be subtle and non-physical (WHO, 2024). In this regard the cycle of abuse and even the older Duluth Power and Control Wheel, as discussed in Chapter 2, can convey important information aiding the recognition and management of female partner abuse. Through informational support,

various forms of abuse may be clarified (physical, emotional and psychological, financial, and sexual), red flags identified, which could help victims assess their own relationships (WHO, 2024).

According to the findings of this study, one of the primary manifestations of informational support is education. The participants (P4, P5) in the study indicated that they need to be educated about their rights and the legal options available to them. They highlighted that victims of partner abuse in North West province are often unaware of the laws designed to protect them or the procedures they need to follow to access such justice and support services. They suggested that the education could be delivered through brochures, workshops and community outreaches. Below are some of the excerpts that attest to this:

*‘During these programmes of motivating women, if they want anyone who has experienced abuse to motivate women who have been in the same situation, I’m willing to advise a fellow woman [on] how to deal with stress and tell her that I’ve walked this painful road. ’(P4)*

*‘So, the department can encourage these women to go seek help from the social workers to end abuse. Without us speaking up, the government won’t know what is happening. ’(P5)*

Both these participants were willing to reach out to others and offer peer or mutual support. Education as a form of informational support is crucial because it empowers women with knowledge and confidence to take legal action against the perpetrators of abuse.

Information on safety is another critical need for victims of IPV. For victims seeking to leave abusive relationships, safety planning is paramount (Childress *et al.*, 2024b). Female victims of partner abuse would need information on personal safety, crisis hotlines, emergency services and shelters, mental health professionals, counselling, support groups, therapy, including securing important documents (Fraser *et al.*, 2024). Further, information on how to get support services and financial resources could lessen the risk associated with leaving abusive relationships as well as ensuring a smooth transition of victims to safety and eventual self-reliance (Little, 2023). Since victims of IPV may be subjected to physical and emotional injuries, information on access to health and medical care is equally important (Ragavan & Murray, 2023). While most victims need

sensitive trauma-informed care, other victims may need different forms of care depending on the abuse they would have experienced (Maquibar *et al.*, 2023). For example, victims of sexual assault and abuse would require reproductive health information, which includes sexually transmitted infection screening, and access to contraception.

#### **4.5.2.2 Legal information**

Victims of IPV also need legal information. Understanding legal processes may empower victims to make informed decisions (Wright *et al.*, 2023). Victims do not just require information about their rights, but also legal recourse at their disposal which include how to report abuse, restraining orders, dealing with the police, and the processes of the justice system (Galera *et al.*, 2023a). The findings of this study underscore understanding the court of justice as another crucial aspect of informational support. Three victims of partner abuse (P1, P6, P14) highlighted that they often face significant barriers in accessing justice, including a lack of knowledge about court procedures, the rights they are entitled to during legal proceedings, and the types of evidence required to support their cases.

*'They said we should go to court first and if he does something to me after that, then they would arrest him because he would have been told what to do and not to do.'* (P1)

Providing clear and accessible information about the court process, the role of legal representation, and the steps involved in pursuing a case can demystify the legal system for victims and reduce the fear and anxiety associated with it.

Informational support is a vital need for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, manifesting in the education of women, and understanding the courts of justice. By equipping victims with the necessary information and resources, they are empowered to take control of their lives, seek justice, and protect themselves from further harm.

#### **4.5.3 Practical support**

Previous studies have shown that victims of intimate partner violence need practical support to escape and protect themselves from violent situations (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021; Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Leemis *et al.*, 2022). The findings of this study validate and

confirm that practical support is an essential need of female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, as it directly addresses the immediate and tangible challenges these women face in escaping abusive situations and rebuilding their lives. As highlighted by the participants, this support encompasses a broad range of services and resources that provide victims with the means to secure their safety, meet their basic needs, and achieve long-term stability. Among them are, providing safe shelter, assisting children in school, accommodation, employment, long jail terms for perpetrators, transport at centres, protection orders, protection from perpetrators, police visibility, adequate housing, income-generating projects, and quick response from SAPS.

#### **4.5.3.1 Provision of safe shelter**

Providing a safe place to shelter was mooted as a crucial practical support need for female victims of partner abuse in the North West province. The significance of such a place is reflected in the way it offers not just physical security, but also psychological relief (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:15). For many victims, being in a safe environment allows them to rest, think clearly, and regain a sense of calm (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021), as indicated by P3, who noted the benefits of being in a secure location for both her and her children. The sense of safety extends beyond mere physical protection; it also alleviates the constant fear of the abuser's potential return, which can be a persistent source of anxiety, as highlighted by P15. The safe place, therefore, is integral to the overall recovery and well-being of these victims, providing them with the peace of mind necessary to rebuild their lives.

*'I'm far from giving any suggestion, because I've just been here for a week, so I haven't seen much of this place. But since I've been here, everything I've seen so far is good for me, because I'm in a place where I can get rest, I can think clearly, I'm at a calmer place, my children are safe, they are helping them to get to school and back.'* (P3)

*'If I can see myself safe and happy, and not always in fear. Sometimes when the police have given him a warning, at night he would be looking through windows.'* (P15)

In a study done with women enrolled in a programme for IPV at a support centre for women (SCW) in Italy, it was found that women need safe shelter and protection

(Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). Safe shelters or refuge offer immediate protection from abusive partners, ensuring that women and their children have a secure environment where they can recover and plan their next steps. These safe shelters must be equipped not only with basic amenities but also with support services such as counselling and legal assistance to help victims transition out of abusive relationships.

Assisting children in school is a critical aspect of practical support for female victims of partner abuse in the study. The stability and well-being of children are often severely impacted when their mothers are subjected to abuse, leading to disruptions in their education and overall development. Providing targeted support to school-going children is essential in mitigating the adverse effects of domestic violence on their academic performance and emotional well-being (Marango, 2020; Nyaranga, 2022).

As stated by P9, giving school-age children assistance with their schoolwork following dinner and rest can have a substantial positive impact on their academic performance. Victims of partner violence often confront significant problems, including mental discomfort and financial instability, which can limit their capacity to meet their children's scholastic needs. This gap can be filled by offering structured homework help, either through after-school programmes or neighbourhood-based projects, making sure that children keep improving academically even in the face of turmoil in their homes.

This practical support for children of victims of partner abuse must be holistic, addressing both academic and basic material needs. By ensuring that children have access to educational resources, nutritious meals, and appropriate clothing, support services can help create a stable environment that fosters learning and personal growth. This approach not only benefits the children directly but also alleviates some of the stress on their mothers, who may otherwise feel overwhelmed by the demands of caring for their children while navigating their own recovery from abuse. The vignette below buttresses one participant's recommendation:

*'There is also the matter of school-going children. The little ones we can take care of. But if the school-going children could be assisted with homework after they've had supper and rested.'* (P9)



Assisting children in school is a vital practical need for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. By providing academic support and addressing material needs, support services can play a crucial role in ensuring that the children of abuse victims could succeed in their education and maintain a sense of normalcy in their lives.

#### **4.5.3.2 Accommodation/adequate housing**

According to Faboye *et al.* (2024:407), the North West Province has seen a significant increase in households, rising from 591 145 in 1996 to over 1.14 million by 2022. During the State of the Province Address, Acting Premier Nono Maloyi highlighted that this represents an eighty-eight percent (88%) increase in formal housing within the province. Since 2019, the provincial government has constructed more than 19 000 houses, with over 2700 of those handed over to beneficiaries in 2023 alone.

The Acting Premier announced a renewed focus on the elimination of mud houses in the province. Apart from an amount of R198 million to replace mud houses, efforts to eradicate mud houses have been supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the provincial government and the Chinese National Import and Export Corporation, which aims to establish gas-to-electricity power stations in the region. As part of their investment initiative the Chinese have committed to invest further resources aimed at eradicating mud houses in the province by constructing 500 new houses each year, for the duration of the project. This initiative is expected to generate over 10 000 jobs.

In a further boost to the region, the provincial government will be launching the R2.6 billion mixed development project in Ventersdorp. This initiative will involve the installation of bulk services for 4000 sites and is expected to create over 600 jobs for local residents. These efforts reflect the commitment of the provincial government to transform the lives of residents of North West and restore their dignity. Former Acting Premier Maloyi emphasised the provincial government's focus on enhancing the title deeds restoration programme with 6 283 title deeds already handed over to rightful owners across the province. It can only be hoped that some of these benefits will reach the female victims of partner abuse in the North West province.

Adequate housing is a fundamental practical support need for female victims of partner abuse, particularly in the North West Province, where many women face the dual challenges of escaping abusive environments and securing safe, stable accommodation. Victims of IPV need housing, not only temporary shelter, but houses that could provide them safety (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Having access to safe, suitable accommodation is essential for victims of abuse to heal emotionally and physically after leaving abusive situations. P2 emphasised the importance of having a shack constructed for her. When a victim of abuse leaves an abusive relationship, they frequently lose their house or are forced to live in substandard housing. Even a small, secure place to live, like a shack, is a vital first step in helping them start over as indicated in this study. It provides individuals with a feeling of security and stability, which is critical to their general well-being and capacity to take back control of their life.

P1's story highlights the vulnerability of victims without safe housing. The fact that her ex-partner ransacked her shack serves exemplifies how victims of substandard housing may become targets of intimidation and additional damage. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to make sure that housing is safe, secure, and impervious to abusers' incursions. Safe and stable housing is not just about providing a place to live; it is also about giving victims a sense of security and dignity while shielding them from further harm (Clough *et al.*, 2014:671; Gotby, 2025). Below are some excerpts from the data regarding this:

*'I'm happy that they've built me a shack. I thought I was going back to that abuse when I left here. I didn't know that they'd arranged to do something so good for me: to build a shack for me.'* (P2)

*'And my dad had to build me a shack. When we came back, we found some of the corrugated iron at the back and on the side missing and things were upside down inside. And when I asked who did that, she said it was my boyfriend. After I left on Friday, he came and ransacked it.'* (P1)

In conclusion, accommodation and adequate housing are essential practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. Providing secure, stable housing helps protect victims from further abuse, offers a foundation for their recovery, and is integral to their ability to achieve long-term independence and well-being.

#### **4.5.3.3 Support with basic necessities**

Participants highlighted that they needed support with basic necessities. They expressed that it is a critical aspect of practical assistance that can significantly impact their ability to survive and recover from their traumatic experiences. When women escape abusive environments, they often leave behind not only their homes but also access to essential resources, leading to a sudden and urgent need for basic support.

Furthermore, support with basic needs also plays a role in restoring the dignity of the victims. By providing them with the essentials they need to live with dignity, support services can help victims feel valued and cared for, which is important for their emotional recovery. This type of assistance can also empower victims by giving them the resources they need to regain a sense of control over their lives.

*‘Alright. Yes, since I’m unemployed, I’m asking the government to help me with food, with pots to cook with, blankets and dishes, toiletry and washing soap.’ (P2)*

While help with basic necessities is an obvious need for victims of female partner abuse and their children, such help should be sustainable and encourage eventual self-sufficiency. The researcher worked as a service point manager for DSD in North West Province. During COVID-19 organisations such as Gift of the Givers and some of the big mining companies in the province were involved to provide practical help, such as blankets, food and school uniforms. In the Province there is also food provision through the Community Nutrition Development Centres (CNDC) funded by DSD. The shelters are also funded by DSD. More of these services could be targeted specifically to victims of female partner abuse and their children to enable them to gradually achieve a sense of stability. This support should ensure that victims have access to the fundamental resources necessary for their survival and well-being, thereby laying the groundwork for their recovery and long-term independence.

#### **4.5.3.4 Employment/ income-generating projects**

Dichter and Rhodes (2011) say that fulfilling tangible employment needs can help women establish independence from their partners. In addition, economic empowerment provides women in IPV with resources to assert their rights which may also reduce the incidences of IPV (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Unemployed women also highlighted that they

need job training, skills development, and access to jobs (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Employment and income-generating projects are crucial practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse, in the North West Province. These forms of support are essential in empowering women to achieve financial independence, which is often a critical step in breaking free from abusive relationships and rebuilding their lives (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:723).

For many victims, financial dependence on their abusers impedes their capacity of leaving the abusive setting. In situations where victims are unable to support themselves or their children on their own, a lack of personal money keeps them imprisoned in abusive cycles. As P20 pointed out, this dependency might heighten emotions of powerlessness and failure.

*'I never got a job; I can't take care of my son, and he [husband] still abuse me verbally even ... [crying]. There wasn't much I could do for my child, so I felt like a failure.'* (P20)

P20 showed intense grief about her incapacity to care for her son because she was unemployed. The psychological toll that comes with not being able to provide for oneself or one's children emphasizes how crucial it is to have access to work opportunities to take back control of one's life.

P5's desire to develop her own business after learning to sew at the shelter reflects the value of income-generating enterprises in empowering victims.

*'I need to have an income that helps me to be able to be independent, to have my own business because I learnt to sew here in K.... A business that I can be able to help my children with it, to be able to be independent as a woman.'* (P5)

P9 desires to have employment because she is not employed.

*'I need employment because I am not employed now. That's all I need.'* (P9)

In conclusion, employment and income-generating projects are vital practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, also supported by the study done in North West Province by (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:721). Employment

and income-generating projects may empower victims by providing financial independence, reducing dependency on abusers, and facilitating the process of rebuilding their lives with dignity and self-sufficiency.

#### **4.5.3.5 Long jail terms for perpetrators**

Based on the findings of this study, long jail terms for perpetrators of partner abuse represent a significant practical support need for female victims, in the North West Province. Extended prison sentences serve multiple purposes: it acts as a form of justice and retribution for the victims, provides them with a sense of safety, and functions as a deterrent to potential abusers. Stjernqvist and Strand (2024:1859) assert that effective measures should be in place to explore interventions that ensure the safety, well-being and protection of female victims against their perpetrators. Mandatory arrest where there is probable cause, issuing of protection orders and long jail terms can act as a deterrent to further committal of the abuse crime.

The call for long jail terms stems from the need for justice and acknowledgment of the severity of the abuse. P17's expression of satisfaction at the prospect of seeing perpetrators arrested and imprisoned reflects a common sentiment among victims who seek to see their abusers held accountable. The imposition of a long jail term can validate the victim's experiences and contribute to their emotional healing by affirming that society recognizes and condemns the harm inflicted upon them.

Furthermore, long jail terms are a necessary measure to protect victims from further harm. Victims often live in fear of their abusers, who may seek retribution or continue their abusive behaviour upon release from short sentences. As noted by P11, a prolonged period of incarceration gives the perpetrator time to reflect on their actions and potentially reform. More importantly, it provides the victim with an extended period of safety and peace of mind, free from the threat of further abuse.

Additionally, the enforcement of long jail terms can serve as a powerful deterrent to others who might engage in abusive behaviour. The knowledge that severe consequences await those who commit acts of partner abuse could contribute to the prevention of such crimes, thereby protecting potential future victims. This is supported by Du Plessis and Mestry (2024:198) when emphasising the escalating violence in communities that could be

reduced through revision of the current laws, legislative amendments and adding various new measures to make South Africa a more law-abiding and a safe country.

#### **4.4.3.6 Protection order/protection from perpetrators**

P1 and P15 indicated that protection orders and effective protection from perpetrators are crucial practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. These measures are essential in ensuring the safety and well-being of victims, who often continue to live in fear of their abusers even after reporting the abuse to authorities.

*'What I think the department is not helping us with, is that we call the police when we are abused. They move us away from our places or locations, and the men who abuse us remain behind in the house. And these perpetrators found us in those places. Like my boyfriend, he said to me that I can only break up with him if I leave V.... [town where she lived]. And I'm a resident of this place. That's what I told the police.'* (P1)

One of the significant challenges amongst victims is the lack of adequate protection following the issuance of a protection order. As indicated by P1, the current approach by law enforcement often involves moving the victim away from their home, while the perpetrator remains in the same location. This approach not only displaces the victim but also fails to address the root cause of the fear and insecurity they experience. In some cases, as highlighted by P1, the abuser can track down the victim, undermining the effectiveness of the protection order and leaving the victim vulnerable to further harm.

The need for effective protection is also emphasized by P15, who expressed the desire for assistance in relocating to a safe environment.

*'To be helped to be safe or to move out of this place. But my problem is that I don't have relatives anywhere else except in this place.'* (P15)

However, the lack of alternative safe spaces or support networks complicates this option, especially when the victim has no relatives or connections outside their current location. This situation underscores the importance of providing victims with not just legal protection but also practical support in securing safe accommodation, whether through

relocation services or more robust enforcement of protection orders that restrict the abuser's access to the victim.

Protection orders and protection from perpetrators are critical practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. The protection from perpetrators and protection orders are legal mechanisms in safeguarding victims from further harm. Ensuring that these protections are effectively implemented and enforced is an essential part of practical support, as it reassures victims that their safety is being prioritised by the legal system.

#### **4.4.3.7 Police visibility/quick response from SAPS**

Women also need law enforcement and legal assistance services, as police are in most cases the first to respond to IPV. The police are also the entry point into criminal legal systems (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Ogundipe *et al.*, 2018). Law enforcement strives to reduce the incidences of violence, however, in Africa many government entities fail to respond to IPV and sexual assault which creates barriers to stemming the scourge (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016). The problem is also exacerbated by underreporting violence (Dickson *et al.*, 2023), which result in governments not deploying resources needed to address the problem (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016).

Participants highlighted that there is need for police visibility as a critical practical support. They emphasised that police should increase in number and presence as well as timely responses to calls. For instance, P3 underscored the importance of police making their presence known, even in less severe cases, to signal to abusers that they are being monitored. Similarly, P4 highlights the dire consequences of delayed police responses, noting that faster action could save many women from serious harm or death.

*'Maybe if they can just improve themselves there. When they get a call from a woman, just respond, even if it's not that serious, they must just go and check and let the men see that they are watching them.'* (P3)

*'There's one thing that SAPS must learn to do, because sometimes as a woman, you are beaten by your husband. When you call them, they take a long time to answer the call. You end up being severely injured by the abuser because of their delay. If they could improve there, to come on time when you*

*call them. Many women would be saved from being beaten, stabbed and killed.'*  
(P4)

This underscores the necessity for a more responsive and visible police force as part of a broader strategy to protect victims of partner abuse. Furthermore, quick responses from the South African Police Service (SAPS) are vital in situations of domestic violence. A rapid and effective police response can prevent further abuse, apprehend perpetrators, and provide immediate assistance to victims in crisis situations.

In summary, practical support for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province is multifaceted, encompassing immediate safety, basic needs, legal protection, and long-term stability. By addressing these practical needs, support services help victims escape abusive situations and build a secure and independent future.

#### **4.5.4 Networking**

The findings of this study suggest that networking is a vital support mechanism for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. This need is manifested through various forms of social support, including women support groups, support programmes, follow-ups, engagement with women, family support, and involvement of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in engaging women. Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory says that victims of abuse actively cope with the events and try to restore their lost resources (Saan *et al.*, 2022). To cope with the abuse, victims need support which sometimes comes through informal networks such as family, friends and colleagues (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These networks may help victims to cope and recover. Human beings have survived within the five nested systems, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem by building social relations and social bonds that help them to cope with various situations that they find themselves in including partner abuse (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021; Park & Jeon, 2022).

##### **4.5.4.1 Women support groups**

The participants said that women support groups are critical for networking with other victims of female partner abuse for both emotional and practical support. They highlighted that the groups could serve as a platform for women to come together and support each other. Based on their accounts, women support groups function as a form of informal



support where victims can engage in activities that help them to escape the trauma of their experiences. For instance, P4 highlights how participation in a sewing program provided a distraction from their problems and created an environment where women could connect and support each other.

*'Last time they had a sewing programme for us. So at least when you are on that programme, you easily forget your problems. So, it kept us busy. So, I think if they can do something like that for abused women, where they can destress and be able to sit together and encourage each other, because we do talk as women when we are engaged in programmes like that.'* (P4)

This concurs with the ideas of the Sisters for Life (SFL), a participation programme of gender training and HIV education aimed at increasing confidence and communication skills among victims of partner violence in the North West Province (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:721). Such activities not only occupy the mind but also foster a sense of community and belonging, which can be empowering for women who have been isolated by abuse.

Furthermore, P6 emphasizes the need for structured support groups akin to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) but tailored for abused women. These groups could serve as safe spaces where women, particularly those hesitant to involve the authorities, can discuss their challenges, fears, and potential solutions. The suggestion reflects a broader need for accessible, non-judgmental environments where victims can seek help and advice without the fear of reprisal or stigmatisation.

*'And then for DSD, I wish they could open something like where women could meet and talk about our problems, like AA groups, something like that. I wish they could have something like that where for women who are scared to open a case.'* (P6)

Other studies highlight that women need networking platforms where they can participate in different activities for the development of relationships with other women victims of IPV and acquire concrete skills that contribute to the development of self-esteem (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These groups have played a significant role in providing validation, reducing feelings of stigma and enhancing coping strategies for women in IPV (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). One good example of such is the intervention with microfinance for AIDS and gender equity (IMAGE), a microfinance programme combined with HIV and gender issues

with the aim of economically empowering women to reduce vulnerability to partner abuse through microfinance loans and training to enhance confidence and skills (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016).

Women support groups in the North West Province represent an essential networking need for female victims of partner abuse. These groups provide a crucial outlet for emotional expression, social connection, and practical problem-solving, all of which are vital for the victims' recovery and empowerment. It is widely believed that victims are more likely to discuss and disclose their experiences with persons within their informal network than within formal support networks such as the police, mental health professionals and general practitioners (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Saan *et al.*, 2022). However, in the informal network support system, victims are less likely to express themselves to male family members, especially the fathers (Park & Jeon, 2022).

#### **4.5.4.2 Follow- up**

The participants underscored that follow-up is an essential aspect of networking and ongoing support for female victims of partner abuse. Follow-up provides a sustained connection between victims and support services, ensuring that the assistance offered extends beyond the initial intervention and continues to address the evolving needs of the victims over time (Voth Schrag *et al.*, 2021:2313).

The findings emphasize the importance of consistent follow-up in maintaining the well-being of victims. P5 underscored the importance of ongoing check-ins, even years after the initial support was provided. P14 want continuous communication through platforms such as WhatsApp for social workers to stay informed about the victim's current situation and challenges, offering a channel for the victim to express ongoing concerns and receive timely advice or assistance. Follow-up also reinforces the victim's sense of being cared for and not forgotten, which can be crucial in rebuilding trust and self-esteem. The following excerpts attest to that:

*'I think you should not only help a person that day, but keep on checking [upon] her, even if it's one or two years after the experience. Like with me, I went to that O...last year March, but they still check me via WhatsApp, asking me how I'm*

*doing. And I'm able to tell them whatever is disturbing me. So, I think you should do the same follow-ups telephonically or in whatever way.'* (P14)

In a similar vein, P5 said:

*'You can help me with what I've just said and to check me from time to time'.* (P5)

Follow-up is a vital networking need for female victims of partner abuse, ensuring that support is not a one-time event but a continuous process that adapts to the changing needs of the victims. This ongoing connection helps to foster a sense of security and empowerment, which is critical for the long-term recovery and stability of those affected by partner abuse in the North West Province.

#### **4.5.4.3 South African Police Services (SAPS) engagement with women**

Female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province highlighted that SAPS's involvement is essential to their networking needs. They feel that effective engagement by SAPS can considerably strengthen the protection and support provided to them, providing a safer environment where their needs and rights are prioritised. P6 brought forward the need for a unit inside the South African Police Service (SAPS) that deals specifically with victims and other who report abuse. This is to ensure that victims who come forward to report their abusers are protected from reprisals and additional harm. Informing victims about the protection offered, including protection orders, relocation, and anonymity, is an important part of providing informational help. Victims must comprehend how these steps might be taken to guarantee their protection both during and after the court proceedings. Below is what was said by one of the participants:

*'I wish SAPS had a unit which deals specifically with situations like these, a unit which I can report physical abuse to, which can prioritise these situations. Because I opened cases for my physical abuse many times, even when he did this to me, I opened the case. That case hasn't been resolved up to now.'* (P6)

A victim-friendly strategy within a legal framework involves creating a comprehensive support system that not only informs victims about these protections but also actively facilitates their access to them. This could involve collaboration between legal

professionals, law enforcement, and social services to provide a coordinated and proactive response that prioritises the victim's safety and well-being.

In addition, P5 emphasises the importance of encouraging women to seek help from social workers to end abuse. This suggests that SAPS should play a more active role in facilitating connections between victims and social services, serving as a bridge to comprehensive support networks. By engaging women in this way, SAPS can help empower them to speak out and seek the necessary assistance, ensuring that their situations are brought to the attention of the government and other relevant authorities.

In conclusion, SAPS engagement with female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province must evolve to include specialised units that focus on these cases, along with proactive encouragement for victims to connect with social services. This approach would not only improve the response to cases of abuse but also strengthen the overall support network available to victims, contributing to their long-term safety and well-being.

#### **4.5.4.4 Family support**

Nakie *et al.* (2025:2288) argue that community development models, family support structures and community partnerships work together to engage and empower families in supporting female victims of abuse. Family support is grounded in reciprocal proximal processes within the microsystem. Family support emerges as a critical networking need for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province, offering both emotional and practical assistance that is essential for their recovery and well-being. The role of family in the lives of these victims extends beyond immediate emotional comfort to include active intervention and protection.

The participants illustrated two key dimensions of family support. First, they highlighted the role of family in mediation and conflict resolution. The support provided by the family serves as an essential intervention, where the abuser is reminded that violence is not a solution and that problems should be addressed through dialogue. This form of support is crucial in de-escalating potentially violent situations and in reinforcing non-violent norms within relationships. It suggests that family involvement can be a preventive measure, helping to curb abuse before it escalates.

*'They counselled him and told him that that's not how problems are solved, that he doesn't have to beat me, but we can sit with her and discuss how to solve the problem.'* (P8)

*'My family have been supporting me. My mom and dad have already passed away. But the remaining ones in the family, especially my cousins have been supporting me. They don't want anything bad to happen to me or for me to be hurt by anything or anyone. My male cousin and his wife especially, they take care of me even came to spend some nights at my place to see if everything is OK.'* (P14)

In addition, participants' accounts underscored the broader protective and supportive role that family members can play. The ongoing support from family, particularly the efforts to physically monitor their safety, exemplifies the protective role that family can assume. This form of support provides the victim with a sense of security and reassurance, knowing that there are loved ones actively looking out for their well-being. Puente-Martínez *et al.* (2023:463) is of the view that support provided by friends and families in the form of emotional sustenance assist the female victim of abuse to develop a high self-esteem and confidence as they feel loved and cared for. In line with self-determination theory, this would imply that relatedness is restored. Such support is vital in helping victims rebuild their sense of safety and confidence, which are often eroded by prolonged exposure to abuse.

The involvement of family members can provide a strong foundation for victims as they navigate the complexities of recovery. Family support not only offers emotional backing but also practical assistance, such as helping with childcare or providing a temporary place to stay.

Family support serves as a vital network for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province. It provides both emotional and practical assistance, including mediation, conflict resolution, and protective oversight. This support network is indispensable in helping victims navigate their circumstances and in fostering a sense of security and empowerment as they work towards recovery and independence.

#### 4.6 LOGIC MODEL - ELEMENTS FOR VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY BASED ON INPUT FROM FEMALE VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE

**Table 4-5 Elements - Input from female victims of partner abuse**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Psycho-education about types of abuse</b></p> <p><b><i>Emotional and psychological abuse</i></b> – coercion, controlling, denied communication, divorce, false accusations, illtreat women’s children, Intimidation, restricted freedom of movement and association, stalking, Insulting, threatening to harm, verbal abuse, violent threats, children exposed to partner abuse</p> <p><b><i>Financial abuse</i></b> - financial dependency, forced to leave job, arson/destruction of property, forced out of house/forced relocation, forced to leave school</p> <p><b><i>Physical abuse</i></b> – Being beaten, fighting, bodily harm</p> <p><b><i>Sexual abuse</i></b> – Cheating, extra-marital affairs, child molestation, forced to be intimate</p> | <p><b>Emotional and psychological healing aimed at types of and effects of abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxiety and depression</li> <li>• contemplating suicide</li> <li>• fear</li> <li>• feeling useless</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Needs of female victims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Informational support</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Practical support</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

The exploration of abuse-related experiences confirmed the pervasive and multifaceted nature of abuse that the female victims of partner abuse endure, categorized under emotional, economic, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. These themes highlight the complex and interrelated forms of violence that undermine the well-being autonomy, competence and relatedness of the victims.

The emergence of emotional abuse as a critical kind of violence is marked by pressure, intimidation, and a reduction in one's sense of self-worth. Victims of economic abuse are

additionally made more vulnerable by financial control and forced dependency. Physical abuse causes long-lasting psychological and physical scars and frequently progresses from threats to violent assaults. The effects of abuse emerge as trauma, despair, depression and anxiety. As a result, victims frequently experience persistent distress. All forms of sexual abuse violate the victims' bodily autonomy and dignity, which adds to their total sense of helplessness. The requirements of female victims were explored, and the findings showed that comprehensive approaches are needed to meet these complex experiences in robust victim empowerment strategies. The needs identified were divided into practical, informational, emotional support and networking support.

This chapter highlighted the significance of a comprehensive victim empowerment strategy that is responsive to the various and interconnected needs of female victims of partner abuse. The chapter underscored the importance of addressing both the experiences of female abuse and the specific needs of victims as a strategy to develop more effective interventions and support mechanisms in the North West Province. In the next chapter, the input of entry level social workers into the development of the draft victim empowerment strategy is outlined. The steps followed in this multi-phase research are proffered to indicate how the draft strategy was refined with the help of social work managers and supervisors. Their final input on the strategy was compiled, followed by the Victim Empowerment strategy that is the outcome of this research.

## **CHAPTER 5 VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West province. The previous chapter presented thick descriptive data on the abuse-related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in the North West province as well as their needs that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy in the North West province. This formed part of the exploration phase of this multi-phase research.

In this chapter, the discussion focuses on the proposed victim empowerment strategy for the support of female victims of partner abuse in the North West province in South Africa. The adoption of this strategy could help the Department of Social Development in North West Province, and social workers in advancing effective management of female partner abuse. In the face of escalating violence against women, the aspiration to eliminate such violence is clearly articulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.2. This goal serves as a critical component to the broader aim to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women (United Nations Women, 2022).

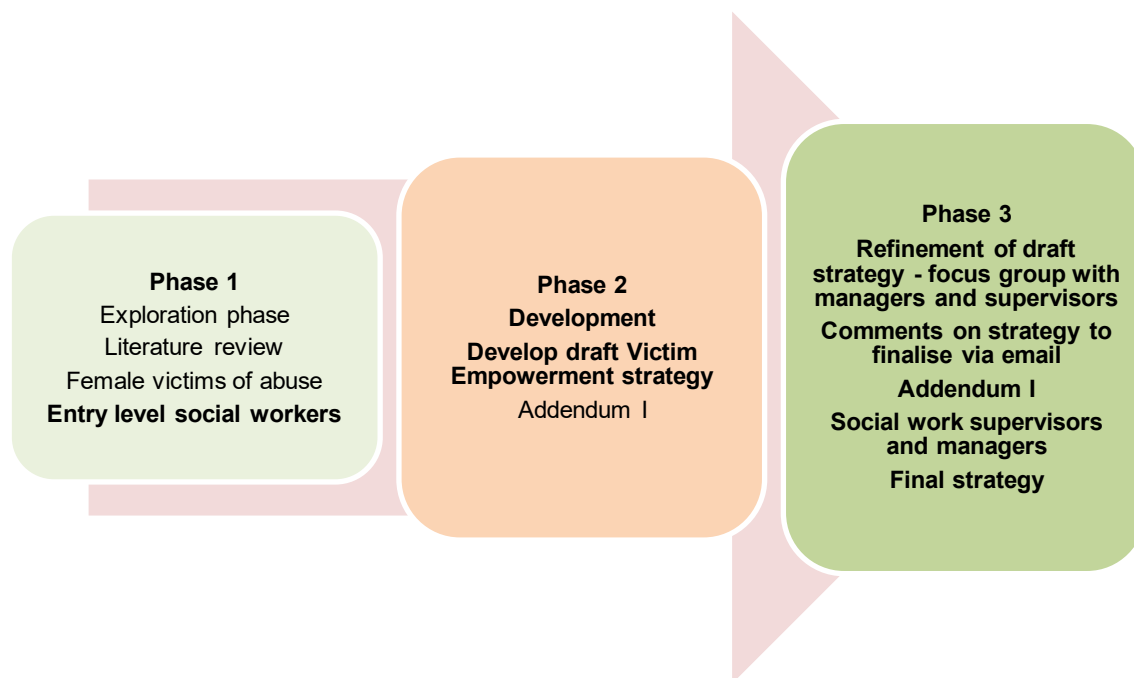
While developing the victim empowerment strategy, the researcher was alert to the fact that a strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long term or overall aim involving goal setting, determining actions to achieve the goals and mobilizing resources to execute the actions. Furthermore, a strategy is guided by a vision, mission, objective setting, resource allocation and prioritisation (National School of Government, 2022:15). Overall, a strategy should empower individuals, groups and communities to increase power over their own feelings and their way of life (Payne, 2020:10).

In South Africa, many policy documents, guidelines and directives are directed towards victim empowerment. Notably, the Western Cape Dept. Social Development (2024) in collaboration with the private sector, identified the provision of psychosocial intervention to victims of domestic violence as a critical initiative. This study aimed at adding an innovative approach to victim empowerment, based on information on the phenomenon of female partner abuse gathered from female victims of partner abuse, social workers,



social work supervisors, social work managers and the relevant literature. Possible elements for a victim empowerment strategy for North West Province were also identified based on the contributions of participants and literature. Lastly, an integrated victim empowerment strategy was presented at the end of the chapter. Based on the inputs of participants and literature, a workbook that can be used by social workers is attached as Addendum D.

The multi-phase research process addressed in this chapter is as follows:



## 5.2 PHASE 1 – EXPLORATION PHASE

### SOCIAL WORKERS INPUT ON VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY COMPONENTS

The data obtained from the entry level social workers were based on the discussions of questions at each World Café table. The individual discussions were summarised by a social worker representing each group (group 1 to 4) and during the presentation of these summaries all participants gave further input. The numbers S1 – S32 is indicated for individual contributions, and G1 – G4 for the combined responses summarised at each World Café table. The profile of participants has been included in Chapter 3.

The entry level social workers' responses on the strategies that could be used to effectively manage and empower female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province suggested that there are many components and activities that could be incorporated into the victim empowerment strategy. Among the components that featured prominently in the World Café sessions were education and awareness, emotional and psychological healing, building supportive networks, skills development, legal empowerment, advocacy and policy change, provision of temporary shelter, contextual assessment and improvement and supporting financial independence. The description presented below highlight the components that can be incorporated in the female partner victim empowerment strategy in the North West province as was suggested by the social workers and female victims of partner abuse.

