

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed at examining the distribution of, and factors associated to women's experience of violence, and where victims seek help from after experiencing violence. It also aimed at identifying predictors for women's experience of violence, and where women would seek help after victimization.

6.2 Summary of Major Findings/Discussion

This was achieved by employing binary logistic regressions which established that age, education, marital status, ethnicity, residence, province, and SES were the key predictors for women's experience of violence; age, marital status, household headship, province and ethnicity were found to be predictors for whether victims seek help; while age, education, marital status, ethnicity, residence, and province were key predictors for where women seek help after victimization. The variables identified as key predictors for a woman's experience of violence were made against small R-squared values, and therefore calls for more studies of this kind to be conducted so as to monitor the observed relationships between these variables.

This study found the prevalence of women experiencing violence to be 9.2%. It also found that a high proportion of victims (76.8%) do not seek help from the services available after their experience of violence.

These findings clearly provide a basis for designing programs at local and national levels to enable the prevalence of violence against women to be monitored. Victims need to be encouraged to seek help from the services provided as opposed to not seeking help as a strategy for dealing with victimization.

The low use of services and their non-use in some instances call into question the effectiveness of services and whether they are appropriate or even available. For

example the study found that generally shelters and women's centers were not used by victims, while in the North West Province victims are not likely to seek help from counseling (0.00 odds). Another matter of concern is that young women experience high levels of violence yet they have the lowest percentage for seeking help from available services. Surprisingly, separated women (divorced, widowed and those not living with their partners) were found to be more likely to experience violence than never married women and almost two and a half times as likely as never married women to seek help from services. Whether this violence is domestic or societal needs to be investigated, as separated women could still be victims of violence from ex-spouses and this could imply, for example, that they lack legal protection once their relationships have ended.

6.3 Conclusions

These findings clearly provide a basis for further research to be carried out in this area of study, and the designing of programs at local and national levels, to enable the prevalence of violence against women to be monitored. Victims need to be encouraged to seek help from the services provided as opposed to not seeking help as a strategy for dealing with victimization.

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ex-spouses and this could imply, for example, that they lack legal protection once their relationships have ended.

6.4 Recommendations

Knowing the predictors of experiencing violence and of seeking help after one has experienced violence, would enable the planning of targeted intervention strategies with more precision, to cater particularly for the young women that are not turning to available services as an option.

Attention also needs to be paid to residential and regional imbalances of service provision and their utilization. Establishing why services are under used and what services would be relevant would give insight into improving use of services for victims, and the design of relevant interventions that take into account the cultural economic, social and historical context within which this violence occurs.

The impact of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) of 1998 and the Amended Sexual Offences Act of 2007 can also be assessed against the findings of this study. This should be done to observe their impact and effectiveness as the DHS was conducted before these Acts were promulgated. Data from the DHS 2003, if made available, would help in the assessment of the effectiveness of the DVA 1998 and would thus facilitate the monitoring of violence experienced by women.

Further research to continually monitor the levels and patterns of violence against women is required to give a clearer picture of the challenges which face South Africa, and the directions that need to be taken to alleviate this crisis. This will permit the impact of interventions put into place to arrest its escalation to be monitored and evaluated, and to inform policy and relevant interventions.

Taking into account of the relationships established in this study will assist in the design of both local and national programs and measures that could support the decisions made to help women come out of violent situations, and to cope when they

decide to stay in those situations, due to the dictate of circumstances. Emphasis should not just be placed on reporting experiences of violence by women, but on availing opportunities needed to release them from their entrapment and support them in the decisions they take to limit the abuse they suffer.

Violence against women needs to be seen as a crime in all spheres, public and private, and treated as such. This should be reflected in society and institutionalized structures and hence efforts to reform the responses of these institutions should go beyond training to change their cultures, but should also impact on the conviction to change attitudes and practices towards violence against women.