

LOVE IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE:

Understanding the Motivations for Remaining in Union and Coping Strategies Adopted by Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in Eswatini.

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) presents a major concern in sub-Saharan Africa and globally because it affects a significant proportion of women. Although IPV has diverse implications for the health and wellbeing of women, women are remaining in these violent relationships. This study aims to explore why married women in Eswatini are remaining in union in the face of physical or sexual abuse using a descriptive qualitative study design that is currently ongoing. Semi-structured interviews are being conducted with a purposive sample of 53 married women who reported to have experienced some form of sexual or physical abuse in their union. Our preliminary analysis suggests that three-quarters of the women reported to have thought of ending their union as a result of abuse. Since this study is ongoing, we anticipate that findings from the qualitative interviews will provide richer explanation for the motivation for which women are remaining in abusive relations.

Keywords: *Eswatini; intimate partner violence; sexual abuse and physical abuse.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, gender-based violence has become a major concern in sub-Saharan African and globally particularly because it cuts across all levels of education, income status, religion affiliation, occupational status, type of residence, marital status, household wealth, children/parity and alcohol consumption (Koenig, 2003 and Russell, 1990).

It is estimated that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. In Eswatini, gender based violence is a persistent challenge, disproportionately affecting women and girls with approximately 1 in 3 females having experienced some form of sexual abuse by age 18 years, and 48 percent of women reporting to have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime (UNFPA, 2007). Recent statistics from a national study on violence against children and young women in Eswatini reports that nearly half of young females aged 13-24 years reported that they had experienced some form of sexual violence (UNICEF 2017). Among those who are 18-24-year olds, 10.7% had been raped while 28.2% had been coerced into sexual intercourse.

Similarly, a report by the UNFPA delivered at the Royal Swazi Hotel on the 21 February 2019, mentioned that attitudes towards GBV in general in Eswatini continue to be worryingly accepting as about 33% of women and 16% of men believe that a husband is justified for hitting his wife for any offence (MICS, 2014). GBV undermines the agency and ability of women to claim and exercise their rights as citizens. Even after the violence have started, women tend to stay in those violent relationships which are not good for their well-being. Staying in an abusive relationship can cause an array of

health problems ranging from physical and sexual injuries to psychological and psychiatric disorders. According to (Stevens, 2001), GBV lead to poor nutrition, exacerbation of chronic illness, substance abuse, brain trauma, organ damage, partial or permanent disability, chronic pain, unprotected sex which can lead to sexually transmitted infections, HIV and unwanted pregnancies, pelvic inflammatory disease, gynaecological problems, low-birth weight, miscarriage, adverse pregnancy outcomes, maternal death, suicide, and death. It can further lead to the loss of employment and earnings.

The number of people being abused and remaining with their perpetrators in Eswatini, seems to be escalating daily. According to the Times of Swaziland dated 8 November 2018 stated that Abuse cases reported During October 2018 were higher than those recorded in the previous months. The statement was proved by the statistics of psychosocial services rendered by the Swaziland Action Against Abuse (SWAGAA), which said that a total of 87 people during October reported that they were either sexually, physically, financially and emotionally abused while only 69 cases were reported in November. These reported cases showed an increase of about 26.1%.

Several studies have examined the motivations for remaining in violent relationships in diverse contexts. The findings have suggested that women more often weigh the possibility of remarriage as a challenge especially those with children. They believe moving out of abusive relationship will complicate the future of their children. Merchant & Whiting (2011) point out that women also put their children first, sacrificing their own safety. Social beliefs about relationships, marriage and motherhood typically associate women with acts of undying loyalty requiring them to commit to and work on maintaining their relationships even when they are abusive (Fraser, 2005: 15). In most instances, women blame themselves for the abuse they experience. Women often believe that if they just try harder, love more, or be a more worthy person, then the abuse will stop because they will no longer be deserving of it (Fraser, 2005; Power, et al., 2006; Wood, 2001). Leaving an abusive

relationship may be difficult for a woman because the thought of existing outside an intimate relationship could be more painful than staying in an abusive one. It has also been argued that leaving an abusive relationship can be difficult for women because “the desire to be loved, and to love romantically is pivotal to understandings of self as properly feminine subjects” (Power 2006).

From the foregoing, it is evident that women have numerous motivations for staying in abusive relationships despite their costs. However, all these studies are concentrated in developed countries with rarely any scholarly evidence from the African region. African women may have alternative motivations for remaining in violent relationships. For example, many African religious denominations emphasize that wives should accept authority of their spouses and always be submissive to them. It is through this concept that they prefer staying no matter how horrible consequences they face. Given the level of intimate partner violence experienced by married women in Eswatini and its implications for their health and wellbeing, this study seeks to examine why married women in Eswatini remain in union in the face of violence. A proper awareness of the motivations could be of great value to policy makers, it will assist in policy implementation and setting up the required necessities to help the victims of GBV who even if they see they are being abuse by their partner, they decide on staying.

Objective

Major objective:

- To determine the Frequency and Severity GBV forms among female victims remaining with their perpetrators.

Research question

- What is the Frequency and Severity of GBV forms among female victims who remain with their perpetrators?

DATA AND METHODS

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted to understand the motivations for remaining in violent relations. Interviews are taking place at the Gender Links a non-governmental organisation that promotes gender equality and justice, located in Mbabane, Eswatini. Only the researchers and participant were present in each interview. An interview guide was developed based on the literature review and the themes that emerged from a previously conducted but unpublished pilot assessment.