## Profile of entry-level social workers - World Café

**Table 5-1: Participant Group 2: Social Workers – World Cafe – TOTAL (32)**

| Group Number | Participant Number | Current Occupation | Years of experience as a social worker | Years of experience in social work field | Level of Education | Race  | Gender | Age | District |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|--------|-----|----------|
| <b>G1</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 37  | DR RSM   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 26  | DR RSM   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 28  | DR RSM   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 25  | DR RSM   |
| <b>G2</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 28  | DR RSM   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR RSM   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 27  | DR RSM   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR RSM   |
| <b>G3</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 25  | DR RSM   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 26  | DR RSM   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Masters            | Black | F      | 31  | DR RSM   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 25  | DR RSM   |
| <b>G4</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 30  | DR RSM   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR RSM   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 27  | DR RSM   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 29  | DR RSM   |
| <b>G1</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 26  | DR K.K   |

| Group Number | Participant Number | Current Occupation | Years of experience as a social worker | Years of experience in social work field | Level of Education | Race  | Gender | Age | District |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|--------|-----|----------|
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 28  | DR K.K   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 28  | DR K.K   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 25  | DR K.K   |
| <b>G2</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 28  | DR K.K   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR K.K   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR K.K   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 30  | DR K.K   |
| <b>G3</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 26  | DR K.K   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 26  | DR K.K   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR K.K   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 28  | DR K.K   |
| <b>G4</b>    | P1                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 28  | DR K.K   |
|              | P2                 | Social Worker      | 3                                      | 3                                        | Degree             | Black | M      | 29  | DR K.K   |
|              | P3                 | Social Worker      | 1                                      | 1                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 24  | DR K.K   |
|              | P4                 | Social Worker      | 2                                      | 2                                        | Degree             | Black | F      | 26  | DR K.K   |

### 5.2.1 Education and awareness

The social workers suggested that a victim empowerment strategy should develop educational programmes that raise awareness of the different forms of abuse and available resources. They suggested that the education programmes should also include school going children and the perpetrators of violence for it to be more holistic and effective. For the perpetrators, anger management courses were suggested because anger is one of the causes of female partner abuse and violence as was highlighted by the female victims of partner violence in Chapter 4. Participants suggested various methods for conveying education including workshops, brochures, social media and community outreach initiatives. The following excerpts from the data illustrate that education and awareness are essential components of the VEP strategy:

*'Anger management courses- The perpetrator should also be provided with anger management courses.'* (G4, S16)

*'And then there is this awareness campaign that used to go on and on, so that the community may know that there is this problem, but there are resources that can help us to solve this kind of problem. Or there are people whom I can run to when I experience this thing'* (G3)

*'And most of the time, we tell them, we do awareness also at the schools, the children also are more victims of this gender-based violence than we can ever know'* (G3).

In line with the bio-ecological theory, education and awareness are most effective when there is a comprehensive understanding of the context surrounding the violence. Education and awareness should take the dynamic proximal processes within the person and context into account. This includes the cultural, social and economic context where female partner abuse occurs. Additionally, it is important to consider the prevailing norms, attitudes, and behaviours that play a role in female partner abuse.

### 5.2.2 Emotional and psychological healing

The World Café participants highlighted the significance of incorporating emotional and psychological healing into the victim empowerment strategy as part of a holistic approach

to comprehensively deal with female partner abuse. To empower and prevent future abuse, G4 underscored the importance of victim-offender mediation in fostering closure for the victim and accountability for the perpetrator of abuse.

*'Victim Offender Mediation. Whereby the perpetrator should apologise to the victim' (G4).*

G2 suggested counselling as the bedrock of emotional and psychological healing. Based on the discussions, counselling offers emotional relief by helping victims to manage stress and deal with trauma. It also helps victims to recover from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (G3). The vignette below captures this core suggestion:

*'Counselling.... The victim should be counselled for her to understand and accept the apology of the perpetrator'(G2).*

Additionally, G3 and G1 highlighted the need to incorporate emotional and psychological healing in the VEP strategy through two strategic ways namely, comprehensive victim support and involving people affected in the household. These suggestions are also in line with the bio-ecological approach where the victim is not seen in isolation, but as part of dynamic systems, where inverse proximal processes may lead to abuse. In a similar vein, Hodges and Harris (2021:82) emphasise that service providers should understand the environment where abused individuals live and interact, including the effects of broader societal issues.

G3 and G1 emphasised that victim support offers sustainable healing and fosters a sense of solidarity, which in turn strengthens victims' resilience and equips them with necessary tools to be independent. Below are some of the data excerpts that attest to this effect:

*'You deal with the victim and not only the victim, but the people affected in the household as well. For example, children, the relatives who are sitting there, because sometimes you know, the abuser will come and may start to support his family or have a good relationship with family' (G3).*

*'And then we have what we call victim support. It means you give them psychosocial support.'(G1)*

As conveyed in the verbatim excerpts above, engaging household members in dealing with female partner abuse allows them to understand the impact of abuse and be able to rebuild relationships. In essence, well administered emotional support can enhance individuals' capacity for coping and contribute to their overall mental and physical well-being (Sasscer, 2024:52).

### **5.2.3 Building an informal network of social support**

The World Café participants emphasised that victim support ensures that the victim has support structures which help prevent isolation. Social support is widely seen as a protective factor in stressful and traumatic situations, including partner violence (Choate *et al.*, 2025:99). Furthermore, Nikrouy *et al.* (2025:1390) emphasise the importance to restore relatedness for those affected by abuse. As shown in Chapter 4 by participants (P8, P14), family support is an important network for female victims of partner abuse because it provides emotional and practical assistance which gives a sense of security and empowerment to the victim. It is believed that victims feel more at ease to discuss and disclose their experiences within informal networks (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Saan *et al.*, 2022).

### **5.2.4 Building a network of professional support**

World Café group members G1, G3, G4 voiced that supportive networks should be incorporated in the VEP strategy for victims to effectively receive comprehensive and coordinated services. They underscored the significance of working with a multidisciplinary team from various sectors among them medical personnel, legal practitioners, psychologists, social workers and law enforcement agencies to prevent service gaps. Having a multidisciplinary team helps to address a victim's physical, psychological, legal, emotional and even economic needs. As shown in Chapter 4, female partner abuse in North West manifests in various ways including physical, psychological, emotional, financial and sexual abuse. Hence, a network of professional support can significantly add in addressing female partner abuse in North West province. This is highlighted below:

*'And then, we refer the victim to get another service, that one is called there is a multidisciplinary team that needs to work together. Because, when you have*

*worked with someone here, you realize that this person needs another service from other departments and then you refer the case especially to SAPS.’ (G3)*

G3 also suggested the use of referrals to enhance access for victims as well as ensuring that they have smooth transitions from one service provider to another which minimises additional trauma and saves time when victims do not have to re-explain their situations. The importance of referrals is explained below by G3:

*‘Yeah, we refer them to SAPS, and you check with them to see if they have received an order that is called a Protection Order from the police station. And then, after the court or the SAPS has explained what the order entails, you are also going to sit down with the victim and explain in detail what it entails in the Protection Order and how valid this protection order is. And they must keep the Protection Order safe because if the perpetrator can share the same house [he can take or destroy the protection order].’ (G3).*

One other factor that featured prominently to be included in the victim empowerment strategy was to link victims with various relevant stakeholders. This approach aims to create a support system which can facilitate resources, foster grassroots-level interventions and ensure continuity of support and care. These stakeholders may include various government agencies, NGOs, NPOs, religious groups, civil and legal aid organisations as stated by G1 and G4:

*‘The other thing to empower victims is to link them with relevant stakeholders, relevant resources such as police officials, department of justice, legal aid’ (G1)*

*‘Stakeholder involvement must be more visible, and roles clarified to ensure that all the departments play their part within the empowerment strategies. Like for example, as social workers we always face challenges tsa gore [with] SAPS, people go to SAPS and SAPS always sends people back to our offices, ka di services tse e leng gore [with the services] that can be handled by them [SAPS]’ (G4.)*

Other studies emphasised the importance of support networks as platforms for victims to participate in different activities and develop relationships that help to restore their self-esteem (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These support networks create safe spaces where



individuals can share experiences, exchange ideas and advice, and receive emotional support from peers who may have endured similar situations (Dickson *et al.*, 2023).

### **5.2.5 Skills development and empowerment**

Participants (G2, G4) pointed out incorporating skills development into a victim empowerment strategy as a transformative approach which works well to deal with long-term needs of female partner abuse. They further explained that skills development equips victims with tools to rebuild their lives to achieve economic independence. In short, they said that skills development empowers victims to break the cycles of abuse by acquiring marketable skills which give them the autonomous power to make life changing decisions such as leaving abusive relationships. The skills also provide victims with sustainable ways of supporting themselves and building confidence. The participants added that victims can overcome psychological and socio-economic challenges if they are equipped with life skills such as problem-solving, financial literacy and effective communication.

*‘Employment opportunities for victims and perpetrators, life skills programmes for both perpetrators and victims,’ (G4).’*

*‘There is another thing that as a group we have highlighted... there is inadequate understanding or knowledge or skills to deal with victims of gender-based violence by all role players in the gender-based violence spectrum’ (G2).*

Another important aspect that was mentioned by the World Café participants was to involve both the perpetrators and victims in the skills development programmes so that both will be empowered to counteract and reduce female partner abuse and its ripple effects. They also emphasised the need for skills development for community leaders and service providers such as community chiefs, police officers, social workers, nurses and doctors and other role players. The skills could help them to effectively address the root causes and consequences of IPV that will facilitate behaviour change. This concurs with Leburu-Masigo (2020:134) who recommends that social workers and the women who suffer partner abuse should be equipped with skills, knowledge and economic empowerment to facilitate effective and quick response in preventing secondary victimisation against female partners.

Lee and Hudson (2017:143), view the empowerment theory from the standpoint of an individual's relation with the environment as well as the skills and competencies required to resolve the clients' problems. In Chapter 4 empowerment was mentioned in the context of economic empowerment, as well as empowerment facilitated by on-going contact with social services, mutual support groups and by enhanced relatedness within families.

G1 indicated the importance of empowerment and stated that:

*'Empowering ... victims is a holistic manner which reduces secondary victimisation. It is very important to empower the survivors of gender-based violence because it enables them to start taking control of their lives back. They must no longer feel ashamed of themselves, or they must no longer withdraw from other activities. If a person was a church-going person but now because she has been raped, she is scared to face the world'.*

Empowerment links with self-determination theory outlined in Chapter 2, with the premise that competence, sense of personal agency or autonomy and relatedness should be restored.

#### **5.2.6 Legal empowerment and law enforcement**

G4 suggested that legal empowerment should be incorporated in the Victim Empowerment strategy for North West province. They argued that legal empowerment improves justice, accountability and protection for the victims of female partner abuse. They went further highlighting the significance of legal empowerment as a vehicle for understanding and using the law to defend one's rights. They also emphasised the central role that law enforcement plays in delivering justice and preventing recurring of violence.

*'Law enforcement. Everyone should take responsibility not leading to secondary victimisation of victims.'* (G4).

The emphasis of G4 on law enforcement shows that institutional support is very important to victims seeking justice and protection. The survivors of female partner abuse will be supported, and the perpetrators will be held accountable and the whole community will be empowered to confront the prevalence of female partner abuse. Hence, the understanding of legal processes fundamentally empowers victims of IPV to make the

right choices and decisions in relation to their rights (Wright *et al.*, 2022). In addition, Dichter and Rhodes (2011) and Ogundipe *et al.* (2018) underscore the need for law enforcement and legal assistance services. Law enforcement reduces the incidences of violence in communities where the government takes strict measures to all those who are on the wrong side of the law by practicing female partner abuse (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016). However, underreporting of violence is prevalent in many communities, posing challenges for law enforcement to respond quickly and efficiently (Dickson *et al.*, 2023).

### **5.2.7 Advocacy and policy change**

G2 emphasised the inclusion of advocacy and policy change which they presented as an indispensable component of a victim empowerment strategy because of its ability to address the root cause of violence and also improving the support system. They highlighted the need to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks especially regarding the implementation and enforcement of laws such as the *Domestic Violence Act* and the protection orders from the police. Below is the evidence from the data.

*‘The protection orders or restraining orders that female victims receive from the police, or the courts are not adequately enforced because sometimes female victims do not honour court appointments’.* (G2)

*‘Another thing is that there is a limited number of social workers appointed to deal with matters of gender-based violence.’* (G2)

As highlighted in the data, advocacy and policy change are necessary for bringing immediate relief and support to the victims. The participants also want the policy to change regarding the number of social workers appointed to deal with issues of gender-based violence, hence there is need for advocacy for the increase of the number of social workers who specifically deal with gender-based violence. Reforming policies could enhance survivor-centred services with improved resource allocation.

### **5.2.8 Temporary shelters**

Based on the insights of the World Café discussions, (G2, G3, G4) it is evident that provision of temporary shelter is an important inclusion in a victim empowerment strategy. The participants highlighted that shelter offers the victims immediate protection and

safety; the victims will have a secure place away from threats of harm. Furthermore, shelters serve as places of safety where a range of essential services can be offered to victims. These services may include legal aid, psychosocial and emotional support, support for the children of victims, economic empowerment and facilitating reintegration into the families of the survivors and the society at large.

*‘And then, we have one stop centre here in X, the victims of GBV. At least they can accommodate you for three days but can be extended based on the issue that is handled. And then, at least, everything is covered there by the department’. (G3)*

*‘To establish the point of services that are needed for various types of abuse and the victims, right? Because [you know] people experience different abuses, differently.’ (G4)*

*‘Another thing is that, for the services that are being provided by the social workers in X in particular, there is no adequate space to provide a conducive environment and a quality service of standard to the victims of gender-based violence because there is no adequate or operational space.’(G2)*

Sheltering of victims is also very important because as highlighted above there is inadequate shelter for the victims. It is therefore imperative that shelter is incorporated in the victim empowerment strategy of North West province so that a pathway from crisis to recovery is provided to the survivors.

In North West, victims of female partner abuse sometimes are forced out of their homes stripping them of their security and safety and increasing their vulnerability (P7, P8, P9). These victims need safe places especially when they decide to leave abusive relationships (Childress *et al.*, 2024b; Justice *et al.*, 2022).

### **5.2.9 Financial independence**

As highlighted in Chapter 4, economic dependency is one of the major reasons why most of the abused women remain in abusive partnerships (Justice *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, financial independence is a vital component of a victim empowerment strategy because if financial vulnerability is effectively addressed, victims will be able to break the cycle of economic abuse which gives them the autonomy to make financial decisions. Financial

independence also empowers victims to take a bold stance against abuse, including walking away from abusive relationships. The World Café groups (G2, G3, G4) were of the view that female victims of partner abuse should be supported to start businesses that generate income so that they become self-sufficient and self-reliant. They also suggested that the perpetrators must also be financially empowered so that they have self-esteem which may also help to reduce the incidences of partner abuse. Below are some excerpts from data regarding this explanation.

*'Financial empowerment of victims. Helping victims to open businesses for them to be self-sufficient and self-reliant.'* (G4)

*'Perpetrators should be provided with the skills development courses' for him to build his self-esteem.'* (G4)

*'As a result, women depend on their spouse for financial support and for the support of their children.'* (G2)

*'Most of them are unemployed. So, we help them have life skills so that they can generate income, for example we can refer them to the department of agriculture.'* (G3).

Financial independence is very important in the North West because as shown in Chapter 4 most of the female victims of partner abuse are financially dependent on their partners who are also the perpetrators of violence.

#### **5.2.10 Continual assessment and improvement**

Crawford *et al.* (2025:20-27) argue that there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the support services to victims or survivors of female partner abuse. The social work participants of this study underscored the need for ongoing assessment and improvement of the victim empowerment strategy. They advocated for the implementation of activities tailor-made to meet the diverse needs of female victims of partner abuse, highlighting the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of interventions.

*'Monitoring and evaluation should be done by all the departments that are involved in domestic violence issues.'* (G2).

*'So, we felt as a team that different departments should have a monitoring and an evaluation tool kit such as NPA, Social Development, or Health; these are our toolkit.'* (G1).

Participants also emphasised the need for continual assessment and improvement to strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration among key departments such as social development, the judiciary and the police service.

### **5.3 OTHER DIRECTIVES FROM LITERATURE**

When reading literature on gender-based violence some directives come to the fore.

#### **5.3.1 Trauma-informed approach**

A trauma-informed approach is a way of helping people who have been hurt, especially by gender-based violence, by making sure they feel safe, understood, and supported (Dylan *et al.*, 2025:135). All service providers should adopt the key values and principles of trauma-informed care as outlined in Chapter 2, such as safety, transparency and trust, empowerment, voice and choice and an awareness of gender, cultural and historical issues.

#### **5.3.2 Empowerment**

Heywood and Mulveen (2021:205) share the thrivership model which integrates elements of post-traumatic growth and empowerment. An outline of their model is included as demonstrated below on Figure 5.1. and includes the provision of safety and safeguarding, the opportunity to share their stories and hearing their voices and a social response to gender-based violence.

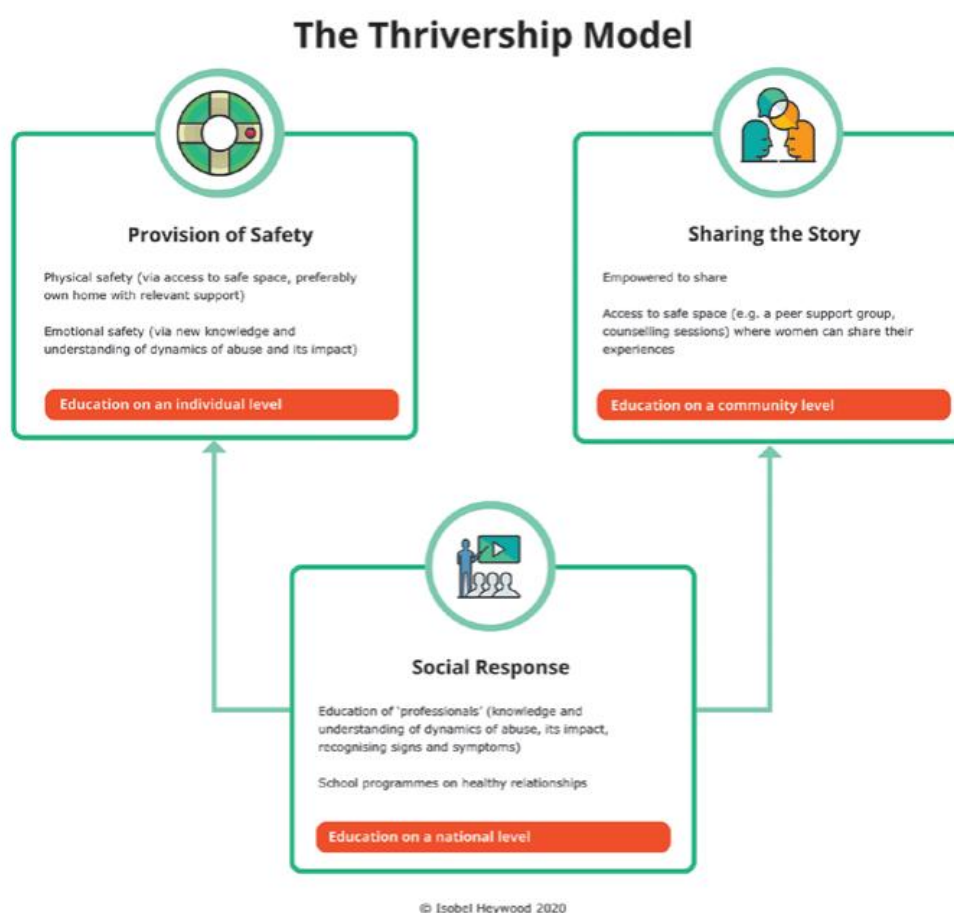
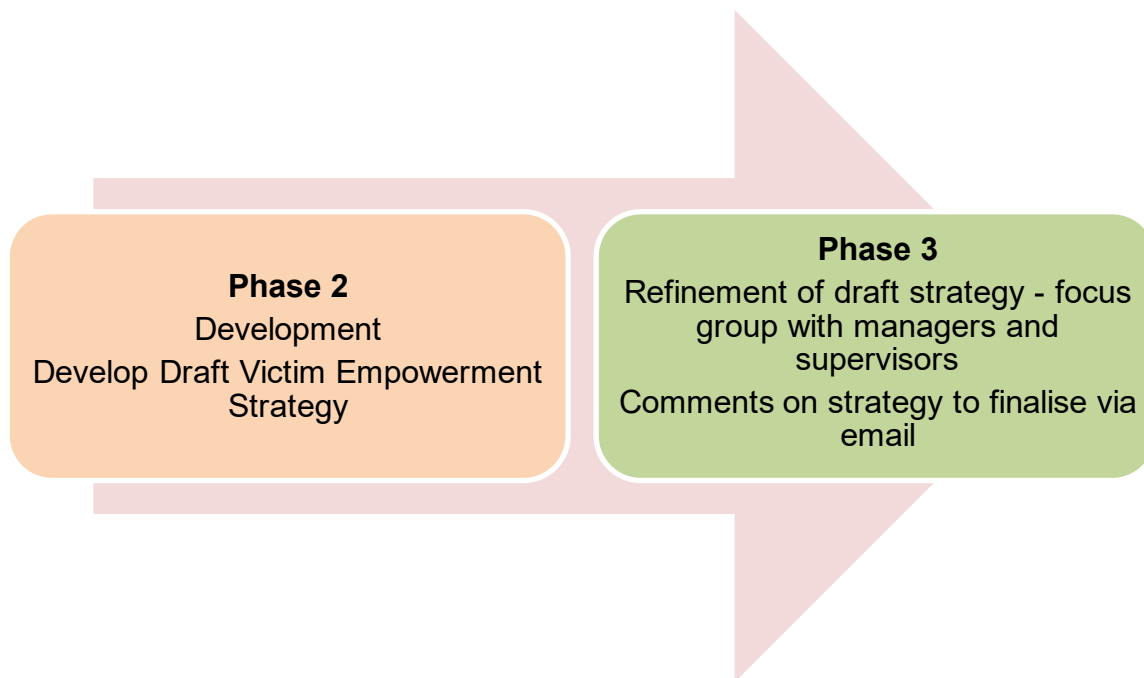


**Figure 5-1: The revised version (2020) of the thrivership model**

(Source: Heywood & Mulveen, 2021:205)

A secure and supportive environment should be available to survivors of female partner abuse, where they feel protected and respected. This emphasis on the provision of safety links with the key principles of trauma-informed care and includes physical and emotional safety (Levers, 2022). In line with a narrative approach, survivors should have the opportunity to narrate their stories at their own pace, using expressive art and creative activities (Malchiodi, 2020), should they find that helpful. To enhance the broader social response to gender-based violence, social workers and other professionals should be equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills development.



#### **5.4 PHASE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

Based on the literature review, data collection with the female victims of partner abuse, and the entry level social workers a draft victim empowerment strategy was compiled. This was still a tentative document as the literature review was still on-going at the time. The main part of this document was the components.

The escalating global prevalence of female partner abuse necessitates effective interventions with social workers at the forefront of support (Detjen, 2023). Social workers need to advance effective management of the abused women through empowering them with educational skills and psychosocial support mechanisms. As pointed out, available legislation outlines broad guidelines, but not specific guidance in terms of interventions and psychosocial support services for victims of female partner abuse. Interventions should be on all system levels as outlined in the bio-ecological theory.

In terms of the Logic model and as indicated at end of Chapters 2 and 4, the following elements were considered for inclusion in the draft strategy.



**Table 5-2: Literature review**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Multi-level intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions should focus on all systemic levels.</li> <li>• Victims should feel safe in their microsystems by fostering social interconnectedness and restoring relatedness</li> <li>• Mesosystemic connections should offer pathways to a new equilibrium</li> <li>• On macro level there should be a critical transformation of the cultural, legal, and economic systems that perpetuate gender-based inequality and silence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p><b>Emotional and psychological healing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills.</li> <li>• Focus on maladaptive belief systems that might be built on early experiences in the chronosystem of the person.</li> <li>• Cognitive behavioural interventions can aid the process of managing thoughts, feelings and behaviour.</li> <li>• Cognitive behavioural interventions should include anxiety management with basic techniques such as breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.</li> <li>• CBT interventions should include psycho-education about the multi-dimensional effects of trauma and traumatic memory.</li> <li>• Self-determination theory could aid the setting of goals for intervention by planning interventions around restoring autonomy and relatedness and enhancing competence.</li> <li>• Victims of female partner abuse should move from contexts where they experience need-thwarting and need-depriving, and goal setting should focus on what they need to move into pervasive contexts where their needs are supported.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Trauma-informed practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principles of trauma-informed practice should be incorporated into all interventions with victims of female partner abuse and their families.</li> <li>• Core principles are enhancing safety, restoring voice and choice, including autonomy and personal agency, restoring relatedness and connections, trustworthiness and transparency in all contacts, facilitating mutual and peer support, and considering cultural diversity and contextual influences.</li> <li>• Elements of the Fonofale model could be used when working with female victims of partner abuse. The application of the model could be adapted according to the needs of clients in their specific contexts.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Psycho-education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial empowerment should be a core feature of interventions to counteract economic abuse. Such empowerment should include financial literacy, financial management, and financial safety, including knowledge about micro-lending.</li> <li>• Victims of female partner abuse should understand the cycle of violence to recognise the patterns associated with the build-up and actual abuse. Enhanced awareness of this process can help them to take proactive measures to enhance their safety by leaving before the outburst or seeking timely support. Furthermore, understanding the cycle of abuse can validate the experience of victims, allowing them to see their struggles as part of a broader pattern that many others have faced. This recognition can also break their sense of isolation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Forms of support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Informational support</li> <li>• Networking and relational support - Networking support can be assessed using practical techniques such as mapping, ecomapping, genograms, and loss and gain spirals.</li> <li>• Practical support</li> </ul> |

**Table 5-3 Elements based on input of victims of female partner abuse**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Psycho-education about types of abuse</b></p> <p><i>Emotional and psychological abuse</i> – coercion, controlling, denied communication, divorce, false accusations, illtreat women’s children, Intimidation, restricted freedom of movement and association, stalking, Insulting, threatening to harm, verbal abuse, violent threats, children exposed to partner abuse</p> <p><i>Financial abuse</i> - financial dependency, forced to leave job, arson/destruction of property, forced out of house/forced relocation, forced to leave school</p> <p><i>Physical abuse</i> – Being beaten, fighting, bodily harm</p> <p><i>Sexual abuse</i> – Cheating, extra-marital affairs, child molestation, forced to be intimate</p> | <p><b>Emotional and psychological healing aimed at types of and effects of abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxiety and depression</li> <li>• contemplating suicide</li> <li>• fear</li> <li>• feeling useless</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Needs of female victims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Informational support</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Practical support</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**Table 5-4: Elements based on the input of entry level social workers**

|                                                |                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Education and awareness                        | Legal empowerment and law enforcement |
| Building an informal network of social support | Temporary shelters                    |
| Building a network of professional support     | Financial independence                |
| Skills development and empowerment             | Continual assessment and improvement  |

Based on the elements identified in the exploration phase of the research, outlined above and supported with literature and participant quotes in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, the draft strategy was compiled. The draft document is attached as Addendum I.

### **5.5 PHASE 3: REFINEMENT OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

In Phase 3 social work managers and supervisors discussed the draft document in focus group discussions, after receiving the draft strategy before the focus groups so that they could study it. The profile of the 16 participants follows next:

## Profile of focus group participants

**Table 5-5 Participant Group 3: Managers and Supervisors - Focus groups – TOTAL (16)**

| <b>Participant Number</b> | <b>Current Occupation</b> | <b>Years of experience as a Supervisor/ Manager</b> | <b>Years of experience in social work field</b> | <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>District</b>           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|
| <b>SM1</b>                | Service point manager     | 10 years                                            | 30 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 58         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM2</b>                | Social work manager       | 8 years                                             | 23 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 55         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM3</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 3 years                                             | 17 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 44         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM4</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 8 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Masters                   | Black       | Female        | 48         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM5</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 7 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 45         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM6</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 10 years                                            | 20 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 58         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM7</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 7 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 49         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM8</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 10 years                                            | 21 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 50         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda         |
| <b>SM9</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 5 years                                             | 17 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 44         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM10</b>               | Service point manager     | 4 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 46         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |

| <b>Participant Number</b> | <b>Current Occupation</b> | <b>Years of experience as a Supervisor/ Manager</b> | <b>Years of experience in social work field</b> | <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>District</b>           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|
| <b>SM11</b>               | Service point manager     | 9 years                                             | 20 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Male          | 48         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM12</b>               | Social work manager       | 10 years                                            | 22 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 55         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM13</b>               | Social work supervisor    | 4 years                                             | 16 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 44         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM14</b>               | Social work supervisor    | 4 years                                             | 15 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 45         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM15</b>               | Social work supervisor    | 8 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 52         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>SM16</b>               | Social work supervisor    | 6 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 51         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |

In the focus group discussions, the following questions were addressed:

How can the proposed victim empowerment strategy (that you have read) be refined?

- Can you comment on the Introduction of the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy?
- Please comment on how Victim Empowerment is defined in the proposed strategy. Suggest refinements.
- Various elements are outlined in the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy. Please comment on those in the text.

Any other suggestions on what victim empowerment strategies could be applied to reduce the prevalence of female partner abuse in the North West province?

#### **5.5.1 Findings: supervisors and managers on the draft victim empowerment strategy**

A total of sixteen (16) social work supervisors and social work managers were included in focus group discussions, and they made inputs into the draft strategy. All the participants were given pseudonyms such as (SM 1- SM 16). Participants were from Dr Kenneth Kaunda and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati Districts in North West. The draft strategy was presented to them by the researcher before the focus group discussions.

##### **Inputs on the introduction of the draft victim empowerment strategy**

Participants (SM3, SM11, SM12, SM16) generally agreed that the strategy's introduction could benefit the female victims of partner abuse and could be further extended for greater inclusivity, clearer focus, and broader contextual grounding. There was a request for the inclusion of LGBTQI+ representation in the strategy's scope and definitions, with suggestions to explicitly include these groups to ensure the strategy speaks to the community holistically. Here is what one of the participants said:

*'I reckon that the strategy is well presented but, it is not including the LGBTQI+ in the definition and research. So, I suggest that if they can also be included in the*

*definition and in the research, then maybe the strategy might be helpful to everyone in the community.'*(SM3)

However, it was explained to participants that this study focused on female victims of partner abuse, but that the suggestion to include LGBTQI+ populations would be included in recommendations for further research. Additionally, SM12 felt the introduction lacked a strong emphasis on the study's purpose and called for clearer structural framing to guide the reader. Below is what the participant said:

*'The introduction is okay, but more emphasis on the purpose of the study.'* (SM12)

*'Under introduction the study focused on North West Province, maybe it's crucial to add other statistics from other provinces for female victim abuse.'* (SM12)

SM12 also commented on the geographic focus as the current emphasis on the North West Province was perceived as limiting. Participants recommended inclusion of data from other provinces to capture a more holistic picture of female partner abuse. While these are valid suggestions, the strategy developed in this research had to adhere to the research questions, aim and objectives of the study. Participants praised the use of verified statistics sourced from frontline professionals who interact directly with both victims and perpetrators, lending credibility and depth to the strategy. Here is the evidence from one of the participants

*'Regarding the introduction, however, the strategy is very clear, as it is based on verified statistics, from role players, who directly deal with victims of crime, and perpetrators of such crimes.'* (SM11)

SM16 highlighted that the Victim Empowerment Strategy is a vital, multi-dimensional intervention to support women who have been subjected to intimate partner abuse. The participant further noted that the strategy could be a cornerstone initiative within South Africa's social development framework, driven by both national and provincial departments and implemented at a District and Service point level. Here is what the participant said,

*'This strategy therefore sets the tone of the programme and also sets the values which the programme is embedded. This strategy involves goal setting,*

*determining actions to achieve the goals and mobilizing resources to execute the actions. It seeks to address issues of vision, mission, objective setting, resource allocation and prioritisation.'* (SM16)

SM14 further elaborated that the victim empowerment strategy is a tool with a central purpose to facilitate the recovery and empowerment of abused female partners through the provision of an integrated and well-coordinated basket of services. These services aim to restore a sense of dignity and personal strength while nurturing resilience.

SM16 also noted that psychological healing is fostered through therapeutic engagement, while practical components focused on developing coping mechanisms and life skills. Special emphasis was placed on economic empowerment initiatives, which are seen as essential for helping survivors establish independence and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, the strategy is perceived not only as a means of providing immediate support, but also as a long-term path toward emotional, physical, and economic restoration for female victims of partner abuse.

### **Inputs on conceptualising female partner abuse**

SM5 gave a different perspective on the definition of a female partner victim within the context of the strategy. SM5 suggested that this definition should be inclusive of diverse identities, acknowledging not only cisgender women but also members of the LGBTQI+ community and individuals with disabilities, emphasising that these groups often face heightened vulnerability and possess distinct needs, making their inclusion essential in both the definition and targeted interventions. This is what the participant said,

*'Definition should also include, the LGBTQI+ and persons with disabilities, but there is somewhere we have seen that you have included women and people with disabilities because they have special needs and they are the most vulnerable. In other words, they are the target groups.'* (SM5)

This is a valid and valuable contribution; however, the delimitation in this study focuses only on female victims of partner abuse.



Further input by SM15 clarified that a female partner victim refers to any woman who experiences harm or abuse, be it physical, emotional, or economic inflicted by a male intimate partner or spouse. The following excerpt gives evidence to what was said:

*'For purpose of this study, a female victim shall refer to any female person who incurs any harm, ill-treatment, physically, emotionally and economically from her partner or spouse.'* (SM15)

The definition underscores the multi-faceted nature of abuse and highlights the need to recognise all forms of victimisation in efforts to address and empower affected individuals. This perspective is in line with what was found in the literature on the types of abuse as outlined in Chapter 2.

SM11 defines empowerment in the context of abused female partners as a process grounded in social work practice. SM11 further indicated that the draft strategy employs professional techniques and interventions aimed at improving the lives of women who have endured partner-related violence. These approaches involve therapeutic engagement and structured support, allowing survivors to rebuild their sense of self-worth and agency. Drawing from the academic sources, Leburu-Masigo (2020) emphasised the importance of empowerment as a guiding framework for helping women navigate and confront abuse-related challenges. The strategy stresses the need for responses that are informed by victims' personal experiences and environments. Sulaiman *et al.* (2025) added that effective empowerment requires active interaction between social workers and female victims, underscoring the need for interventions that are not only responsive and relevant but deeply attuned to the specific nature of the victims' suffering. This collective perspective highlights empowerment as both a restorative and transformative process for survivors of intimate partner abuse.

SM11 defines victim empowerment as a transformative process designed to support women who have suffered abuse in intimate relationships. Below is what the participant said,

*'Victim empowerment is a strategy to make it easier for everyone who has been harmed, traumatised, or lost due to violence, crime, a natural catastrophe, a fatal accident or socioeconomic situation to access a variety of services. In essence*

*empowerment is about control of own thoughts, actions and aspirations. Ownership of the problem, processes to overcome it and outcomes that are geared towards self-reliance. By making empowerment a focal point of its mission, social work has taken reasonable steps towards becoming the primary global depositary of this theoretical model. The victims need to be taught life skills, be offered legal support and offered safe spaces.'* (SM11)

This involves helping female partners who have been harmed physically, emotionally, economically, or psychologically to reclaim agency over their lives through targeted, supportive interventions. Furthermore, SM12 emphasised that empowerment is about restoring control, enabling survivors to take ownership of their recovery, and guiding them toward self-reliance.

*'Victim empowerment is restoring the loss or damage; by accessing services the victim will be able to deal with trauma or loss.'* (SM12)

This includes teaching essential life skills, providing legal assistance, and ensuring access to safe environments where healing can take place.

SM11 also stressed the role of social workers as central to this approach. Effective empowerment requires social workers to engage meaningfully with abused women, understand their lived realities, and offer responses that are both relevant and empathetic. The detailed participant excerpts below, explain this,

SM12 suggests that when victim empowerment becomes a core focus of social work practice, it positions the profession as a key driver in helping abused female partners overcome trauma and rebuild their lives with dignity and strength.

SM15 presents victim empowerment as a strategic, restorative framework aimed at supporting women who have suffered abuse in intimate relationships. It encompasses structured interventions designed to restore personal agency, resilience, and dignity to female victims by enabling them to reclaim control over their thoughts, actions, and aspirations.

*'Victim empowerment is an integral part of the work of the National Department of Social Development and Provincial Social Development Departments, where*

*Victim Empowerment Programmes are operational. It is about the regaining of strength and dignity after being violated through an integrated, structured and well-coordinated programme. Furthermore, building inner strength, capacity and resilience of victims through therapeutic processes. Teaching victims coping skills and survival skills such as an economic empowerment skill.’ (SM15)*

SM14 viewed empowerment not merely as a service, but also as a transformative process that promotes self-reliance through access to therapeutic support, life skills training, legal resources, and safe spaces.

