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Perceptions on Domestic Violence against Women in the Havana Informal Settlement, Windhoek, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in Namibia is an issue that the country has been trying to combat since its independence in 1990. The World Health Organisation (as cited in Edwards-Jauch, 2016), states that gender inequalities increase the risks of violence against women by men. Furthermore, a study conducted by Sumbadze (2014), indicates that there is a correlation between domestic violence and gender inequality. The study found that female participants who embraced gender equality and not male superiority, were less accommodating towards violence against women and girls. Therefore, to decrease the problem of violence against women in our country, it is essential that the perceptions of Namibians who are affected directly and indirectly by violence against women in various areas in Windhoek, including the Havana Informal settlement, are studied. A qualitative study was carried out in the Havana Informal Settlement in the Moses //Garoeb constituency. The aim of this research was to explore the perceptions of people in the Havana Informal Settlement regarding domestic violence against women. The study used an explorative case study approach. The sampling method that was employed was purposive sampling, which consisted of participants aged between 30 and 49 years residing in the Havana Informal Settlement. Twelve semi-structured interviews which were guided by an interview schedule were employed to collect data from six males and six females residing in the Havana informal settlement. In addition, interviews were conducted with the constituency councillor and a social worker from the Gender Based Protection Unit, who were the key informant participants for the study. The data was analysed through thematic analysis and grouped into themes, namely, knowledge of domestic violence (DV), characteristics of the forms of DV, the contributing factors and the role of the community. The study found that the participants were knowledgeable about domestic violence within their community. The different forms of domestic violence against women in the community were identified as physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, economic violence and psychological violence. Physical violence and sexual violence were indicated as the most common forms of domestic violence. Furthermore, there were at least 27 contributing factors to domestic violence which were identified. These were then clustered into different categories, namely, social and economic factors, unequal power relations and gender inequality factors, cultural and traditional factors and emotional and relationship factors. The contributing factors were all identified by the participants according to their

knowledge and experience of domestic violence. However, three of the participants were not aware of the structures, programmes or services in place for domestic violence victims in the community. The participants revealed their ideal solutions to combat this phenomenon in their community which involve unison among the community members and community member participation. The findings of this study contribute to the existing knowledge about perceptions of domestic violence in the Havana informal settlement. The study also creates awareness about the community itself and domestic violence in this community. The conclusions and recommendations could result in assisting victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, domestic violence is a social problem that is linked to other social issues such as gender inequality, which is an obstacle in social development. Therefore, tackling issues of domestic violence brings us closer to combatting gender inequalities in communities.

Keywords:

Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Patriarchy, Women, Gender Equality, Perceptions, Contributing Factors, Havana Settlement, Namibia