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VULNERABILITY AND RESISTANCE: BLACK IMMIGRANT WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF SPOUSAL ABUSE IN JOHANNESBURG

A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of MA (Sociology) in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg

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April 2019
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, Archbishop (Rtd) LS Ayo Ladigbolu, for his support and encouragement towards my academic success.
Acknowledgements

My profound gratitude to the University of Johannesburg and Faculty of Humanities for the bursaries that made this dream come true, without which my studies would have been near impossible.

I appreciate the diligent guidance of my supervisors, Mr Muhammed Suleman and Professor Kammila Naidoo, Thank you!

My gratitude goes to the following people and organisations for their contributions, big or small, Sonke Gender Justice (Mr Thomas), Human Rights Lawyers, Germiston Magistrate’s Court (Domestic violence section), Bethany Homes; Ikhaya Lethemba, Dr Soogun, Centre for the Study of violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), Ms Goodman and Ms Charlotte for your assistance.

To all the women that trusted me enough to share their stories with me, thus, making this work possible, I say a big THANK YOU!

To my family, thank you for your support; and my children, you have been my motivation to study further.

To Professor and Doctor (Mrs) Ilesanmi, Mrs Damilola Tokwede. God bless and reward you richly.

To Almighty God for working in my favour to realise this dream.
Declaration

This mini-dissertation is submitted to the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

I declare that this project is my original work, and, it has not been submitted at any other University for any degree purposes.

Signature -----------------------                          On -----------------------------

Titilade Adedoyin Ajayi
Abstract

How black African immigrant women living in South Africa experience, endure and react to domestic violence is a topic that needs considerable exploration and in-depth analysis. This mini-dissertation focused on eight non-South African immigrant women who had endured violence at the hands of their partners while living in Johannesburg. Feminist theories of patriarchy and intersectionality were applied to gain insight and understanding into their views on the factors that make them vulnerable to abuse in the current context. The study also attempted to investigate how immigrant women conceptualised domestic violence and what they saw as their abilities to cope and/or assert their agency. Findings from this study indicate that black African immigrant women draw on similar coping mechanisms to immigrant women in other societies. However, the instances in which some of the women exercised their agency in attempting to ameliorate their suffering by standing up to their abusers, debunk the myth that abused women, if non-citizens and immigrants, are helpless, unsupported and unable to change their situations. The participants in this study refused to be intimidated by institutional or structural barriers that have been identified as keeping women in abusive relationships, as seen in previous studies that emanate from outside Africa.

Key words: domestic violence, spousal abuse, vulnerabilities, agency, immigrant women, Johannesburg, South Africa.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: WHY IMMIGRANT WOMEN?

1.1 Background to the study

Historically, in traditional settings, men have wielded power and authority over women and children. Through the persistence of patriarchal systems and male-centred leadership structures, men have been, in many societies, legally and culturally entitled to use force to control the behaviours and inhibit the freedom of women (Ajila, 2002; Bograd, 1999; Sigler, 1989). In the case of women in relationships, research has shown that women are susceptible to abuse from their partners or spouses, irrespective of their educational, socio-economic, religious or racial backgrounds (Ajila, 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Sigler, 1989). Often, various terminologies are used to describe spousal abuse, but the broader term, “domestic violence”, is more encompassing and describes various forms of abuse, including child abuse and abuse of the elderly (Angel and Frias, 2005; Watts and Zimmerman, 2002). This study refers to domestic violence with a particular focus on intimate partner or spousal abuse of women in intimate/romantic relationships.

Spousal abuse is characterised by the abuse of women by men with whom they have had relatively permanent living arrangements - through both common law and conventional marriages (Sigler, 1989). On a slightly broader level, it is any act of abuse between two intimate adults, regardless of their marital status or sexual orientation (Ferraro and Johnson, 2000). It also involves a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, such as
physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion used by adults against their intimate partners (Gelles, 2000; Warshaw and Ganley, 1998).

Domestic violence, like other forms of violence against women, is an impediment to women’s economic and social development, as well as their capacity for self-determination (Koening, Hossain, Khorshed and Mozumber, 2003). Aside from physical hurt, domestic violence has been linked to various health and reproductive concerns, including STDs1, unwanted pregnancy, use of contraception and abortion, maternal morbidity and adverse pregnancy outcome (Heise, Pitanguy and Germain, 1994; Heise et al, 1994; World Health Organisation, 1996, all cited in Koening et al. 2003). Koening et al. (2003) further argued that domestic violence plays a key role in maintaining women’s subordinate position, while controlling women’s initiative for independent and autonomous actions.