*‘Female partner victim empowerment entails being able to motivate, encourage women victims to be independent both physically, emotionally and economically.’ (SM14)*

This approach also encourages victims to actively participate in overcoming the trauma they have experienced, recognising and owning their challenges while being supported by professionals through relevant and meaningful pathways toward recovery. SM14 also highlighted that the social work profession was seen as central to this mission, with its role evolving into an overall leader in victim empowerment. Through empathetic engagement and context-sensitive interventions, social workers are expected to connect deeply with abused female partners to design support mechanisms that respond effectively to the complexities of their lived experiences.

SM15 stated that Female Partner Victim Empowerment Strategy is a nationally endorsed framework designed to support women who have endured abuse within intimate relationships. Rooted in South Africa’s broader victim support agenda, this strategy is implemented by both National and Provincial Departments of Social Development to ensure survivors receive comprehensive and coordinated care. SM14 defines female partner victim empowerment strategy as a transformative process that aims to restore emotional, physical, and economic autonomy to abused female partners. The promotes personal healing through therapeutic interventions, while simultaneously building practical capacities such as resilience, coping mechanisms, and financial independence. Economic empowerment, in particular, is viewed as a cornerstone for long-term stability and self-sufficiency. SM15 added by articulating that empowerment also involves encouraging survivors to take back control of their lives through nurturing their inner

strength and confidence. SM14 is of the opinion that through motivation and structured guidance, female victims of partner abuse are supported to overcome dependency and reclaim personal agency. SM15 concluded by adding that the strategy ultimately seeks to not only heal trauma but also cultivate lasting independence, ensuring that survivors emerge stronger and more resilient.

### **General comments**

SM1, SM12 and SM16 identified some structural and systemic shortcomings in how female partner abuse is tracked and addressed. A recurring concern was the narrow focus of available data, which tends to emphasize physical abuse while overlooking other significant forms such as psychological, emotional, economic, and sexual violence. This limited scope was seen as obscuring the full extent of victims' experiences. SM1 further noted that current reporting practices rely heavily on data from the South African Police Service (SAPS). SM1 also pointed out that numerous cases are documented by non-governmental organisations and social development offices but remain absent from official statistics. This gap suggests an underestimation of the true prevalence of female partner abuse and calls for a broader, more inclusive data-gathering approach.

SM12 added by articulating that the physical environment where the female victims of abuse are assisted is also questionable, as there is shortage of victim-friendly facilities at SAPS, noting that such environments are crucial for encouraging survivors to report abuse and seek help without fear or discomfort. SM16 further denotes that more emphasis should be placed on extension of victim empowerment services beyond victim support and to include rehabilitative programmes for offenders embarking on an approach viewed as essential for breaking cycles of abuse and fostering sustainable change.

SM1, SM13, SM16, SM6 and SM11 acknowledged the role of South Africa's legal and policy instruments in shaping and legitimizing the draft Strategy. SM1 referenced the *Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998*, noting its significance as a foundational legal framework that defines and addresses various forms of domestic abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, and economic violence. This Act provides the legal basis for protective interventions and support mechanisms for victims of intimate partner violence.

SM13 highlighted the importance of national policy initiatives such as the *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP)* and the *National Framework on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide*. These strategic instruments were described as essential for outlining government commitments, multi-sectoral coordination, and programmatic responses to violence against women. SM16 added by saying these policies and frameworks serve to guide the implementation of victim-centred empowerment strategies by promoting prevention, care, support, and justice services. SM6 added that together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive foundation for the development, execution, and monitoring of the draft strategy, ensuring it aligns with national goals and human rights standards in addressing violence against women.

## **5.5.2 Elements to be incorporated into female victim empowerment strategy**

### **5.5.2.1 Education and awareness**

SM2 emphasised that education and awareness should be central to the Female Partner Victim Empowerment Strategy. The proposed approach involves creating inclusive empowerment dialogues led by Social Service Professionals (SSPs), where both survivors and perpetrators of female partner abuse are actively involved. SM2 also highlighted that victims' participation is seen as critical, offering them a voice and a space to contribute to conversations about their experiences and recovery needs. Such engagement fosters empowerment through visibility, validation, and shared understanding. Including perpetrators in selected dialogue sessions under the guidance of trained professionals was also proposed to encourage accountability and promote behavioural change. This is highlighted by the following excerpts,

*'On elements, the strategy should also include the victim - the strategy that the Social Service Professionals (SSPs) should conduct the victim empowerment dialogues. This means that the victim has to be involved and participate on the dialogues even the perpetrators. The perpetrators should also participate on the dialogues.'* (SM2)

SM5 added that the educational element goes beyond information-sharing; and ultimately becomes a participatory tool for social transformation. By facilitating open conversations and promoting reflective engagement across the community, the strategy aims to

challenge norms surrounding gender-based violence and contribute to the long-term prevention of abuse.

Furthermore, SM6 recommended that the Department of Education incorporate financial literacy and empowerment themes into the CAPS Life Orientation curriculum, alongside existing topics such as sex education and pregnancy, to better prepare young individuals for independent living. Below is the evidence from the data,

*‘Others should be encouraged to study. For victims who are working, they are also encouraged to study, like long distance learning. Because immediately when you are educated, they can be independent, stand on their feet therefore they will never depend on any other person. They will never stay in abusive relationships. We also reckon that the Department of Education should also include this into Life Orientation Skills (L.O). As much as they are teaching them about sex education, pregnancy and others.’ (SM6)*

SM2 highlighted the need for strengthened advocacy and more responsive policy measures to protect female victims of partner abuse. As said below,

*‘I think that the preventative measures that will be good maybe would be presentations on radio stations about prevention and information regarding the abuse. Disseminate knowledge to the target groups.’ (SM2)*

SM2 proposed using media platforms, especially radio, to disseminate information on abuse prevention and support services tailored to vulnerable groups.

#### **5.5.2.2 Emotional and psychological healing**

SM7 emphasised the significance of equipping social workers with the necessary skills to support the emotional and psychological recovery of female victims of partner abuse. SM7 further suggested that regular access to in-service training, short courses, and capacity-building sessions focused on trauma counselling and debriefing would be essential in enhancing the competence of professionals working in this field. This approach, according to the participant, would strengthen the ability of social workers to provide informed, empathetic, and effective support to survivors navigating the complex aftermath of abuse. The participants voiced the following:

*'Social workers should consistently receive training / in service training / capacity building sessions or short courses on trauma debriefing and trauma counselling so that they can be empowered to attend to the emotional and psychological healing.'* (SM7)

*'... trauma counselling and therapeutic service, professional services are needed.'* (SM14)

SM14 underscored the necessity of professional trauma counselling and therapeutic services to address psychological wounds and facilitate recovery. SM1 proposed a range of activities designed to promote healing, skills development, and personal growth among female victims of partner abuse.

SM9 advocated for integrating creative arts into recovery initiatives for female victims of partner abuse, highlighting its value in easing emotional distress.

*'There is a need to teach victims painting and music in order to ease their tension after experiencing abuse.'* (SM 9)

SM9 also suggested that activities like painting and music can help survivor's express emotions, relieve psychological tension, and process trauma in a supportive, non-verbal manner. Through artistic engagement, abused female partners can begin to reclaim a sense of identity and inner strength, reinforcing emotional healing and personal empowerment. This perspective reinforces the importance of holistic support approaches that incorporate creative expression alongside traditional therapeutic methods.

SM7 emphasised the importance of comprehensive and coordinated intervention strategies led by social work professionals when supporting female victims of partner abuse.

*'The professionals in their plans for the female victim of partner abuse should entail both short- and long-term planning.'* (SM 7)

SM7 advocated for planning that incorporates both immediate and long-term considerations, recognising that recovery is an ongoing process that extends beyond initial crisis response. In the short term, social workers should prioritize safety, access to

shelter, and emotional stabilization. For long-term recovery, professionals are encouraged to integrate services such as trauma counselling, legal support, financial and digital empowerment, and skills development. SM7's perspective underscores the vital role of social workers in crafting holistic, individualized care plans that empower survivors to regain autonomy and rebuild their lives sustainably.

A key recommendation was the inclusion of **individual counselling sessions**, where social workers engage directly with survivors to build trust and gain deeper insight into their emotional and psychological needs. This personalized approach is seen as vital for designing responsive and effective support plans.

### **5.5.2.3 Building a supportive network**

SM8 and SM12 underscored the value of fostering supportive environments for female victims recovering from partner abuse. SM8 further remarked that peer support groups offer a platform for survivors to connect and share their experiences, helping them process their trauma among others who understand. Another contributor highlighted how involvement in community organisations could be therapeutic, enabling women to reestablish social ties, remain active, and gradually rebuild a sense of belonging.

*'Social workers should encourage female victims of partner abuse to join support groups as they are platforms where they will share experiences and challenges encountered.'* (SM12)

*'The victims of female partner abuse should be fully engaged in community local groups to keep themselves busy after the abuse experience, build relationships and effectively connect with other community members.'* (SM8)

These shared insights reflect a common belief among professionals that social connection plays a vital role in healing and empowerment. SM17 proposed the creation of women's peer support groups led by trained social workers or psychologists, providing a safe space for survivors to share experiences and receive tailored guidance. The vignette below captures what was said,



*'There is a need to establish women groups for victims that will assist them to share experiences which a professional social worker or psychologist so that relevant advice and support could be given.'* (SM17)

*'Peer support groups should be used in order for victims to share experiences.'* (SM11)

SM11 also emphasised the value of **peer support groups**, where survivors can connect with others who share similar experiences. These groups offer a safe space for dialogue, emotional release, mutual and spiritual encouragement, strengthening solidarity and reducing isolation among victims.

#### **5.5.2.4 Skills development**

SM7, SM16 and SM14 outlined the importance of comprehensive skills development to empower women affected by partner abuse and foster long-term independence. SM7 advocated for relationship-oriented education, suggesting that both partners, regardless of the stage of their relationship should receive guidance in communication, parenting, and conflict management to encourage healthier dynamics and informed decision-making. Collectively, these perspectives reveal a shared belief that equipping women with practical, relational, and economic skills is fundamental to their recovery and long-term resilience. The following are some of the data excerpts,

*'There is need to improve on communication skills for both partners. Maybe it's a partner that is in a long-term relationship or a relationship that has just started. It is better if both parties are being taught about parenting skills and conflict management which will encourage better decision making.'* (SM7)

SM9 highlighted the vital role of digital empowerment in supporting female victims of partner abuse with the inclusion of technological literacy, covering skills such as operating computers, using smart phones, and navigating the internet to educate themselves and learn women empowerment initiatives.

*'More technological literacy, skills and knowledge such as the usage of computers, smart phones and internet should be used as part of demonstrating, improved*

*education to the victims of female partner abuse and such should be incorporated to impart knowledge.'* (SM9)

Digital empowerment could help broaden access to education, resources, and communication tools. By equipping survivors with digital competencies, support programmes can foster greater independence and help all the abused female partners to engage more confidently with information networks, ultimately enabling them to rebuild their lives with increased self-reliance and adaptability.

In addition to therapeutic services, SM16 suggested that **educational and creative empowerment programmes** as essential components towards women's empowerment. Activities such as sewing, computer literacy workshops, and visual arts were identified as tools that not only develop practical skills but also encourage self-expression, confidence-building, and pathways toward economic independence.

#### **5.5.2.5 Legal empowerment**

SM2 emphasised the need to empower female victims of partner abuse by enhancing their legal awareness.

*'Female victims of partner should be educated and acquire knowledge on the laws and legislation on their situations.'* (SM 2)

According to SM2, equipping women with knowledge about laws and regulations that relate to their circumstances plays a vital role in helping them make informed decisions and assert their rights. Legal education enables survivors to navigate justice systems with greater confidence and independence, reinforcing their ability to seek protection and redress. This view supports the integration of legal literacy into broader support programmes aimed at strengthening autonomy and resilience among abused female partners.

#### **5.5.2.6 Shelter**

SM2 drew attention to limitations in current short-term shelter arrangements, noting that victims are often offered refuge at crisis centres for only three days. In situations where

survivors are unemployed or lack alternative resources, this brief intervention may lead them back into harmful environments. This is what the participant said,

*‘... and then the other strategy that DSD is implementing is, not only DSD the other strategy that we are applying is the short term. Whereby we have such a case that the victim is only going to be placed at the crisis centre for shelter and safety for only three days. When the three days elapse, the victim might go back to the abusive environment because in some instances, some of the victims are unemployed.’ (SM2)*

SM14 emphasised the importance of reintegrated services and adequate sheltering options, calling for a more cohesive support structure that extends beyond emergency care.

*‘There is a need for reintegrated services and sheltering services.’ (SM14)*

SM15 recommended providing crisis intervention and forming dedicated support groups to address survivors’ specific needs through targeted and responsive strategies.

*‘There is a need to provide crisis intervention, establish victim support groups and apply strategies and intervention that meets the needs of female victims. (SM15)*

This viewpoint calls for extended care provisions and policy enhancements that address economic vulnerabilities and promote long-term safety and empowerment. SM13 spoke to the value of openness and transparency in practice, noting that when victims feel safe to share their experiences without fear of judgment, it fosters trust and facilitates recovery.

*‘Openness and transparency is important as it enables the victim to illustrate the circumstances encountered without fear’. (SM13)*

SM19 added a terminological insight, explaining that in their professional context, victims are referred to as "clients" rather than "patients" as a paradigm shift that reflects respect, autonomy, and empowerment. Together, these perspectives advocate for an approach rooted in safety, dignity, adaptability, and holistic care tailored to the evolving needs of survivors.

### 5.5.2.7 Financial independence

SM12 highlighted that financial dependency often traps women in abusive relationships, proposing that development programmes focused on financial literacy and economic empowerment could help women regain autonomy.

*‘Skills development programmes will enhance the financial skills of the abused women as most of them stay in abused relationships because they are financially dependent on their abusive partners’ (SM12)*

*‘Skills development can find expression through capacity building such as sewing, computer training in order to reduce dependency on male partners.’ (SM16)*

*‘Jobs creating can be another form of female victim empowerment.’ (SM14)*

SM16 emphasised practical capacity-building opportunities such as sewing and computer training to promote self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on male partners. Complementing this, SM14 pointed to job creation initiatives as essential tools for empowering victims by offering sustainable livelihood options. SM6 stressed the need for long-term strategies to promote financial independence among female victims of partner abuse.

*‘... there is need for long term solutions. Some of the victims are illiterate, therefore we also suggest that they should come together as women and register something that is income generating projects such as cooperatives. This could sustain their livelihood and also help their families. Others should be encouraged to study.’ (SM 6)*

SM6 acknowledged that some survivors lack basic education and proposed that all the abused female partners need to form cooperative ventures and other income-generating initiatives to sustain themselves and support their families. SM6 also encouraged continued education, including distance learning, for both unemployed and employed victims, noting that academic advancement fosters autonomy and reduces reliance on abusive partners.

#### **5.5.2.8 Holistic health**

SM10, SM12, SM14, and SM16 collectively highlighted the need for a multifaceted and inclusive victim empowerment strategy tailored to the diverse needs of abuse survivors. SM10 emphasised that LGBTQI+ individuals should be explicitly included, recognizing them as a vulnerable group that experiences high rates of abuse. SM12 advocated for a targeted service framework informed by victim-specific needs assessments, with empowerment positioned as the central goal to reduce dependency. This approach, they noted, requires the active involvement of key stakeholders such as social development agencies, education departments, counsellors, faith-based leaders, psychologists services, and law enforcement.

SM7 added that, *‘the well-being of the female victims should be nurtured through enhancing their mental health, reducing their stress, anxiety and depression.’*

Together, these viewpoints call for a coordinated, inclusive, and trauma-informed empowerment model that integrates community engagement, institutional support, and professional care.

#### **5.5.2.9 Continuous assessment and improvement**

SM16 stressed the importance of maintaining continuous support for female victims of partner abuse through ongoing assessment and service improvement. SM16 advocated for establishing strong referral mechanisms, conducting regular follow-ups, and ensuring consistent intervention to meet the evolving needs of survivors. Below is the excerpt from the data,

*‘There should be proper referral systems, follow ups and consistent intervention assistance.’* (SM16)

This approach promotes accountability, fosters trust, and allows service providers to tailor responses over time, improving the overall effectiveness of care. SM16’s viewpoint reinforces the necessity of a structured, responsive support system that prioritises long-term recovery through sustained professional engagement.

The excerpts provided a clear picture on how significant social work services are to the victims of female partner abuse. Therefore, an intensive training is required for the social workers to ensure effective and efficient services are rendered to the victims.

## **5.6 PHASE 3: REFINEMENT VIA EMAIL**

### **5.6.1 Comments of the managers on the victim empowerment strategy**

The proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy was sent via email to the managers and supervisors who initially took part in focus group discussions. This tentative victim empowerment strategy, before refinement, is attached as Addendum I. The profile information of the managers and supervisors who responded to the email is highlighted in Chapter 3.

## Profile of managers and supervisors who responded via email

**Table 5-6 Participant Group 3: Managers and Supervisors – Email refinements TOTAL (16)**

| <b>Participant Number</b> | <b>Current Occupation</b> | <b>Years of experience as a Supervisor/ Manager</b> | <b>Years of experience in social work field</b> | <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>District</b>   |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------------------|
| <b>P1T</b>                | Service point manager     | 10 years                                            | 30 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 58         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P2T</b>                | Social work manager       | 8 years                                             | 23 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 55         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P3T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 3 years                                             | 17 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 44         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P4T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 8 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Master's                  | Black       | Female        | 48         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P5T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 7 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 45         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P6T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 10 years                                            | 20 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 58         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P7T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 7 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 49         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P8T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 10 years                                            | 21 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 50         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P9T</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 5 years                                             | 17 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 44         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |
| <b>P10T</b>               | Social work supervisor    | 4 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 46         | Dr Kenneth Kaunda |

| <b>Participant Number</b> | <b>Current Occupation</b> | <b>Years of experience as a Supervisor/ Manager</b> | <b>Years of experience in social work field</b> | <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>District</b>           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|
| <b>P1N</b>                | Service point manager     | 9 years                                             | 20 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Male          | 48         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>P2N</b>                | Social work manager       | 10 years                                            | 22 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 55         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>P3N</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 4 years                                             | 16 years                                        | Degree                    | Coloured    | Female        | 44         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>P4N</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 4 years                                             | 15 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 45         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>P5N</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 8 years                                             | 19 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 52         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |
| <b>P6N</b>                | Social work supervisor    | 6 years                                             | 18 years                                        | Degree                    | Black       | Female        | 51         | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti |



The comments of the managers and supervisors are summarised here, and their input was incorporated in the final strategy that follows this section. In summary the following aspects were suggested as refinement:

## **Vision**

The managers and supervisors commented on the *Vision* by stating that it is well-phrased and well-aligned to the current gender- based violence and femicide national strategic plan (P2N), and concise and clear (P1N). P1T was satisfied with the vision, saying, “*The vision of VES includes empowerment, support, protection and upholding justice. This aims to restore dignity of victims by helping them to gain back their self-worth, dignity and confidence. Moreover, it ensures that their rights are protected and advocated for.*” P2T viewed the vision as ‘*aspirational and survivor-centred, emphasizing dignity, safety, and independence. It clearly reflects a transformative agenda.*’ P6T suggested that male partner abuse should be included in the Vision. However, the focus of this research is on female partner abuse. This suggestion is factored into the recommendations section in the final chapter as a suggestion for further research. According to P2N, ‘*The vision is well phrased and well aligned to the current Gender Based Violence and femicide national strategic plan in the sense that it addresses key areas of Principle no 1 that is aimed at achieving a multi- sectoral approach and public private partnership.*’

Even though most participants found the vision to be well formulated two participants made suggestions for refinement. P4N found the Vision a bit too long. However, to include important elements, including the suggestion of P2T that systemic barriers should be reflected in the vision, the vision statement in the final strategy could not be shortened.

## **Mission**

In general, the participants found the mission to be in order (P1N; P2N; P3T; P4T; P4N; P3N). According to P1T the victim empowerment strategy ‘*seeks to foster a healing and supportive platform for victims to be able to restore lives where they are able to claim back their power. It is victim-centred which means it prioritizes all the needs of victims.*’ P5N linked with the multi-sectoral support empowerment system referred to in the Mission by emphasising collaboration with key stakeholders like law enforcement, health professionals and NGOs to enhance inter-agency coordination. P2T indicated that the mission is comprehensive, focusing on multi-sectoral collaboration and holistic support.

P2T made a valuable contribution by suggesting that language around trauma-informed care should be included, as well as inclusivity for marginalised groups, and survivor participation in policy and program development. This comment has three important suggestions. Based on this trauma-informed care was included as one of the core components of the strategy, whereas in the tentative strategy it was presented under a heading, *Other directives from literature*. When considering what was said about trauma-informed care in Chapter 2, based on literature, and the input of this participant, the importance of trauma-informed care in all aspects of victim empowerment came to the fore very clearly. The second suggestion to focus on inclusivity of marginalised groups have been added to the objectives. However, the word, *key populations*, has been used, in addition, as it refers to specific groups that are disproportionately affected by certain health and social issues, (World Health Organisation, 2024). The third suggestion for survivor participation in policy and program development has been added to the component focusing on advocacy and policy change.

## **Objectives**

P4T and P1N indicated that the objectives were clear, concise and measurable. P2N added that the objectives were relevant to the research topic. P2T said that the objectives were well aligned with the Vision and Mission. P2T added that the objectives '*are relevant and actionable*.' This participant also recommended the inclusion of clear indicators and timelines to make the objectives more measurable and support effective monitoring and evaluation with consideration of the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). P5N echoed the suggestion of P2T that the objectives could be more measurable i.e. setting targets for legal reforms or survivor support programme expansions.

This is a valuable suggestion that could be incorporated as part of the intervention plan of each individual client. P3N suggested a main objective or aim, followed by specific objectives. It is the opinion of the researcher that the last part of the mission offers such an overall perspective on the strategy, and it was not added as a main aim. P4N suggested a slight adaptation to the first objective to include the words 'ineffective interventions.' However, it was decided to keep to the original wording as it pointed to broader systemic barriers, not only linked to intervention. P6T commented on the objective being only focused on females, namely, '*To raise public awareness of female*

*partner abuse in the North West province.*' As the focus of this research was on female victims of partner abuse, males have not been included in the objectives, thereby not discounting that males can also be affected as victims of abuse.

### **Education and awareness**

P1T agreed that *'community education and awareness campaigns assist a lot in reaching the objectives, mission and vision of this strategy. Taking this as a priority can create a more supportive, informed and inclusive community where people promote victim empowerment and fight against violence.'* P1N echoed this by saying that *'Education and awareness play a critical role in victim empowerment. Topic well covered and research based,'* P2T believes that *'The strategy presents a robust education and awareness plan, integrating bio-ecological perspectives and contextual realities. Including content for perpetrators and school-going children is commendable'* A suggestion by P2T that mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of these campaigns (e.g., attitude change, reporting rates) should be included, was added to the strategy as well as the suggestion of culturally tailored and linguistically inclusive materials to enhance community impact.

P4T and P4N agreed that education and awareness should thus be at a micro, meso, and macro level as stipulated in the victim empowerment strategy. P2N agreed that education and awareness could help community members to recognise the signs of abuse and that awareness campaigns, dialogues, presentations and workshops will educate community members about different types of abuse. They would also be equipped to have information to know how to react and to protect themselves from being victimized. P3N suggested that spiritual organisations must be engaged to provide female partner abuse education and awareness, especially as females often go to church and find support there. This suggestion was taken to Chapter 6 as a recommendation.

### **Emotional and psychological healing**

P4T and P1N stated that the information on emotional and psychological healing was well-researched. P1T shared that emotional and psychological healing can be done through trauma-informed care, continuous support services (psychosocial support), support groups and counselling. By making these components a priority, victims can start their journey to recovery from their experiences and be able to rebuild their lives. Added to this comment, P4N agreed to the statement by echoing that these programmes are to

be geared towards building a cushioning effect through crisis intervention. This suggestion, linked to crisis intervention, was added to the component, emotional and psychological healing. Psychosocial support can assist helpers and professionals in harnessing efforts towards a holistic approach to mitigating the effects of female partner abuse. P4N further suggested that healing programmes should focus on primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions within a continuum of care. P2T stated that the section on emotional and psychological healing '*... is thorough and deeply informed by current trauma and neurobiological research. The inclusion of psycho-education, counselling, and victim-offender mediation demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of survivor needs.*' A suggestion by P5N that monitoring indicators should be considered to track improvements in survivor's quality of life over time was added to recommendations for social work practice in Chapter 6. Another suggestion by P5N that there should be safeguarding to ensure the mediation process does not retraumatize victims was also taken to Chapter 6. P6T cautions that steps should be taken to prevent victims from becoming perpetrators because of unresolved trauma. This suggestion was added to this section.

### **Building a network of informal social support**

P2N outlined informal support networks as '*vital for GBV survivors because they need a listening ear that is free of judgement*' and promote the dignity of the survivors. P2N added that relevant support structures include women's groups, churches or other service organisations.

P1T referred to the value of mutual or peer support... '*where victims are able to connect with other victims and are able to draw strength and courage from them*' P4T and P1N also emphasises the value of informal support networks to prevent isolation and provide a sense of belonging. P2T added that informal social networks help to reduce isolation and stigma and agrees with the VEP strategy's emphasis on family, household, and community involvement. P3N indicated the importance of spiritual support. P2T recommended that capacity-building workshops for families and community leaders be implemented to equip them with basic psychosocial support skills. This suggestion was added to recommendations in Chapter 6.

According to P4N informal support can cushion the effects of family disintegration. P4N further stated that informal support networks will also help hold the survivor accountable in responding and utilisation of available services. Furthermore, informal support networks can serve as ears and eyes in the community to detect cases of abuse and may help with advocacy and social action in the context of female partner abuse. P5N points to an important support namely peer mentorship programmes that could help survivors strengthen their resilience within their communities, by also engaging household members. This suggestion was added to the strategy.

### **Building a network of professional support**

P1T supported the inclusion of this component into the VEP strategy by saying that *'Being able to collaborate in a multi-disciplinary team enables professionals to engage and share ideas on how to best support their clients.'* Moreover, *partnerships may be established where organisations and agencies come together to work on the VES. 'By so doing, organisations can provide effective services to victims which will be promoting victims' healing, well-being, empowerment and recovery.'* P1N also concluded that a *'robust support system [is] essential in ensuring continuity of support and care.'* P2T agreed that building a network of professional support is crucial in victim empowerment. This participant suggested that Memoranda of understanding between role players should clarify roles, referrals and accountability. This suggestion has been included with recommendations in Chapter 6. P2T made another important comment that was included in the VEP strategy, namely that the voice and choice of victims must remain central in all formal interactions. A suggestion by P2N that victim empowerment forums must be established to strengthen stakeholder relations has been included in Chapter 6 as a recommendation. P5N suggested that service providers should be trained to use survivor-centred approaches effectively. This suggestion was added to recommendations in Chapter 6, as well as another suggestion by P5N that there should be a centralised tracking system to ensure smooth coordination among stakeholders. P6N's suggestion of a command centre where the community can call and report abuse have been added to Chapter 6 as a recommendation for further research.

## **Skills development**

P1T, P4N and P1N found the content linked to this component well-articulated, well researched and easy to read. In a similar vein, P2T articulated that *'the inclusion of both survivors and perpetrators in skills training is a progressive approach. Skills development enhances autonomy and self-efficacy.'* A suggestion by P2T that skills training should be informed by local labour market trends and that participants be linked with sustainable employment or entrepreneurship pathways was included in the VEP strategy, as well as the importance of post-training mentorship to ensure long-term success. P2N indicated that practical skills such as sewing, baking, computer skills, driving or beauty care can assist victims to earn an income. P6N added bead-making and gardening. This was included in the VEP strategy.

## **Legal empowerment**

P2T found the section on legal empowerment insightful, recognising the role of legal literacy and law enforcement. This participant stated that underreporting remains a concern, and efforts to build trust between victims and justice institutions are crucial. The suggestion of P2T that legal aid must be made accessible and survivor-friendly and that legal processes should be trauma-informed was included in Chapter 6 as recommendations. Aligned to this, P2N said that legal empowerment for survivors of GBV involves providing survivors with the legal knowledge, access to legal services and advocacy support to navigate the legal system and seek justice. This helps survivors to understand their rights, have resources to pursue legal remedies and to empower them to hold perpetrators accountable. Survivors need information about the laws that protect them against domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of GBV. Victims need to know that they have a right to compensation or restitution from the offender including payments of losses and damages. P4N suggested that a resource directory should be available to victims and role players. This suggestion has been included as a recommendation in Chapter 6.

## **Advocacy and policy change**

P1T, P4T and P1N found the information on advocacy and policy change to be well-articulated and relevant. P2T and P4N emphasised that strong advocacy is necessary to reform systemic shortcomings. This viewpoint has been added to the VEP strategy. P2T

indicated that the strategy rightly connects advocacy with ethics and trauma-informed practice and suggested that *'to make this more effective, survivors should be included in advocacy efforts as empowered voices. Collaboration with civil society, faith-based organisations, and academic institutions will further policy influence'*. These aspects were included in the VEP strategy with the component advocacy and policy change.

P2N emphasised the urgent need to reform legislation and policies regarding the granting of bail for offenders of femicide and sexual abuse. Observing a troubling trend, the participant highlighted that many offenders are committing similar crimes while out on bail. In response to this concern, this suggestion has been included as a recommendation in Chapter 6.

In the context of policy and advocacy, P3N referred to cultural issues such as culture-based marriage and is of the opinion that such practices could sometimes lead to abuse. A recommendation for further research in this regard has been added to Chapter 6. P3N indicated that in Setswana, for instance, there is the practice that wives should not ask questions about their husbands' movements or even other relationships which might lead to them being beaten up, should they ask about it; also known in Setswana as *'monna ga a botswe gore o tswa kae.'* Given the significance of this aspect, it has been included in Chapter 6 as a suggestion for further research.

P5N made a valuable contribution by stating that regular audits or evaluations of existing laws should be done to ensure they remain effective. This was added to the recommendations in Chapter 6. The participant also suggested that survivor testimonies should be part of awareness building to drive more impactful policy changes. According to P6T the Victim Empowerment Program *'still lacks social workers who are trained to effectively provide victim support services.'* P6N added that social workers should also be skilled to implement new policies. These suggestions have been included in Chapter 6.

### **Temporary shelters**

P1T, P1N and P42 indicated that the section on temporary shelters is well-articulated, relevant and important. P2T added that the recognition of shelters as both safe havens and resource hubs is commendable. They should not only provide immediate safety but serve as platforms for reintegration. Establishing minimum service standards for shelters

and regular staff training in trauma-informed care is essential. Long-term housing options could provide continuity beyond crisis accommodation, as also stated by P5N. These suggestions were added to the VEP strategy, under the heading *Temporary shelters*. P2N emphasised the value of shelters for female victims of partner abuse. This participant referred to practical aspects such as that the shelters must be clean and fully furnished to create a safe environment that would allow victims to feel at home. This suggestion was added to the VEP strategy.

P3N stressed the vital importance of maintaining safety from perpetrators at shelters, referring to a case in Botswana where a victim was murdered at a shelter by the perpetrator. This suggestion was added to the VEP strategy. P4N stressed the need for funding channelled to shelters. It seems important to help the management of shelters to be compliant to all the requirements for registration and to access funding. This suggestion has been included in Chapter 6.

### **Financial independence**

P1N rightly pointed out that financial independence links closely with skills development. This link was added to the VEP strategy. The following suggestion of P2T was added to the VEP strategy, under the heading, *Financial independence: 'Financial empowerment is rightly identified as key to breaking the cycle of abuse. Support for job readiness, microfinance, cooperative business models, and financial literacy will enable women to become self-sufficient. Consider partnerships with private sector stakeholders and local economic development units to widen opportunities.'* The suggestion of P5T that victims of female partner abuse should be linked to social protection programmes and casual works such as Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP) and Community Works Programmes (CWP) to empower them on financial independence, was included in the VEP strategy.

P6N gave an example of practical support given to victims along with teaching them to sew. They also received sewing machines and accessories so that they can support themselves financially. This concept was added to the section on Skills development.



## **Continuous assessment and improvement**

P2T made important observations, indicating that more emphasis should be placed on adaptation and responsiveness to changing social dynamics (e.g., AI, post-COVID impacts). A strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework must be established, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Survivor feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized to inform ongoing learning. These suggestions have been included in the VEP strategy. P4N concluded that continuous assessment and improvement is *'important as the landscape is forever changing. Key machineries need to be put in place, while some need resuscitation, support and strengthening to act as a watchdog, support structure, educational structure and impact monitoring, to review progress and make redress.'* The suggestion of P4N was added to the VEP strategy namely that the VEP strategy should not operate in isolation but should consider all Acts, Policies, regulations, charters and frameworks for maximization of impact.

## **5.7 FINAL VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The newly developed victim empowerment strategy is designed to specifically support female victims of partner abuse by strengthening their capacity to cope with the trauma of their experiences. Unlike the existing approaches that may inadvertently expose victims to re-traumatisation, this strategy places emphasis on fostering resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional stability. It seeks to provide women with practical tools, and psychosocial support that enable them to process their abuse in a manner that prioritises their dignity and emotional healing. By embedding empowerment principles and trauma-informed practices, the strategy ensures that interventions not only address immediate needs but also safeguard against the recurrence of psychological harm, thereby promoting sustainable recovery and long-term well-being.

### **Implementation summary**

**Key stakeholders:** Social workers, Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Department of Education, South African Police Service (SAPS), Local Municipality, NGOs, community leaders.

**Key activities:** Training programmes for the abused female victims; public awareness campaigns; sheltering services and offender victim reconciliation and management; counselling and reintegration support; inter-agency collaboration.

**Timeframe:** 5 years (2026- 2031)

**Outcomes:** Improved safety, increased resilience, economic and financial independence.

**Monitoring indicators:** Reporting rates, service uptake, customer satisfaction.

## **VISION**

A North West Province where survivors of female partner abuse live free from fear, and the confines of systemic barriers such as poverty, patriarchy and inequality, with access to inclusive, survivor-centred support services that empower them to restore their lives with dignity, security, and independence.

## **MISSION**

To provide a comprehensive, survivor-centred, and multi-sectoral support and empowerment system that promotes the safety and dignity of victims of intimate partner violence. We strive to break the cycle of violence and promote long-term resilience and well-being for survivors across North West province through harmonised service delivery, economic empowerment, psychosocial support, legal and community-driven prevention initiatives.

## **OBJECTIVES**

**To address systemic barriers contributing to female partner abuse in the North West province.**

- To ensure that services reach marginalised and key populations in North West Province.
- To strengthen the institutional and legal frameworks aimed at addressing female partner abuse in the North West province.
- To enhance survivor-centred services in the North West province.
- To raise public awareness of female partner abuse in the North West province.

- To improve the resource allocation for female partner abuse in the North West province.

### **KEY COMPONENTS OF VEP STRATEGY**

Based on the findings of the participants' views and the literature review, the components of the Victim Empowerment Strategy are as follows: education and awareness, trauma-informed practice, emotional and psychological healing, building a network of informal social support, building a network of professional support, skills development, legal empowerment, advocacy and policy change, temporary shelter, financial independence and continual assessment and improvement. According to Jumarali *et al.* (2021:2), social workers should encourage clients to make choices and be active participants in their own intervention or support plans, emphasising autonomy, respect, and decision-making as well as collaboration with the victims to understand their needs, experiences and their frustrations. In addition, the following could be incorporated to make victims feel safe, free, and empowered to live their lives after abuse. The key components of the suggested Victim Empowerment Strategy are outlined in Figure 4,1:



**Figure 5-2: Key components of VEP strategy**

### **Education and awareness**

A victim empowerment strategy should incorporate educational initiatives that illuminate the diverse manifestations of abuse and available resources. To ensure a comprehensive and preventative approach, education should also reach school-aged children as well as the perpetrators of violence. Anger management courses should be available for individuals who perpetrate violence, to address one of the contributing factors to violence and abuse. Education can be disseminated through workshops, informal brochures, social media and community outreaches. Mechanisms should be included to assess the effectiveness of these campaigns (e.g., attitude change, reporting rates). Culturally tailored and linguistically inclusive materials should enhance community impact.

