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## The Role of Culture on Violence against Women in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Domboshava, Dunya Village

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### **Abstract:**

*This study focused on the role on culture on violence against women in Zimbabwe with a special focus on Domboshava, Dunya village. The study intended to help women who are subject to violence in respect for culture and to reveal the centrality of culture approach to development. The study also aimed to explore ways in which women are constrained in the economic, social, political, religious and cultural areas. The study also sought to find out if women are aware of the abuse that affects them in their culture and to explore on the cultural factors that affect women. The study also looked at the means of mitigating the impact of culture on women and the legal aspects that can address the issue on the role of culture on violence against women. The study further highlighted the society's perceptions and attitudes towards them. The study later proposed strategies that emancipate on the role on culture on violence against women. Data was collected from twenty (20) women who participated in the study in Dunya village, Domboshava. A mixed methodology was used and a structured questionnaire and interview questions was used to collect data. The researchers' findings revealed that women are victims on violence and women tend to endure abusive marriages in respect of their culture and tradition. Women have tended to accept the abuse that they do not report the cases of abuse or violence. The researcher also noted that women are looked down upon and the society has a negative attitude towards them and these are deep rooted in socio-cultural and religious practices. Pursuant to the study, the researchers among other recommendations, recommended that there is a great need of effort to end violence against women and men should be involved. There is also need to promote and protect the economic, social and cultural rights of women; this therefore will provide a different opportunity for women in all sectors of life.*

**Keywords:** Culture, violence, women, development, religion

### **1. Introduction**

Violence against women has no boundaries as it affects women from all forms of lives. It infringes on women's rights and cuts across culture and religious barriers. According to the UN General Assembly 2006, violence against women can be influenced by economic status, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, religion and culture. This clearly shows that it does not choose, it can happen to anywhere. In a baseline study done for the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer of Zimbabwe 2013, Zimbabwe was ranked number three out of the six countries in the survey, in terms of levels of violence against women. The Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) 2010-2011, it shows that 42% of women in Zimbabwe have either been physically, emotionally or sexually abused at some point in their lives. In most cases it is someone they are close to.

#### *1.1. Background of the Study*

The UN General Assembly (1993) defined violence against women as, "Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering for women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private". Violence is in some cases not taken seriously by communities, so it remains hidden, under-reported and deeply traumatizing violation of dignity, European Institute for Gender Equality (2013).

Writers especially from Africa have sought explanations on domestic violence in cultural beliefs of the people. In some societies wife battering is regarded as normal in the African culture APWLD (2006) This is supported by rates of acceptance of wife-beating which ranged from 70% of women in Uganda (Koenig et al 2003), 53% of women in Zimbabwe (Hindin, 2003) and 64 % of women in Nigeria (Coyedirán and Isaago Abonihe 2005). In a study of Uganda, young women accepted wife beating more than elder women (Koenig et al 2003). This was supported by a study done in Zimbabwe which examined women's attitudes towards wife beating and noted that young age, residing in rural areas, lower household wealth, lower job status and less secondary education were all associated was justifying wife beating. (Mindin, 2003).

Marriage by abdications is a practice found in most SADC countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa. It violates the rights of girl child and women in the sense that in most cases, the girl is forced into marriage without her consent. Women are disadvantaged in Zimbabwe, with economic dependency and social norms preventing them from combating sex discrimination. Despite legal prohibition, customs such as forced marriage are still in place for example in Nyanga and Makoni Districts the girl child who spoke with action aid representatives during a strategy operationalisation program for Zimbabwe recently, said girls were dropping out of school in Nyanga and Makoni district as they married at an early age.

Women in most cultures in Zimbabwe and social economic daises experience gender violence and its toll is overwhelming. According to Osirim and Johnson (2010) the Zimbabwe Republic Police in reports, that more than 20 women in Dunga village of Domboshava are physically assaulted by their spouses daily because violence is seen as a way of defining male dominance as the head of household and instilling discipline within the family. Violence is commonly “accepted”. This result in that woman culturally believes that it is normal for a man to abuse her.