1.2 Problem statement

Studies have identified various factors that contribute to the vulnerability and abuse of women in intimate relationships. These include patriarchal practices entailing men’s dominance over women, such as confining women to the house, or demanding obedience and extreme compliance (Ajila, 2002; Bograd, 1999; Roberts, 1996; Sigler, 1989; Thistlewaite, 1981). This is compounded by other factors, such as economic inequality, alcohol consumption, adherence to rigid sex roles, sexual dissatisfaction and infidelity (Abrahams et al., 2006; Ibokete, 1994, cited in Ajila, 2002:16; Leonard and Jacob, 1988).

---

1 STDs are sexually transmitted diseases or venereal diseases.
Hence, the prevalence and severe negative consequences of domestic abuse, making it a serious and compelling issue to address (Elly, Dulmus and Wodarski, 2004; Martin et al., 2002; Moreno et al., 2005; Schuller et al., 1996).

When the abused women are non-citizens or immigrants, the situation is arguably more complex. Apart from the common factors shared by most women across the spectrum, research findings show that domestic violence is intensified by mobility or immigration, causing vulnerabilities, through social and cultural dislocation, that might impair the management of domestic violence by immigrant women (Gbafoumia, 2011:208). There are certain vulnerabilities that are peculiar to immigrant women, particularly due to their immigrant status. They are often depicted as a marginalised group, without agency (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2014). Marginalised groups are socially excluded people who are usually relegated to the peripheries of society due to their lack of access to rights, resources and opportunities on an equal basis to other people in the society. The social context of immigrant women, which comprises of complex sets of interacting cultural, legal and practical factors, increase the possibilities of immigrant women staying longer in abusive relationships (Raj and Silverman, 2002).

Often, immigrant women are influenced by cultural practices from their home countries, which allow for husbands to beat or discipline their wives as situations permit. For example, there are reported cases of Latin American women residing in the United states of America, Chinese women and women from the Indian sub-continent, such as Bangladesh, living in North America (Lee and Hadeed, 2009; Schuller et al. 1996; Shirwadkar, 2004; Viales, 2010). In addition, it is also possible that for immigrant women
legal issues surrounding divorce and child custody could pose challenges in the event that they do indeed choose to leave their abusers. Leaving one’s partner could be difficult when practical factors, such as financial dependence and poverty, are staring the woman in the face. For example, research has shown that abused African immigrant women and Latina women in the United States remain in abusive relationships because they lack finances to emancipate themselves from these relationships (Ting and Panchanadeswaran ;2009; Vidales, 2010). These factors tend to limit the options available to such women, thus, prolonging their sufferings or making it difficult or impossible to leave their abusive relationships.

Spousal abuse is not peculiar to immigrant groups. It affects people of all races, religions, socio-economic statuses, educational statuses and nationalities (Reina and Lohman, 2015). However, immigrant women could be more vulnerable compared to indigenous women due to intersecting structural and institutional barriers. Previous studies have identified some of the barriers to include unstable resident status, institutional discrimination and economic inequality (Kyriakakis, Panchanadeswaran and Edmond, 2015; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Reina and Lohman, 2015). Statistics indicate that in South Africa, one in every four women is physically abused by a partner; while a woman is reported to be killed every six hours by a current or former partner (City Press, 2016/11/20). Furthermore, a study by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2012 found that 65% of women in South Africa had experienced spousal abuse in the year prior to the release of the study findings. The data on immigrant women is not conclusive nor
substantive, although anecdotal evidence suggests that it is similar to the South African data.

There are campaigns in the media on gender equality and addressing violence against women (domestic violence) and *femicide*. Also, many studies have been conducted on immigrant women in North America and Europe. However, the experience of immigrant women in intimate partner violence/abuse is under-studied in South Africa, as very few studies on this topic have been produced.

In South Africa, despite the fact that women comprise about 52% of the population, they retain less power and have fewer opportunities than men in the country (Amien, 1998). The Women's Charter and aims of 1954 (cited by Amien, 1998), attributed the civilisation of any society to the degree of freedom enjoyed by its members. Therefore, the status of women is a key test indicating the quality of society in which we live. The Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994) cited by Amien (1998), acknowledges the pervasive nature of domestic and sexual violence because women still live under the threat of, and actual experiences of domestic violence.

The commitment of the South African government towards tackling the menace of domestic violence led to the release of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 116 of 1998. The Act served to convey commitments to the elimination of domestic violence, with the aim of achieving gender equality. The Act widens the involvement and participation of the police in the prevention and handling of domestic violence, thereby, making the police
duty-bound to assist victims or complainants in obtaining medical treatment, finding suitable shelter, if need be, and advising victims of their rights to seek justice by laying criminal charges. The duty of the police also includes making an arrest of the perpetrator on the scene (Amien, 1998: 6-7).