Education could also help to reduce stigma around abuse, and it would assist in encouraging victims to report and to seek help. Educated community members will

support victims and survivors, and they will provide them with the right information because they will have knowledge.

Childress *et al.* (2024a) argue that victim education is a vital form of informational support, empowering victims with the knowledge and confidence necessary to face the perpetrators of female partner abuse through legal action. Education also provides information on safety for the victims and informs them of professional counselling (Fraser *et al.*, 2024), how to access support services and financial resources (Little, 2023) and access health and medical care, conflict resolution and help-seeking (Dickson *et al.*, 2023) and other forms of care (Maquibar *et al.*, 2023). These essential components have also been incorporated into the workbook for female victims of partner abuse (Addendum D), ensuring that they have access to resources that facilitate empowerment.

Smith and Monteux (2023:138) outline the neurobiology of trauma and emphasise that due to the strong limbic-related, primitive responses created by traumatic exposure, the higher cognitive functions of the brain, where self-regulation is situated, are metaphorically off-line at times, as the limbic system, especially the amygdala, is so active after traumatic exposure. As part of emotional and psychological healing, female victims of partner violence should get psycho-education on the neurobiology of trauma, including self-regulation strategies such as recognising increased stress levels, mindfulness, breathing and relaxation (Smith & Webber, 2024:445).

In support of education and awareness, information on the following aspects have been included in the attached workbook (Addendum D), that can be used by social workers during intervention with abused female victims.

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| Definition of abuse             |
| Types of abuse                  |
| Harmful traditional practices   |
| Effects of female partner abuse |

### **Trauma-informed practice**

All service providers should adopt the foundational principles of trauma-informed practice. Such a practice would contribute to environments that prioritise safety, foster transparency and trust, and promote empowerment through voice and choice. A critical component of trauma-informed practice involves recognising and responding to intersecting influences of gender, culture and historical context shaping individuals' experiences. According to Speck *et al.* (2023:2) social workers must be trained in trauma-informed practice, so they can recognize trauma symptoms, respond appropriately, and avoid re-traumatisation.

The thrivership model of Heywood and Mulveen (2021:205) offers a framework to enhance post-traumatic growth and empowerment in the aftermath of gender-based violence. Central to the model are three interrelated pillars that links with trauma-informed practice namely the provision of safety and safeguarding mechanisms, the facilitation of narrative expression through opportunities for survivors to share their stories and have their voices heard; and the cultivation of a socially responsive environment that actively challenges and addresses gender-based violence. This model underscores the importance of survivor agency, and relational healing, linking it with self-determination theory.

A secure and supportive environment should be available to survivors of female partner abuse, where they feel protected and respected. This emphasis on the provision of safety links with the key principles of trauma-informed care and includes physical and emotional safety (Levers, 2022).

### **Emotional and psychological healing**

Integrating emotional and psychological healing into the victim empowerment strategy is essential for adopting a holistic approach to addressing female partner abuse effectively.

One component of this healing journey could involve victim-offender mediation to facilitate closure for the victim while promoting accountability for the perpetrator of abuse.

Counselling serves as a vital cornerstone for emotional and psychological healing. Counselling provides emotional relief by assisting victims in managing stress and processing trauma. Within the VEP strategy, emotional and psychological healing can be pursued through two key approaches, namely, comprehensive victim support and engaging individuals affected within the household. The literature review and participant feedback highlighted the importance of emotional and psychological healing, as it empowers victims to prevent future abuse, ultimately breaking the cycle of abuse. According to a narrative approach, survivors should have the opportunity to narrate their stories at their own pace, using expressive art and creative activities (Malchiodi, 2020) should they find that helpful.

Levenson (2020:288) asserts that social workers must prioritise physical and emotional safety for individuals and create a safe and trusting environment where they can share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgment or harm. Therefore, the overarching goal of victim empowerment is to contribute to the formation of safe and peaceful communities by improving the human rights culture and providing more effective, multisectoral, coordinated responses to victims of crime and trauma.

Hamel *et al.* (2023:314) point out that emotional abuse is intended to destroy and diminish the self-esteem of victims through coercive behaviours, jealousy, threats, and intimidation. Therefore, to effectively restore self-esteem, a victim empowerment strategy should address emotional and psychological healing. The approach should not only facilitate emotional healing but also consider boosting positive emotional states while also assisting individuals in overcoming negative emotional states (Kindness *et al.* 2017). In essence, well administered emotional support can improve people's ability to cope and contribute to their overall mental and physical well-being (Zarling *et al.*, 2025).

Crisis intervention is a relevant intervention in the context of female partner abuse. As defined by Junkin and France (2025) crisis intervention entails a plan of action designed to foster positivity and assist individuals to cope with crises. Crisis intervention will often be needed during the stay of victims in shelters. Isobel *et al.* (2019) state that it is important to address the effects of abuse and the resulting trauma to ensure that victims

do not engage in perpetrator behaviour themselves, and also to prevent the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Justice *et al.* (2022) highlight the serious implications of experiencing violence in intimate relationships on the quality of life of those affected. This concern points to the need for intervention strategies to recognise the effects on quality of life and explore the resources that should be gained to enhance the quality of life of victims as part of their emotional and psychological healing. In support of emotional and psychological healing, there is information on the following aspects in the attached workbook (Addendum D).

|                                         |
|-----------------------------------------|
| Emotional and psychological healing     |
| Barriers when trying to seek help       |
| Tell us your story- Victim's experience |
| Self-determination restored             |
| Where to seek help                      |

### **Building a network of informal support**

Support networks serve as vital relational ecosystems that enable survivors of female partner abuse to engage in meaningful activities and cultivate interpersonal connections conducive to rebuilding self-worth (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These networks function as protective spaces where individuals can share their experiences, exchange practical insights, and access peer-based emotional support from others with shared trajectories (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Mutual or peer support is a valuable resource where victims can connect with other victims and are able to draw strength and courage from them. Furthermore, informal support networks prevent stigma, reduce isolation and provide a sense of belonging. Added to this, peer mentorship programs could help survivors of female partner abuse to strengthen their resilience. Household members could be included in such mentorship programmes within their communities, by also engaging household members.

These suggestions are also in line with the bio-ecological approach where the victim is not seen in isolation, but as part of dynamic systems, where inverse proximal processes may lead to abuse. In a similar vein, Hodges and Harris (2021:82) emphasise that service



providers should understand the environment in which abused individuals live and interact, including the effects of broader societal issues.

Victim empowerment should ensure that the victim has informal support structures to help prevent isolation. Social support is widely seen as a protective factor in stressful and traumatic situations, including partner violence (Choate *et al.*, 2025). Family support is an important network for female victims of partner abuse because it provides emotional and practical assistance that gives the victim a sense of security and empowerment. In this regard, Smith and Webber (2024) refer to the value of social connectedness. Victim support offers sustainable healing and fosters a sense of solidarity, which in turn strengthens victims' resilience and equips them with the necessary tools to be independent. Engaging household members in dealing with female partner abuse allows them to understand the impact of abuse and be able to rebuild relationships. The informal support network could also help hold the survivor accountable in responding and utilisation of available services.

### **Building a network of professional support**

Formal supportive networks should be integrated into the VEP strategy to ensure that victims have access to comprehensive and coordinated services. A network of professional support could significantly aid in addressing female partner abuse in the North West province. Referrals should be done in such a way that smooth transitions from one service provider to another are ensured to minimise additional trauma and save time when victims do not have to re-explain their situations.

Victims should be linked with diverse relevant stakeholders to create a robust support system which leverages resources, fosters grassroots-level interventions and ensures continuity of support and care. These stakeholders may include various government agencies, NGOs, NPOs, religious groups, and civil and legal aid organisations.

The literature supports the use of support networks as one of the most significant ways of coping with the events of abuse and regaining lost resources (Saan *et al.*, 2022). These networks can encompass professional or formal connections, as well as informal ones in the microsystem (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). The multidisciplinary team concept concurs with what George (2020) identifies as inter-sectoral and inter-departmental cooperation, a vital

approach in addressing the diverse needs of the victims. It is important in all interactions with formal systems that the voice and choice of victims should remain central, which also aligns with trauma-informed care.

### **Skills development**

Skills development equips victims to reconstruct their lives and attain economic independence. Marketable skills could give victims the autonomy to make life-changing decisions, such as leaving harmful relationships. Work-related skills training should be informed by local labour market trends and victims should be linked with sustainable employment or entrepreneurship pathways. Practical skills such as sewing, baking, computer skills, bead-making, gardening, driving or beauty care can assist victims to earn an income. It can be considered to provide victims with sewing machines and accessories so that they can support themselves financially. Ensuring long-term success post-training mentorship should be implemented.

The skills also provide victims with sustainable ways to support themselves and build confidence. Victims can overcome psychological and socio-economic challenges. Both perpetrators and victims should be included in the skills development programmes to empower them to combat and reduce female partner abuse and its ripple effects. Community leaders such as chiefs and ward councillors and service providers such as police officers, social workers, nurses and doctors should also be equipped to deal effectively with female partner abuse. The skills help to effectively address the root causes and consequences of IPV that will facilitate behaviour change. This concurs with Leburu-Masigo (2020:175) who recommended that social workers and the women who suffered partner abuse should be equipped with skills, knowledge and economic empowerment to facilitate effective and quick response in preventing secondary victimisation against female partners.

In addition to mastering practical skills, Levers (2022:48) refers to the importance of stress management skills. Similarly, Williams and Poijula (2016:213) state that traumatic exposure keeps the autonomic nervous system on high alert, which necessitates stress and anxiety management. Skills such as breathing, recognising and working with repetitive thoughts and worrying internal dialogue can be part of interventions. Lee and Hudson (2017:143) view empowerment from the standpoint of an individual's relations

with the environment as well as the skills and competencies required to resolve the clients' problems. Skills development should be realistic and attuned to each person's particular needs and circumstances.

### **Legal empowerment**

Legal empowerment reinforces victims' access to justice, eradicating barriers such as lack of knowledge and fear (Galera *et al.*, 2023a). Law enforcement is at the centre of legal empowerment, indicating the critical role of institutional support for victims seeking justice and protection (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Ogundipe *et al.*, 2018). With effective law enforcement, survivors of female partner abuse are supported, the perpetrators held accountable, and the whole community is empowered to confront the prevalence of female partner abuse. Legal empowerment is also important because sometimes victims have a negative self-perception (Aizpitarte *et al.*, 2024), and to counteract such negative self-views, understanding of legal processes and their rights fundamentally empowers victims of IPV to make the right choices and decisions in relation to their rights (Wright *et al.*, 2023). Communities where governmental support is provided for law enforcement and initiatives aimed at deterring, preventing and investigating violence often experience a decrease in violent incidents (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016). However, many communities face significant issues with underreporting of violence, which creates obstacles for law enforcement to respond swiftly and efficiently (Dickson *et al.*, 2023).

### **Advocacy and policy change**

Advocacy and policy reform are vital elements of a victim empowerment strategy, addressing the underlying causes of violence while enhancing support systems and addressing systemic deficiencies. Legal and institutional frameworks should be strengthened, particularly in terms of the application and enforcement of laws like the *Domestic Violence Act* No 116 of 1998 and the protection orders.

Modifications in policy and national planning should aim to increase the number of social workers assigned to address gender-based violence, highlighting the need for advocacy for these changes to be adopted. By reforming policies survivor-centred services with improved resource allocation can be enhanced. Looking at the ethical aspects of trauma work, Matthews *et al.* (2025) emphasise that professional helpers should promote social

justice and advocacy for vulnerable people affected by trauma. Such advocacy would include educating policy makers, law enforcement officials, health personnel and those in the judiciary about typical aspects linked to female partner abuse and trauma, such as trauma-related memory distortions which may lead to the inability to tell the facts of what happened (Justice *et al.*, 2022). Importantly, survivors should be included in advocacy efforts so that their voices can be heard. Collaboration with civil society, faith-based organisations, and academic institutions will further policy influences.

### **Temporary shelters**

When victims are compelled to leave their homes due to violence, their vulnerability increases and they need safe places to stay (Childress *et al.*, 2024a; Justice *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, incorporating temporary shelter in a victim empowerment strategy is crucial, as it provides victims with immediate protection and safety from potential harm. Additionally, shelters function as secure environments where a range of essential services can be made available to victims. Within these shelters, serving as resource centres and platforms for reintegration, services can be offered such as legal aid, psychosocial and emotional support, support for the children of victims, economic empowerment and facilitating reintegration into the families of the survivors and the society at large. According to Leemis *et al.* (2022:15), shelters should not only offer physical security but also psychological assistance, allowing victims the opportunity to rest, and reset their minds (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). Practical aspects should include that shelters are clean and fully furnished to create a safe environment that allows victims to feel at home. Additionally, it is crucial to implement stringent security measures to protect the shelter from potential perpetrators, thereby ensuring the safety of all residents.

Shelters should have information on various issues such as safety, crisis hotlines, support groups, mental health professionals and therapy (Fraser *et al.*, 2024). In addition, the Western Cape Dept. of Social Development (2024) advocates for a rights-based approach that persons in shelters should have access to services such as trauma debriefing and counselling, skills development, and building capacity. Adequate and safe shelters offer immediate protection from abusive partners, ensuring that women and their children have a secure environment where they can recover and develop plans for their next steps (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Long-term housing options should be explored to

provide continuity beyond crisis accommodation. Minimum service standards should be established for shelters. Staff training in trauma-informed care is essential.

### **Financial independence**

Financial independence is a vital component of a victim empowerment strategy because if financial vulnerability is effectively addressed, victims will be able to break the cycle of economic abuse giving them the autonomy to make financial decisions. Financial independence also empowers victims to take a stand against abuse, including stepping out of abusive relationships. Financial independence links closely with skills development. Support for job readiness, microfinance, cooperative business models, and financial literacy will enable women to become self-sufficient. Establishing partnerships with private sector stakeholders and local economic development units will further enhance opportunities for women, enabling them to thrive economically.

Financial dependency makes a person susceptible to control and manipulation by the perpetrator (Adams *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, financial independence may provide a gateway from abusive relationships (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:723). Financial independence can be gained through job training, small businesses, skill development, and access to jobs (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). To empower victims of female partner abuse and promote their financial independence they should be linked to social protection programmes. Initiatives such as Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP) and Community Works Programmes (CWP) could provide them with valuable opportunities.

Clearly, employment and income-generating projects are crucial practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:721), enabling them to become self-sufficient and self-reliant.

### **Continuous assessment and improvement**

Any victim empowerment strategy should be continuously assessed, adapted and improved to ensure that it addresses the ever-changing needs of victims of female partner abuse, within a fast-changing society. The demands and changes brought about by the COVID-19 epidemic clearly indicated how global changes can filter down to microsystems and individuals. The evolving impact of social media and Artificial Intelligence should be noted and its impact included in victim empowerment strategies going forward.

Continuous assessment and improvement of strategies are also needed to strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration among key departments such as social development, the judiciary and the police service. Furthermore, it is essential to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, that includes both qualitative and quantitative indicators. To ensure continuous improvement and relevance, survivor feedback mechanisms should be widely accepted to inform ongoing learning. Lastly, the VEP strategy should not operate in isolation but should consider all Acts, policies, regulations, charters and frameworks for maximisation of impact, also during continuous assessment and improvement.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

Empowering victims of female partner abuse is a gradual and ongoing process. The findings of this study show that it is important to create a safe and non-judgemental environment that respects the victim's autonomy and choices. It is, therefore, imperative to use a strategy which encourages collaboration among professionals, organisations and community members to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to victim empowerment. Lee and Hudson (2017:143) place empowerment centrally within the "person-environment configuration" which is one of the most used lenses for social workers. This links with the bio-ecological approach. Levers (2022) proposes that victims of trauma should be seen through the lens of the bio-ecological approach, where their life histories (chronosystem), spaces where they function (different systems) and the interactions and transactions in those systems (proximal processes) are relevant when planning and implementing interventions. In the next chapter, the final conclusions and recommendations will be outlined. Integrated services, cross-sector cooperation, and female victims' participation are vital to ensure evidence-based grounding, practical relevance, and alignment with empowerment and resilience goals.

The section acknowledges empowerment, collaboration, autonomy, and ecological context to reflect the comprehensive scope and strategic depth of the Victim Empowerment Strategy. A comprehensive victim empowerment strategy has integrated key elements, that is education and awareness, trauma-informed practice, emotional and psychological healing, building informal and formal networks of support, skills development, legal empowerment, advocacy and policy change, temporary shelter, and

financial independence, to enable survivors of partner abuse to reclaim dignity, autonomy, and resilience while fostering sustainable reintegration and systemic change.

## **CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY, EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the overall evaluation, conclusions and recommendations of the research. The recommendations are applicable to social workers, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Justice and Correctional Services, Non-Profit Organisations, Community-based Organisations, policy makers and relevant stakeholders. This chapter consolidates the findings into a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing victim empowerment through multi-sectoral and trauma-informed approaches.

### **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH**

The research aimed at developing a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse, empowering victims through provision of emotional and practical support services and ensuring that victims are well educated and aware of their rights in preventing victimisation. Deane (2024a:89) asserts that the victimisation of women through abuse by their partners in South Africa has reached alarming levels. According to Sulaiman *et al.* (2025:251) female partner abuse has been regarded as a public health concern that is in most instances, characterised by controlling behaviour by the male partner. Pelowich *et al.* (2024) state that it was estimated that female partner abuse in South Africa has affected one in four women. It remains a concern that many cases of female partner abuse are not reported in some societies and cultures, and abuse is normalised (Moruri-Silo *et al.*, 2025:5).

The integration of victims' experiences with professional input from social workers revealed the importance of linking psychosocial recovery with economic empowerment and community reintegration. The pragmatic approach ensured that findings were not only theoretically sound but practically implementable by social workers and stakeholders.

### **6.3 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The main aim and objectives provided the researcher with clear guidance, ensuring adherence to the research topic and alignment with the title and research questions.



As outlined in Chapter 1 this study aimed to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in North West. The objectives that informed this research study were an exploratory phase to conduct a literature review on the research topic followed by an exploration of the unique realities of victims of female partner abuse and their needs linked to victim empowerment. Also, as part of the exploration the input of social workers was obtained on possible components of a victim empowerment strategy. In the development stage of the research, the above inputs were synthesised and compiled into a preliminary victim empowerment strategy that was presented to social work managers and supervisors, after which the strategy was refined, also including recent literature. In the refinement and finalisation phase, the victim empowerment strategy was emailed to the same managers and supervisors who gave their final input, after which the strategy presented here was finalised. The multi-phase process was executed chronologically as planned. In Table 5.1 each of the objectives is briefly evaluated.

The objectives were linked to the phases of the multi-phase research.

**Table 6-1: Valuation of objectives**

| <b>Phase 1: Exploration</b>                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objectives</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Evaluation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| To conduct a literature review to explore female partner abuse and possible elements for a victim empowerment strategy. | Both empirical and theoretical aspects of literature were explored to meet the research objectives. Topic-related and research literature were used. Topic-related literature was included in the problem statement, in Chapter 2 as part of the literature review, as literature control with the findings, and in the final victim empowerment strategy. |
| To explore the experiences of female victims of partner abuse.                                                          | During individual semi-structured interviews, the victims of female partner abuse elaborated on the resources needed, what they lost, and what they gained in the form of resource loss and gain spirals. Their views are included in Chapter 4 and offer an overview of what they experienced due to female partner abuse.                                |

|                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| To explore the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.                                                                | Needs of female victims of partner abuse were identified, as outlined in Chapter 4. They indicated for instance their financial needs and capacity building needs to be incorporated in a victim empowerment strategy.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| To explore social workers' perspectives of components that can be included in a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse.                                 | Entry level social workers contributed to possible components of a victim empowerment strategy during a World Café.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Phase 2: Development</b>                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Objective</b>                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Evaluation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| To develop a draft victim empowerment strategy.                                                                                                                                  | A draft victim empowerment strategy was developed based on literature, and the input of female victims of partner abuse and entry level social workers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Phase 3: Refinement and finalisation</b>                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Objectives</b>                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Evaluation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| To obtain the inputs of social work supervisors and managers on the draft victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.            | The draft strategy was sent to managers and supervisors before the focus group discussions. Refinements were suggested by social work supervisors and managers during focus group discussions. Refinements were made to the strategy, and it was sent to the managers and supervisors via email for final comments. Those comments were included in the final victim empowerment strategy and as recommendations in this chapter. |
| To finalise a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province (linked to primary research question). | The victim empowerment strategy was finalised and has answered the research questions. A workbook for empowering victims of female partner abuse was also developed and finalised.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

It is acknowledged that the victim empowerment strategy outlined in this study is not a definitive solution or a final product. Instead, it presents a snapshot in time informed by a specific group of adult victims of female partner abuse, social workers and the relevant literature available at the time of the study. Female partner abuse is a complex, multifaceted issue that does not lend itself to simple resolutions. This research proposes a potential strategy for addressing this challenge in a specific context. It is essential to

understand that while the research process was rigorously followed and the aim and objectives were met, the researcher humbly acknowledges that such attainment of aims and objectives can always be merely partial. There is always scope for further contributions and refinement.

#### **6.4 PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL PARADIGM**

This research study adopted a pragmatic philosophical paradigm. According to Dube *et al.* (2024), pragmatism guides research addressing challenging situations through the real-world application of knowledge. Pragmatism underlies studies focused on strategies that can make a difference to the lives of participants, rather than just theoretical discussions. Similarly, Leavy (2024:279) explains that pragmatism asserts the absence of set theories, emphasising that the selection of research tools and theories is contingent upon the specific research setting, as was the case in this research.

The bio-ecological theory served as a theoretical paradigm for this research, reflecting a pragmatic choice in understanding the complexities of individual functioning within the environment. As a social worker, the researcher employs a bio-ecological lens as an individual can never be seen in isolation. The reciprocal influence between individual and surrounding systems is particularly relevant in the context of female partner abuse, where proximal processes that should be supportive of individual functioning and development become inverse and toxic, leading to downward spirals of resource loss for individuals and families. In this study, social work professionals identified key elements and components that could assist them in practice to empower victims. Furthermore, this study incorporated the voices of those affected directly by female partner abuse within their microsystems.

#### **6.5 METHODOLOGY**

The multi-phase, qualitative process used in this research ensured that there was a flow in the way the research process was to follow sequentially by including the three participant groups. The rigorous process of approving the research proposal by two scientific panels and by the NWU-HREC ensured that the proposal was well formulated and adhered to research principles and processes. The two designs supported the data collection with the different participant groups. Narrative inquiry helped to illuminate the

difficult realities faced by the female victims of partner abuse. A qualitative descriptive design enabled the social workers to add their knowledge about the topic to the development and refinement of the victim empowerment strategy.

The Logic model linked well with the stages of the multi-phase research. The Logic model gave structure to the process and especially with the identification of elements to be included in the draft and final victim empowerment strategy.

## **6.6 FINDINGS**

In line with the second objective, the participants who were victims of female partner abuse outlined various needs to address partner abuse, such as practical support, informational support, emotional support and networking. The participants' responses indicated that women in North West Province experience various forms of abuse which calls for multi-sectoral collaboration for efficient and effective management of their concerns and needs.

The exploration of the different types of abuse experienced by the female victims signifies that they are affected multi-dimensionally. These effects extend beyond the victims themselves, affecting their significant others such as their biological children and extended families. Unfortunately, these distressing effects often go unaddressed as the extended family and the victims face significant barriers in taking effective action to improve their situations. These barriers include financial constraints and an inability to make decisive choices. Moreover, there is a pervasive fear of retaliation from perpetrators who may threaten harm or even death upon discovering that the victims have taken action.

The core contributions of entry level social workers, supervisors and social work managers centred around their knowledge of victim empowerment, and their understanding of the specific needs and circumstances of abused female partners. They could also contribute what needs to be done by different role players to ensure victim empowerment in the context of female partner abuse. The key components suggested for a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse were education and awareness, trauma-informed practice, emotional and psychological healing, building a network of informal social support, building a network of professional support, skills

development, legal empowerment, advocacy and policy change, temporary shelters, financial independence, continual assessment and improvement. While prevention was not the focus of this study, it is essential that preventative strategies be integrated into social work interventions at multiple levels. By doing so the need for victim empowerment could ideally be reduced over time.

The emphasis on economic independence directly informed the proposed skills development and financial literacy initiative. This involves evidence-based linkages such as the emphasis on economic independence informed skills development and financial literacy initiatives. The recognition of fragmented service delivery led to recommendations for integrated, multi-sectoral collaboration. Female victims' feedback highlighting the role of Social Development and its partners' participation further reinforces empowerment and resilience of the female victims. By weaving these insights into the Victim Empowerment Strategy, the strategy gains coherence, and practical applicability, ensuring that empowerment, collaboration, autonomy and ecological context are not abstract ideals but operationalised components grounded in research evidence. The victim empowerment strategy developed in this study provides a practical roadmap to holistically assist female victims of partner abuse.

## **6.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS**

All ethical aspects of the research process were overseen by NWU-HREC. The protection of human participants and minimisation of potential harm (Benjamin, 2025:75) is a core ethical component, especially when including vulnerable and marginalised persons such as the victims of female partner abuse. However, the justification for including these participants was to hear their voices on a topic so directly relevant for them. The researcher reasoned that victims of female partner abuse did not always have a voice in their difficult relationships with their partners. It did not seem ethically correct to exclude them from this research, as that would go against ethical principles of social justice and equitable treatment of people. If they were excluded, this study would have been in connection with victims of female partner abuse and not with them. Inclusion and justice were, therefore two important aspects guiding the decision to include female victims of partner abuse. To safeguard these participants and minimise their risks, it was decided to include such victims who were in shelters at the time of the study so that their partners

could not victimise them because they participated in the study and to ensure that there were adequate interventions and follow-up by professionals.

The social work participants faced minimal risk of harm. Benjamin (2025:75) indicate that minimal risk exists when participants are not exposed to more than they experience in their daily lives. This was the case for the social workers, supervisors and managers who took part in this study and whose contributions linked with their professional work experience. The clear ethical guidelines ensured that the researcher could conduct this study with research integrity.

### **6.7.1 Informed consent**

Prospective participants were fully informed of what would be expected of them in discussions with the mediators, the independent person and by being able to read through the informed consent forms before consenting. Before the commencement of the research interviews, all the role players (mediators, independent person) were briefed and equipped on their roles and responsibilities throughout the research interview process. In addition to the information shared by the independent person, the researcher introduced herself and provided an overview of the study. She explained the purpose of the study to each participant as well as the procedures she would undertake. Furthermore, the researcher conveyed what would happen to their data, and she outlined risks and benefits of the research study. The informed consent process was aided by the fact that all the participants were able to read, understand and sign the informed consent forms.

The entry level social workers, supervisors and managers were also fully informed of what would be expected of them before they signed the informed consent forms in the presence of the independent person.

### **6.7.2 Privacy and anonymity**

The researcher succeeded in protecting the anonymity and privacy of participants. As planned, all transcripts and other material, like the loss and gain spirals were kept on a laptop with a user password. No one was able to access data of the participants from the beginning of the fieldwork study until the time of completion. Participants' information was always managed in such a way that anonymity was maintained. In this regard the

participants were assigned participant numbers to ensure that their identities remained anonymous.

### **6.7.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality should be maintained as far as possible in research endeavours (Subedi, 2025:1). However, with some data collection strategies, confidentiality cannot be promised. The entry level social workers understood that confidentiality could not be guaranteed during World Café. Similarly, the supervisors and managers accepted that in focus group discussions there were also no guarantees of confidentiality. The established group rules of not sharing personal information worked well during the discussions. It was also emphasised that all information shared during the World Café and focus group discussions should be treated as confidential. However, the researcher had no control over adherence to this directive. Some protection was offered by the fact that the information shared during these two data collection strategies focused on social work practice linked to victim empowerment and personal information of individual cases was not shared, which contributed to the confidentiality of data.

## **6.8 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The researcher found that after all these years, the Lincoln and Guba as cited by Nyathi (2018) criteria for trustworthiness still offered valuable guidelines to work towards trustworthiness and overall rigour of the study. To enhance the rigour of this research, the researcher endeavoured to present the findings honestly by keeping close to what participants said. The four trustworthiness criteria of Lincoln and Guba served as guiding principles to ensure trustworthiness. These criteria are discussed next.

### **6.8.1 Transferability**

The concept, transferability requires careful and detailed description of the research participants and processes to enable readers of the research report to determine whether the findings will also be relevant in their work contexts. The researcher kept the definition of Ahmed (2024) in mind, namely that transferability entails the extent of which the research findings can be generalised to various situations or contexts. Although this study was context-specific to the North West Province of South Africa and the findings are particularly relevant to this context, the aim was to provide insights that could still resonate

with wider audiences. To enhance transferability, the researcher employed thick descriptions of all identified themes and ensured that research methodology, data collection and analysis processes, were clearly described. It is hoped that these descriptions could assist other researchers in applying relevant aspects to their own contexts.

### **6.8.2 Dependability**

According to Stahl and King (2020:26), dependability reflects the stability of findings over time, and it is evident that findings would be more or less similar if research is conducted with the same participants and same contexts. Ahmed (2024) frames dependability as the enduring and reliable nature of research outcomes over time. Dependability entails methodological rigour which was ensured by keeping records of data collection and analysis, and reflection by the researcher throughout the research process. It was already indicated above that this research is not a final product, especially when considering that female partner abuse is a wicked and persistent problem which can also be culturally grounded in certain practices and rituals. What is true for the North West Province in this current time span, might shift and change, posing challenges to the assertion that similar findings would emerge in future. However, the literature adds an element of grounding within this difficult landscape, with elements for intervention that has been used globally, within the African continent and nationally, which adds to the dependability.

### **6.8.3 Confirmability**

According to Ahmed (2024:1), confirmability refers to the neutrality and impartiality of the findings over time. Confirmability can also imply how participant input led to the findings of a study, and not the ideas of the researcher. The researcher established strategies for documenting and checking data collected throughout the study. The researcher also ensured adherence to all ethical considerations to ensure trustworthiness of data.

### **6.8.4 Credibility**

In addressing the concept of credibility in qualitative research, Stahl and King (2020) define credibility as the alignment of research findings with the perspectives of participants. In this research, the verbatim quotes of participants clearly reflect their perspectives, and the themes and sub-themes were derived from their contributions as



captured in transcripts. Furthermore, credibility was ensured through crystallisation, integrating multiple sources of data and data collection strategies to enhance the richness, depth and trustworthiness of findings. Crystallisation was further enhanced by the inclusion of many participants in three different participant groups.

The researcher used reflection by writing down her thoughts, the research process and possible bias when working with themes and sub-themes. The researcher knows the North West Province well, as she worked there during the research. She consciously bracketed pre-conceived ideas by striving for awareness of such bias in her reflection and by discussing possible bias in study supervision sessions. As suggested by Tener (2025:770), the researcher was attentive to avoid biased language, i.e., not using the word subject, but rather participant. The researcher also collaborated with the language interpreter to be mindful of possible bias in language during compilation of the informed consent form in vernacular and the official languages used in South Africa.

## **6.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- This study was done post-COVID, and it seemed as if the DSD was still catching up on backlogs. High workload resulted in Service Point Managers postponing interviews, which affected the timeframe of the study.
- When the researcher visited the shelters to do data collection, some victims of female partner abuse were involved in activities at the shelter such as skills enhancement and development and could therefore not take part in the interviews
- The study was costly as the researcher was not funded with bursaries for the full duration of the study.
- Some managers took a longer period than anticipated to sign and return the goodwill permission letters.
- In the final phase of the research, the supervisors and managers had to be reminded a few times to send their comments on the victim empowerment strategy. This delayed the research process.

## **6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In any research study, it is advisable for the researcher to outline recommendations aimed at addressing and mitigating the research problem. Below are recommendations to be implemented by various role players to address female partner abuse. It is essential to recognise that the recommendations should encompass all forms of intimate partner violence, addressing the needs of individuals across all sexual orientations and genders. However, given that this study specifically focused on victims of female partner abuse, the recommendations are articulated as aimed at female partner abuse. Prior to the recommendations, the roles of all the relevant stakeholders are outlined:

Female victim empowerment in South Africa is built on a coordinated, multi-sectoral framework where each institution plays a vital role. The Health Department ensures female victims of partner abuse receive medical care, forensic evidence collection and psychological support. The Education Department promotes prevention through awareness programmes, safe school environments and teaching gender equality. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development guarantees access to justice, protection orders and victim-friendly courts, while the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) prosecutes offenders and provides specialised support to victims. Shelters offer safe refuge, counselling and reintegration services, and the Department of Social Development (DSD) coordinates empowerment programmes, deploying social workers and linking female victims to welfare support. The South African Police Service (SAPS) acts as first responder, ensuring immediate safety, enforcing protection orders and investigating cases. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) provides financial relief through social grants and reducing economic vulnerability. Finally, the Human Rights Commission monitors constitutional compliance, investigates rights violations and advocates systemic reforms.

Female victim empowerment is a collective responsibility involving state institutions, communities, and broader society. The victim plays a central role by exercising agency, seeking support and participating in empowerment programmes designed to restore dignity and independence. The family provides emotional, social, and practical support, helping survivors rebuild stability and resilience. The community contributes by fostering awareness, reducing stigma and creating safe environments that discourage abuse and

support reintegration. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups are critical in advocacy, service delivery, legal aid, counselling and monitoring government accountability. The business fraternity supports empowerment through workplace policies, economic opportunities, funding and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Parastatal organisations contribute by aligning their mandates with national development goals, offering resources, training and infrastructure to strengthen victim support systems. It is evident that the problem of female partner abuse should be attended to on all the systemic levels outlined in the bio-ecological theory.

### **6.10.1 Recommendations for the Department of Social Development (DSD) and social work practice**

#### **6.10.1.1 Provision of capacity and expertise**

- DSD should intensify stakeholder collaboration to provide effective human resources to enable social workers to effectively attend to the needs of abused women.
- DSD should increase human resources for all the existing Victim Empowerment Programmes and structures by appointing experts in the field of female/women empowerment.
- Social workers should receive regular in-service and CPD accredited training to equip them to work with victims of female partner abuse and specifically implementing Victim Empowerment.
- Continuous debriefing sessions and counselling should be conducted for social workers working with the trauma of female partner abuse to provide support and address their own emotional challenges and possible vicarious trauma.

The findings of the research study demonstrate that trauma-informed, empowerment-oriented interventions enhance the coping capacities of female victims of partner abuse while mitigating risks of re-traumatisation, thereby offering substantive contributions to both policy development and the advancement of social work curricula.

#### **6.10.1.2 Stakeholder collaboration**

- Stakeholder relations should be strengthened with all the relevant stakeholders such as SAPS, Justice, Health, Education, NGOs, FBOs, Civil society and Vocational Training Centres by holding empowerment workshops and engaging them when dealing with the victims of abuse for support.
- Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) should be established between role players to clarify roles, referrals and accountability. As the lead department in gender-based violence in the North West Province, DSD should take the lead in these processes. The establishment of Victim Empowerment Forums could form part of such agreements.
- Victim Empowerment should be supported by a centralised electronic information management tracking system to ensure smooth coordination of victim empowerment among stakeholders, by also assessing the effects of services to victims of intimate partner violence.
- All the reported cases of abuse in DSD and NGOs should be tracked and traced as well as reflect on SAPS statistics. It has been established in this research that available statistics do not reflect the reality of female partner abuse. Recordkeeping by social workers could add to existing statistics.
- An updated victim empowerment programme resource directory should be available to all the role players.
- All stakeholders should adapt a trauma-informed approach and structure their organisations or departments accordingly so that all the personnel in the organisations follow trauma-informed practices. The principles of trauma-informed practice could be printed and placed on notice boards.