On the other hand, other explanations point out that the uneven distribution of power, within the African marriages, the impact of polygamy were the causes of violence within the African context. Furthermore, the researcher pointed an example of Dunga village in Domboshava, the payment of bride price makes it difficult to leave abusive husbands. More so Armstrong (2001) studies in Zimbabwe, supports the role of culture on violence among the shone people.

Armstrong (2001) points out that conflict arises out of sexual jealousy within the cultural context where male promiscuity is unquestioned but rather encouraged. If a woman ask questions, she is seen to be challenging the authority of the husband, thus conflict may arise precipitating into domestic violence. However, this is further supported by statistics of victim friendly unit of Dunga, Domboshava which had 30 women who were physical and psychologically damaged by their husbands from (June to October 2011)(Victim friendly unit 2011).

The religious sects in Zimbabwe such as apostolic churches have come under scrutiny at national level following revelations that they are violating women rights. It has also been noted that girls as young as 10 years are being given for marriage on the basis of spiritual guidance within the apostolic sect churches, which is a gross violation of children rights. The religious sects in Zimbabwe have been accused of barring women and children from seeking medical attention from hospitals and this has contributed to unwarranted deaths and high maternal mortality ratio which currently stands at 525/100000. Pregnant women are not allowed to make antenatal visits to hospitals or clinics for checkups. This has resulted in deaths of both mothers and infants mainly due to complications which would not have been detected timorously.

### *1.2. Statement of the Problem*

Documented evidence, observations and statements confirm that millions of women around African communities are systematically subjected to violence in the name of tradition and respect of culture. The sad thing however is that most women tend to endure abusive marriages even when they are being deprived on their rights as human beings and suffer violence in their lives. The role of culture on violence has devastated the state and rights of women in most parts of sub-Sahara and in particular Zimbabwe.

### *1.3. Research Questions*

The role of culture on violence against women in Zimbabwe (Case Study in Domboshava, Dunya village), and this was done by trying to find out the following research questions;

1. What cultural factors affect women?
2. What are the legal aspects that address the issue on the role of culture on violence against women?
3. What mitigating factors can be put in place by the community to improve the lives of women who are abused?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. The Negative Aspects of Culture That Affects Women*

According to Connell (1994), machismo may cause some Hispanic men to believe that they have the right to use violent or abusive behavior to control their partners. In turn, Latina women and other family or community members may excuse violent or controlling behavior because they believe that husbands have ultimate authority over them and their children.

Msasa Project (2004) notes that cultural notions of women weaker sex and the patriarchal attitude that men own women, encourage women to be submissive to their husbands and be accepting of his behavior without questioning .Within most socio-cultural contexts, different forms of abuse which include emotional or psychological, physical or sexual abuse is not condemned and is viewed as the entitlement of men. Violence is seen as a way of defining male dominance as the head of household and instilling discipline within the family .Abuse is thus commonly “accepted”. This results in women believing that it is normal for a man to abuse her.

Traditional, cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations .Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional culture practices and beliefs ,some of which are beneficial to all members ,while others are harmful to a specific group ,such as women .These harmful traditional practices include female genital mutilation ,forced feeding of women ,early marriages ,the various taboos or practices that prevent women from controlling their own fertility, nutritional taboos, cultural birth practices, son preference and its implications for the status of a girl child ,female infanticide ,early pregnancies and dowry price.

Chuulu (2001) posits that traditions and culture pertaining to marriage have perpetuated violence against women. He notes that in Zambia, the family is considered sacrosanct and the affairs of family members, private. It is within this context that spouse beating has

led to maiming and death in some cases. The witnessing of violence in the home by both girls and boys has been a contributing factor in the perpetuation of violence against women. Boys exposed to their acts of battery tend to internalize this behavior and in turn act it out on their wives when they get married. Girls on the other hand learn to accept violence as a way of life and to no challenge it. Gender violence whether in public or private sphere creates permanent constraints in the ability of victims especially women. Thus, violence in this way retards development at the individual and national level.