Study Participants and Sampling

Participants in this study are gender-based violence survivors (women) aged 15-49 who reported with Gender Links Eswatini, after their selection from their respective Tinkhundla and supervised under their different Town councils with the help of Gender Links a Non-governmental Organisation that promotes gender equality and justice. Gender Links is working towards a Sunrise campaign which aims to equip and empower Gender Based Violence Victims. The main reason for choosing such a population, was the fact that they were easily accessible and reachable. A total of 12 married women were successfully enrolled in the study. Data collection is ongoing, and the process is expected to be completed, analysed and interpreted before the conference date.

Sampling procedure

The convenience or non-sampling techniques was the right procedure for the selection of respondents through the use of a purposive sampling technique which relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units to be studied and the sample being investigated. Since Gender links

works with 12 different town councils around Swaziland inclusive of Mbabane, Ngwenya, Pigg's Peak, Zulwini, Matsapha, Manzini, Mankayane, Nhlangano, Hlatikhulu, Lavumisa, Vuvulane and Steki, each victim will be selected in each town so as to ensure that all four regions of the country are catered for and represented, which will then sum up to the total of 12 participants

Research Design

This was a cross-sectional quantitative research design because, it gathered data that was measurable and presented using statistics measures. The study was conducted through a cross-sectional study because, cross-sectional surveys are used to gather information on a population at a single point in time. Also a cross-sectional design is used to investigate population by selecting samples to analyse and discover occurrences. It was also a field study because it look a "snap short" of a population at a certain time allowing conclusions about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn (kalibbala, 2008). The study used primary data which was collected through conducting face to face interviews through a set of structured questionnaires.

Data collection and data sources

The data for this study will be collected for 4 days each day for each region. A central place will be used as the main focus area, where participants will be gathered. HHohho region is made up of four towns (Mbabane, Ngwenya, Pigg's Peak and Zulwini), Mbabane city council will be used as the central place for all four participants to gather. Manzini region is made up of three towns (Manzini, Matsapha, Mankayane) and Manzini city council will be our median point. Lubombo region, is made up of three towns (Vuvulane, Siteki and Lavumisa) and Steki town council will be used as the central place of gathering. Shiselweni region is made up of two towns (Hlathikhulu and Nhlangano) and Nhlangano town council will be used as a central place of

gathering. Participants will be given different time schedules and an hour will be given to each participant during the course of the interview.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and translated into English by a professional translator. Once data collection has been completed, interviews will be prepared for analysis using Atlas.ti software. All interviews will be read several times by each of the researchers to gain a feeling about the data and to initiate coding and the extraction of meanings. Thematic analysis, as described in Miles and Huberman (1994), will be conducted once the principal codes and categories have been achieved.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Description of the sample.

The sample comprised of a total of 53 Gender based violence women survivors reported with Gender Links Eswatini who are still living with their perpetrators. Most of the respondents (50.9%) were aged between 25 and 34 followed by 22.6% of respondents aged 15-24, (20.8%) of other respondents aged 35-44 years and least respondents off about 5.7% were aged 45+. Amongst them, 37.7% attended only primary education, the majority of 50.9% attended secondary/ high school education and the remaining 15.1% have reached their tertiary education. Furthermore, all respondents represented all four regions of the country, most of them were from the Manzini region with 45.3%, Hhohho 28.3%, Shiselweni 17.0% and Lubombo with the least of 9.4%. Most of all the respondents covered reported to be in a relationship, where 41.5% were married and 56.5% were cohabiting. Moreover, 52.8% were employed while 41.5% were unemployed and 5.7% were pensioners. There were two main types of religion affiliations among the respondents; those from traditional churches inclusive of Romans, Catholics, Zionist etc and those from ministries and others were non-religious. Most of the respondents were attended traditional churches (52.8%), Ministries (30.2%), and non- religious respondents (13.2%). In addition to that, 64.2% of them had children with the perpetrator and 35.8% did not have children with the perpetrator. When it comes to the decision making process, 11.3% of respondents made decisions for the family. Finally, 69.9% of respondents said decisions were made by either husband if married or by boyfriend if cohabiting and the remaining 18.9% mentioned that decisions were made jointly. (table1).

Table 1: Description of the sample

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Considered leaving perpetrator		
Yes	13	24.5
No	40	75.5
Age of respondents		
15-24	12	22.6
25-34	27	50.9
35-44	11	20.8
45+	3	5.7
Education Attainment		
Primary	20	37.7
Secondary/ high school	25	47.2
Tertiary	5	15.1
Region		
Manzini	24	45.3
Hhohho	15	28.3
Shiselweni	9	17.0
Lubombo	5	9.4
Marital Status		
Married	22	41.5
Cohabiting	31	58.5
Occupation		
Employed	28	52.8
Not employed	22	41.5
Pensioner	3	5.7
Religion		
Traditional	30	56.6
Ministry	16	30.2
Non-religious	7	13.2
Children Attainment		
Yes	34	64.2
No	19	35.8
Decision Making		
Yourself	6	11.3
Husband/ boyfriend	37	69.9
Together	10	18.9

Anticipated Results

This study is currently ongoing with descriptive qualitative interviews currently underway. We anticipate that findings from the interviews will provide a richer context for understanding the reason why married women in Eswatini are remaining in violent union despite its implications for their health and wellbeing. An awareness of these motivations could motivate better and targeted interventions aimed at addressing and improving the socioeconomic conditions of women who are victims of intimate partner violence.

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