#### **6.10.1.3 Safeguarding victims of female partner abuse**

- DSD should extend the length of stay for the victims of abuse in shelters and embark on a long-term sheltering intervention for victims of abuse.

- DSS and all the relevant stakeholders should play an advocacy role in ensuring that funding is channelled to shelters annually and facilitate the process of funding through business plans. Shelters should be managed effectively to quality assure their compliance to all the requirements for registration and to access funding.
- The establishment of a 24-hour call centre where the community can report abuse should be considered. Such centres should function with well-planned rotation and representation of all stakeholders. A variety of services should be offered at such centres to facilitate holistic help to female victims of partner abuse.

#### **6.10.1.4 Direct intervention**

- Social workers should strengthen family-centred approaches that promote active family participation in victim empowerment and recovery.
- Individual intervention plans should include strategies to fulfil in the basic needs of female victims of partner abuse and their families.
- The incorporation of resource loss and gain spirals based on Conservation of Resources Theory, could be a valuable tool in assessment and intervention planning.
- Contact numbers in their area to report abuse and emergency numbers to call should be made available to victims of female partner abuse on small, printed cards that they can hide so that the abusers do not destroy such documents. Ideally there will also be contact numbers for specific community safety groups that can reach out with immediate help. Social workers should be involved in compiling such area-specific information.

#### **6.10.1.5 Skills development for victims**

- DSD and NGOs should provide skills development to the female victims of abuse such as capacity building sessions, financial literacy, and provision of resources needed by the victims of abuse.
- Women should be encouraged to pursue further education, thereby reducing their dependency on men and fostering financial independence. To address education

challenges, programmes should focus specifically on early school-leaving and adolescent pregnancies.

#### **6.10.1.6 Mutual and peer support**

- Social workers should actively establish community-based support groups aimed at survivors to share their experiences and receive multi-dimensional support.
- Social workers should facilitate peer mentoring programs for newly abused women to be assisted by other survivors with mutual support. Such peer mentoring programmes may also increase the support networks of female victims of partner abuse.
- Linked to peer mentoring, Nkoane (2023:1) argues that female partners should be empowered to join social clubs that will increase their knowledge in preventing female partner abuse and reducing the rate of abuse they encounter.

#### **6.10.1.7 Community interventions**

- Community-based outreach programmes should be strengthened to address and raise awareness about all forms of abuse encountered by female partners and all women to empower them to handle and manage the abuse.
- Capacity-building workshops for families and community leaders should be implemented to equip them with basic support skills for victims of female partner abuse.

#### **6.10.1.8 Intervention and mediation with perpetrators**

- Dialogue should be facilitated between victims and perpetrators to promote understanding and encourage accountability.
- Social work intervention should be directed to the perpetrators of female partner abuse to understand their life histories, possible trauma exposure and to assist with anger management. Any other needs and problems faced by these perpetrators should be addressed holistically.

#### **6.10.1.9 Digital coordination mechanisms and survivor led advocacy.**

In addition, the victim empowerment strategy introduces a set of innovative recommendations designed to reinforce victim empowerment initiatives. Key among these are digital coordination systems that improve the integration of services, survivor-led advocacy structures that embed women's voices into programme design and continuous monitoring and evaluation frameworks that uphold accountability. Collectively, these measures ensure that interventions remain adaptable to evolving social and technological environments, while maintaining responsiveness, evidence-based practice, and long-term resilience.

To ensure sustainability and accountability, the victim empowerment strategy embeds continuous monitoring and evaluation across all stages of implementation. This approach establishes systematic feedback loops that track progress, measure outcomes, and identify emerging challenges in real time. By integrating M&E into programme design, service delivery, and survivor support mechanisms, the strategy guarantees that interventions remain evidence-based, adaptable, and responsive to evolving socio-technological conditions. Moreover, continuous evaluation strengthens transparency, informs policy refinements and enhances social work profession learning and development, thereby reinforcing both the effectiveness and resilience of victim empowerment initiatives.

#### **6.10.2 Recommendations for SAPS**

- SAPS must undertake a comprehensive review of their current waiting times to respond to reports of abuse as victims often face undue delays before being assisted. Rapid response could be facilitated by increasing police presence in high-risk areas.
- SAPS should have a trauma-informed and victim-friendly approach when working with female victims of partner abuse.
- It is imperative to improve the turnaround time for the processing of abuse cases, which allows victims to receive timely updates about their cases. Dedicated officers should regularly communicate with victims, providing them with feedback and reassurance that their cases are being actively managed. This practice could enhance

transparency and help victims feel valued, heard and supported throughout the process.

- SAPS should improve the training of law enforcement officers on gender-based violence sensitivity and victim-centred approaches.
- SAPS should facilitate free legal aid and other services such as advocacy for victims in need of justice and protection orders.
- SAPS should conduct home visits to ensure the safety and security of the victims.
- There should be adequate provision of resources to SAPS to deal with cases of abuse, for example, procurement of designated vehicles to attend to female victims of abuse.
- SAPS should intensify community outreach programmes to educate about female partner abuse.
- SAPS officials are urged to take all the reported female partner abuse seriously and act accordingly in the protection of the victim against the perpetrator.
- The SAPS senior management should make provision for undertaking intensive training on the process flow for reporting and opening and management of abuse cases. They should cascade the information to their subordinate officers.

### **6.10.3 Recommendations for the Department of Justice**

- Special training is required for all justice officials dealing with the victims of abuse, especially on the process flow for reporting and opening a case against the perpetrator.
- There should be proper training on protection orders to Justice Department officials who are dealing with all forms of abuse cases.
- Legal aid must be always made accessible and be survivor-friendly and that legal processes should be trauma-informed.
- The Department of Justice should adopt a trauma-informed approach, acknowledging that many people who need services come from backgrounds of high adversity. As far



as possible within the Justice environment, the principles of trauma-informed care such as providing physical and emotional safety, allowing voice and choice and personal agency should be respected.

- There is a need to reform legislation and policies regarding the granting of bail for offenders of femicide and sexual abuse cases. There is a trend of recidivism with many offenders who were released and committed similar crimes while out on bail.

#### **6.10.4 Recommendations for health practitioners**

- There is a dire need for health practitioners to provide immediate medical attention to all victims of abuse. Waiting times for these victims should be minimised to the shortest possible time.
- All health practitioners who are attending to female victims of partner abuse must receive regular training on effective methods and best practices for supporting and treating victims of abuse.
- Confidentiality is fundamental to safeguard the rights and privacy of female victims. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a victim-friendly space that prioritises these confidentiality concerns.

#### **6.10.5 Recommendations for the media**

- Journalists and news reporters should be trained on confidentiality, protection of human rights and the rights of abused women.
- As professionals, media and communication personnel play a crucial role in breaking the stigma, discrimination and labelling that often surrounds abused women.
- Media Liaison Officers should actively disseminate information through news articles, infographics and educational materials about abuse to both the broader community and victims of abuse.
- Furthermore, live radio broadcasts focused on empowerment programmes are essential for reducing the incidence of all forms of abuse and fostering a supportive environment for survivors.

- Journalists must assist in reporting all forms of abuse during their media briefings and events to the relevant authorities.

#### **6.10.6 Recommendations for policy and legislation**

- Social work policy developers, justice law makers and members of the legislature should rigorously advocate for policy improvements on gender-based violence laws and victim protection measures.
- Programme implementers such as social workers and programme managers should establish monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) systems to assess the effectiveness of victim empowerment programmes.
- The existing policy guidelines and legislative frameworks should be updated to reflect the current trends and challenges surrounding issues of abuse, such as digital abuse. Again, there should be a dedicated provision of funding for the development of social service programmes that will assist in alleviating gender-based violence and female partner abuse.
- Policies on victim empowerment should be easily accessible on the internet.
- Prior to the promulgation of any law, it is essential to consider the input and perspectives of all organisations dealing with abuse with, as well as the views of those directly affected by the abuse.
- The National Gender Based Violence Policy of 2024 as stated by Deane (2024b), along with related policies and legislative frameworks are aimed at reducing female partner abuse, must be thoroughly reviewed to assess their implementation.
- There is an urgent need to reevaluate the Marriage Act to incorporate cultural considerations such as culture-based marriages, polygamy, and polyandry. These practices can sometimes contribute to situations of abuse, highlighting the importance of addressing them within the legal framework.
- Certain traditions and cultural norms within cultures, such as the notion in the Setswana culture, that wives should not ask questions about their husbands' movements or even other relationships. Should they ask, it may lead to them being

beaten up, also known in Setswana as “monna ga a botswe gore o tswa kae”. This aspect warrants the attention of the House of Chiefs. As influential policymakers, they have the responsibility to advocate for a paradigm shift in Parliament that addresses these harmful practices.

- Regular audits and evaluations of existing laws should be done through the instruction of policymaking bodies to ensure that the implementation of policies and acts are carried out properly without any fear of favour and remain effective.

#### **6.10.7 Recommendations for further research**

- There is a need for further context-specific research to address female partner abuse across various provinces in South Africa. While the Western Cape government has good strategies in place to combat partner abuse, it is crucial to research more evidence-based interventions tailored to local contexts.
- Further research should prioritise the unique needs and experiences of the LGBTQI community in relation to partner abuse.
- More research should be directed at understanding the root causes and causal factors behind the abuse perpetrated by individuals. Adopting a bio-ecological approach enables researchers to explore both the current life situations and life histories (chronosystems) of perpetrators. Such research should be aimed at a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues contributing to their behaviour.
- More research is needed on developing culturally sensitive interventions that consider traditional and indigenous healing practices. Such interventions can be integral in addressing abuse within specific cultural contexts.
- Research should focus on male partner abuse perpetrated by females. The focus should also be on gaslighting and wrongful reporting of abuse. This research focus is needed for understanding the dynamics of partner abuse across different genders.

#### **6.11 CONCLUSION**

Generally, women lack the financial means to support themselves after experiencing abuse. Many are unemployed, under-educated and reliant on their male partners for

financial support. This dependency traps them in a cycle of violence, that is compounded by judgment from the community when they do report the situation. The stigma associated with being a victim often leads to suffering in silence, fearing loneliness and how they would be perceived compared to their peers in terms of relationships. Consequently, many female victims of partner abuse find themselves ensnared in abusive relationships, caught in patterns of fear and unpredictability.

In response, the South African Government has implemented measures to combat female partner abuse and has allocated funds toward programmes aimed at effective action. Experts and researchers are expected to play a vital role in educating communities about gender-based violence. Public education and empowerment of women are crucial measures in the fight against partner abuse. Furthermore, men must actively participate in safeguarding women and children from all forms of violence. There is a need to reinforce support systems for female victims, strengthening practical support and economic empowerment, increasing police visibility and legal support, enhancing counselling and psychosocial support, stakeholder collaboration and networking and lastly, there is need for policy and legislative reforms. If the developed victim empowerment strategy could be implemented collaboratively, the strategy could serve as a foundation for sustained, multi-level interventions addressing female partner abuse in the North West Province and beyond.

This study offers a distinctive contribution to the discourse on victim empowerment by developing a multi-phase strategy that is specifically tailored to the socio-cultural realities of the North West Province. Whereas earlier scholars and policy frameworks have tended to emphasise either broad national directives or isolated practice models. This research advances a contextually grounded approach co-designed with victims and the Department of Social Development Social Service Professionals in the North West Province. ensuring that it reflects experiences and operational challenges while remaining aligned with national policy priorities. In doing so, the study bridges the gap between theory, policy, and practice, demonstrating how empowerment can be operationalised through participatory and locally responsive mechanisms that enhance both legitimacy and effectiveness. Finally, protecting women from abuse requires a collective effort; it truly takes a village.

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# ADDENDUM A: LEGAL AUTHORIZATION LETTERS AND GOODWILL PERMISSION

## APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



**social development**  
Department:  
Social Development  
North West Provincial Government  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Provident House Building  
Private Bag X 6  
Mmabatho, 2735

### HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Tel: +27 (18) 388 – 1426  
Fax: +27 (18) 384 – 5967  
E-mail: RKhaole@nwpg.gov.za

Enq: Dr. Motshedi - 0824749189

Ms F.S. Nthutang – Researcher – PhD Studies  
North West University – Potchefstroom Campus  
Private Bag X 2046  
**Mmabatho**  
2735

Dear Ms. F.S. Nthutang

#### **RE: REQUEST FOR PERMSSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

The Department of Social Development wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been granted with the following conditions:

1. You must sign confidentiality agreement with the Department to protect unauthorised sharing of Departmental information.
2. You must make the necessary appointment with the respective managers that are required to support you during the research to ensure that DSD officials are not disrupted in performing their duties.
3. Your conduct during the duration of the research at DSD must be of a professional nature at all times.
4. The Department must be provided with a copy of the final research report.

I wish to inform you that the Department of Social Development will not bear any financial and legal liabilities that may arise from this research study. I further wish to bring to your attention that all research ethics must be considered and adhered to in this regard.

Given the nature of your research subject, you must contact Centre Managers/District Directors to facilitate the assistance you may require during your research.

Yours Sincerely

  
**MR. R.E. MOFOKANE**  
**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

LET'S GROW NORTH WEST TOGETHER

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER SIROLOGANG TRAUMA CENTRE (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT) FROM



Private Bag X8001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mr DBAKENG TIROENG

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION SIROLOGANG TRAUMA CENTRE

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotsi Mhuthang (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfillment for a PhD thesis under NWU (Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe  
Contact No: 082 964 6697  
Email: [mariette.vandermerwe@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariette.vandermerwe@nwu.ac.za)

### Aim of the research:

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### Prospective participants:

- Entry level Social workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:

By signing below, I ABEL TIROENG grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

### I declare that:

- I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
- I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
- I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) GANYESA on the (date) 14/12/2022

Name of the Manager: ABEL TIROENG

Designation: PROJECT MANAGER

Signature:

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER TLOKWE SERVICE POINT (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
YUNIBESITHI YA BORORONE-SOPHIRIMA

®

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date

03 / 01 / 2022

Mr/ Ms

TOH NE STEENKAMP

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION

TLOKWE SERVICE POINT MANAGER

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotso Nthutang (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU (Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za)

### **Aim of the research:**

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### **Prospective participants:**

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### **DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER:**

By signing below, I grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) POTCHEFSTROOM on the (date) 05 / 01 / 2022

Name of the Manager: TOH NE STEENKAMP

Designation:

Signature:

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER TLOKWE CRISIS CENTRE (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mr/ Ms Mpho Ntshunwana

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION Tlokwe Crisis Centre

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotsotso Nthuteng (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU ( Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za)

### **Aim of the research:**

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### **Prospective participants:**

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### **DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:**

By signing below, I Mpho Rebecca Tsunduku grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) Potchefstroom on the (date) 03/11/2022

Name of the Manager: Mpho

Designation: Manager

Signature: [Signature]

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DR RSM DISTRICT DIRECTOR (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mr/ Ms M.D. SEITHAUNO  
NAME OF THE ORGANISATION DR RSM DISTRICT DIRECTOR

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotsi Nthutang (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU ( Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za)

### **Aim of the research:**

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### **Prospective participants:**

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### **DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:**

By signing below, I M.D. SEITHAUNO grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) POTCHEFSTROOM on the (date) 3/11/2022

Name of the Manager: M.D. SEITHAUNO

Designation: DIRECTOR

Signature: [Signature]



# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: DR KK DISTRICT (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mrs Ms MOLEFI HLASA  
NAME OF THE ORGANISATION ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR (DR KK)

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotsi Nthuteng (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU (Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe  
Contact No: 082 964 6697  
Email: [mariettestudent@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudent@nwu.ac.za)

### Aim of the research:

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### Prospective participants:

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:

By signing below, I MOLEFI HLASA grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

### I declare that:

- I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
- I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
- I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) POTCHEFSTROOM on the (date) 03/ Nov, 2022

Name of the Manager: MOLEFI HLASA

Designation: ACTING DIRECTOR

Signature: [Signature]



## GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER NALEDI SERVICE POINT (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mri Mr.

PHILIP RAMUDZULI

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION

NALEDI SERVICE POINT

### GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotso Nthutang (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU (Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za)

#### **Aim of the research:**

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

#### **Prospective participants:**

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

#### **DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:**

By signing below, I P. Ramudzuli grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) Vryburg on the (date) 04/11/2022

Name of the Manager: P. Ramudzuli

Designation: S.P. Manager

Signature: [Signature]

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER MAQUASSI HILLS SERVICE POINT (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mrf Ms GADDAFI TABILE  
NAME OF THE ORGANISATION MAQUASSI HILLS SERVICE POINT

## GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotsi Nthuteng (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU (Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariethestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariethestudente@nwu.ac.za)

### Aim of the research:

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

### Prospective participants:

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

### DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:

By signing below, I GADDAFI TABILE grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) MAQUASSI HILLS on the (date) 03/11/2022

Name of the Manager: GADDAFI

Designation: SERVICE POINT MANAGER

Signature:

## GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER KHUSELEKA ONE STOP CENTRE (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 03/11/2022

Mr/ Ms KOKETSO MOTHIBI

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION KHUSELEKA ONE STOP CENTRE

### GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PhD IN SOCIAL WORK

Herewith, I acknowledge receipt of request to gain access to participants and to collect data of the following study:

***Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.***

The research project will be conducted by Ms Funky Segomotso Nthutang (student no: 16544943) as part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis under NWU ( Potchefstroom Campus), under the supervision of:

Prof Mariette van der Merwe

Contact No: 082 964 6697

Email: [mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za](mailto:mariettestudente@nwu.ac.za)

#### **Aim of the research:**

- The aim of the research is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social perspective for female partner abuse in North West Province.

#### **Prospective participants:**

- Entry level Social Workers and Social worker specialising in Victim empowerment programme.
- Supervisors, Managers and Service Point Managers.
- Shelter/ Centre Managers.
- Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters.

#### **DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT MANAGER:**

By signing below, Koketso S. Motlhabi grant goodwill permission for the researcher to have access to participants for the purpose of data collection for the research study.

I declare that:

1. I have read the information regarding the study and understand what is expected from participants.
2. I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and provided with answers.
3. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressured to take part.
4. I understand that participants may leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
5. I understand that participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is finished, it is in the best interest of participants or if participants do not follow the research procedures.

Signed at (place) Vryburg on the (date) 08/11 /2022

Name of the Manager: K.S. Motlhabi

Designation: Institutional Manager

Signature: [Signature]

# GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MANAGER KGAKALA CRISIS CENTRE (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School for Psychosocial Health:  
Social Work Division

Date 01/11/2022

Mr/ Ms T. MAMISOITHO

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT/ SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANISATION

KGAKALA CRISIS CENTRE

NORTH WEST PROVINCE

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GOODWILL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FIELD WORK STUDY

Dear Ms /Mr.

The researcher is seeking your goodwill permission to include [female victims of partner abuse, social workers, social work supervisors, social work managers, service point managers, chiefs and tribal authority members] of your organisation to participate in the research study titled- Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective. The research study is part of fulfilment for a PhD thesis.

## What is the aim of the study?

The aim of this study is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in North West Province.

## Research method

The researcher will conduct a rapid review of literature, policies, national and international guidelines to form a basis of understanding that can inform practice guidelines for social workers dealing with female victims of partner abuse. Thereafter, the researcher will formulate practice guidelines for social workers dealing with female victims of partner abuse and victim empowerment...

## What will be expected from participants?

- Prospective participants will be provided with a draft practice guideline and they will be asked to make inputs based on their expertise. Feedback received from participants will be analysed, consolidated, and will form part of the second draft practice guidelines. The second draft of guidelines will be presented to the participants, and this will in turn create an opportunity for them to further review the draft and give their inputs. When consensus is reached, the final product will become the practice guidelines.
- Prospective participants interested and willing to take part in the study will be required to give written consent to participate in the research study.
- The participants will be requested to notify the independent research assistant (Dr Blessing Mogocho) appointed by the researcher on ([blessingmogocho@gmail.com](mailto:blessingmogocho@gmail.com)) of their interest participating in the study. (Depending on the participant's location, who will liaise with prospective participants to obtain written consent either in person or via email).

The following conditions will be true for the researcher:

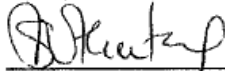
- The researcher will abide by the rules and regulations of the organisation.

- The researcher will inform participants, as well as all relevant departments of the results of the study.
- The researcher is a registered student at the North West University – Potchefstroom campus.
- The researcher will abide by the ethical issues regarding the study and participants.

If any additional information is required, please feel free to contact the researcher on the contact details provided.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours in service



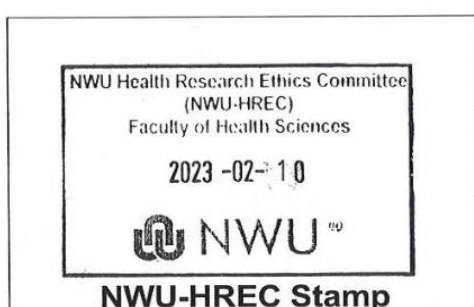
**MS. FUNKY S. NTHUTANG**  
**RATLOU SERVICE POINT MANAGER /RESEARCHER**  
**SACSSP reg. no.: 10-24849**  
**Student no. 16544943**  
**Contact No: 0605031722**  
**Email address: [funkynthutang@gmail.com](mailto:funkynthutang@gmail.com)/ [funkyju79@gmail.com](mailto:funkyju79@gmail.com)**

## ADDENDUM B: INFORMED CONSENT

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR ABUSED FEMALE PARTNERS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR FEMALE VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER:** NWU-00162-22-A1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Professor Mariette Van der Merwe

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Funky Segomotso Nthutang

**ADDRESS:** 18 Malan Street, Wellington, 7654

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 060 5031722

You are invited to take part in a research study that forms part of a Doctoral study of Funky S Nthutang. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain what this study is about. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are happy that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary (you can choose to take part or not) and you are free to say no to participate. If



you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw (pull out) from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00162-22-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**What is this research study all about?**

- *I am hoping that the result of this research will be to develop a victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West from a social work perspective. I plan to explore and describe abuse related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in North West Province to get a better understanding of what you are going through. I will also want to know more about your needs, which could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy. More or less 21 female victims of partner abuse will be included in the study. I will come to the shelter to interview you. I will talk to you, and we will use timelines, resource loss and gain spirals (where we talk about what you have lost and what you have to help you) and metaphor (using a symbol, or example to describe what you are going through, i.e., my life is like a storm) to help you express your situation in words.*
- *This study will be done in the North West Province (Dr. KK and Dr. RSM Districts)*
- *Social workers will also be included in the study to help with the development of a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse. You will not have any contact with these social workers.*

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are one of the women who experienced female partner abuse as evidenced by your stay in the shelter.*
- *You will unfortunately not be able to take part in this research if you are below the age of 18 and above 60 years, or you are a non- South African citizen or you are a person with disability.*

**What will be expected of you?**

- *You will be expected to keep everything that will be discussed confidential. You will be expected to answer questions for a period of 60 to 90 minutes. As mentioned, we will use timelines, resource loss and gain spirals and metaphor to help you to express what you went through. You are not going to be forced to participate in the research if you are not interested or you do not want to volunteer to take part in the research. No one will force you to participate.*

**Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- *You will not benefit directly from the research participation. The possible gains for you if you take part in this study is that you may learn more about yourself and your situation by talking about it.*
- *The study will assist social workers to better understand and apply victim empowerment strategies for other women.*

**Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- *The risks to you in this study are that some of the questions I am going to ask might remind you of the abuse you have suffered before. It can be upsetting to talk about what happened. It is recommended that you go for counselling at the social worker at the shelter after our interview. You might also get tired during the interview. Please indicate to me when you need a break.*

**How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings**

- *Your identity is confidential. Your name will not appear on any of the transcripts (word-by-word written account taken from the audio recording). A participant number will be given to you, and this will be used where the findings of the study will be described. Transcripts, drawings, and any other data will be kept safe by locking hard copies in a cupboard in the researcher's office and electronic data will be password protected. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recorders. This informed consent form with your signature on, will be stored away from the transcripts. Data will be stored for 5years.*



**What will happen with the findings?**

- *The findings of this study will be used to complete the thesis (report) for this PhD study. Articles will also be written based on the findings. These articles will be aimed at scientific journals for social workers. It is possible that some of the findings may be reported in newspapers. As with all the other places where the findings are published, no-one will be able to identify you.*

**How will you know about the findings of this research?**

- I will tell you about the findings of the study through WhatsApp or a phone call. During the interview I will ask if it will be safe to call or WhatsApp you.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- This study is funded by the researcher. You will not receive any payment to take part. As you are already at the shelter, it is not expected that you will have travel expenses. I will provide some refreshments after the interview. Water will be available. You will receive a small token of appreciation.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Ms Funky S Nthutang at 0605031722 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

### Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) .....  
2023....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by person obtaining consent**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave her time to discuss it with others if she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

### Declaration by researcher

I (name) ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to ..... **or**  
I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them  
or I was available should she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that she had time to discuss it with others if she wished to do so.

Signed at (place) ..... on (date) .....  
2023....

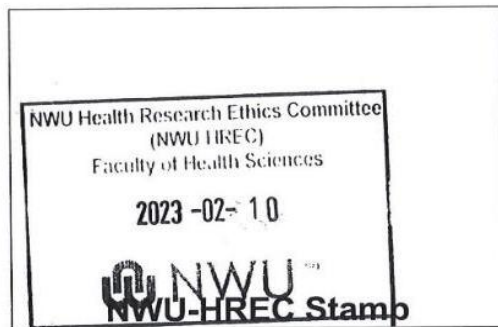
.....  
**Signature of researcher**

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.6 Forms\HREC\9.1.5.6\_NWU-HREC\_ICF\_Template\_Feb2019.docm  
7 February 2019  
File reference: 9.1.5.6

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR ENTRY- LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER:** NWU-00162-22-A1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Professor Mariette van der Merwe

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Funky Segomotso Nthutang

**ADDRESS:** 18 Malan Street, Wellington

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0605031722

You are invited to take part in a research study that forms part of a Doctoral study by Funky S Nthutang with Prof. M van der Merwe as promoter. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to say no to participate. If



you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00162-22-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**What is this research study all about?**

- To explore and describe the multi-dimensional abuse-related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in North West Province.
- To investigate the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.
- To explore and describe social workers' understanding on possible components to be included in a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To develop a victim empowerment strategy to be utilised by social workers when attending to female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To obtain the input of social work supervisors and managers on the tentative victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To finalise and draft a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- This study will be conducted in the North West Province DSD. Entry-level social workers will be invited from two districts namely Bojanala (a more urban area) and RSM (which is a more rural area) as they work in the VEP programme.

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

- Because you are a registered social worker with South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP).
- Also, because as an entry level social worker who is engaged in Victim Empowerment at DSD.
- Unfortunately, you will not be able to participate in this study if you are working in the same district where the researcher works.

**What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to keep everything that will be discussed confidential. You will be asked to take part in a World Café data collection. At least 36 entry level social workers working in the VEP Programme will be included in the two separate World Café sessions with at least 18 participants per session. Each World Café will last for 60 to 90 minutes. You will rotate between tables and answer a specific question at each table. Each round table will comprise of at least four to five participants and there will be four tables.
- The data collection will take place after a meeting where you all are together.

**Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There are no direct benefits for you if you take part in the study. However, you could learn more about victim empowerment.
- Your input will help to develop a strategy which could benefit a vulnerable client group, namely female victims of partner abuse.

**Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The risks to you in this study are that you might find it difficult to fit the research in their daily work schedule because of work pressure.
- To ameliorate this risk, the focus group discussion will take place after a regular work meeting so that you do not have to spend extra travel time.

**How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- I cannot promise confidentiality as there will be a World Café discussion where other participants will interact with you. You are advised not to talk about any confidential personal aspects, but to keep to the topic of the research. Your privacy will be respected by the researcher and everyone who is involved in the study. Your real name will not be used in transcripts and the research report. You will get a pseudonym (Participant 1, 2 etc). You are encouraged to use this pseudonym in the World Café discussion. I will also provide a card with the pseudonym which you can put in front of you on the table. Only the researcher, co-coder and promoter will look at the transcripts, and by then all identifying particulars will have been removed.

- Transcripts will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and electronic data will be password protected. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recorders. Data will be stored for 5 years, locked away at the office of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies in Wellington, where the promoter is situated.

**What will happen with the findings?**

- The findings of this study will only be used for this study. It will be written up in a thesis and could also be published in scientific journals for social workers. To enhance awareness, it might also be published in public media
- An electronic copy of the final document will be handed over to the Head of Department Social Development to distribute it to all the participants.

**How will you know about the findings of this research?**

- We will give you the findings electronically when the thesis has been through the examination process and has been finalised.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- This study is funded by the researcher. You will not be paid to take part in the study because this is an academic study which may benefit you and other policy makers.
- You will have no travel expenses and do not have to be refunded for traveling. There will thus be no costs involved for you if you do take part in this study. Bottled water will be available. Refreshments will be served when you are done with the focus group.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Ms Funky S Nthutang at 0605031722 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.



### Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) .....  
2023....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by person obtaining consent**

I (name) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research,  
as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (place) ..... on (date) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

**Declaration by researcher**

I (name) ..... declare that:

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I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this  
purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
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or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
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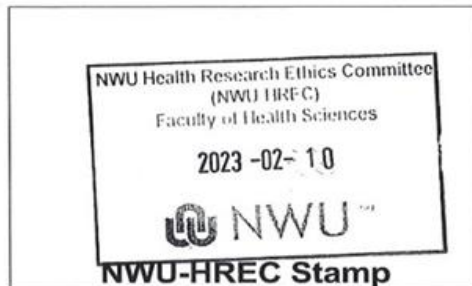
Signed at (place) ..... on (date) .....  
2023....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL WORK MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS



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Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
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### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SOCIAL WORK MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER:** NWU-00162-22-A1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Professor Mariette van der Merwe

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Funky Segomotso Nthutang

**ADDRESS:** 18 Malan Street, Wellington

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0605031722

You are invited to take part in a research study that forms part of a Doctoral study by Funky S Nthutang with Prof. M van der Merwe as promoter. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to say no to participate. If

you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00162-22-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**What is this research study all about?**

- To explore and describe the multi-dimensional abuse-related experiences of female victims of partner abuse in North West Province.
- To investigate the needs of female victims of partner abuse that could be addressed in a victim empowerment strategy.
- To explore and describe social workers' understanding on possible components to be included in a victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To develop a victim empowerment strategy to be utilised by social workers when attending to female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To obtain the input of social work supervisors and managers on the tentative victim empowerment strategy for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- To finalise and draft a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female victims of partner abuse in the North West Province.
- This study will be conducted in the North West Province DSD. Managers and supervisors will be invited from two districts namely Bojanala (a more urban area) and RSM (which is a more rural area) as they manage the social workers working in the VEP programme.
- **Why have you been invited to participate?**
- You are a managers or supervisor employed by North West Department of Social Development (Social work supervisors' grade 1 and 2 or service point managers).
- Social work managers holding strategic positions working in the field of victim empowerment



- Unfortunately, you will not be able to participate in this study if you are working in the same district where the researcher works.

**What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to keep everything that will be discussed confidential. You will be expected to read through the tentative victim empowerment strategy. You will then take part in a focus group discussion with about 10 other participants. This will take between 60 – 90 minutes. The focus group will take place after a meeting where you all are together. When the victim empowerment strategy is refined, it will be sent to you via email to give comments before finalising the strategy.

**Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There are no direct benefits for you if you take part in the study. However, you could learn more about victim empowerment by reading and discussing the strategy.
- Your input will help to develop a strategy which could benefit a vulnerable client group, namely female victims of partner abuse.

**Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The risks to you in this study are that you might find it difficult to fit the research in your daily work schedule because of work pressure. To ameliorate this risk, the focus group discussion will take place after a regular work meeting so that you do not have to spend extra travel time.

**How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see the findings?**

- I cannot promise confidentiality as there will be a focus group discussion where other participants will interact with you. You are advised not to talk about any confidential personal aspects, but to keep to the topic of the research. Your privacy will be respected by the researcher and everyone who is involved in the study. Your real name will not be used in transcripts and the research report. You will get a pseudonym (Participant 1, 2 etc). You are encouraged to use this pseudonym in the focus group. I will also provide a card with the pseudonym which you can put in front of you on the table. Only the researcher, co-coder and promoter will look at the transcripts, and by then all identifying particulars will have been removed.

- Transcripts will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and electronic data will be password protected. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recorders. Data will be stored for 5 years, locked away at the office of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies in Wellington, where the promoter is situated.

**What will happen with the findings?**

- The findings of this study will only be used for this study. It will be written up in a thesis and could also be published in scientific journals for social workers. To enhance awareness, it might also be published in public media
- An electronic copy of the final document will be handed over to the Head of Department Social Development to distribute it to all the participants.

**How will you know about the findings of this research?**

- We will give you the findings electronically when the thesis has been through the examination process and has been finalised.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- This study is funded by the researcher. You will not be paid to take part in the study because this is an academic study which may benefit you and other policy makers.
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**Declaration by participant**

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- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2023.

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**



**Declaration by person obtaining consent**

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Signed at (place) ..... on (date) ..... 2023.

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**Signature of person obtaining consent**

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I (name) ..... declare that:

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I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
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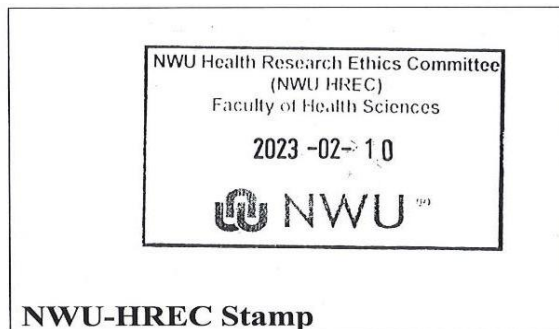
Signed at (place) ..... on (date) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**

## INFORMED CONSENT (AFRIKAANS) FOR VICTIMS



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### INGELIGTE TOESTEMMING DOKUMENTASIE VIR VROULIKE SLAGOFFERS VAN GEWELD IN INTIEME VERHOUDING

TITEL VAN DIE NAVORSINGSTUDIE: Victim empowerment strategy for female  
partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective

ETIESE VERWYSINGSNOMMER: NWU-00162-22-A1

HOOFNAVORSER: Professor Mariette Van deR Merwe

NAGRAADSE STUDENT: Funky Segomotso Nthutang

ADDRES: Malanstraat 18, Wellington, 7654

KONTAKNOMMER: 0605031722

Jy word uitgenooi om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingstudie wat deel vorm van die doktrale studie van Funky S Nthutang. Neem asseblief tyd om die volgende inligting deeglik deur te lees. Dit verduidelik die besonderhede van hierdie studie. Vra asseblief die navorser of persoon wat die navorsing aan jou verduidelik enige vrae oor enige deel van die studie wat jy nie ten volle verstaan nie. Dit is baie belangrik dat jy ten volle tevrede is dat jy duidelik verstaan waaroor hierdie navorsing gaan en hoe jy betrokke kan wees. Asook, jou deelname is heeltemal vrywillig en jy is vry om nie te sê om deel te neem. As jy sê nee, sal dit jou op geen manier negatief raak nie. Jy is ook vry om op enige stadium aan die studie te onttrek, selfs al stem jy in om nou deel te neem.