Connors (1992) and Connell(1994) both alluded to the fact that many countries still do not regard the violence perpetuated by men against women in the home, outside as a serious concern. Marital rape, for example, has only recently come in some countries to be regarded as a criminal offence. Walker (2009) noted that some cultures believe early marriages guarantee a long period of fertility, very young brides may need a smaller dowry. Females young age at marriage is slowly rising in most of Africa.

Sexual objectification theory postulates that many women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). However, turning to women's interpersonal experiences research indicates that being sexually objectified is a regular occurrence for them (Bartky, 1990). Women end up enduring the rather than enjoying the marriage and some women will even deny that the abuse is taking place only in trying to respect their cultural values.

One can point that there is evidence that some negative cultural beliefs, traditional and practices which are deep rooted in the social and sexual lives of most African ethnic groups, have also contributed to the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Unequal power relations make it difficult for women to negotiate safe sex, it gives women a subordinate position and make them socially dependent on male family member, women have less access to health care, employment, education and information thus leave them in a poorer position to control when, with whom or in what circumstance they have sex. However one may note that HIV/AIDS programme should collect and use sex and age disaggregated data to monitor and evaluate impact of programme on different populations, build capacity of key stakeholders to address gender inequalities.

Gender-based violence both reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of rights victims (Connell, 1994). Connell (1994) postulates that men have always used violence against women to perpetuate the gender hierarchy, to keep a woman "in her place", to stifle her right to speak, to come and go, to make decisions and to control her sexuality. This gracious and persistence violence has been largely condoned by most cultures. Connell notes that in fact, in many cultures it was and sometimes still is, regarded as a man's right to beat his wife. Violence against women is rarely perceived as a violation of human rights and until recently organization concerned with the defense of human rights omitted it from their list of violations Connell, (1994). Connors, (1992) notes that most countries refuse to penalize a husband who forces his wife to engage in unwanted sexual activity.

Msasa Project (1997) asserts that violence against women has a number of severe health consequences. Typical outcomes of physical and sexual assaults include partial and permanent injury, pelvic inflammatory diseases, unwanted pregnancies, miscarriage and gynecological problems. Consequently, violence impacts on a number of the other areas of health such as maternal morbidity and mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and mental health. Evan (1993) notes that abuse can subtly, but with increasing consequences, undermine a woman's self confidence and esteem almost without her knowing.

Psychological, physical and sexual abuse can all have profound mental health consequences, including severe anxiety and depression, as well as stress related symptoms' such as ulcers and high blood pressure. Women are commonly blamed for the violence they receive end, there is still strong family and social pressure for women to remain within marriages, no matter how abusive. (Msasa Project,1998). This can leave women severely isolated from any form of support or help. Those leaving such marriages often have limited options to support themselves and their children, and face poverty and isolation. Msasa Project (1997) noted that each year a number of women try to commit suicide to escape such difficulties.

One pointed also that these cultural practices like female genital mutilation, early marriages, wife inheritance and common practices like sexual abuse, myths like sex with a virgin cures AIDs, remove women's reproductive health and rights, cement gender inequality and lock men into practice that assert male power over women.

However, to add, women assume the major share of care-giving in the family, including for those living with and affected by HIV, is often unpaid and is based on the assumption that women naturally fill this role. There is a need of programme that can support women in their care-giving roles by offering community-based care and support, also the need for programme that can promote economic opportunities for women for example through microfinance and micro-credit, vocational and skills training and other income generating activities. Educating girls and women makes them equipped to make safer sexual decision.

Cultural violence is stopping women accesses their most basic human rights-to safety, health, schooling, and work. Due to violence women experience injury mental health and emotional problems. It also stops women and their families from making positive changes in their own lives in order to end the poverty they and their communities experience.