The Act is explicit in its definition of what constitutes domestic violence in South Africa and the responsibilities of police and law enforcement agencies in handling domestic violence cases. However, drawing from a Human Rights Watch Report that South Africa’s public culture has become increasingly xenophobic, and due to unfounded perceptions that migrants are responsible for various social ills, it appears that migrants have become targets of abuse at the hands of the police and other public officials (HRW, 1998:4, cited in HRSC, 2008). The use of repression by the police in the way they deal with immigrants can act as a barrier to immigrant women approaching them for assistance.

Sigworth, Ngwane and Pino (2008) indicated that foreign women could not report domestic violence and abuse due to the xenophobic attitudes of the police. Some of the women referred to being sexually harassed by the police who often displayed indifference towards their plight, usually sending them back to their abusers without any recourse. Such negative experiences and perceived hostility serve as a deterrent to reporting and seeking intervention for domestic abuse due to a feeling of being perceived as a burden on the country’s social facilities as a foreigner (Sigworth et al., 2008). This scenario could deter immigrant women, including asylum seekers and refugee women who are experiencing spousal abuse or domestic violence from seeking interventions in order to
avoid further abuse or being perceived as nuisance to the society. It is therefore imperative to note the issue of inclusion and exclusion as it affects immigrant women’s responses and how it contributes to their vulnerabilities and resistances as a marginalised group. Hence, a study in this area will serve as a contribution to knowledge and aim to effect policy changes to empower immigrant women going through spousal abuse. The research question therefore is:

What are the views of black immigrant women regarding the factors that make them vulnerable to spousal abuse?

1.3 Aims of the study

This study aims to explore how black immigrant women living in urban Johannesburg experience intimate partner/spousal abuse within an African social context, bearing in mind that their experiences might be different in certain ways from those of the local women. This presumption was arrived at based on some of the factors that are peculiar to migrant populations, such as language barriers, immigrant and legal status, lack of economic power, fear of exclusion and isolation, and xenophobic attitudes of public service providers, for example, the police and health practitioners. The main objectives of the study include the following:

1. To add to existing literature, as there are few sources, on immigrant women’s experience of spousal abuse in South Africa.
2. To identify factors that may contribute to increasing immigrant women’s vulnerabilities to spousal abuse.
3. To ascertain how immigrant women cope with or resist spousal abuse.
1.4 Structure of the study

Following the introduction and background provided in chapter 1, the remainder of the dissertation has been structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** presents a review of relevant literatures and debates on the vulnerabilities of immigrant women to spousal abuse, with emphasis on literature from outside Africa. This is because there is little to no such literature within Africa. Before focusing on immigrant women, I made an effort to briefly discuss women’s vulnerability in general, some of which also affect immigrant women. Social theories are vital in understanding social issues. Therefore, feminist theories of patriarchy and intersectionality are discussed to understand the vulnerabilities of immigrant women to spousal abuse, while looking briefly into abused women’s strategies for coping, and, or resisting abuse.

**Chapter 3** outlines the qualitative methodological approaches used to understand and research immigrant women’s experiences of spousal abuse. It also gives justification for the use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques.

**Chapter 4** is a presentation of emerging themes from the analysis of the qualitative data collected for this study. It also provides discussion of findings relating to the women’s vulnerabilities, as well as whether, and how, they resisted. The data was analysed in conjunction with the literature discussed in chapter 2 and other relevant theories such as family theories and masculinity.
Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings from the study, conclusion, and recommendations based on the findings.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the purpose and main objectives of the study. The study seeks to address a gap in the literature regarding the situation of abused immigrant women. The next chapter highlights relevant aspects of the literature on this topic.
CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS A THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN’S VULNERABILITIES

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines literature that lay the foundation for addressing the main research question, which is: “What are the views of black immigrant women regarding the factors that make them vulnerable to spousal abuse? This chapter is divided into sections that examine spousal abuse, which will be referred to interchangeably as domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and or abuse, (when applicable). This will be followed by a review of existing literatures on the factors that enhance the vulnerabilities of immigrant women and how they have coped with or resisted spousal abuse in various social contexts. These literatures mostly, though not exclusively, emanate from studies conducted in North America; as there is very little literature on immigrant women’s experiences with domestic violence within the African social context. The chapter will further look into the theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of spousal abuse among immigrant women.

2.2. Definition of spousal abuse

Conceptually, spousal abuse refers to any form of abuse suffered by women through the actions of men with whom they have had or currently have a romantic or sexual relationship (Sigler, 1989). In describing the nature of domestic violence, Roberts (1996), states that the term ‘domestic’ connotes a private/ intimate setting, which could refer to a marital or co-habiting relationship. Violence on the other hand refers to an intentional
hostile and aggressive physical or psychological act. There has been no consensus by authors and researchers in family studies on the definition of domestic violence. However, for the purpose of this study, the following definitions will suffice.