Hierdie studie is goedgekeur deur die NWU- etiek komitee (HREC) van die Fakulteit Gesondheidswetenskappe van die Noordwes-Universiteit (NWU-00162-22-A1) en sal uitgevoer word volgens die etiese riglyne en beginsels van Etiek in Gesondheidsnavorsing: Beginsels, prosesse en strukture (DoH, 2015) en ander internasionale etiese riglyne wat van toepassing is op hierdie studie. Dit mag dalk nodig wees vir die navorsingsetiek komitee lede of ander relevante persone om die navorsingsrekords te inspekteer.

#### **Waaroor gaan hierdie navorsingstudie?**

- Ek hoop dat die uitkoms van hierdie navorsing 'n maatskaplike werk strategie sal wees om slagoffers van geweld te bemagtig. Ek beplan om ervarings van vroulike slagoffers in Noordwes oor mishandeling te verken en te beskryf ten einde beter te verstaan wat jy beleef het. Ek wil ook graag meer weet van jou behoeftes wat moontlik in so 'n strategie aangespreek kan word. Ek sal na die skuiling toe kom om 'n onderhoud met jou te voer. Daar sal sowat 21 vroulike slagoffers van geweld deur 'n eggenoot of vriend by die navorsing betrek word. Ek sal met jou gesels en ons sal tydlyn, spirale van bronverlies en bronvoorsiening en metafore gebruik om jou te help om jou situasie in woorde mee te deel.
- Hierdie studie sal in die Noordwes Provinsie (Dr. KK en Dr. RSM Distrikte) uitgevoer word.
- Maatskaplike werkers sal ook ingesluit word as deelnemers in die navorsing. Hulle sal help met die ontwikkeling van 'n strategie vir slagofferbemagtiging vir

vroue wat aan mishandeling blootgestel is. Jy sal geen kontak met hierdie maatskaplike werkers hê nie.

- **Hoekom is jy genooi om deel te neem?**
- Jy is genooi om deel te wees van hierdie navorsing omdat jy een van die vroue is wat mishandeling deur jou lewensmaat ervaar het soos dit blyk uit jou verblyf in die skuiling.
- Jy sal ongelukkig nie aan hierdie navorsing kan deelneem as jy onder die ouderdom van 18 en ouer 60 jaar is, of as jy nie 'n Suid-Afrikaanse burger is of 'n persoon met gestremdheid is nie.

#### **Wat sal van jou verwag word?**

- Daar sal van jou verwag word om alles wat bespreek gaan word vertroulik te hou. Daar sal van jou verwag word om vrae vir 'n tydperk van 60 tot 90 minute te beantwoord. Soos genoem sal ons tydlyne, bron spirale, en metafore gebruik om jou te help om die vrae te antwoord. Jy gaan nie gedwing word om aan die navorsing deel te neem as jy nie belangstel of as jy nie vrywillig deel wil wees . van die navorsing nie. Niemand sal jou dwing om deel te neem nie.

#### **Sal jy iets baat om aan hierdie navorsing deel te neem?**

- Daar is nie direkte voordele vir jou as jy aan die navorsing deelneem nie. Die moontlike voordele vir jou as jy aan hierdie studie deelneem mag wees dat jy meer van jouself en jou situasie mag leer as jy daaroor praat.
- Die studie sal maatskaplike werkers help om slagofferbemaagtinging vir vroue in jou situasie beter te begryp en toe te pas. Indirek sal jou bydrae dus ander vroue help.
- **Is daar risiko's vir jou as jy aan hierdie navorsings deel neem en wat sal gedoen word om die risikos te hanteer?**
- Die risiko's vir jou in hierdie studie is dat sommige van die vrae wat ek gaan vra jou kan herinner aan die mishandeling wat jy deurgemaak het. Dit kan ontstellend wees om te praat oor wat met jou gebeur het. Ek beveel aan dat jy inskakel vir berading by die maatskaplike werker by die skuiling na ons onderhoud. Jy kan dalk ook moeg raak; laat eet my tydens die onderhoud indien jy 'n breuk wil neem.



### **Hoe sal ons jou vertroulikheid beskerm en wie sal jou bevindings sien?**

- Jou identiteit is vertroulik. Jou naam sal nie verskyn op enige van die transkripsies (woord-vir-woord getikte weergawe van die audio-opname) nie. Jy sal 'n deelnemernommer kry wat gebruik sal word wanneer die bevindinge van die navorsing beskryf word. Transkripsies, tekeninge en ander data sal in 'n kas in my kantoor toegesluit word. Elektroniese data sal met 'n wagwoord beskryf word. Sodra data getranskribeer is, sal die audio-opnames van die opnemers afgevee word. Hierdie ingeligte toestemmingsvorm met jou handtekening op, sal apart gestoor word van die transkripsies. Data sal vir 5 jaar gestoor word.

### **Wat sal met die bevindings gebeur?**

Die bevindings van hierdie studies al gebruik word in die tesis (verslag) wat nodig is om die PhD studie te voltooi. Artikels sal ook geskryf word vir wetenskaplike joernale (tydskrifte) vir maatskaplike werkers. Dit is moontlik dat van die bevindings ook in koerante gepubliseer kan word. In al hierdie publikasies sal verseker word dat niemand jou kan identifiseer nie.

### **Hoe sal jy weet van die bevindings van hierdie navorsing?**

- Ons sal vir jou die bevindings van hierdie navorsing gee deur WhatsApp of 'n oproep. Ek sal tydens die onderhoud vra of dit veilig sal wees om jou te bel of te WhatsApp.

### **Sal jy betaal word om aan hierdie studie deel te neem en is daar enige koste vir jou?**

Hierdie studie word befonds deur die navorser befonds. Daar is geen betaling verbonde aan jou deelname nie. Aangesien jy reeds by die skooling is, word daar nie voorsien dat jy reisuittgawes sal hê nie. Tydens die onderhoud sal daar water beskikbaar wees en na die tyd iets te ete. Jy sal 'n klein geskenkie kry om dankie te sê vir jou deelname.

**Is daar enigiets anders wat jy moet weet of doen?**

- U kan me Funky S Nthutang kontak by 0605031722 indien u enige verdere vrae of enige probleme het.
- U kan ook die NWU-HREC (Etiekkomitee) kontak via mev Carolien van Zyl by 018 299 1206 of [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) as u enige bekommernisse het wat nie oor die navorsing beantwoord is nie of as u klagtes het oor die navorsing.
- U sal 'n afskrif van hierdie inligting en toestemmingsvorm vir u eie doeleindes ontvang.

### **Verklaring deur Deelnemer:**

Deur hieronder te teken, stem ek ..... in om deel te neem aan die navorsingstudie getiteld: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective.

Ek verklaar dat:

- Ek het hierdie inligting gelees/dit is aan my verduidelik deur 'n vertroude persoon in 'n taal waarmee ek vlot en gemaklik is.
- Die navorsing is duidelik aan my verduidelik.
- Ek het 'n kans gehad om vrae te vra aan beide die persoon wat die toestemming van my kry, sowel as die navorser en al my vrae is beantwoord.
- Ek verstaan dat deelname aan hierdie studie vrywillig is en ek is nie onder druk geplaas word om deel te neem nie.
- Ek kan enige tyd kies om die studie te verlaat en sal nie op 'n negatiewe manier hanteer word as ek dit doen nie.
- Ek kan gevra word om die studie te verlaat voordat dit voltooi is, as die navorser voel dit is in die beste belang, of as ek nie die studieplan volg soos ooreengekom nie.

Geteken te (plek) ..... op (datum) .....  
..... 20....

.....

Handtekening van deelnemer

.....

Handtekening van getuie



**Verklaring deur persoon wat toestemming verkry**

Ek (naam) ..... verklaar dat:

- Ek het die inligting in hierdie dokument duidelik en in detail verduidelik aan  
.....
- Ek het 'n toek gebruik/nie gebruik nie.
- Ek het haar aangemoedig om vrae te vra en het genoeg tyd geneem om dit te beantwoord.
- Ek is tevrede dat sy alle aspekte van die navorsing, soos hierbo bespreek, voldoende verstaan
- Ek het haar tyd gegee om dit met ander te bespreek as sy dit sou wou doen.

Geteken te (plek) ..... op (datum) .....  
..... 2023

.....

Handtekening van persoon wat toestemming verkry

### Verklaring deur navorser

Ek (naam) ..... verklaar dat:

- Ek het die inligting in hierdie dokument aan ..... verduidelik of ek het dit laat verduidelik deur ..... wie ek vir hierdie doel opgelei het.
- Ek het 'n tolk gebruik/nie gebruik nie
- Ek het die deelnemer aangemoedig om vrae te vra en het genoeg tyd geneem om dit te beantwoord en ek was beskikbaar sou sy enige verdere vrae wou vra.
- Die ingeligte toestemming is deur 'n onafhanklike persoon verkry.
- Ek is tevrede dat sy alle aspekte van die navorsing, soos hierbo beskryf, voldoende verstaan.
- Ek is tevrede dat/sy tyd gehad het om dit met ander te bespreek as hy/sy dit sou wou doen.

Geteken te (plek) ..... op (datum) .....  
..... 2023

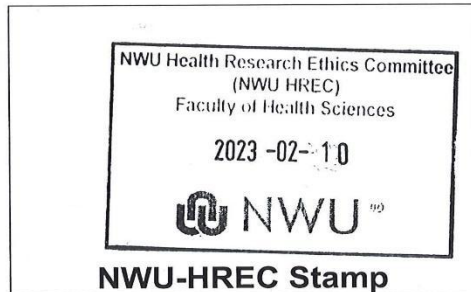
.....

Handtekening van navorser

## INFORMED CONSENT (SETSWANA) FOR VICTIMS



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Mog: +2718 299-1111/2222  
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### TOKUMENTE YA TUMELELO KA KITSO YA BASADI BA BA TSHWARWANG MAKGWAKGWA KE BALEKANE BA BONE

SETLHOGO SA THUTOPATLISISO ENO YA TSHEKATSHEKO: Leano la go naya maatla batho ba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa la basadi ba ba kgokgontshiwang ke balekane ba bone mmo Porofenseng ya Bokone Bophirima: pono ya bodirelaloago

NOMORO YA REFERENCE YA TSAMAISENTLE: NWU-00162-22-A1

MMATLISISIMOGOLO: Moporofesara Mariette Van der Merwe

MOALOGANE WA DITHUTO TSA MORAGO GA TSA YUNIBESITHI: Funky Segomotso Nthutang

ATERESE: 18 Malan Street, Wellington, 7654

NOMORO YA MOGALA: 060 5031722

O lalediwa go tsaya karolo mo **thutopatlisisong ya tshekatsheko** e e leng karolo ya Doctoral Study ya ga Funky S Nthutang. Tsweetswee tsaya nako e e rileng go bala tshedimosetso e e newang fano, e e tshalosang dintlha ka thutopatlisiso eno le gore e botsolosa eng. Tsweetswee botsa mmatlisisi kgotsa motho yo o go tshalosetsang patlisiso

eno dipotso dipe kaga karolo ya thutopatlisiso eno e o sa e tlhaloganyeng sentle. Go botlhokwa thata gore o bo o kgotsofalela gore o tlhaloganya sentle se patlisiso eno e buang ka sone le kafa o ka nnang wa tsaya karolo ka gone. Gape, go tsaya karolo ga gago ke **ga boithaopo ka botlalo** mme o gololesegile go bua gore ga o batle go tsaya karolo. Fa o gana, seo ga se na go go ama ka tsela e e sa siamang le fa e le ka tsela epe. Gape o gololesegile go ikgogela morago mo thutopatlisisong eno ka nako epe fela, le fa o dumalana go tsaya karolo jaanong. Ga gona ditlamorago dipe fela tse di matshosetsi le fa o ka ikgogela morago.

Thutopatlisiso eno e dumeletswe ke **Komiti ya Tsamaisosentle ya Dipatlisiso ka tsa Boitekanelo ya Lefapha la Dithuto tsa Saense ya tsa Botsogo la Yunibesithing ya Bokone Bophirima (NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University)** Mme e tlile go tsamaisiwa go ya ka dikaelo le melaometheo ya Tsamaisosentle Tsamaisosentle ya Dipatlisiso tsa Boitekanelo: Melaometheo, Ditshamaiso le Dithulaganyo (*Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures* [DoH, 2015]) le dikaelo tse dingwe tsa tsamaisosentle tsa mafatshefatshe e e leng maleba mo thutopatlisisong eno. Go ka nna ga tlhokega gore maloko a komiti ya tsamaisosentle ya dipatlisiso kgotsa batho ba ba tshwanetseng ba tlhatlhobe direkoto tsa patlisiso.

#### **Thutopatlisiso eno e kaga eng?**

- Ke solofela gore tse di tla bonwang morago ga patlisiso eno e tla nna go dira leano la go naya maatla ba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa la basadi ba kgokgontshiwang ke balekane ba bone mo Porofenseng ya Bokone Bophirima go ya ka pono ya bodiralogo. Boikaelelo jwa me ke go sekaseka le go tlhalosa ditiragalo tsa basadi ba ba kgokgontshiwang ke balekane ba bone mo Porofenseng ya Bokone Bophirima gore le tlhaloganye botoka se se le diragalelang. Gape ke batla go itse tse dingwe gape ka tse le di tlhokang, tse di ka nnang tsa tlhalosiwa mo leanong la go naya ba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa maatla. Go tlile go tsenngwa basadi ba ba kgokgontshiwang ke balekane ba bone ba ka nna 21 mo thutopatlisisong eno. Ke tlile mo lefelong leno la botshabelo go tla go le botsa dipotso tsa go batlisisa. Ke tlile go bua le lona, mme re tlile go dirisa mmepe ya mmele wa motho, tlhatlhamano ya ditiragalo le ditshwantshiso go le thusa go tlhalosa maemo a lona



ka mafoko le ditshwantsho tse di tla a thusang go tlhaloganya go latlhegelwa ga mmogo le go fenywa mo tsamayong ya nako.

- Thutopatlisiso eno e tlile go tsamaiswa mo Porofenseng ya Bokone Bophirima (Kgaolo ya Dr. KK le ya Dr. RSM)
- Badirelaloago le bone ba tlile go nna teng mo thutopatlisisong eno go thusa go tlhama leano la go naya maatlaba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa la basadi ba ba kgokgontshiwang ke balekane ba bone. Ga le na go nna le kgolagano epe le badirelaloago bano.

#### **Ke kantlhayang fa o laleditswe go tsaya karolo?**

- O laleditswe go tsaya karolo mo patlisisong eno ka gonne o mongwe wa basadi ba ba sotliwang ke balekane ba bone se se supiwang ke go bo lo nna mo lefelong leno la botshabelo.
- Ka maswabi ga o na go kgona go tsaya karolo mo patlisisong eno fa e le gore o na le dingwaga tse di kwa tlase ga 18 le go feta tse 60, kgotsa o se moagi wa Aforika Borwa kgotsa o le motho yo o nang le bogole.

#### **Se se tlileng go lebelelwa mo go wena?**

- Go tlile go lebelelwa gore o boloke sengwe le sengwe se go tlileng go buisanngwa ka sone e le khupamarama. Go tlile go lebelelwa gore o arabe dipotso lefa di ka nna lesome mo nakong ya metsotso e le 60 go ya go e le 90. Jaaka go boletswe, re tlile go dirisa mmepe ya mmele wa motho, ditshwantsho tse di tla a thusang go tlhaloganya go latlhegelwa ga mmogo le go fenywa mo tsamayong ya nako. tlhatlhamano ya ditiragalo, le tshwantshiso go go thusa go tlhalosa se se go diragaletseng. Ga o na go patelediwa go tsaya karolo mo patlisisong eno fa e le gore ga o na kgatlhego ya go dira jalo kgotsa o sa batle go ithaopela go tsaya karolo mo patlisisong eno. Ga o na ope yo o tlileng go go pateletsa go tsaya karolo.

#### **A o tlile go solegelwe molemo ke sepe ka go tsaya karolo mo porojekeng eno?**

- Ga o na go solegelwa molemo ka tlhamalalo ka go tsaya karolo mo patlisisong eno. Se se ka nnang sa go solegelwa molemo ka go tsaya karolo mo thutopatlisisong eno ke gore o ka nna wa ithuta go le gontsi ka wena le seemo sa gago ka go bua ka sone.

*Thutopatlisiso eno e tlile go thusa badirelaloago go tlhaloganya botoka le go dirisa maano a go naya maatla ba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa moa basadingba bangwe. A go na le bodiphatsa bongwe jwa go tsayakarolo mo patlisisong eno mme go tla dirwang go bo thibela?*

- *Bodiphatsa jo bo ka nnang jwa go diragalela mo thutopatlisong eno ke gore dipotso dingwe tse ke tlileng go di botsa di ka nna tsa go gapotsa kafa o kgokgontshitsweng ka teng. Go ka nna ga go utlwiswa botlhoko go bua ka se se diragetseng. Go akantshiwa gore o ye go bona badirelaloago ba ba mo lefelong leno la botshabelo gore ba go sidile maikutlo morago ga dipotso tseno tsa patlisiso.*

**Re tlile go sireletsa dilo tsa gago tsa sephiri jang mme ke bomang ba ba tlileng go bona tse di bonweng ka wena?**

- *Go tlile go sirelediwa botlhokaina jwa tse di bonweng ka wena mme komiti ya patlisiso le leina la gago di tlile go bolokwa e le khupamarama. Leina la gago ga le na go bonala mo kwalololong ya mafoko a o a buileng a a theipilweng. O tlile go newa nomoro ya motsayakarolo, mme yone e tlile go dirisiwa fa se se bonweng mo thutopatlisong eno se tlhalosiwang teng. Kwalololo ya mafoko a a theipilweng, ditshwantsho le tshedimose tso epe e nngwe di tla bolokwa di sireletsegile ka go lotlelela ditokumente tseo tsa pampiri mo khabotong e e mo ofising ya mmatlisisi mme tshedimose tso e e mo khomphiuteng e tlile go sirelediwa ka khunololamoraba (password). Ka bonako fela fa tshedimose tso e e rekotilweng e se na go kwalololwa e tla phimolwa mo metšhineng e e rekotang. Foromo eno ya tumelelo ka kitso e o e saenneng, e tlile go bolokwa e se na le dipampiri tse go kwaloletsweng mafoko a a theipilweng mo go tsone. Tshedimose tso eno e tlile go bolokwa dingwaga di le 5.*

**Go tlile go diragalang ka tse di bonweng mo patlisisong eno?**

- *Tse di bonweng mo thutopatlisong eno di tlile go dirisiwa go fetsa pego eno ya thutego ya PhD. Gape go tlile go kwalwa go ya ka tse di bonweng mo patlisisong eno. Diathikele tseno di tla bo di lebisitswe mo dijenaleng tsa saense tsa badirelaloago. Go ka kgonega gore dingwe tsa tse di bonweng mo patlisisong eno di begiwe mo dipampiring tsa dikgang. Fela jaaka mo mafelong a mangwe otlhe a tse di bonwang mo patlisisong eno di gatisiwa mo go one, ga go na ope yo tla kgonang go itseng gore ke wena.*

**Le tlile go itse jang ka tse di bonweng mo patlisisong eno?**

- Re tlile go go naya tse di bonweng morago ga patlisiso eno fa mmatlisisi a se na go fetsa go sekakaseka tshedimosetso kwa bokhutlong jwa kgwedi ya Tlhakole ka 2023.
- Mmatlisisi o tlile go lo itsise ka dipe tse di bonweng bosheng mo patlisisong eno tse di maleba kwa bokhutlong jwa kgwedi ya Tlhakole ka 2023 ka go lo naya dikhopi tsa pego eno.

**A lo tlile go duelelwa go tsaya karolo mo thutopatlisisong eno gape a go na le sengwe se o tlileng go se duelela?**

- Thutopatlisiso eno e etleediwa ke mmatlisisi. Ga le na go duelwa sepe ka baka la go tsaya karolo. Ereka lo setse lo le mo lefelong leno la botshabelo, ga go a lebelelwa gore lo tlile go nna le ditshenyegelo tsa go duelela dipalangwa. Ke tlile go lo naya dijonyana dingwe morago ga dipotso tsa patlisiso fa re se na go fetsa sengwe le sengwe. Go tla bo go na le metsi a a ka nowang. Lo tlile go newa madinyana a go bontsha tebogo.

**A go na le sengwe gape se o tshwanetseng go se itse kgotsa go se dira?**

- O ka ikgolaganya le Mohumagatsana Funky S Nthugang mo nomorong ya 0605031722 fa o na le dipotso dipe tse dingwe kgotsa o na le mathata ape.
- Gape o ka ikgolaganya le Komiti ya Tsamaisosentle ya Dipatlisiso tsa Boitekaneko ya Yunibesithi ya Bokone Bophirima (*NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee*) ka go leletsa Mrs Carolien van Zyl mo nomorong ya 018 299 1206 kgotsa ka go mo romelela imeile mo go [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) fa go na le sengwe se o tshwenyegileng ka sone se se neng sa seka sa arabiwa malebana le patlisiso eno kgotsa fa o na le dingongorego dipe ka patlisiso eno.
- O tla newa khopi ya tshedimosetso eno le foromo ya tumelelo gore o di ipolokele go di dirisa kafa o batlang ka teng.



### **Tlhomamisetso ya motsayakarolo**

Ka go saena fa tlase fa, ke..... dumela go tsaya karolo mo thutopatlisisong ya tshekatsheko ya setlhogo sa: Leano la go naya basadi maatla ba ba tshwarwang makgwakgwa la basadi ba ba kgokgontshitsweng ke balekane ba bone mo Porofenseng ya Bokone Bophirima: pono ya bodirelaloago.

Ke tlhomamisa gore:

- Ke badile tshedimosetso eno/ke e tlhaloseditswe ke motho yo o ikanyegang ka puo e ke e buang le go e tlhaloganya sentle.
- Ke tlhaloseditswe patlisiso eno sentle.
- Ke nnile le sebaka sa go botsa dipotso motho yo o tsayang tumelelo mo go nna, gammogo le mmatlisisi mme dipotso tsotlhe tsa me di arabilwe.
- Ke tlhaloganya gore go tsaya karolo mo thutopatlisisong eno go a **ithaopelwa** mme ga ke a patelediwa go tsaya karolo.
- Nka nna ka dira tshwetso ya go tswa mo thutopatlisisong eno ka nako epe fela mme nka seka ka tshwarwa ka tsela e e sa siamang fa ke ka dira jalo.
- Nka nna ka kopiwa gore ke tswe mo thutopatlisisong eno pele ga e fela, fa e le gore mmatlisisi o bona gore go tla bo go ntshiametse thata, kgotsa fa ke sa dire go ya ka thulaganyo ya thutopatlisiso, jaaka go dumalanywe.

E saenetswe kwa (lefelo) ..... ka (letlha)  
..... 2023

.....  
**Mosaeno wa motsayakarolo**

.....  
**Mosaeno wa mosupi**



**Boipolelo jwa motho yo o tsayang tumelelo.**

Nna (*leina*) ..... ke tlhomamisetsa gore:

- Ke ..... tthaloseditse .....  
tshedimoseditse e e mo tokumenteng eno sentle le ka botlalo.
- .....  
.....
- Ke dirisitse/ga ke a dirisa motoloki
- Ke mo kgothaleditse go botsa dipotso ka ba ka tsaya nako e e lekaneng go di araba.
- Ke kgotsofetse gore o tthaloganya sentle dintlha tsotlhe tsa patlisiso eno, jaaka go buisantswe le ene fa godimo
- Ke mo neile nako ya go buisana ka yone le ba bangwe fa a batla go dira jalo.

E saenetswe kwa (*lefelo*) ..... ka (*letlha*)  
..... 20....

.....  
**Mosaeno wa motho yo o tsayang tumelelo**

## ADDENDUM C: SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND HREC APPROVAL



### Scientific Committee Approval for a Research Application Research using human participants, health or health-related studies

| Scientific Committee Information |                 |                                                 |                    |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Name of the scientific committee | COMPRES         | Discipline(s)                                   | PhD Social Work    |
| Research Entity                  | COMPRES         | Contact Person for the committee                | Jessica Daniel     |
| Faculty                          | Health Sciences | E-mail address for the committee contact person | 26159600@nwu.ac.za |

| Study & Scientific Review Information                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title of the study:                                                     | Original title (unedited): A victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West Province: a social work perspective [17 words]<br>Title edited: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective [14 words] |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Researcher/Study Supervisor Initials, Name and Surname:                 | Prof Mariette van der Merwe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | NWU Number:                         | 23376244                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Student Initials, Name & Surname:                                       | Funky Segomotso Nthutang                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | NWU Number:                         | 16544943                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Other Researchers involved in the study (Initials, Names and Surnames): | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Potential risk level for human participants:                            | No risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <b>Motivate:</b> The first population group (abused female victims) is considered to be vulnerable; thus, making it a high-risk study for them. The second population group is social workers dealing with abuse cases; thus, making it a minimal risk study for them. |
|                                                                         | Minimal risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                         | Medium risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                         | High risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Potential risk level for children and incapacitated adults:             | No risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Motivate:</b> Click here to motivate the risk level                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                         | No more than minimal risk of harm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                         | Greater than minimal risk with the prospect of direct benefit                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                         | Greater than minimal risk with no direct benefit                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                                                       |                                                                                      |                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation for the REC:</b>                                                                    | Review by the research ethics committee required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Motivate:</b> Proposed research study directly impacting on human participants. |
| <b>Any additional comments</b>                                                                        | Motivate: Please not language edited title.                                          |                                                                                    |
| <b>Chairperson of the committee</b>                                                                   | Prof CHM Bloem                                                                       |                                                                                    |
| <b>Committee members present during the review</b><br><br>(NB, please ensure no conflict of interest) | <b>Dr Erika Hitge</b><br><b>Prof Herman Strydom</b><br><b>Prof Retha Bloem</b>       |                                                                                    |
| <b>Date of review</b>                                                                                 | 2022/07/05                                                                           |                                                                                    |

Interim Scientific Committee COMPRES

Digitally signed by Interim Scientific Committee COMPRES  
Date: 2022.07.11 13:10:20 +02'00'

**Signature of Chairperson**

**Date: 2022/07/11**

Prof CHM Bloem

Digitally signed by Prof CHM Bloem  
Date: 2022.07.11 13:09:54 +02'00'

**Signature of Research Director**

**Date: 2022/07/11**

*Form developed by Prof Minrie Greeff, 1 March 2017*  
*Form updated by Prof Minrie Greeff, 31 January 2019*  
*Form updated by Prof Minrie Greeff, 8 May 2019*  
*Form updated by Prof Minrie Greeff, 23 July 2019*  
*Form updated by Prof Minrie Greeff, 10 August 2019*

Original details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.6 Forms\9.1.5.6\_SC Approval\_Human Participants.docm  
 10 August 2019

File Reference: 9.1.5.6

10 February 2023

## ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 10/02/2023, the NWU-HREC hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-HREC grants its permission that, provided the general and specific conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

**Study title: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in the North West: a social work perspective**

**Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher: Prof M van der Merwe**

**Student: FS Nthutang - 16544943**

**Ethics number:**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | W | U | - | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | - | A | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Institution

Study Number

Year

Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation;  
A = Authorisation

**Application Type: Single study**

**Commencement date: 10/02/2023**

**Expiry date: 29/02/2024**

**Risk:**

**Medium**

**Approval of the study is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of an annual monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. Monitoring reports are due at the end of August and February annually until completion of the study.**

### General conditions:

*While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:*

- The principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HREC:
  - six-monthly on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided annually, and upon completion of the study; and
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for active monitoring.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-HREC reserves the right to:

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
  - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
  - submission of the six-monthly monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and/or
  - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- NWU-HREC can be contacted for further information via [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 1206

**Special conditions of the research approval due to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

**Please note:** Due to the nature of the study i.e. (face-to-face collection of qualitative data via narrative enquiry, world café and focus group discussions with domestic abuse survivors, social workers, and social work supervisors, respectively), this study will be able to proceed during the current alert level, following receipt of the approval letter. No additional COVID-19 restrictions have been placed on the study other than that indicated under the COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy as indicated in the application. The researcher must, however, ensure that before proceeding with the study that all research team members have reviewed the North-West University COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety Standard Operating Procedure.

**Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):**

- a. Please provide the NWU-HREC with a copy of the victim empowerment strategy, once it has been setup for review and approval before proceeding with its use.

As the study progresses the aforementioned conditions should be submitted to [Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za) with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX." The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, that the documents are being submitted as part of the conditions of the approval set by the NWU-HREC, the nature of the document i.e. which condition is being fulfilled and any further explanation to clarify the submission.

The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating the nature of the submission e.g. "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The e-mail should indicate the nature of the document being sent. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

The NWU-HREC would like to remain at your service and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

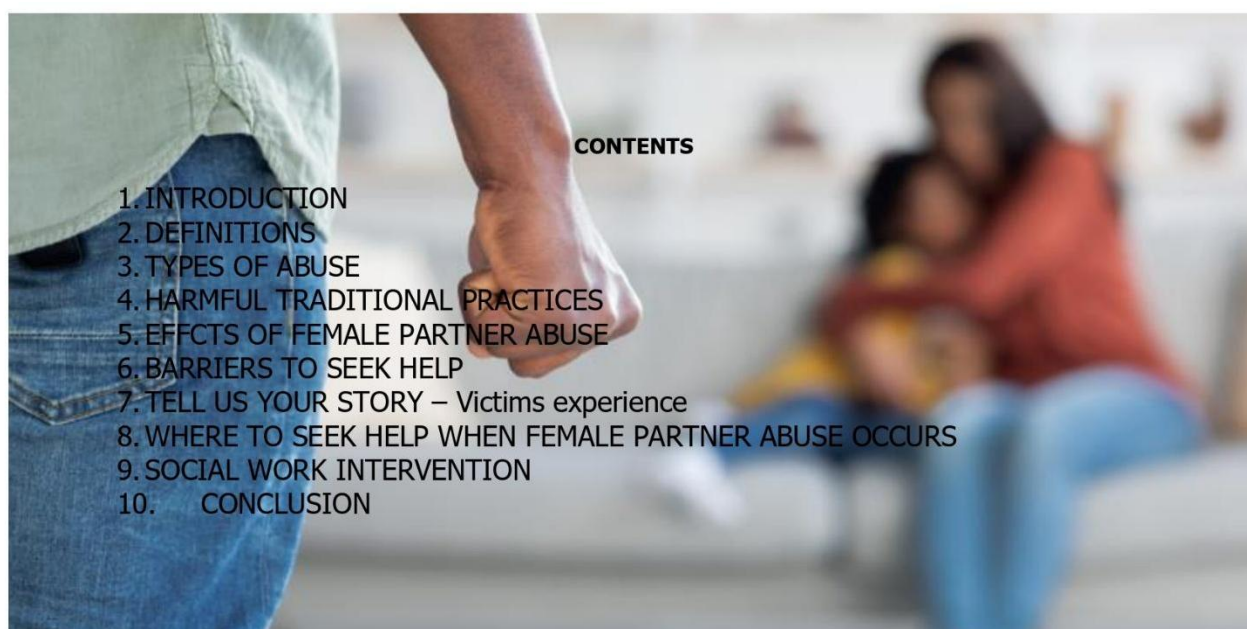
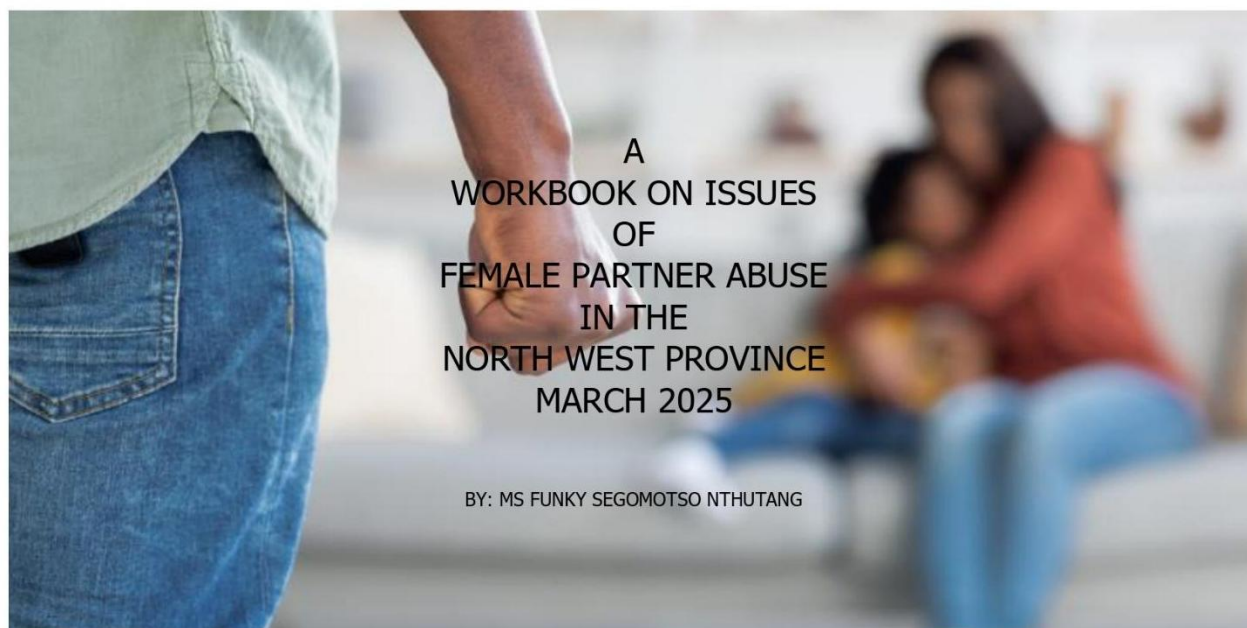


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Prof Petra Bester  
Date: 2023.02.13  
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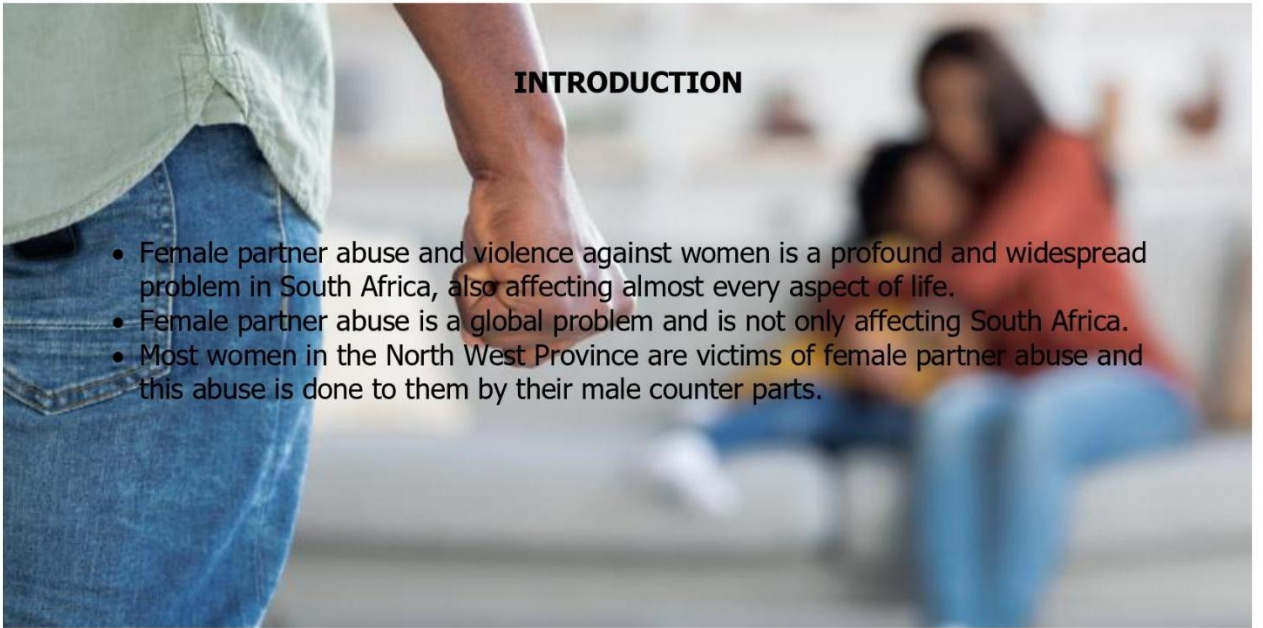
Chairperson NWU-HREC

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.4 Templates\9.1.5.4.2\_NWU-HREC\_EAL.docm  
20 August 2019  
File Reference: 9.1.5.4.2

## **ADDENDUM D:    WORKBOOK FOR FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE**

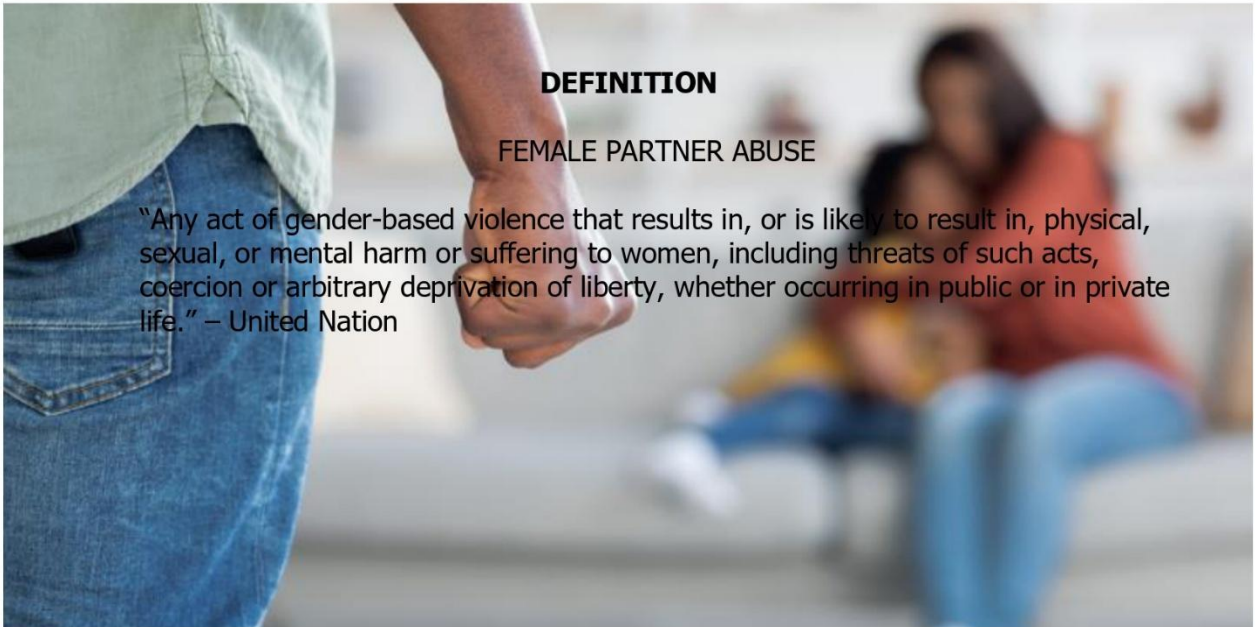






## INTRODUCTION

- Female partner abuse and violence against women is a profound and widespread problem in South Africa, also affecting almost every aspect of life.
- Female partner abuse is a global problem and is not only affecting South Africa.
- Most women in the North West Province are victims of female partner abuse and this abuse is done to them by their male counter parts.