## *2.2. Legal Framework to Mitigate Violence against Women in Zimbabwe*

There are several acts and policies that have been put in formulated and implemented by the Post Colonial Zimbabwean government to achieve gender equality. The equal pay regulation promulgated in 1980, prescribes that equal pay for work of equal value against a background of unjustified inequalities in pay and recognition or status that were based on social construction of sex. Women were noted that they were not only discriminated in terms of recruitments but also in terms of levels of remuneration. Women earned lower wages and salaries regardless of similarity of work done to that of men. However, the post colonial government of Zimbabwe introduced equal pay regulations in 1980. This policy provision had positive impact on the status of and benefits for women in various industries because it is recognition of the importance of their contributions to development in various industries, hence the need to remunerate them in the same way as men.

Chuulu (2001) alluded that, legal age of majority (LAMA) which was promulgated in 1982 and it conferred majority status on women. Before this law African women were regarded as perpetual minors. Custom prescribed that women are minors therefore subordinate to men throughout their lives. Women could not make independent decisions regarding their lives. The implications of such customary values and practices are that women will remain perpetual subordinates to men. A situation of dependency creates and maintains poverty and blocks empowerment of the subordinates groups. LAMA recognizes that women and men are equal human beings.

According to Centre's for disease control and prevention (2004), violence against women can also result in illness and disability, reinforcing and exacerbating disadvantage. Women who have experienced physical and sexual violence have high rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and the fear of violence can prevent many negotiating safe sexual practice such as condom use and seeking treatment for sexual transmitted infections as other injury such as genital trauma, for example, in the strategy for protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender –based violence in automous, Province of Vojvodina 2008-2009 ( Republic of Serbia), recognition has been given to the need for specialized services for victims of violence against women that are specifically accessible to Romani women ;those with a disability or chronic disease.

Zimbabwe is part of a number of international policies or international conventions that provide for gender equality CEDAW, Beijing platform for action and the convention on civil and political rights but only to mention a few. Chapman (2005) pointed that, despite these achievements, Zimbabwe is still ranking lowly in gender equality ranking. The Human Development Report (2011) revealed that the gender inequality index was at 0.053 compared to an idea of zero. This indicates the generally low status of women with respect to reproductive health, empowerment, access, control, and ownership of economic resources and economic opportunities and participation in decision making.

Other instruments that Zimbabwe is part of are the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa which stipulates that VAW is a violation of basic rights and freedoms. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development makes provision for the implementation of a variety of strategies for member states aimed at eliminating VAW and trafficking. In 2007, the Zimbabwean government enacted the Domestic Violence which seeks to criminalize any form of domestic violence thereby protecting the victims from the perpetrators.

However , the lack or the inadequate implementation of legislation supporting gender inequality or insuring the legal rights of women have deep impact on the lives of women on families ,community and many social and economic context

### *2.3. Mitigation from the Community to Improve the Lives of the Victims of Negative Culture*

Violence against women originates in socio-cultural construction of gender and power, taking many forms. Although such behavior unfolds at the individual level ,theory holds that cultural forces support and perpetuate it (Burt,1990).Recent cross-cultural research also contends that sexual harassment is common in many societies around the world (Barak,1997).A frequent method of coping with sexual harassment is reliance on social support from colleagues ,friends and family members (Gutek and Koss,1993).Researchers have theorized that cultural norms and values heavily influence social –support mobilization (Butzel and Ryan,1997).In particular they reason that support seeking and benefits should be greater in collective cultures ,which emphasizes interpersonal orientation ,affiliation ,and interdependent over independence.

Bbuku-Chuulu et al (2001) observe that for many Zambian women the phrase “spousal abuse” is a foreign concept, yet it epitomizes their many lives .Previous research has shown that spousal abuse and generally violence against women is prevalent in Zambia society. Yet according to Bbuku –Chuulu the record shows that very few cases of violence against women are reported ,let alone brought before the court .He further asserts that there are long –term psychological effects of violence in the home ,not only on the mother ,but the children as well. Efforts to educate society about the ill effects of violence against women have been made but however Bbuku-Chuulu (ibid) notes that in spite of these efforts the violence has not abated .In fact gender violence has escalated so much in Southern Africa that it has caught the attention of both scholars and activists alike.

