

Chapter 45

Violence, Emotionally Abusive and Controlling Behaviour in Intimate Partner Relationships: The Case of Bindura Urban in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on intimate partner violence (IPV) in relationships in the Bindura urban of Zimbabwe. IPV exert a long-term influence in relationships. One of the most dangerous forms of violence is performed by an intimate partner. People in relationships experience all forms of IPV such as physical, emotional, economic, and sexual. Violence is often perpetrated against an intimate partner as a way of showing systematic patterns of dominance and control. Qualitative methodology was used in this study. Data was collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and documentary sources. The research concludes that intimate partner violence impacts survivors' immediate sexual, physical and psychological health and increases the risks of longer-term health problems and social stigma.

INTRODUCTION

According to Morse (1995) Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most pervasive forms of violence across the world and is often the cause of serious physical and mental health problems. IPV is defined as physical, sexual and psychological maltreatment of one partner against another in the form of slapping, kicking, biting, using a weapon, verbal assault, beating and raping (Basile, Arias, Desai, and Thompson, 2004; Douglas and Hines, 2011). The National Coalition of Anti-violence Programs (NCAVP, 2012) also defines IPV as an inclusive term that means a pattern of behaviour where one intimate partner coerces, dominates or isolates another intimate partner to maintain power and control

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over the partner and the relationship. IPV is also known as domestic violence, dating violence, and/or partner abuse. The term IPV often includes sexual violence and psychological abuse. In most cases psychological and sexual forms of abuse often, but not always accompany physical violence. However, one major challenge has been the inconsistencies in the definitions used in research, particularly with regard to inclusion or exclusion of sexual and psychological abuse by male intimate partners. This has resulted in most global quantitative studies on the causes of IPV focusing solely on physical violence (Douglas & Hines, 2012; NCAVP, 2012). In this study IPV is described as physical, psychological and sexual violence directed against an intimate partner.

Abusive partners may use a myriad of tactics and strategies to exert and maintain control over their partners. These strategies include psychological/emotional, economic, physical, verbal, sexual, cultural abuse, isolation and intimidation. IPV can occur in short or long-term relationships, with current or past partners and affects all communities (NCAVP, 2012). The patriarchal conception of IPV contends that it is perpetrated by men who are motivated by a need to dominate their female partners and maintain male privilege. When women are violent it is assumed to be in self-defence and the consequences for such violence in most cases are thought to be negligible (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pagelow, 1981; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Walker, 1979).

In Zimbabwe, IPV is widely acknowledged as a great concern from a human rights, health and economic perspective. In 2006, Zimbabwe enacted the Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 15:16). The goal of the Act is to “to make provision for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence. Despite this legislation and other measures to combat domestic violence, there is widespread recognition in Zimbabwe that there is still a lot of work to do in order to protect victims of domestic violence”.

Several key decisions are embedded in the decision to focus here on IPV, which is only one of the many forms of violence and abuse that women and girls experience globally. First, IPV is the most common form of violence. At the population level, it greatly exceeds the prevalence of all other forms of physical and sexual abuse in women’s lives. Second, more research is available on IPV than on other forms of gender-based violence, making the topic more mature for review and synthesis. Third, IPV is a strategic entry point for efforts to reduce violence more broadly – because the family, where the vast majority of violent acts occur, is also where habits and behaviours are formed for successive generations. Fourth, IPV shares a range of determinants or contributing causes with other types of gender-based violence, especially at the level of norms and institutional responses. Focusing on IPV also builds a strong and necessary foundation for preventing other forms of abuse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is no single theory that covers all cases of IPV. Theories on the causes of IPV include psychological and social theories. Psychological theories consider personality traits and mental characteristics of the perpetrator while social theories consider external factors in the perpetrator’s environment such as the family structure, stress and social learning. There is however, a growing concern around apparent inter-generational cycles of domestic violence (Browman, 2003).

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