Spousal abuse is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours and violent acts, which include physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion used by adults and adolescents against their spouses and intimate partners (Gelles, 2000; Warshaw and Ganley, 1998, cited in Rianon and Shelton, 2003). Furthermore, spousal abuse or intimate partner violence is described as characterised by male abuse of the women they live with (Sigler, 1989:7) or acts of abuse between two intimate adults irrespective of their marital or living arrangements. These forms of abuse include psychological and financial abuse, and acts expressed in intentional, hostile and aggressive manners (Johnson and Ferraro, 2000, cited in Frais and Angel, 2005; Roberts, 1996). Miller-Perin et al. (2018) describe intimate partner violence as any threatened or completed acts of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse that is committed by a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend. This act of maltreatment could have lasting damaging effects on the abused individual, such as psychologically tormented and controlled women.

The South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 defines domestic violence as “physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic, psychological and emotional abuse; verbal abuse, intimidation, harassment, damage to property, entering complainant’s residence
without permission (if living separately), as well as controlling and abusive behaviours towards the victim”.

From the foregoing, it can be established that spousal abuse/domestic violence is a multifaceted phenomenon. It encompasses physical, emotional, psychological and financial manipulation, control and abuse by one partner on the other. Therefore, the scope of this study will cover physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, financial abuse, neglect and verbal abuse. Hence, overall, the term intimate partner violence will be used for this study; considering the fact that not all the participants were married to their partners.

Putting into consideration the various views regarding maltreatment or abuse in intimate relationships irrespective of the marital status of the people involved, the following will suffice for this study. Intimate partner violence is described as any threatened or completed acts of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse that is committed by a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend (Miller-Perin et al. 2018).

2.3 Dissecting the different forms of abuse

The oppression and marginalisation of women is a long-standing issue in many societies irrespective of race, education, religion, and socio-economic status. The marginalisation of women stems mostly from beliefs that men are superior to women, based on patriarchal belief systems. Many feminist theorists (classical and contemporary) have written on the problem of women’s oppression (Lemert, 2017).
There are various forms of abuse encountered by women in their intimate relationships. Some acts of abuse are not expressed physically, such as economic, emotional and psychological forms of abuse. Economic abuse includes preventing the woman from having access to the family income, collecting her money and or preventing her from getting paid employment. Thereby, making the woman financially dependent on the abuser (Gibbs, Dunkles and Jewkes, 2018: Park, 2016). Emotional or psychological abuse is a form of malicious manipulation through non-violent acts against an intimate partner, such as stalking and silent treatment. Even though they leave no visible marks the consequences on the victims are equally devastating (Gibbs et al., 2018). For example, Gibbs et al. (2018) found that emotional and economic abuse leads to suicidal attempts among abused women in informal settlements in South Africa. Other forms of abuse, however, are more physically expressed in the form of a slap, shove, and outright beating up with fists or objects (such as a belt or anything else at the perpetrator’s disposal). These forms of abuse come, without doubt, with associated negative consequences such as inflicted bodily harm in the form of broken bones, bruises, and black eyes. There are also resultant health and reproductive issues and psychological harm arising from physical and psychological abuse (Koening et al., 2003; Moreno et al., 2005; Miller-Perin et al., 2018; World Health Organisation, 1996).

With regard to the above, Miller-Perin et al. (2018) listed physical and mental health problems that are associated with intimate partner violence to include gastrointestinal disorder, chronic fatigue syndrome, hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease. They also include: gynaecological and obstetric problems, HIV/AIDS and other
sexually transmitted infections, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use (or abuse), and suicidal thoughts and attempts. These go to show the devastating effects of abuse as a violation of the rights of women to safety and dignity as human beings. Women also experience spousal abuse in the form of coercive sex, often referred to as marital rape.

Before proceeding with discussions on vulnerabilities peculiar to immigrant women, I set the background, highlighting some of the vulnerabilities that are common to women in general and from which immigrant women are not excluded. Rather, the experiences of immigrant women are further entrenched in the context of migration. These vulnerabilities will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.1 General vulnerabilities of women to spousal abuse

Women generally are vulnerable to various forms of abuse in their intimate relationships. As I mentioned in the preceding section, these forms of abuse include, but are not limited to physical beating, neglect, psychological and emotional abuse, name-calling and verbal put-downs and financial deprivations. Women also experience spousal abuse in the form of non-violent sexual abuse, often referred to as marital rape. On the other hand, it could be a denial of conjugal rights by the husband, especially in a situation where there is infidelity from the male partner. The discussion on general vulnerabilities of women to spousal abuse is not exhaustive, as it is not the main area of concern in this study. Therefore, the vulnerabilities discussed include, but are not limited to the following.
2.3.1.1 Cultural practices

Patriarchy manifests itself through different cultural practices which put women in precarious positions that make them vulnerable to abuse and violence in their intimate/spousal relationships. These cultural practices include acceptance of male dominance, or patriarchy and its associated practices. These practices include arrogating absolute power and the control of financial and economic power to men; and also, the perceived legitimacy of men’s violence towards women as a way of controlling them (Ahmed et al., 2009; Ajila, 2002; Bograd, 1999; Felser, 2014; Sigler, 1989; Steven, 2007).