According to Evans (2006) the persistence of negative customary norms that conflict with and undermine implementation of both national legislation and international human rights standards must be addressed .It is the duty of the state to modify the social and cultural attitudes of both men and women ,with a view to eradicate customary practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either exchanges in both men and female 's knowledge ,attitude and behavior are necessary conditions for achieving the harmonious partnership of men and women and it is essential to improve communication between men and women on issues of sexuality and reproductive health and the understanding of their joint responsibilities ,so that men and women are equal partners in public and private life(Glazer,1979).

Connell (1994) posits that although women who experienced severe abuse were more likely to leave the relationship or seek help, none of the rural women in the study sought help through formal channels despite suffering severe cultural violence. Women are less likely to report sexually harassing incidents if the harasser is their superior Bingham and Scherer, 1993). This relationship maybe even stronger among women from high power distance cultures ,such as the Turkish and the Hispanic ,which emphasize and respect social hierarchy(Hofstede,1980).However in situations involving harasses of status or high power in the organization ,these cultural patterns could further inhibit assertive response for example advocacy and confrontation and gender more avoidant coping mechanism( Bingham and Scherer, 2006).

### **3. Methodology**

To access the research context the study will use the qualitative research method, mainly because there is need for in-depth understanding violence against women. The researcher made use of quantitative techniques in order to obtain information from the respondents. The study population comprised of women residing in Domboshava, particularly in Dunya village, forty women

respondents were appropriate target group for the research question and in terms of age all were above eighteen. The researchers had to sample from this population using simple random sampling technique. Thirty of the women in the Dunya village were sampled and agreed to be part of the study. All the above respondents will be participating through answering questionnaires and interviews. The researchers made use of the interviews and the questionnaires.

The principle of voluntary participation was exercised in the participation of the selected population in the research; none were coerced into taking part and that there would be no incentives for participating as the participation was purely voluntary. Therefore in this study the researchers negotiated for informal consent from the women in Dunya village in Domboshava, before carrying out the study. Secondly, the researchers considered the sensitivity of the topic, respondents were assured that whatever they discuss with the researchers would stay between them and the researchers. Privacy was maintained by not discussing respondents' answers with anyone else. Considering the abusive nature of the women's marriages, the researchers allowed their participants to have their identity remain confidential. The researchers also managed not to put her participants at risk, and respect vulnerable informants. The researcher respected the participants and sites for research. As this research was on the role of culture on violence against them, some participants chose not to be interviewed within their homes in fear of their husbands and other relatives, thus the researcher respected the respondent's preferable sites for the conduction of interviews.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

##### 4.1. Socio Demographic Profile of Participants

The participants were women of Dunya village. Thirty questionnaires were given out of forty, were returned. Thus the response rate was 75%. 43 % of the women 18 -30 years, 21% indicated that they were 31-40 years, 18% were 41-50 years and 14 % were of the 51 -60 years whilst 4% of the women were 61 years of age.

. From the responses of the participants, the researcher found out that most of the negative effects of culture were being experienced by women of the ages 18-30 years, since this age group has the highest percentage rate. This is further supported by other research studies done in Egypt by Abdel (2005), where most married women of the 18-30 years were mostly abused by their husbands.