## DEFINITION

### FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE

"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." – United Nation

## TYPES OF ABUSE

1. **Physical Abuse** - any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person or animal by way of bodily contact.

Examples of Physical abuse:



Boxing



Beating



Slapping

2. **Sexual Abuse** - sexual conduct or a sexual act forced upon a woman, man or child without their consent.

Examples of Sexual Abuse:



Rape



Sexual Harassment



Defilement



3. **Emotional/Psychological Abuse** - include mostly non-physical behaviors that the abuser uses to control, isolate, or frighten someone.

Examples of Emotional/Psychological Abuse:



Insulting or name calling



Controlling someone



Restricting their movement

4. **Economical/Financial Abuse** - is a form of abuse when one abusive person has control over the victims access to economic resources.

Examples of Economical/Financial Abuse:



Husband taking wife's salary



Denying opportunity to work



Dictating how the wife spends her money

## 5. DIGITAL ABUSE

Digital abuse involves using technology like texting or social media to bully, harass, stalk, or intimidate your intimate partner. This kind of behaviour is often used in a form of emotional or verbal abuse and carried out through online platforms.

### Examples of Digital Abuse



**Cyber bullying**



**Sextortion**



**Doxxing**

## 6. SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological mistreatment whereby someone uses controlling or manipulative behaviour within a religious or spiritual setting for example, using religious beliefs or teachings to excuse, justify, or downplay abusive actions. Towards your partner.

### Examples of Spiritual Abuse



**Using religion to justify abusive behaviour, e.g. shaming one's beliefs, forcing your partner to follow your cultural beliefs.**

## HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

- These practices have a negative effect on a wellbeing of a person and are rooted in cultural practices.
- Traditions that are passed on from generation to generation and favours one gender more than the other.

Examples of Harmful Traditional Practices:



Young females having children



Arranged Marriages



Husband being the Sole decision maker

## EFFECTS OF FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE

- Female partner abuse against women and children can lead to long-term physical and mental health problems.
- Children that grow in an abusive household sometimes grow up to be abusive because of childhood trauma.
- Sometimes Female partner abuse can lead to disability.
- Unwanted pregnancies.
- Physical abuse may sometimes lead to the female partner contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including H.I.V
- Female victims may get injured and may lead to disability or death.
- Loss of a job or being forced to quit a job because the man has insecurity issues.
- Family may be also be affected because the abuser can sometimes try to control the victims' movements and who they meet.
- The victim might end up using substances as a coping mechanism.



## SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

- Victim empowerment strategies
- Problem solving / Conflict resolution
- Legal aspect
- Policy prescripts
- Continuous assessment for social workers
- Financial independence/literacy for victims
- Substance Abuse clinics
- Social network maps with relevant departments:
  1. **NYDA** - Financial literacy and entrepreneurship
  2. **SEDA/TVET** - Job/vocational training programs
  3. **Sports, Arts and Culture** - Talent search and improvement
  4. **ABET** - Academic literacy (reading and writing)
  5. **Department of Agriculture** – Self sustainable farming training



## Emotional and psychological healing

Understanding ecological psychological impact of cohesion through healing.

### Examples of Emotional and psychological healing



**Self-Love**



**Independence**



**Self Respect**

## Self Determination Theory in female partner abuse

**Autonomy** – sense of being in control and determining destination.

**Competence** – Skills and confidence to be effective in ones' deeds.

**Relatedness** – sense of being connected to a supportive network.

### Examples of Self Determination Theory



**Autonomy**



**Competence**



**Relatedness**

## WHERE TO SEEK HELP

Places to seek help after being a victim of Female Partner Abuse:



Police Stations



Hospitals



Crisis Centers



Churches



Trusted Neighbors

- Family members
- Trauma call Centre
- Emergency Help-line
- Social Development
- Thuthuzela Centers

## CONCLUSION

Female partner abuse is a serious pandemic and it should be dealt with as in "YESTERDAY" before we loose our future leaders.






**!!!!..GET HELP NOW..!!!!**

South African GBV Helpline: 0800 428 428 // Stop Women Abuse: 0800 150 150  
 Please Call Me Service: \*120\*7867# // Commission for Gender Equality: 0800 007 709  
 SAPS: 10111 // POWA: 011 642 4345  
 Skype Address: Helpme GBV

***" BETWEEN STIMULUS AND RESPONSE THERE IS A SPACE.  
IN THAT SPACE IS OUR POWER TO CHOOSE OUR RESPONSE.  
IN OUR RESPONSE LIES OUR GROWTH AND OUR FREEDOM"***

**- VICTOR E. FRANKL**



## ADDENDUM E: FLYERS FOR RECRUITMENT

### ENTRY LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS



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NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE - BOPHIRIMA

## **RECRUITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY TO: ALL ENTRY SOCIAL WORKERS**

### **What is the study about?**

The title of the study is: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective. The research will be conducted by a PhD Scholar registered with the North West University: Potchefstroom Campus. What is the nature of the study?

A qualitative descriptive design will be used for the two social work participant groups. For entry-level social workers, the World Café method will be the data collection strategy to engage participants in a constructive dialogue.

### **Who to participate?**

Entry Social Workers employed by the Department of Social Development.

### **Why Participate?**

The aim of this study is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West Province.

### **PARTICIPANT GROUP 2 – ENTRY-LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR ENTRY LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS**

- Social workers at entry level registered with South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP).
- All the entry level social workers engaged in Victim Empowerment at DSD

### **EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE SOCIAL WORKERS**

No social workers in the district where the researcher works, will be included.

### **DATA COLLECTION - PARTICIPANT GROUP 2**

### **(ENTRY LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS): WORLD CAFÉ RESEARCH METHOD**

- The World Café research method offers a hospitable space where data can be collected when participants enter a conversation around tables. A particular question is discussed at each table, with the support of a facilitator (Jolly et al., 2021:2). At least 36 entry level social workers working in the VEP Programme will be included in the two separate World Café sessions with at least 18 participants per session. Each World Café will last for 60 to 90 minutes. Each round table will comprise of at least four to five participants and there will be four tables.
- For this research, the seven (7) World Café design principles will be adhered to namely, setting the context, creating a hospitable space, exploring questions that matter, encouraging everyone's contribution, allowing different ideas, thoughts, and perspectives, listening together for common consensus and insights and lastly sharing collective discoveries and analysis (Margulies 2015:1).
- The two World Café sessions will be aligned with the research questions of the study. During the process of World Café, The researcher will introduce herself and the purpose of the study. Field notes and a tape recorder will be used to gather the responses from the participants. World Café questions are attached as Appendix 2.

### **When to participate?**

The research field study will be conducted on:

Date:  
Venue:  
Time:  
N.B

*For more enquiries, please contact the researcher: Ms Finky Ntutang on 0605031722/ 0605378433 (student-researcher: NWU)*

## FLYERS FOR RECRUITMENT OF MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS



### **RECRUITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY TO: ALL SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

#### **What is the study about?**

The title of the study is: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective. The research will be conducted by a PhD Scholar registered with the North West University: Potchefstroom Campus.

#### **What is the nature of the study?**

A qualitative descriptive design will be used for the two social work participant groups. In the last phase of the research, experienced social work managers will be included in focus group discussions to discuss the victim empowerment strategy. They will be asked to read the strategy before the focus group discussion.

#### **Who to participate?**

Social Work Supervisors Grade 1 and 2, Service Point Managers and all managers holding strategic positions employed by the Department of Social Development.

#### **Why Participate?**

The aim of this study is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West Province.

#### **PARTICIPANT GROUP 3**

##### **INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

Managers and supervisors employed by North West Department of Social Development.

Social work supervisors' grade 1 and

2. Service point managers.

Social work managers holding strategic positions working in the field of victim empowerment

##### **EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR social work supervisors and MANAGERS**

No managers or supervisors in the district where the researcher works, will be included.

##### **DATA COLLECTION FOR PARTICIPANT GROUP 3 (Supervisors AND MANAGERS): FOCUS GROUP**

Carey and Asbury (2012:15) define the purpose of conducting focus group discussions as capitalizing on the interaction of group members for collection of strong, deep beliefs and perspectives.

In this part of the study, focus groups will be used because of the advantage that they have to explore topics that may not be easily explored in one-on-one interactions

(Doodly, Slevin & Tagart, 2013). The researcher will facilitate the three similar focus groups discussions around the proposed victim empowerment strategy.

There will be 10-11 participants in each focus group discussion. The discussions will be between 60-90 minutes. Participants will receive the proposed victim empowerment strategy before the sessions. After the focus group discussions, the strategy will be refined, and emailed to the participants and their final comments will be considered when the researcher will refine and finalize the strategy.

**WHEN TO PARTICIPATE?** The research field study will be conducted on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Venue: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

N.B

For more enquiries, please contact the researcher, Ms Funky Nthutang on 0605031722/ 0605378433 (student researcher: NWU)



## FLYERS FOR RECRUITMENT OF VICTIMS

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YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA

**RECRUITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**  
**TO: FEMALE VICTIMS OF PARTNER ABUSE ADMITTED IN A SHELTER**

**What is the study about?**

The title of the study is: Victim empowerment strategy for female partner abuse in North West: a social work perspective. The research will be conducted by a PhD Scholar registered with the North West University: Potchefstroom Campus.

**What is the nature of the study?**

A qualitative descriptive design will be used for the two social work participant groups. Female victims of partner abuse admitted in shelters around the North West Province shall form part of the study. Narrative inquiry with visual data collection strategies will enable them to voice experiences of female partner abuse, and to understand their needs in terms of victim empowerment.

Who to participate?  
Women who are victims of female partner abuse and being admitted in the shelter.

**Why Participate?**

The aim of this study is to use multi-phase research to develop a victim empowerment strategy, from a social work perspective, for female partner abuse in the North West Province.

**SAMPLING CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANT GROUP 1 (VICTIMS)**  
**INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR FEMALE victims of PARTNER ABUSE**

- Women experiencing partner abuse, which includes women above 18 years to 59 years as this age category comprises of mature adults who are neither children nor older persons. (Persons of 60 years and older will be seen as victims of elder abuse, and that would entail a study with a specific focus on elder abuse).
- Cohabiting, single, married, and divorced women who are victims of female partner abuse and who reside in shelters in North West Province as they receive good support while they are there.
- Only women will be included as including males will be a different focus.
- Women speaking and able to read, talk and understand Setswana, English and Afrikaans.

**EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR female victims of PARTNER ABUSE**

- Non-South Africans as migrant residents may be having different experiences in female partner abuses other variables linked to their migrant status might influence the findings.
- Persons with disabilities might have different variables impacting on their experiences of abuse.
- Prospective participants who have been diagnosed with Covid and are in isolation will be excluded due to the risk of infection of the independent person and the researcher. There will also be a risk of contamination of the interview space, which will be avoided with this exclusion.

DATA COLLECTION for female victims of partner abuse: individual face to face semi-structured interviews

- Participant group 1: Data will be collected using individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. An interview guide (Appendix 1) will be used to direct the interview (Creswell, 2014:240). According to Braun and Clarke (2013:79), open-ended questions should be used as they encourage participants to provide detailed responses and prompt the participant to discuss what is important to them. The researcher can use probing during face-to-face semi-structured interviews which is regarded as the ideal data collection strategy for sensitive issues (Braun and Clarke, 2013:80). Each session will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

The researcher will be the primary source of data collection. Visual data collection strategies will be used during the interviews, namely timelines, body maps, and metaphors. According to Mazzetti and Blenkinsopp (2012:2), visual methods elicit honesty when participants can express their experiences, emotions, and thoughts while externalizing the topic under discussion

Time lines: Participants will be asked to write the trends and the frequency of abuse chronologically from the oldest to the most recent events. They can draw houses on the timeline to indicate where they lived during the abuse and who lived with them. In that way they can also point out if they have received any support in the household.

#### **Resource loss and gain spirals data collection strategy**

A brief discussion will follow on what resources are. The following questions will then be asked:

What resources do you value? Probe – energy, object, interpersonal and intrapersonal resources.

When we go through difficult times, we often lose resources, and this can be a fast process.

To feel better and to start living with less stress, it is necessary to gather resources, to know what resources we need.

Let's talk about what you need to feel better and live with less stress.

We do not always have all those resources, but if we know what we need, we can make plans to stop the loss of resources and to build good resources.

What resources do you have? (Probe object, energy, interpersonal and intrapersonal) What resources do you need?

What plans can you make to get those resources? Who can help you to get such resources?

How can you make sure that you keep those resources and do not lose them again?

To invite metaphor, participants will be asked: If you compare the abuse to something, i.e., it is like a lemon, very sour, what will you

Finally, the following questions will be asked: What kind of assistance have you received from social workers employed by the Department of Social Development or other organisations?

What do you need from social workers in terms of help? What other sources of support can be helpful?

#How was it for you to use

(I) timeline; (ii) loss and gain spirals) and (iii) metaphor to talk about your experiences of female partner abuse?

**When to participate?** The research field study will be conducted on:

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Venue:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

For more enquiries, please contact the researcher,

**Ms Funky Nthutang on 0605031722/ 060 537 8433 (studentresearcher: NWU)**

## **ADDENDUM F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE VICTIMS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS**

Interview guide for victims of female partner abuse

### **VICTIMS OF ABUSE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS USING VISUAL DATA COLLECTION)**

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

**Please answer all the questions and tick where appropriate.**

Participant number

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|--|--|

#### **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. What is your age 



 Years
  
2. Level of education 

|           |
|-----------|
| None      |
| Primary   |
| Secondary |
| Tertiary  |
  
3. Employment status 

|            |
|------------|
| Employed   |
| Unemployed |
  
4. Marital status 

|            |
|------------|
| Married    |
| Cohabiting |
| Divorced   |
| Widow      |

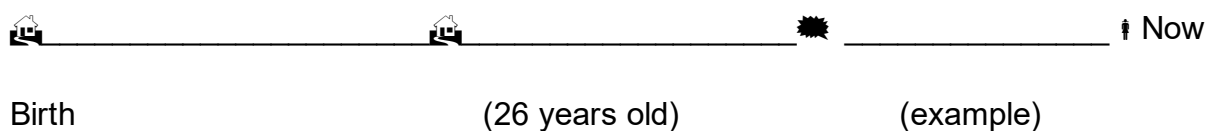
## Visual data collection (timelines, resource loss and gain spirals)

### Timeline

Participants will be asked to write the trends and the frequency of abuse chronologically from the oldest to the most recent events. They can draw houses on the timeline to indicate where they lived during the abuse and who lived with them. In that way they can also point out if they have received any support in the household.

The following probing questions will be asked:

- How long have you been in the abusive relationship? Can you indicate the events (or some of them) on the timeline?
- Tell me more about the different instances of abuse?
- Who supported you in the household, broader family, and community?
- Tell me what you usually did after abuse happened?



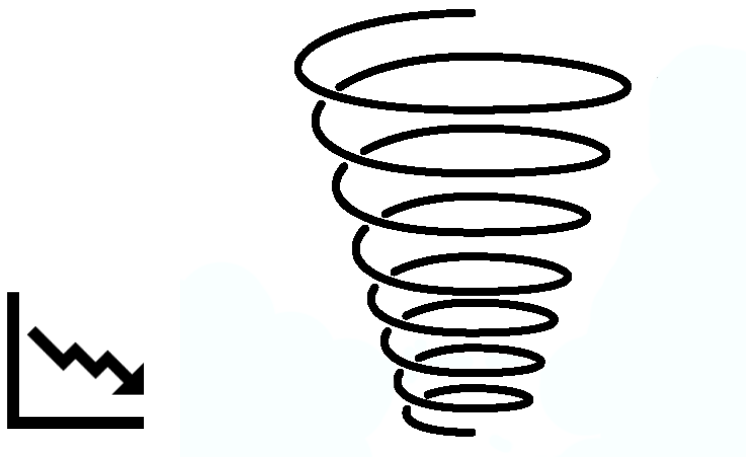
### Resource loss and gain spirals

A brief discussion will follow on what resources are. The following questions will then be asked:

What resources do you value? Probe – energy, object, interpersonal and intrapersonal resources.

I have a drawing of a spiral here. You can see that it is moving downward.





When we go through difficult times, we often lose resources, and this can be a fast process. Let's talk about resources you have lost due to the abuse. We can then write them on the downward spiral.

To feel better and to start living with less stress, it is necessary to gather resources, to know what resources we need. Let's talk about what you need to feel better and live with less stress. We do not always have all those resources, but if we know what we need, we can make plans to stop the loss of resources and to build good resources.

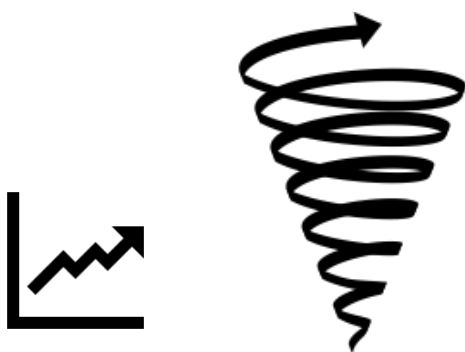
What resources do you have? (Probe object, energy, interpersonal and intrapersonal)

What resources do you need?

What plans can you make to get those resources?

Who can help you to get such resources?

How can you make sure that you keep those resources and do not lose them again?



Finally, the following questions will be asked:

- What kind of assistance have you received from social workers employed by the Department of Social Development or other organisations?
- What do you need from social workers in terms of help?
- What other sources of support can be helpful?
- How was it for you to use (i) timeline; (ii) loss and gain spirals) to talk about your experiences of female partner abuse?

## **WORLD CAFÉ QUESTIONS (FOR ENTRY LEVEL SOCIAL WORKERS)**

**Research question** - What elements are suggested for a victim empowerment strategy to be used by social workers to address female partner abuse in the North West Province?

- Name and Surname (Optional)/ Participant number
- Gender
- Nationality
- Age
- Current Occupation
- Level of Education
- Municipality
- District

### **Table 1: The focus will be on ...**

- What, according to your understanding, is victim empowerment?

### **Table 2: The focus will be on ...**

- In your experience, what are female victims of partner abuse faced with? (Probe: challenges in their environment; reactions because of female partner abuse)

### **Table 3: The focus will be on...**

- What do you as a social worker, the DSD and government do already to help female victims of partner abuse and what more can be done in the context Victim empowerment to assist them to cope?

### **Table 4: The focus will be on...**

- What elements will be needed in a victim empowerment strategy?

## **FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR THE SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

### **FOCUS GROUPS FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

The focus will be on:

How can the proposed victim empowerment strategy (that you have read) be refined?

- Can you comment on the Introduction of the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy?
- Please comment on how Victim Empowerment is defined in the proposed strategy. Can you suggest refinements.
- Various elements are outlined in the proposed Victim Empowerment Strategy. Please comment on those in the text.
- Any other suggestions on what victim empowerment strategies can be applied to reduce the prevalence of female partner abuse in the North West province?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

## **ADDENDUM G: EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW, WORLD CAFÉ AND FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Excerpt from interview with female victim of partner abuse**

Participant 24 (P24)

FN: Now I want you tell me, step by step, what year your partner started to abuse you, when you started to stay together, what did he do in what year and so forth, until currently.

P24: I started a relationship with my partner in 2011. That year it was nice. But before the end of that year, I started to notice something about the phone. I was working at Overland. When I went to work in the morning, he would call me and continue talking to me over the phone until I got to work. When I go for lunch, he would call the whole hour. When I said to him that I was having my lunch, he would say that I could eat while he was talking to me. I noticed then that it seems as if he didn't want me to talk to anyone, but just him. But I dismissed it, thinking that it was because he loved me.

December that year, he lost his job. I was working and he came to stay with me but would go away from time to time. Sometime when I come from work, I would see him sitting in the bush. So, I thought maybe he missed me and wanted to meet me halfway and accompany me home. He would ask me who I was walking home, and I would tell him that I've been walking alone. He would tell me that he felt bored and just decided to sit in the bus. 'No, don't do that because you might be attacked by criminals', I would tell him. He would say that no one would do anything to him.

Sometimes I would take a taxi home, and he would have a problem with me sitting in the front seat. I wouldn't notice that he saw that I was in the front seat, but he was stalking me, telling me places where he saw me.

He also stalked me at work when I went to buy lunch with one of my male colleagues. When I came back, he asked me about him and I told him his name, \*\*\*\*\* and he was one of my contacts in my cell phone. One day (name taken out)



called me at night and when I wondered why he call me that time of the night, my partner told me to answer the call. (Name taken out) said that I had made a call back to him, but I hadn't. I said to (name taken out) that if there is anything work related that I needed to talk to you about, I would tell you the following day. Then my partner would say I am saying that to (name taken out) because he was in the house and accused me that I had called (name taken out) during the day. I asked me what really was going on in his mind. I would be angry with (name taken out) for calling me after hours. He told me that I buzz him from time to time. It turned out that my partner would take my phone and call (name taken out) to try to find out what was going on between (name taken out) and I. I tried to dismiss it.

He then started with my daughters. He liked them. But one day I caught him touching one of my daughters on her waist. He didn't find any wrong with when I confronted him, telling them that what he was doing to my daughter is what he should do to me, not my daughter. He said it means I don't want him to play with my daughters. I told him that he could play with them but not the way I caught him doing to my daughter, because what would I think about him being with my daughters during the day when I'm at work. I asked him never to repeat that.

He then showed his true colours. He didn't want me to sit with my daughters in the sitting room but to be with him in the bedroom. I did that to avoid problems. But then I didn't have time for my daughters. He would want us to have sex while the girls were watching TV. I told him that's not how I was brought up and that I respect my daughters, and that even if he looks at them like women, to me they were still my babies and that I would not do anything like that in front of my daughters. Then he said to me that it means I have a relationship with some man (name taken out) at work. I asked him what made him say those things. I ignored him.

### **Excerpt from World Café transcript**

I am representing group number 3. And then the question says that, "What do you do as a social worker or the department and government to do already to help female victims or partners abuse and what more can be done in the context of victim empowerment to help them cope?". Yes, in our group we discussed a few ideas. Firstly, the department should provide counselling. That is currently what they do they provide counselling of the

victim of GBV. And then we have what we call victim support. It means you give them psychosocial support. You deal with the victim and not only the victim but the people affected in the household as well. For example, children, the relatives who are sitting there, because sometimes you know, the abuser will come and maybe see that this family, has no men to protect this family, so he takes advantage of the family and does as he please. So, we also deal with the counselling, to deal with the others in the household, to check their emotional status, to see if they are also okay. And then, we refer the victim to get another service, that one is called there is a multidisciplinary team that needs to work together. Because, when you have worked with someone here, you realize that this person needs another service from other departments and then you refer the case especially to SAPs. Because the victim sometimes needs to be protected. Because the perpetrator, in most cases they instil fear to the victim and intimidate them so that they can never report them. So, we give them support, even if it takes you taking them by the hand and going with them to the police so that they know that they have support. And see that, "Ee! I can do this!". Yeah, we refer them to SAPs, and you check with them to see if they have received order that is called Protection Order from the police station. And then, after the court or the SAPs, has explained what the order entails, you are also going to sit down with the victim and explain in detail, what it entails in the Protection Order and how valid is this protection order. And they must keep the Protection Order safe because if the perpetrator can share the same house. The perpetrator can see that this is the document that is against me, then they will come and tear the order. And then, we have the stop centre. At least they can accommodate you for 3 days but can be extended based on the issue that is handled. And then, at least, everything is covered there by the department. And then, they can even sleep there with their children if we need to remove the victim from the perpetrator but there is a law that we use from children's act that we can remove also the perpetrator when the perpetrator needs to be removed. Then we have the order that we can also remove the perpetrator. And then, the other one, is that while they are there, or after or during the process provide life skills to the victim. Because my fellow group members have said that most of the victims are depending on the perpetrator so that they can eat off financial support. Most of them are unemployed. So, we help them have life skills so that they can generate maybe income, for example we can refer them to the department of agriculture. Agriculture can provide them with seeds so that they can plant at the back of their yards. And it be even bigger.

They can even look for available spaces at the mall so that they can make income out of it. So, let's say you sell potatoes, if you have space in the mall, you can sell there and also on the street, which will help them at least have something on their own. Which will help them feel special. You know when you have something on your own you can stand and say no to other things that you do. Because if you are a victim, you say yes multiple times just because you want this person to provide not to get angry. And then, one other thing is that we also help the community. There is this disease that we call gender-based violence. We encourage the community to create committees inside the community. The community patrollers just patrol around the streets to check the safety of the community members. And they are not taking things on their hands alone they are work hand in hand with SAPs. So, at least, they can report other cases to SAPs, that we have this case, we are handing it over to you. So, in that manner we will be helping our communities, to help themselves. There is this saying that says, "You need to teach a person to catch a fish not to feed them with a fish every now and then." And then there is this awareness campaign that used to go on and on, so that the community may know that there is this problem but there are resources that can help us to solve this kind of problem. Or there are people whom I can run to when I experience this thing. And most of the time, we tell them, we do awarenesses also at the schools, the children also are more victims of this gender-based violence than we can ever know. Because those are the people, who are mostly bullied, raped, intimidated if they say something so we help these children to know the spots they can report. If I am afraid of my mother or people who are my guardians at home, my caregivers, I have teachers. I just have to choose teachers I can open up to. Then, in that manner then we can, we as the teachers should also help. You know if a child comes to you with this kind of problem, here are the social workers, you can refer the cases to the social workers. Do not do it alone because as the department, we need to work collaboratively with each other. Within that manner, I think I am done. If there are any questions, I can take questions also. Thank you so much!

### **Excerpt from focus group transcript**

#### **GROUP 1 Focus Group Discussion (Managers and Supervisors)**

Q1. This is how we have viewed the strategy. In terms of the scope of work which we need to follow here, item number one talks to issues on the introduction. So, according to

our observation, the introduction is well aligned. We did not have any contribution or addition or subtraction with regards to the introduction. So, we are fine with the introduction. But, on item number two, which states that, we should look at, the definitions. Then. we had some inputs wherein we indicated that, for the purpose of this strategy, female victim, shall refer to any female person who incurs any harm, ill-treatment, physically, emotionally and economically from the partner or the spouse. This entails that, we are saying that if anyone is hurt by the spouse, being a female person, this definition will refer to such an individual. It does not matter who has her but as long as the victim is a female under all these categories of being physically, emotionally, economically hurt, then the definition can refer to her...to that as well.

Q2. Yes! And then, we have got, other definitions as well that talk to... (Pause!). All right! On page three, in terms of what is Female Partner Victim Empowerment Strategy we added to say Female Partner Victim Empowerment Strategy should be able to motivate and to encourage women victims to be independent both physically, emotionally and economically. And we have indicated that this could be done through capacity building activities. Such as, sewing, computer trainings, in order to reduce dependency as most of the female victims are dependent on the male partners. And then, job creation can be another form of empowering female victims, as that can also influence their dependency and they can be able to stand on their own.

Q3. The item that talks to the elements... what are the elements outlined in the proposed Empowerment Strategy? We have suggested, the elements as follows...one element to be considered is the establishment of women groups. For victims in either for them to share experience with each other and including the professionals such as social workers, psychologists and other helpers. To offer them relevant advice and support. And this could be possible in a shelter set up where women victims are catered for. But within our institutions and our offices as well, social workers can then derive groups of such victims. A multisectoral team...Consisted of, different disciplines such as SAPs Health, DSD...Department of Education, counsellors, pastors, may be critical. To rebuild self-esteem, provide support, so that the victims can believe that there is a positive life after victimization. So, those are the additions on the elements. On page twelve, where in there are principles, we have added amongst the principles, they have crafted, openness. As one of the principles to say we must encourage openness on the victims. So that they

can be able to illustrate the circumstances encountered in completeness. Or as it is. Because sometimes you know victims they come, but because, of the nature of the way we have played or the attitude, they end up not being open. We end up not getting full information. Therefore, they don't get the help that they wanted. Then, on page fifteen, we have added the...to say, these are some of the strategies that can reduce female partner abuse. They are as follows, I suggested, effective awareness to communities. Regarding victim empowerment. We know we have been doing this that is why we added the word "effective". So, it means, this should be well executed and well monitored. And then, cases should be effectively attended to by a multidisciplinary team including your SAPs, instead of our SAPs mediating on the matters. Here, we were referring to issues wherein the teams go to SAPs to report cases and then they end up mediating other than opening a case. And when you mediate, then this abuse continues. And then, effective justice being done to the victims as well as to the perpetrators. You know, these cases are being taken mostly for granted sometimes. Wherein, it goes to court and then at the end of the day we don't even have the verdict.

Q 4: We are saying harsh measures should be taken. In terms of the verdicts at justice. Stakeholder collaboration and ensuring timeous referrals, by stakeholders and follow ups on the cases. We have got, cases that we are attending to but because of our social workers or our stakeholders are not hands on. Therefore, they fall within the cracks, so I am suggesting effective collaboration as well. Regular advocacy sessions and dialogues to learners at school so that we can teach the learners when they are still young. There is this kind of abuse that is happening so that they can also assist I n terms of reporting or also empowering whoever is also experiencing the various kind of abuse. I think this marks the end of my contribution on this strategy. Thank you!

## **ADDENDUM H: VICTIM EMPOWERMENT DRAFT AND PRE-FINAL STRATEGIES**

### **DRAFT VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY FOR FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE IN THE NORTH WEST: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

North West Province has experienced partner abuse and 76% of men who participated in a SAPS study in 2021 admitted that they are perpetrators of such violence. Fapohunda *et al.* (2021:655) indicate that the North West Province had the second highest incidence of physical violence in the country, with only the Eastern Cape showing a higher incidence. According to the South African Police Services (SAPS) report (2021:32) for April to June 2021, North West province encountered 251 reported cases of female partner abuse in that time span which is increasing quarterly. Female partner abuse is widespread and needs the attention of many role-players, including social workers. The high incidence of female partner abuse in the North West Province makes this Province a relevant site for conducting this study. Langfeldt, Nedeva, Sörlin and Thomas (2020:122) refer to usefulness of scientific research in different contexts, including the welfare field. These authors refer to the scientific and societal value of research. It is the opinion of the researcher that she will be better able to advance the societal value of this research if it is done in the province where she works and can disseminate and implement the research within her broader work context.

#### **WHAT IS A STRATEGY?**

The National School of Government (2022:15) defines a strategy as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. A strategy involves goal setting, determining actions to achieve the goals and mobilising resources to execute the actions. A strategy seeks to address issues of vision, mission, objective setting, resource allocation, and prioritisation.

## **WHO IS A FEMALE PARTNER VICTIM?**

A victim is any person who individually or collectively suffers harm, accident, ill treatment, or any other event of crime including physical or emotional injury, economic loss, or substantial impairment of their rights through acts of commission that are violations of national criminal laws or internationally recognised norms relating to human rights. Within the criminal justice system, the term “victim” means a person who has suffered injury because of crime. The word indicates a particular status that confers certain rights under the auspices of law (Dubey & Jain, 2020).

## **WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?**

By making empowerment a focal point of its mission, social work has taken reasonable steps toward becoming the primary global depository of this theoretical model.

Empowerment is “the process of increasing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcome” (Sarumathi & Mohan, 2011). The development of indicators to assess empowerment processes and results is still in its early stages, despite the increased interest in empowerment and its potential to health. Lee and Hudson (2017:148) claim that empowerment deals with a specific type of impediment to issue solutions imposed by external society as a result of stigmatised group identity.

The majority of approaches take into account the dynamic interaction between developing internal capabilities and overcoming external obstacles, frequently relying on a conceptual framework that included the internal quantities such as self-assurance or critical thinking abilities, that contribute to individual agency, power to the creation of new opportunities without dominating factors such as the ability to make independent decisions that determine and demonstrate such agency, and the power or ability to overcome obstacles.

## **WHAT IS VICTIM EMPOWERMENT?**

Victim empowerment (VEP) is a strategy making it easier for everyone who has been harmed, traumatised, or lost property due to violence, crime, a natural catastrophe, a fatal accident, or socioeconomic situations to access a variety of services (National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment).

It is the process of encouraging the resourcefulness of victims of crime and violence by giving them the chance to use and develop their own support networks, use, and grow their own capacity, and make their own decisions. Therefore, having (or taking) control, having a voice, being heard, being acknowledged and respected as an individual, and having the choices one takes respected by others (moving from victim to survivor) are all examples of empowerment.