Strict adherence to traditional gender norms by men and women’s perceived failings in gender roles such as household duties, talking back and assumed insubordination by the wife are key factors in the prevalence and perpetuation of abuse (Ajila, 2002; Bograd, 1999; Desai and Haffajee, n.d; Koenig et al., 2003; Roberts, 1996; Schuler et al., 1989; Thistlethwaite, 1981; UNISA Public Lecture, by Adichie and Dangarembga 2009; World Health Organisation, cited in Morena et al., 2005). The cultural practices discussed above could be the norm in many societies, however, there are some that are peculiar to specific ethnic groups and have thus become part of their culture. For example, there is spousal (wife) abuse and extortion, which stems from the culture of dowry payment from wife’s family to the husband’s family. This is a common practice in the Indian subcontinent, whereby, women are beaten or maltreated in an attempt for the husband to demand more money from the wives’ families for dowry payment (Schuler et al, 1996; Shirwadkar, 2004). In Africa also, men pay dowry to the family of the wife, which is a symbol of friendship between the two families. However, it is often translated as an indication that
the man owns the woman and can do whatever he pleases with her, such as forcing himself on her (marital rape). This could have reproductive health implications if the woman has to terminate an unwanted pregnancy or if she contracts a sexually transmitted disease. Men’s perception of owning their wives also has an implication for domestic violence when a woman gets beaten for allegedly disobeying or disrespecting the husband because he owns her (Kaye et al. 2005; Ngutor, Moses and Arumun, 2013).

There is also the practice of turning the dining table or pouring liquid on the woman in Japanese culture, which is perceived as the height of abuse (Yoshihama, 1999:873, cited in Sokoloff and Dupont, 2014: 42). The rationale behind these acts could be to insult the woman, as Japanese people display a lot of respect at the dining table. Also, the idea of pouring water could signify that the woman is evil and needs to be purified because water is symbolised as a cleansing agent. Walter Sell (2010), writing on Purification in Japanese culture and the use of water, noted that water is used internally for spiritual cleansing and externally to remove dust and dirt.

Furthermore, Kasturirangan et al. (2004) indicated that among the Bedouin Arabs, the focus on the reproductive capacity of women makes them susceptible to abuse. Although, it can be a factor that elevates their status, in many cases, failure to produce children (especially male children) undermines women’s worth. Thus, women who could produce male children are esteemed and valued, whereas, those that are not able to give birth to as many male children are less regarded and are more likely to be abused. This reality is not only a factor amongst Bedouin or traditional women, it is a factor that could affect
various groups of women in different cultural settings. This could be because male children are perceived to be carriers of the family name and legacies, whereas female children will marry into other families and, most probably, change their last names as civil laws surrounding marriage dictates in most societies (Lee and Hadeed, 2009).

Cultural beliefs and practices are also often influenced by religion, as most religions invariably sustain patriarchal practices that silence women’s voices, while enhancing male supremacy as a formula for peaceful co-habitation. This ideology is supported by research on migrant women of African origin in the United States (Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). The same is reported by Desai and Haffajee, (n.d) among Muslim communities in Canada. Schuler et al. (1996) also reported similar findings among Bangladeshi people and those of the Indian subcontinent. These studies indicate that women suffer abuse from their husbands because the holy books command women to be submissive to their husbands and that is often quoted by men to suggest that they have absolute power and control over their wives. Moreover, religion and faith play major roles in preventing women from seeking much needed assistance as African women see their abuse as a test of faith which they must win.

It should be noted however, that arguments have been made against the use of religion to perpetuate violence and abuse against women. Desai and Haffajee (n.d) and Thistlewaite (1981) argued that the Quran preaches peaceful cohabitation of men and women, with a duty to protect each other. While the Bible also does not sanction the use of patriarchy to oppress women, it suggests that women should be protected.
Another aspect of culture that affects women in abusive relationships is the culture of non-disclosure/non-reporting. Several reports have shown that women who speak out or report abuse are perceived as disloyal to their families and husbands because they allegedly bring shame to their families by exposing what should be a secret family matter (Erez, Adelman and Gregory, 2009; Rees and Pease, 2006; Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). Women also keep quiet about abuse because the patriarchal structure of most societies are tolerant of it and calling the police often yields no meaningful outcome as the women are told to go back home and be good wives. Studies of abused refugee women in Australia, Latino women and African women in the United States offer indications of such experiences (Erez, Adelman and Gregory, 2009; Jewkes et al., 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Rees and Pease, 2006; Schuler et al., 1996; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009; Zakar et al., 2012).