Highest level of professional qualification	Respondents	Frequency	%
Tertiary level e.g. post graduates	1	0	3
Advanced level	1	0	3
Ordinary level	18	18	60
Junior certificate (ZJC)	5	5	17
Grade seven	4	4	13
Never attended	1	1	3
Total	30	30	100

Table 1: Academic qualifications

Respondents by academic qualification asked respondents what qualification they held, the responses are given in table 1 above. In terms of the highest level of education attained by participants, 3% have tertiary education, 3% attained advanced level, 60% of the women attended school up to ordinary level , 17% attended school up to ZJC, 13 % attended up to grade seven whilst 3 % never attended school. Table 1 above depicts that majority of women hold a certificate in ordinary level and a sizeable number hold the junior certificate. Occurrence of violence because of the negative effects in it was found to be significantly higher in those women who hold the certificate in education.

Number of years in marriage	Number of respondents	%
5-10	13	43
15-20	7	23
20-30	7	23
30+	3	10
Total	30	100

Table 2: Number of years in marriage

Respondents were asked how long they had been married .Their response is summarized in table 2 above. 43 % of women had been married for 5-10 years, 23% had been married for 15-20 years, and 23 % had married for 20 – 30 years, whilst 10% had been married for 30 years. The findings have been interpreted to mean that women gain more control over decision making processes when they have spent years in marriages as shown by the percentage rates above the more years spent in marriage the lesser problems experienced.

##### 4.1.1. Employment

The researchers wanted to find out if the negative aspects in culture affected women empowerment thus the researchers asked the participants, "are you employed? " the responses are shown in table 3 above. In response to question 54% of the women were employed, 46% of the women indicated that they were not employed shown above.

#### *4.2. Cultural Aspects That Affect Women*

Respondents were asked on what cultural aspects affect women, the participants gave answers that showed that violence against women is evident in many forms, including domestic verbal and physical abuse, rape and sexual assault, early and forced marriages, incest and female genital cutting. The participants showed that in most societies, physical abuse is often considered an acceptable behavior and where it is frowned at, it (Idimegwu, 2002).

The researchers also pointed that it is crucial to note that abuse can have devastating effects on a person. Some women end up committing suicides, while others suffer from stress, and some eventually experience nervous break downs to various forms of abuse. In an interview, respondents expressed that the negative cultural aspects affected them in their socio- economic and political life. That from the answers that were given from the respondents the researcher noted that violence against women takes many forms including intimate partner violence and marital rape, sexual violence and other forms of exploitation and trafficking. This left women with a very low status and no confidence in themselves.

##### 4.2.1. Gender Equality

The researchers asked the participants if they were in a polygamous relationship. 21% of the participants were in a polygamous relationship whereas 79% were not. The researcher sought to distinguish from the respondents if they had equal power sharing, only 7% of the respondents had equal power sharing and 93% had no equal power sharing thereby contributing to domestic violence.

The interview question asked if there was equal power sharing in their homes, respondents said no, and this showed to the researcher that women are still regarded as a variety of humanity inferior to the men folk and are therefore treated in manners under serving of human beings. Thus in Africa women are considered as tools used by men they are regarded as objects to be used for pleasure, temptation and elimination .40% of women interviewed said that , when a man beat them they don't report and instead they accept and go on to their knees and beg the husband.

Unfortunately, gender equality is pervasive -it cuts across all issues and hence affects everyone, everyday and in everything. Gender inequality has an impact on access to resources such as property, loans and inheritance. Men's predominant control of economic assets, political power, cultural authority and military might means that men control most of the resources required to implement women's claims for equal rights. Armstrong (2000) pointed that; gender inequality can also impact women and girls through internalization of negative role descriptions applied to them (incompetent, weak, powerless, etc). They may start to believe that they really do possess those negative attributes and act accordingly to the behaviors they deem society prescribes.

According to Copel (2008), culturally bound versions of masculinity sometimes use gender -based violence and other forms of violence as a means of establishing and maintaining power relations and structural inequalities. Unfortunately, culturally dominant norms of masculinity that encourage men to use violence limit women and girls choices, safety and behavior. The formation of dominant and violent military masculinities in conflict zones around the world, creates extreme forms of gender oppression, civilian women are used as sex slaves and gunrunners. During conflict as towns and villages overrun and pillage, women and girls are beaten, enslaved, raped seemingly, justified and perpetuated by a violent military version of masculinity.