VEP is a response to escalating violence in South Africa and can be linked to the National Crime Prevention Strategy (approved in May 1996). VEP aimed at women and children, was launched in 1998 in Kimberley, at a national conference. VEP places a high premium on inter-sectoral and inter-departmental cooperation in response to the needs of victims (George, 2020). According to George (2020:3), VEP refers to “making a victim of crime heal and move on from the crime with the least possible harm or loss”. Ranganathan *et.al.* (2021:7749) links reduction of female partner abuse and achieving gender equality with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 5, respectively. In the Western Cape, the Dept. of Social Development (WCG, Social Crime Prevention Directorate, 2021) lists the following services offered to victims:

- emotional and practical support,
- assisting victims with the management of trauma,
- ensuring that victims are educated to identify the post-trauma symptoms,
- referring victims to professional services where necessary,
- provision of court support services during the criminal justice process,
- promoting the rights and responsibilities of victims through advocacy,
- ensuring that victims are aware of their rights, ensuring that ongoing victimisation is prevented, and
- providing a shelter service.



## **WHAT IS FEMALE PARTNER VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY?**

Gambrill (2019:455) defines a victim empowerment strategy as a support mechanism for victims and survivors of crime and violence. Mhango (2012:82) outline four central functions of victim empowerment for abused women, namely informational and emotional support, as well as support in terms of networking and practical aspects. In this study, the word, strategy is used to distinguish the product of this research from the overall Victim Empowerment Programme, which is the term commonly used for the overall victim empowerment plan for South Africa. Victim empowerment is an integral part of the work of the National Department of Social Development and Provincial Social Development Departments, where Victim Empowerment Programmes are operational.

Participant 4 under table 1 in Maquassi Hills service point during interviews held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 defined female victim empowerment as “providing support to female victims as well as their families while they are dealing with trauma they have experienced.

- To link the victim with the relevant stakeholders such as SAPS, DOJ, Health for further management.
- To ensure that the victims are treated with fairness, respect and courtesy in private without any form of discrimination regardless of circumstances, race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and appearance.”

On the other hand, participant 2 under table 1 in Naledi service point during interviews held on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023 defined female victim empowerment as “giving power/ ability to someone who has been hurt either physically, emotionally or holistically.

- Ability to be self-reliant
- Taking control of their lives Taking informed decisions

Being confident enough to walk away from toxic situations”.

## **Aims and objectives of the female partner victim empowerment strategy**

In light of this vision, the goals that have been established are to provide a strategic guidance for the creation of management structures for the efficient coordination of the programme at all levels of government.

- Identify and define sector specific roles and responsibilities of government, guide the implementing structures' monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes.
- Serve as a framework for the creation of sector specific policies, identify the relevant government departments and foster a shared understanding of victim empowerment among various state departments, victims and repeat offenders.
- Develop a shared concept of victim empowerment among different state departments, perpetrators, victims, non-profit organisation (NPOs), especially community-based organisations (CBOs), and individual community members.

## **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

The Mafikeng Mail newspaper dated (7th July 2023: 13) asserts that the Department of Social Development is making a lot of effort in addressing issues of gender-based violence in the North West province. DSD has successfully and recently provided psycho-social support services to a number of victims of gender-based violence across the North West Province. It is reported that 3521 victims of gender-based violence femicide and crime received sheltering services (The Mail, 2023:13). Forty (40) human trafficking victims managed to be assisted and have accessed social services across the North West Province. Twenty-two (22) NPOs have been funded in the financial year 2023/24 to provide Gender Based violence services to all the eighteen service points across the North West province. Thirty (30) young women who have survived gender-based violence in the North West Province have undergone accredited training on garment production during the financial year that ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023. These survivors have been given material support in the form of sewing machines, Wi-Fi routers, and laptops as a start-up kit to enable them to venture into micro business / small, micro, medium enterprise (SMMEs).

GBVF Stakeholder Summit held in Klerksdorp on the 26<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 by Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, the following were deliberated on as the stumbling blocks or problem areas on issues of referrals and protocols.

- Victims not knowing where to report and open the abuse cases.
- Lack of resources from state institutions preventing effective and efficient services to female victims of abuse. Lack of information that results in the communities taking law into their hands which compromises the case of the victim.
- Some government departments do not provide effective and efficient services to the victims due to lack of capacity.
- No social workers appointed for standby, thus resulting in them not being available to attend to the abused female partners at night or any time after working hours.
- Victims at times protect the alleged perpetrators by reporting abuse to the police and ultimately refuse to continue with the case due to various reasons.
- There are no GBVF rapid response teams at the level of Districts and Service Points

The above pointers show that there is an urgent need for the establishment of a victim empowerment strategy that guides the social service professionals during execution of the daily intervention with females who encountered abuse from their male counterparts as a guiding tool.

#### **LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS THAT GUIDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEMALE PARTNER VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY.**

- The Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998
- National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide 2020-2030.
- National Intimate partner abuse violence survey
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offense and Related Matters) Act No 32 of 2007
- National Development Plan Vision 2030

- RSA Constitution Act No 108 of 1996
- Service Charter and Minimum Standards for Victims of Crime in South Africa
- Management Protocol and legislation for the management of Victims of Human Trafficking.
- Prevention of Organised Crime Act, No. 121 of 1998
- Witness Protection and Services Act, No. 112 of 1998
- Legal Aid Amendment Act, No. 20 of 1996
- Maintenance Act, No. 99 of 1998
- National Crime Prevention Strategy, 1996
- National Policy Guidelines for Handling of Victims/Survivors of Sexual Offences, 1997
- Service Charter for Victims of Crime in SA, 2004
- Minimum Standards on Services for Victims of Crime, 2004 31 International and regional instruments
- Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction 1980
- The United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, 1985
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995
- SADC Draft Declaration on Gender and Development (Addendum on Prevention and Eradication of Violence against women and children), 2008

## **ELEMENTS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE FEMALE PARTNER VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

### **EDUCATION AND AWARENESS:**

- Develop educational programmes that raise awareness about different forms of abuse, their impact, and available resources.
- Organise workshops and seminars to educate women about their rights, self-esteem, communication skills, and healthy relationships.

#### ***Understand the Context:***

- Begin by thoroughly understanding the cultural, social, and economic context in which GBV occurs. Identify the prevalent norms, attitudes, and behaviours that contribute to GBV.

#### ***Set Clear Goals:***

- Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals that align with your educational efforts. Goals could include reducing GBV incidents, increasing reporting rates, and improving support services.

#### ***Needs Assessment:***

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify the educational gaps and requirements within the community or target audience. Understand the level of awareness, existing knowledge, and attitudes toward GBV.

#### ***Develop Educational Content:***

- Create educational materials that cover a range of topics, including understanding GBV, its forms, consequences, legal frameworks, and ways to prevent and respond to it. Use diverse formats such as workshops, seminars, videos, pamphlets, online courses, and social media campaigns.

***Incorporate a Gender-Sensitive Approach:***

- Ensure that educational content is sensitive to gender issues, challenges stereotypes, and promotes gender equality. Address the underlying power dynamics that contribute to GBV.

***Promote Empowerment:***

- Empower individuals by building their self-esteem, self-confidence, and assertiveness. Include modules on communication skills, conflict resolution, and building healthy relationships.

***Collaboration and Partnerships:***

- Collaborate with local organisations, government agencies, NGOs, and community leaders. Pool resources, expertise, and networks to create a more comprehensive approach.

*Awareness Campaigns:* Conduct awareness campaigns to reach a wider audience and challenge societal norms. Utilize various communication channels, including social media, community radio, posters, and workshops.

***Training of Trainers:***

- Train a group of individuals who can serve as trainers and facilitators within the community. They can conduct workshops, lead discussions, and provide ongoing support.

***Monitoring and Evaluation:***

- Regularly assess the impact of your educational efforts. Collect data on changes in attitudes, behaviours, reporting rates, and incidents of GBV. Adjust your strategies based on the feedback received.
- Sustainable Approach:

- Develop a long-term plan for sustaining the educational efforts. This could include integrating GBV prevention education into school curricula, community programmes, and workplace training.

### ***Advocacy and Policy Change:***

- Advocate for policies and legal reforms that address GBV. Engage with policymakers to ensure that GBV prevention and empowerment strategies are supported at a systemic level.

### ***Address Trauma and Support:***

- Incorporate resources for survivors of GBV, including counselling services, legal support, and safe spaces. Ensure that your educational framework addresses the needs of both survivors and potential perpetrators.
- Establish safe spaces where abused women can connect, share experiences, and provide mutual support.
- Collaborate with local community organisations, shelters, and helplines to create a strong support network.

## **1. EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING:**

- Provide access to counselling, therapy, and support groups to help women process their trauma and build emotional resilience.
- Promote mindfulness, meditation, and relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety.

## **2. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:**

- Offer training programmes and workshops that equip women with practical skills, such as financial management, job searching, and self-defence.
- Collaborate with vocational institutions to provide skill-based training that can enhance employment opportunities.

## **3. LEGAL EMPOWERMENT:**

- Partner with legal aid organisations to educate women about their legal rights and options.
- Offer assistance in obtaining restraining orders, navigating the legal system, and securing custody arrangements.

#### **4. FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE:**

- Provide financial literacy workshops to help women understand budgeting, saving, and investment.
- Connect them with job placement services, vocational training, and microfinance programmes to support financial independence.

#### **5. DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT:**

- Offer training in digital skills, online safety, and the use of technology for personal development, education, and work opportunities.

#### **6. ADVOCACY AND POLICY CHANGE:**

- Collaborate with local authorities and advocacy groups to influence policy changes that protect the rights and well-being of abused women.
- Organise awareness campaigns to highlight the issue of domestic abuse and drive societal change.

#### **7. CREATIVE EXPRESSION:**

- Encourage artistic outlets like writing, painting, or music, which can provide emotional release and promote healing.

#### **8. HOLISTIC HEALTH:**

- Promote physical health through fitness classes, nutrition education, and access to health care services.

#### **9. LONG-TERM PLANNING:**

- Help women set achievable goals for themselves, both short- and long-term.



- Assist with creating personalized safety plans that consider potential risks and steps to mitigate them.

#### **10. CONTINUAL ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT:**

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of the empowerment strategy through surveys, feedback sessions, and case studies.
- Modify the strategy as needed to address emerging needs and challenges.

Remember, empowering abused women is a gradual and ongoing process. It is important to create a safe and non-judgmental environment that respects their autonomy and choices. Collaborate with other professionals, organisations, and community members to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to empowerment.

#### **PRIORITY TARGET GROUP FOR FEMALE PARTNER VICTIM EMPOWERMENT**

- All females who are the victims of gender-based violence and were abused by their male counterparts.
- All women in abusive relationships.

#### **ELEMENTS NEEDED FOR ENHANCEMENT OF VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

Participant 1 under group 4 in Naledi service point articulated elements needed in victim empowerment strategy as: “needs analysis for the establishment of services needed by various victims, prioritizing empowerment and making it the main element to avoid dependency syndrome and stakeholder involvement to ensure role clarification and the contribution thereof in victim empowerment.”

Whereas participant 3 in group 4 in Maquassi Hill Service Point defined the key elements in victim empowerment strategy as “ victim offender mediation where in the perpetrator has to apologise to the victim, sheltering of victims by NPOs, empowerment of victims to encourage self-reliance and self-sufficiency, imparting skills to perpetrators to build their self-esteem, anger management courses for perpetrators, law enforcement, creating a safe environment for children, women and people with special needs, creating employment opportunities for both victims

and perpetrators, life-skills programmes for both the victim and the perpetrator, financial management, entrepreneurship, baking and cooking skills."

## **PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED SOCIAL WORK**

Social workers frequently work with clients who have experienced trauma. Trauma-informed care is a method of offering services that allows social workers to acknowledge the prevalence of early adversity in their patients' lives, see current issues as signs of maladaptive coping, and comprehend how early trauma affects a patient's fundamental worldview and psychosocial functioning over the course of their lives.

### **The principles include:**

- Safety throughout the organisation, clients we serve and ensuring they feel physical and psychologically free.
- Trustworthiness (task clarity, consistency and interpersonal boundaries)
- Transparency (being accessible to your clients always)
- Peer support (using your experience to support and educate others)
- Mutual help (share life experiences to improve the well-being of the clients)
- Collaboration and mutuality (working together harmoniously to achieve one goal)
- Empowerment voice and choice (prioritising empowerment and skills building by providing an atmosphere that allows clients to feel validated and affirmed with each and every contact session with the social worker)

Cultural, historical and gender issues (interaction with clients in consideration of their specific needs based on cultural issues, exposure to historical issues and gender.

## **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT**

The importance of integrated services, multi-sectoral cooperation and female victim's participation will contribute towards ensuring clear evidence-based grounding, reinforcing practical applicability and underlining the strategy's coherence with empowerment and resilience objectives.

| <b>DEPARTMENT</b>                                     | <b>INTERVENTION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Social Development</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing emotional support services, such as trauma debriefing and therapeutic counselling.</li> <li>• Provide information on developing skills, victims' rights and capacity building.</li> <li>• Provide support in preparation for court proceedings.</li> <li>• Render programmes focused on the alleged perpetrators.</li> <li>• Gender-based violence prevention programmes</li> <li>• Training of Community Development workers to conduct prevention programmes on GBVF</li> <li>• Roll out of Sinovoyo parenting programme</li> <li>• Integrating Substance abuse programme with GBVF</li> <li>• Provision of sheltering and psychosocial support services to GBV victims</li> </ul> |
|                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of safe parks for children</li> <li>• Team building and debriefing of service providers.</li> <li>• Implementation of care, support, and prevention programmes</li> <li>• Facilitation of economic opportunities for the victims</li> <li>• Ensuring that on-going victimisation is prevented.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Basic Education</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of educators and SGB members on GBV in schools</li> <li>• Prevention of victimisation of learners within the school environment</li> <li>• Development of programmes to promote a culture of learning and teaching in the absence of GBV.</li> <li>• Developing a framework for promoting health and wellness in schools</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organized local government assists with the establishment of rapid response teams to localise the implementation of National Strategic Plan on GBVF.</li> <li>• Capacity building of municipalities on the National Strategic Plan on GBVF.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Employment and Labour</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registering the women on their skills/abused</li> <li>• unemployment database</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Health</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Patient Rights Charter</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| DEPARTMENT                                                     | INTERVENTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency and on-going medical, medico- legal services, anti-retroviral treatment, contraceptives, and mental health</li> <li>• Provision of post exposure prophylaxis for the victims of sexual offenses</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
|                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of Health Professionals to provide victim empowerment and trauma support services in collaboration with the Department of Social Development.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
| <b>Correctional Services</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct psychosocial treatment provided to prisoners.</li> <li>• Less victimization of prisoners in prisons and support structures to lessen the effects when it occurs.</li> <li>• Effective convict rehabilitation and reintegration into society, with a focus on reducing recidivism and accepting responsibility for crimes committed.</li> <li>• Making sure victims attend parole board hearings, informing victims when prisoners are about to be released, and</li> <li>• creating victim-offender mediation programmes.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                   |  |
| <b>South African Police Services (SAPS)</b>                    | <p><b>The following are services rendered by SAPS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional and compassionate handling of victims and witnesses during statement taking and</li> <li>• Crime investigation. educating victims about their rights, recording confessions in secret, directing them to victim support programs, and providing case numbers.</li> <li>• Feedback on their case's progress (including the results of any bail hearings), as well as notification of the case's closure or referral to court.</li> <li>• Establishing victim support rooms at all police stations for privacy and training staff in victim empowerment and</li> <li>• relevant legislation.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>National Prosecuting Agency</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an integrated, cross- departmental training manual on domestic violence.</li> <li>• Establishment of one-stop facilities linked to sexual offenses and referred to as Thuthuzela care centres for victims of rape.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
| <b>Justice and Constitutional Development</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with the victim before court proceedings</li> <li>• Court preparation of evidence in private</li> <li>• Provide support to victims of GBV in court</li> <li>• Establishment of specialised sexual offenses courts</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| <b>NPOs, CBOs, FBOs, Civil Society rendering GBVF Services</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma counselling and debriefing</li> <li>• Admission of the female victims of GBVF</li> <li>• Prevention programmes on GBVF</li> <li>• Provision of food parcels to the victims of GBVF</li> <li>• Door-to-door campaigns</li> <li>• Community Dialogues</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |

**ADDENDUM I: PHASE 3: PRE-FINAL VICTIM EMPOWERMENT  
STRATEGY SENT TO MANAGERS AND  
SUPERVISORS VIA EMAIL FOR FINAL COMMENTS**

**COMMENTS OF SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS ON VICTIM EMPOWERMENT  
STRATEGY**

**Dear social work manager and supervisor**

Your comments on the proposed Victim Empowerment strategy will be appreciated. You can comment on the document and please also comment on the relevant sections on this form. Your help in this regard is appreciated.

**Office:**

**Designation**

| <b>ELEMENTS/<br/>COMPONENTS</b>            | <b>COMMENTS</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Vision                                     |                 |
| Mission                                    |                 |
| Objectives                                 |                 |
| Education and awareness                    |                 |
| Emotional and psychological healing        |                 |
| Building and informal support network      |                 |
| Building a network of professional support |                 |
| Skills development                         |                 |
| Legal empowerment                          |                 |
| Advocacy and policy change                 |                 |
| Temporary shelter                          |                 |
| Financial independence                     |                 |
| Continual assessment and improvement       |                 |

**Any other comments:**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|--|--|

## **PRE-FINAL VICTIM EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

### **Vision**

A North West Province where survivors of female partner abuse live free from fear, with access to inclusive, survivor-centred support services that empower them to restore their lives with dignity, security, and independence.

### **Mission**

To provide a comprehensive, survivor-centred, and multi-sectoral support empowerment system that promotes safety and dignity of victims of intimate partner violence. We strive to break the cycle of violence and promote long-term resilience and well-being for survivors across North West province through harmonized service delivery, economic empowerment, psychosocial support, legal and community-driven prevention initiatives.

### **Objectives**

- To address systematic barriers contributing to female partner abuse in the North West province.
- To strengthen the institutional and legal frameworks aimed at addressing female partner abuse in the North West province.
- To enhance survivor-centred services in the North West province.
- To raise public awareness of female partner abuse in the North West province.
- To improve the resource allocation for female partner abuse in the North West province.

## **1. KEY COMPONENTS/ ELEMENTS OF VEP STRATEGY**

Based on the findings of the participants' views and the literature review, the components of the Victim Empowerment Strategy are as follows: education and awareness, emotional

and psychological healing, building a network of informal support, building a network of formal support, skill development, legal empowerment, advocacy and policy change, shelter, continual assessment and improvement and financial independence. According to Jumarali *et al.* (2021:2), social workers should encourage clients to make choices and be active participants in their own treatment or support plans. They went on to emphasise autonomy, respect, and decision-making as well as collaboration with the victims to understand their needs, experiences and their frustrations. Avoiding confrontational approaches is one of the key elements that the social worker must take into consideration to avoid justifying undesirable behaviour. In addition, the following can be incorporated to make victims feel safe, free, and empowered to live their lives after abuse.



### **1.1 Education and awareness**

A victim empowerment strategy should develop educational programmes that raise awareness of the different forms of abuse and available resources. Education programmes should also include school-going children and perpetrators of violence for it to be more holistic and effective. For perpetrators, anger management courses should be

available because anger is one of the causes of female partner abuse. Education can be conveyed through workshops, informal brochures, social media and community outreaches.

Childress *et al.* (2024) argue that education is a vital form of informational support, empowering victims with the knowledge and confidence necessary to face the perpetrators of female partner abuse through legal action. Education also provides information on safety for the victims and informs them of professional counselling (Fraser *et al.*, 2024), how to access support services and financial resources (Little, 2023) and access health and medical care, conflict resolution and help-seeking (Dickson *et al.*, 2023) and other forms of care (Maquibar *et al.*, 2023). These essential components have also been incorporated into the workbook for female victims of partner abuse, ensuring that they have access to resources that facilitate empowerment.

In line with the bio-ecological theory, it is imperative to note that education and awareness are most effective when there is a comprehensive understanding of the context surrounding the violence. Education and awareness should take into account the dynamic proximal processes within the person and context. This includes the cultural, social and economic context where female partner abuse occurs. Additionally, it is important to consider the prevailing norms, attitudes, and behaviours that play a role in female partner abuse.

Smith (2023:138) outlines the neurobiology of trauma and emphasises that due to the strong limbic-related, primitive responses created by traumatic exposure, the higher cognitive functions of the brain, where self-regulation is situated, is metaphorically off-line at times. As part of emotional and psychological healing, female victims of partner violence should get psycho-education on the neurobiology of trauma, including self-regulation strategies such as recognising increased stress levels, mindfulness, breathing and relaxation (Webber, Smith & Mascari, 2023:445).

In support of education and awareness, there will be information on the following aspects in the attached workbook:

|                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Definition of abuse           | Workbook page 3      |
| Types of abuse                | Workbook pages 4 - 8 |
| Harmful traditional practices | Workbook page 9      |



## 1.2 Emotional and psychological healing

Incorporating emotional and psychological healing into the victim empowerment strategy is important as part of a holistic approach to comprehensively deal with female partner abuse. Part of such a healing process could be victim-offender mediation to foster closure for the victim and accountability for the perpetrator of abuse.

Counselling is the foundation for emotional and psychological healing. Counselling offers emotional relief by helping victims manage stress and deal with trauma. Emotional and psychological healing in the VEP strategy can be done through two strategic ways, namely, comprehensive victim support and involving people affected in the household. It also emerged from the reviewed literature and from the participants' views that emotional and psychological healing is crucial because it empowers victims to prevent future abuse, thus breaking the cycle of abuse.

(Levenson, 2020:288) asserts that social workers must prioritise physical and emotional safety for individuals and create a safe and trusting environment where they can share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgment or harm. Therefore, the overarching goal of victim empowerment is to contribute to the formation of safe and peaceful communities by improving the human rights culture and providing more effective, multisectoral, coordinated responses to victims of crime and trauma (United Nations Office on Drugs, 2024).

Hamel *et al.* (2023:314) pointed out that emotional abuse is intended to destroy and diminish the self-esteem of victims through coercive behaviours, jealousy, threats, and intimidation. Therefore, to effectively restore self-esteem, a victim empowerment strategy should address emotional and psychological healing. The approach should not only facilitate emotional healing, but also consider boosting positive emotional states while also assisting individuals in overcoming negative emotional states (Kindness *et al.* (2017). In essence, well administered emotional support can improve people's ability to cope and contribute to their overall mental and physical well-being (Zarling *et al.*, 2024).

Justice *et al.* (2022:159) highlight the serious implications of experiencing violence in intimate relationships on the quality of life of those affected. This concern points to the

need for intervention strategies to recognise the effects on quality of life and explore the resources that should be gained to enhance the quality of life of victims as part of their emotional and psychological healing. In support of emotional and psychological healing, there is information on the following aspects in the attached workbook:

|                                         |                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Emotional and psychological healing     | Workbook page 12 |
| Effects of abuse                        | Workbook page 10 |
| Barriers when trying to seek help       | Workbook page 21 |
| Tell us your story- Victim's experience | Workbook page 22 |
| Where to seek help                      | Workbook page 23 |

### 1.3 Building a network of informal social support

These suggestions are also in line with the bio-ecological approach where the victim is not seen in isolation, but as part of dynamic systems, where inverse proximal processes may lead to abuse. In a similar vein, Hodges and Harris (2021:82) emphasise that service providers should understand the environment in which abused individuals live and interact, including the effects of broader societal issues.

Victim empowerment should ensure that the victim has informal support structures to help prevent isolation. Social support is widely seen as a protective factor in stressful and traumatic situations, including partner violence (Choate, 2023:99; Desta *et al.*, 2021:737; Innab *et al.*, 2024:1). Family support is an important network for women victims of partner abuse because it provides emotional and practical assistance that gives the victim a sense of security and empowerment. In this regard, Webber, Smith and Mascari (2023:458) refer to the value of social connectedness. Victim support offers sustainable healing and fosters a sense of solidarity, which in turn strengthens victims' resilience and equips them with the necessary tools to be independent. Engaging household members in dealing with female partner abuse allows them to understand the impact of abuse and be able to rebuild relationships.

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| Networks of informal social support | Workbook page 13 |
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### 1.4 Building a network of professional support

Formal supportive networks should be incorporated into the VEP strategy for victims to receive comprehensive and coordinated services effectively. Participants underscored

the importance of working with a multidisciplinary team from various sectors, among them medical personnel, legal practitioners, psychologists, social workers and law enforcement agencies, to prevent service gaps. Having a multidisciplinary team helps to address a victim's physical, psychological, legal, emotional and even economic needs. A network of professional support can significantly aid in addressing female partner abuse in the North West province. Referrals should be done in such a way that smooth transitions from one service provider to another are ensured to minimise additional trauma and save time when victims do not have to re-explain their situations.

Victims should be linked with diverse relevant stakeholders to create a robust support system which can leverage resources, foster grassroots-level interventions and ensure continuity of support and care. These stakeholders may include various government agencies, NGOs, NPOs, religious groups, civil and legal aid organisations.

The literature supports the use of support networks as one of the most significant ways of coping with the events of abuse and regaining lost resources (Saan *et al.*, 2022). These networks may not only be professional or formal, but also informal networks such as family, colleagues and friends (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021; Park & Jeon, 2021). It is believed that victims feel more comfortable discussing and disclosing their experiences when they are with a professional social worker that they trust to keep their experiences confidential. (Bailey *et al.*, 2024; Saan *et al.*, 2022). The multidisciplinary team concept concurs with what George (2020) identifies as inter-sectoral and inter-departmental cooperation, a vital approach in addressing the diverse needs of the victims. Other studies emphasised the importance of support networks as platforms for victims to participate in different activities and develop relationships that help to restore their self- esteem (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021). These support networks create safe spaces where individuals can share experiences, exchange ideas and advice, and receive emotional support from peers who may have faced similar situations (Dickson *et al.*, 2023).

In support of building a network of formal support, there will be information on the following aspects as included in the attached workbook:

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| Building a supportive professional network | Workbook pages 14 |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|

## 1.5 Skills development

Skills development should be incorporated into a victim strategy as a transformative approach that works well to address the long-term needs of female victims of partner abuse. Skills development equips victims with tools to rebuild their lives to achieve economic independence. Skills development empowers victims to break the cycles of abuse by acquiring marketable skills which give them the autonomy to make life-changing decisions such as leaving abusive relationships. The skills also provide victims with sustainable ways to support themselves and build confidence. Victims can overcome psychological and socio-economic challenges. Both perpetrators and victims should be included in the skills development programmes to empower them to combat and reduce female partner abuse and its ripple effects. Community leaders such as chiefs and ward councillors and service providers such as police officers, social workers, nurses and doctors should also be equipped to deal effectively with female partner abuse. The skills will help them to effectively address the root causes and consequences of IPV that will facilitate behaviour change. This concurs with Leburu-Masigo *et al.* (2020:134) who recommended that social workers and the women who suffered partner abuse should be equipped with skills, knowledge and economic empowerment to facilitate effective and quick response in preventing secondary victimisation against female partners.

Levers (2022) refers to the importance of stress management skills. Similarly, Williams and Poijula (2016:213) state that traumatic exposure keeps the autonomic nervous system on high alert, which necessitates stress and anxiety management. Skills such as breathing, recognising and working with repetitive thoughts and worrying internal dialogue (Hallett & Donelan, 2019:96-97) can be part of interventions with a focus on skills development. Lee and Hudson (2017:143) view empowerment from the standpoint of an individual's relations with the environment as well as the skills and competencies required to resolve the clients' problems.

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| Skills development | Workbook pages 14 |
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## 1.6 Legal empowerment

Legal empowerment reinforces victims' access to justice, eradicating barriers such as lack of knowledge and fear (Galera *et al.*, 2023a). Legal empowerment improves justice,

accountability and protection for victims of female partner abuse and is a vehicle for understanding and using the law to defend one's rights. Law enforcement plays a central role in delivering justice and preventing the recurrence of violence.

Law enforcement is at the centre of legal empowerment indicating the critical role of institutional support for victims seeking justice and protection (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011; Ogundipe *et al.*, 2018). With effective law enforcement, survivors of female partner abuse will be supported, the perpetrators will be held accountable, and the whole community will be empowered to confront the prevalence of female partner abuse. Legal empowerment is also important because sometimes victims have a negative self-perception (Aizpitarte *et al.* (2024), and to counteract such negative self-views, understanding of legal processes fundamentally empowers victims of IPV to make the right choices and decisions in relation to their rights (Wright *et al.*, 2023). Law enforcement reduces the incidence of violence in communities where the government supports efforts to deter, prevent and investigate violence (McCloskey *et al.*, 2016). However, underreporting of violence is prevalent in many communities, posing challenges for law enforcement to respond quickly and efficiently (Dickson *et al.*, 2023). Legal empowerment is addressed in the workbook:

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| Legal empowerment | Workbook pages 17 |
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## 1.7 Advocacy and policy change

Advocacy and policy change are an indispensable component of a victim empowerment strategy because of its ability to address the root cause of violence while also improving the support system. Legal and institutional frameworks should be strengthened especially regarding the implementation and enforcement of laws such as the *Domestic Violence Act* and the protection orders.

Policy changes and national planning should increase the number of social workers appointed to deal with gender-based violence, hence there is a need for advocacy for such changes to be adopted. Reforming policies can enhance survivor-centred services with improved resource allocation. Looking at ethical aspects of trauma work, Johnston and Tarvydas (2023:461) emphasise that professional helpers should promote social justice and advocacy for vulnerable people affected by trauma. Such advocacy would

include educating policy makers, law enforcement officials, health personnel and those in the judiciary about typical aspects linked to female partner abuse and trauma, such as trauma-related memory distortions which may lead to the inability to tell the facts of what happened (Justice *et al.*, 2022).

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| Advocacy and policy change |
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## 1.8 Temporary shelters

The provision of temporary shelter is an important inclusion in a victim empowerment strategy, offering victims immediate protection and safety away from threats of harm. Furthermore, shelters serve as places of safety where a range of essential services can be offered to victims. These services may include legal aid, psychosocial and emotional support, support for the children of victims, economic empowerment and facilitating reintegration into the families of the survivors and the society at large. According to (Leemis *et al.*, 2022:15), shelters should not only offer physical security but also psychological assistance, allowing victims the opportunity to rest, and reset their minds (Albanesi *et al.*, 2021).

When victims are compelled to leave their homes due to violence, their vulnerability increases and they need safe places to stay (Childress *et al.*, 2024; Justice *et al.*, 2022). Shelters should have information on various issues such as safety, crisis hotlines, support groups, mental health professionals and therapy (Fraser *et al.*, 2024). In addition, the Western Cape Government on VEP (WCG, Social Crime Prevention Directorate, 2021) advocates from a rights-based approach that persons in shelters should have access to services such as trauma debriefing and counselling, skills development, and building capacity. Adequate and safe shelters offer immediate protection from abusive partners, ensuring that women and their children have a secure environment where they can recover and develop plans for their next steps (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011).

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| Temporary shelters |
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| Workbook page 18 |
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## 1.9 Financial independence

Economic dependency is one of the major reasons why most abused women remain in abusive partnerships (Justice *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, financial independence is a vital

component of a victim empowerment strategy because if financial vulnerability is effectively addressed, victims will be able to break the cycle of economic abuse giving them the autonomy to make financial decisions. Financial independence also empowers victims to take a stand against abuse, including stepping out of abusive relationships.

Financial dependency makes a person susceptible to control and manipulation by the perpetrator (Adams *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, financial independence may provide a gateway from abusive relationships (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:723). Financial independence can be gained through job training, small businesses, skill development, and access to jobs (Dichter & Rhodes, 2011). Clearly, employment and income-generating projects are crucial practical support needs for female victims of partner abuse (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2022:721), enabling them to become self-sufficient and self-reliant.

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| Financial independence | Workbook page 19 |
|------------------------|------------------|

**1.10 Continuous assessment and improvement**

Any victim empowerment strategy should be continuously assessed, adapted and improved to ensure that it addresses the ever-changing needs of victims of female partner abuse, within a fast-changing society. The demands and changes brought about by the Covid-19 epidemic clearly indicated how global changes can filter down to microsystems and individuals. The evolving impact of social media and Artificial Intelligence should be noted and its impact included in victim empowerment strategies going forward. Continuous assessment and improvement of strategies are also needed to strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration among key departments such as social development, the judiciary and the police service.

## 2. OTHER DIRECTIVES FROM LITERATURE

When reviewing the literature on gender-based violence, some directives came to the fore.

### 2.1 Trauma-informed approach

A trauma-informed approach is widely recognised as a framework for addressing trauma and then specifically with persons affected by gender-based violence (Sperlich, *et al.*, 2021:187). All service providers should adopt the key values and principles of trauma-informed care, such as safety, transparency and trust, empowerment, voice and choice and an awareness of gender, cultural and historical issues.

### 2.2 Empowerment

Heywood and Mulveen (2021:205) share the thrivership model which integrates elements of post-traumatic growth and empowerment. An outline of their model is included in Figure 1 and includes the provision of safety and safeguarding, the opportunity to share stories and hearing the voices of victims and a social response to gender-based violence.

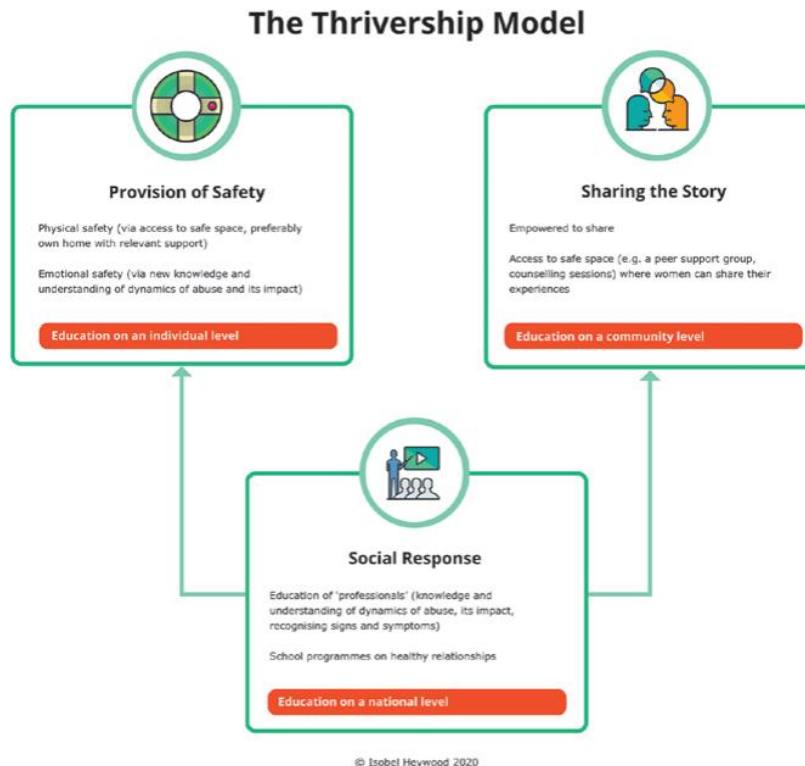




Figure 1: The revised version (2020) of the thrivership model (Heywood & Mulveen, 2021:205)

A secure and supportive environment should be available to survivors of female partner abuse, where they feel protected and respected. This emphasis on the provision of safety links with the key principles of trauma-informed care and includes physical and emotional safety (Levers, 2022). According to a narrative approach, survivors should have the opportunity to narrate their stories at their own pace, using expressive art and creative activities (Malchiodi, 2020) should they find that helpful. To enhance the broader social response to gender-based violence, social workers and other professionals should be equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills development.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Empowering victims of female partner abuse is a gradual and on-going process. The findings of this study show that it is important to create a safe and non-judgemental environment that respects the victim's autonomy and choices. It is therefore imperative to use a strategy which encourages collaboration among professionals, organisations and community members to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to victim empowerment. Lee and Hudson (2017:143) place empowerment centrally within the "person-environment configuration" which is one of the most widely used lenses for social workers. This links with the bio-ecological approach, where life histories (chronosystem), spaces where individuals function (different systems), and the interactions and transactions in those systems (proximal processes) are relevant when planning and implementing interventions.