2.3.1.2 Level of education
Research findings have indicated that domestic violence cuts across all forms of social stratum, including the elites. However, it has been noted that the education status of both partners, or either of them could mitigate against the prevalence of the act. For example, research conducted in South Western Nigeria revealed that the prevalence of spousal abuse and disclosure are lower among educated couples, compared to their illiterate or semi-literate counterparts (Ajila, 2002). This could be because more educated couples find ways of resolving their issues without resorting to violence in order not to bring shame on their families. It could also be in order to maintain the respect of family members and
friends. Invariably, this could imply that the level of education of one or both spouses impacts on the prevalence of spousal abuse.

Research findings on Northern Indian men and South African men in Cape Town both revealed that level of education was significant in reducing the prevalence of domestic violence/spousal abuse (Abrahams et al., 2006; Martins et al., 1999). In these cases, it could be that the educated men were trying to protect their respected positions among family members and friends. Hence, just like the research participants form South West Nigeria, they also found ways of resolving their domestic issues without the use of violence or abusive acts. This was probably achieved by improving on their communication skills and not perceiving their wives as subordinates but as equals in the relationship. In general, lower education has been identified as a risk factor for intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa as further indicated in studies conducted in Uganda (Karamagi et al., 2006). However, other studies show that educational status of both, or one of the partners does not prevent the occurrence of violence or abuse. Education usually can assist the abused partner to recognise some behaviours as abusive, thereby bringing about resistance or agency. In this case, education helps the woman to know her worth and rights, access information and how to navigate various options available to her to end or resist the abuse.

2.3.1.3 Economic status of women
There is a popular saying that ‘he who plays the piper dictates the tune’. This statement cannot be more realistic in a relationship, where the one with greater economic prowess wields more power and control. The economic status of women is one of the major factors for their vulnerability to abuse by their partners. Many studies have found that there is a relationship between abuse and economic dependence (Gillman, 1898; Koening et al., 2003; Schuler et al., 1996). For example, in Bangladesh, it was observed in a certain “Resolution document” on domestic violence that the threat of violence keeps women away from formal work and, thus, from gaining economic resources (Omvedt, 1990, cited in Schuler et al., 1996). Simultaneously, such women are unable to resist violence because they remain financially dependent on their men (Gillman, 1898; Koening et al. 2003; Schuller et al. 1996).

Research findings have shown that women’s financial independence is very crucial in reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse. For example, a study of Bangladeshi women revealed that women’s access to loans, as opposed to their actual contribution to family support, reduces the rate of domestic violence/spousal abuse in rural Bangladesh (Schuler et al., 1996). In this case, husbands were able to access finance through their wives, which gave the women some degree of power. A similar outcome was observed in a study conducted in Limpopo, South Africa (Vetten, 2014), which showed that domestic violence/spousal abuse reduced by up to 55% through micro finance support for the abused women. Another explanation for this scenario, is presented by Schuler et al., (1996), who indicated that the women’s membership of a credit program provided an escape for them inasmuch as it also gave them public exposure, which helped them to
establish support networks outside their homes. This situation is perceived to be a form of intervention for the women, giving them some form of agency.

Some studies have, however, indicated that the economic independence of women could be detrimental, leading to further violence and abuse. In a situation where the man is out of employment and, therefore, is unable to fulfil his ‘provider role’, there is often a role reversal and the woman becomes the primary provider. Some men see this as demeaning and, as a result, could resort to violence to re-establish their positions in the family as head of the household or to cover their shame (Lee, 2000; Raphael, 2001; Schuler et al., 1996). For example, a study in Bangalore, India, indicated that women whose unemployment status changed for the better had an 80% higher chance of experiencing violence from their partners, compared to women who maintained their unemployment status over the period of the research. Also, husbands whose employment stability declined had a higher chance of being violent to their partners, compared to husbands that had stable employment status (Krishnan et al., 2010).

2.3.1.4 Childhood experience of violence

Socialisation is significant in the entrenching and perpetuation of male dominance and female subjection, as elaborated by Chodorow’s (1944) ‘reproduction of mothering’. Here, she argued that differential experiences in infancy, lays the foundation for differential development paths for boys and girls. Boys have a tendency to separate from their mothers and to identify with the fathers’ social powers. Girls, on the other hand, develop a more symbiotic/continuous sense of self in relation to the mother. Hence, children tend
to develop, and act based on what they have learnt consciously or unconsciously from their parents.