##### 4.2.2. Physical Abuse on the Victims

Abuse can be in many forms such as physical or verbal, sexual assault, marital rape, emotional or psychological, verbal aggression amongst others. The physical abuse may include assaults involving beating, burning, slapping, choking, kicking, punches and the use of a weapon (Msasa project 1997). Physical abuse can result in serious injuries or death. Valente and Jensen (2000) note that physical abuser's harm a person physically, mentally and emotionally. It is based on the abusers desire to establish power and control (Berlinger 2001)

The researchers noted that most women endured abusive marriages at home, where most women had fights at home and question (b) further asked what the reason was if the answer was yes. The participants responded in line with the question. 89% women had fights with their husbands whilst 11% did not experience such cases. This is further supported by Koenig et al (2003) who reported that 90% of women in rural Uganda had fights with their husbands and India 56% women also endured abuse in their homes.

Respondents had to indicate the reasons why they had fights, they indicated that their husbands were not paying attention to their needs and not supporting their relatives. This is further supported by research studies done by Martin (1999) who indicated that women are often in great danger in the place where they should be safest within their families. For so many, home is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of their husbands. Most responses were similar.

##### 4.2.3. Majority of Women Being Victims on Cultural Negative Aspects

The researchers wanted to find out the rate at which the role on culture on violence has affected women. From the respondents the researchers noted that the rates of violence against women are higher in culture on which manhood is defined in terms of dominance toughness, entitlements to power or male honor, there are rigid gender roles, and violence is condoned as a means to settle interpersonal disputes (Flood and Pease, 2006). 65% of women suffered from cultural negative effects of culture.

The part b of the question asked if the victims reported the violence, it is touching and so moving that most women endured the abuse in their marriages. Thus, a tradition of battering as it relates to relational aggression towards a current wife, an estranged spouse, an ex-wife remains a reality. As many victims have wallowed in complete silence. Only 18 % of women at least talked to someone of the violence they encountered and the rest 82% did not share or report to anyone of the violence in their life.

The respondents were also asked if she know of other people who are victims of negative cultural violence. 100% of the participants gave yes for an answer and this depicts that violence against women is happening all over the world. However, VAW should not

happen to anyone, in any place or at any time but it does. It is a relational vice that is endemic across all societies within and outside the continent of Africa. It is sad that most women are enduring the abuse in their marriages and have socialized to accept it.

#### *4.3. Legal Framework*

The researchers enquired from participants if they ever reported forms of domestic violence to family members, 93% reported to family members whilst 7% did not. In question (b) respondents were asked if they got satisfying advice, most of the respondents did not get satisfactory answers since most of the married women did not have good relationship with the in laws and some participants end up being accused after reporting it to the family members.

However from the interview session, the researcher noted that a number of key infants interviewed do not report their cases of abuse because addressing violence against women is widely held belief that these are accepted cultural practices.

According to Walker (2009), he alluded that in the sub-Sahara Africa, there is no uniform customs and traditions. In Africa, traditional leaders do not exist in every country but where they exist, they are the custodians of culture and traditions. Nevertheless, defining the source of their powers and role is not easy task because of the multicultural feature of African societies. Walker further pointed that, notwithstanding their various, traditional leaders are the guardians of tradition and are well respected by their communities; they are lessened to and even worshipped and many see the institution as scared. So they can be very instrumental in abolishing discriminatory cultures which impact negatively on women.

Msasa Project (2001) notes that women do not exercise the rights that laws specifically guarantee them, among other factors due to ignorance of the laws, its administration, economic hardships that make it difficult to pursue their legal rights, cumbersome court procedures, customary laws and fear of breaking valued relations with family kin. However despite the significant progress made in the area of policy and legislation reform, the legal, socioeconomic and political status of women remains relatively low. In the human development report (1998), Zimbabwe was described as a highly unequal society of women in terms of access, control, ownership of economic resources and positions in decision making process. According to the 2005-2006 ZDHS, 95% of victims of violence are women while 99% are perpetrators are men. 25% of women experienced sexual violence, 36% experienced physical abuse, 57% are emotionally abused and 8% reported that they experienced violence whilst pregnant. Violence against women remains a challenge and is sustained by prevailing negative socio-cultural practices, attitudes, values, norms and belief as well as the weak implementation of laws and policies.