In Parson’s analysis of socialisation and the role of the family (Parsons and Bales, 1955, cited in White and Klein, 2008: 39), he reiterated the attribution of task orientation to specific genders. In his view, females are more expressive, while males are more instrumental. The expressive nature of female assists the internal affairs of the family system and maintenance of relations between the members. The instrumental nature of the males, on the other hand, has to do with the relations of the system to its situation outside the system. He therefore infers that the father is the technical expert and executive; while the mother is the expressive charismatic leader and cultural expert. He further made the submission that the first stage of socialisation has to do with mother-child identity.

The assertions above are consistent with research findings that childhood exposure to violence between parents is a risk factor for perpetrating and tolerating partner violence in adulthood (Black et al., 1999; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986, cited in Abrahams et al., 2006). Empirical findings of Martins et al. (2002), confirm this. Martins et al. (2002) reveal the impact of rigid male-dominant roles and the low status of women, which act as risk factors for women. As stereotypes are difficult to break, a man that has been brought up to view women as inferior to men will place little or no value on women, as such women in such situations are more vulnerable to abuse. This learned behaviour could also make women who grew up in abusive homes more inclined to accept or tolerate abuse in their
own relationships as they tend to see it as the normal way of interaction in intimate relationships.

In South Africa, it may not be out of place that domestic violence is so rife due to the fact that the society has a history rooted in colonialism, apartheid, state sponsored violence and violent protests against civil authorities by communities, gender inequalities, as well as other cultural and historical issues (Jewkes et al., 2002; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). In a society that is so entrenched in violence, violent protests are used by communities to make demands on government for improved service delivery, amongst other issues. It is not surprising that domestic violence is so pervasive as it is perpetrated in an already volatile society. The society’s permissive attitude to violence has made it, more or less, a normal way of making demands or resolving issues. Reports indicate that in a population of about 40 million, five women are killed every week by their intimate partners (Vetten, 1995, cited in Jewkes et al., 2002; POWA, 2010).

Merten (2017), reporting in the Daily Maverick, indicated that in South Africa, one in five women experience physical violence from their intimate partners. Similarly, Mapumulo (2016), a journalist from The City Press newspaper, reported that one in every four women is physically assaulted by her partner and a woman is reportedly killed every six hours by a former or current partner. Furthermore, Mashego (2017), reports that police statistics show that between April and December of 2016, 14,333 people were killed, which most probably included victims of spousal abuse. Moreover, it was reported that a
study by the WHO in 2012 found that 65% of women in South Africa had experienced spousal abuse in the previous year (2011) (City Press, 2016). The South African Medical Research Council also reported that 40% of men assaulted their partners daily (City Press, 2016). These figures are startling, yet, it is needless to say that the scourge is under-reported (Hutchings, 2015) and the statistics are likely to exclude immigrant women. From the above, an attempt has been made to lay the foundation to identify key factors that make women in general vulnerable to abuse, that is, irrespective of whether they are citizens or immigrants. Thus, the preceding paragraphs have included a reflection on the prevalence of violence within the South African society resulting from colonialism, apartheid, state sponsored violence and violent protests against authorities. It is thus imperative to examine the experiences of immigrant women who may be doubly vulnerable, as women and as foreigners in a volatile society.

Immigrant women may not have any form of easy recourse or agency to protect them from their abusers due to lack of information on the type of intervention suitable for them, or out of fear for the consequences of seeking help or resisting the abuse. Often, the same factors that make them vulnerable could also be the ones that prevent them from reporting the abuse and hold them back from leaving the relationships. Such factors may include financial dependence on the abuser or cultural ideologies about marriage and family (Bhuyan, 2012; Erez, Adelman and Gregory, 2009; Raj and Silverman, 2002).

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2 WHO refers to World Health Organisation
The situation with immigrant women could be worsened, by insecure immigration status in the host country, a situation that can be likened to being between a rock, and a hard place. The next section will therefore, focus on discussions about the risk factors that increase immigrant women’s vulnerability to domestic/spousal abuse irrespective of their legal status in their host countries.

2.4 Risk factors for spousal abuse among immigrant groups

I start off this section by acknowledging the fact that there is little to no literature on immigrant women and domestic violence/spousal abuse in South Africa. However, there are extensive studies from other parts of the world; especially Europe, North America, and Canada. The reason for this being that these geographical zones have always attracted more economic migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers from around the world. Also, these countries are industrialised and are perceived to offer more opportunities for a better life (Erez, Adelman and Gregory, 2009; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). South Africa has become an attraction in recent years for tourists, economic migrants and asylum seekers and refugees, probably because of the economic prospects of the country. The 2011 national census puts the number of foreigners living in South Africa at 2.2 million (Stats SA). Likewise, Africa Check (2016) reports that 75.3% of migrants in South Africa are Africans, with 63% of international migrants coming from the SADC\(^3\) region. While immigrant women share common risk factors with other women in general, there are certain factors that are peculiar to immigrant women which make them more vulnerable to domestic/spousal abuse. In light

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\(^3\) SADC refers to Southern African Development Community, which is an economic community for the 16-member states of the Southern African region
of this, the subsequent sub-headings will discuss some of these vulnerabilities found in studies from outside Africa.