#### *4.4. Mitigation from the Community to Improve the Lives of the Victims of Negative Culture*

The researchers asked the respondents if there was anything that government or non-governmental organization and stakeholders can do to reduce or stop the negative aspects on the role of culture against women. It is noted that 100% answered yes.

The researchers further asked the participants on their ideas, what they think that should be done to reduce the impact of negative effects on the role of culture on violence against women. 100% of the participants suggested that violence prevention must address men because largely it is men who perpetrate this violence. This means that men themselves must take responsibility for preventing violence against women. As Berkowitz (2002) states, even though not all men may commit sexual assaults, all men can have influence on other men to be perpetrators.

75% of women also pointed that there is need for the government, non – governmental organizations and other stake holders to be engaged on helping and support women on the negative aspects of culture that affect them. The government should establish sensitivity training programs for police departments, to assist them in treating women who have been victims of violence.

### **5. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was intended to help women who are subject to violence in respect for culture and to reveal the centrality of culture approach to development in the ongoing inter-call for an inclusive gender and development strategy to enhance sustainable development. The study also aimed to condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any customer cultural or traditional considerations. The researchers in short, concluded that in most patriarchal societies, women tend to be tolerant of men's behavior. They believe men are supposed to act in certain ways, even if they are suffering violence, women believe they are doing it because they are men and it is culture aspect. Thus, structures are capable of restraining individuals in a certain way, making them do certain things they would not do if not for structure. Thus women can endure abusive marriages in order to be acceptable in society. The researchers' findings also noted that women's ability to enjoy civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights is interlinked with issue of discrimination. The results of the findings showed that their freedom to participate fully in development matters was infringed what society perceived women to behave. The researchers noted from the findings that most cases of violence against women are not being reported and less action is taken on those who would have reported.

### **6. Recommendations**

Basing on the study carried out, the research therefore recommends the government, non-governmental organizations and other stake holders and the following groups to:

#### *6.1. Portrayal of Women and Girls*

- Culture is dynamic and can change overtime. It is important for society to change their views and portrayal of women, such that they are viewed as empowered intellectually, emotional and physically. This should start from the home, the community and the media.

- There is need to promote policies and programs that foster healthy family environments, so that young people grow up free from violence.

#### 6.2. Legal Systems

- There is need for a more functional multi-sectoral approach in dealing with victims and perpetrators of violence against women.
- There should be improved coordination on how service providers conduct victims of violence.
- More awareness of the laws that can protect women against violence should be done and they should be disseminated to the grassroots in vernacular.

#### 6.3. Traditional Leadership

- Traditional leaders in communities must be targeted to be the custodians of behavior change towards women. Especially to those who still believe in carrying out negative cultural practices on women.
- The Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act (2007) empowers traditional leaders to solve some local disputes of domestic violence that are not criminal, it is important that they receive constant training on how to effectively counsel victims and perpetrators.

#### 6.4. Male Involvement

- Statistics has repeatedly shown than men are the major perpetrators of violence. There is need for targeted programmes that ensure that men and boys are challenged about their views on VAW and eventually change their attitudes.
- This has to start with how our boys in the homes are being raised (socialization process), then VAW can be reduced.

#### 6.5. Government and Other Stakeholders

- There is need for the government to further enforce laws that prohibit VAW and award stiffer penalties to perpetrators of violence.
- Government together with its stakeholders should continue to provide coordinated support to both victims and perpetrators by ensuring that VAW is eradicated and victims are given one-stop-shop services.

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