### 2.4.1 Limited host language skills

Generally, the ability or inability of immigrants to communicate in their host country depends on language acquisition. Language plays a significant role in the process of settlement and in adapting to their new culture (Nah, 1993). Therefore, for many immigrant women specifically, language poses a greater problem in accessing and communicating their needs to service providers, such as the police and health care service providers in their communities, especially where there are no bilingual services. For example, Raj and Silverman (2002), in their study of domestic violence among multiple immigrant countries, in the United States, found that Asian and Latino migrant women were faced with language problems in seeking care or lodging a complaint about their abuse. This same language problem was discovered in the study of undocumented migrant women in Europe (Haas, Dutton and Orloff, 2000, cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; McCracken et al., 2013). Language barriers posed a problem for these women in seeking protection from their abusers through the legal system.

In contrast, however, Mehrotra (1999), in his study of Hindu Asian Indians in the United States, argued that even in situations where learning the local language was not a problem, it did not necessarily improve the conditions of immigrant women in domestic violence situations. This is because the abuse may still not be reported in order to avoid bringing shame on the family and the migrant community at large.
2.4.2 Lack of knowledge and access to available social services

Research studies have reported a lack of knowledge by immigrant women about available support or intervention programmes for domestic abuse victims in their host countries. Perpetrators have often taken advantage of their partners’ ignorance about help seeking avenues to entrench their abusive behaviours. Moreover, even when there is awareness about such services, many of the women are unable to access them due to language barriers, as discussed earlier, and cultural barriers that stem from their pre-conceived beliefs and attitudes towards domestic violence from their home countries. For example, among South Asian and South East Asian immigrants in the United States, cultural barriers include shame, fear, and ignorance about available resources and personal rights (Bhuyan, 2012; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Rizo and Macy, 2011). Moreover, studies by Menjivar (1999, 2000 cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002), reported that in the United States, when Guatemalan and Salvadoran women got to know about their rights with regards to domestic violence through community organisations, it did not please their partners. Hence, they were prevented from further interactions with such agencies.

Furthermore, the culture of silence about abuse that has been imbibed by most immigrant women prevents them from reporting for fear of bringing shame to their families. This was found by Erez, Adelman and Gregory (2009) among Muslim communities in Canada and Australia. The women were reported to fear rejection by their immigrant community, as most of them did not support outside intervention for domestic abuse issues. Hence, making public a supposedly private affair tends to increase the women’s isolation.
2.4.3 Isolation from and lack of contact with family and community

Isolation may undoubtedly occur among immigrant women as there is a possibility that many of them may have left close family members and friends to be in a foreign country, where many things, such as language, culture and social settings may be strange to them. They tend to also have very limited or non-existent social networks. Some studies reported that immigrant women can establish informal networks quite effectively (Kofman et al, 2000; Menjivar, 2000). Situations like these can be manipulated by their partners to control them emotionally, economically and physically; thereby, taking control of resources that could offer any form of support for the women. For example, the husband could prevent the wife from establishing tangible relationships or control her level of interaction with informal networks that could be beneficial to her. In the case of abusive relationships, any act of disobedience by the woman could result into physical assault to maintain male authority and ensure control over the woman.

Abraham (2000), cited in Ting and Panchandeswaran (2009), reports that South Asian and Vietnamese immigrant women in America were unable to actively participate in networks as did their male counterparts. This is because, most often, men determine if and to what extent their wives can access community or state social services. Research findings by Chol et al. (2012) support arguments by Portes (1998) that migration has a tendency to disrupt people’s social networks, reduce their social support and remove them from social control. Similarly, a study on cross border and local marriages in Hong
Kong (Chol et al., 2012) indicated that female marriage migrants were more vulnerable to spousal violence and were also more socially isolated compared with local women.

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, making public a supposedly private matter could result in women being isolated by their immigrant community. Research findings showed that in extreme cases, this had fatal consequences when the women could not bear the isolation any further. For example, there are reports that several Asian Indian and Tamil women in Canada resorted to suicide by jumping out of their windows (Morison, Guruge and Snarr, 1999, cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

Fear of isolation has also been reported to keep women in abusive relationships among Canadian Muslim communities (Desai and Haffajee, n.d), and South Asian and Vietnamese women in America also reported the fear of being ostracised by their community if they reported abuse or left the relationship (Abraham, 2000; Bui and Morash, 1999, cited in Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009).

### 2.4.4 Lack of basic resources and skills

Besides the lack of knowledge about social support services and fear of isolation, another important factor that make immigrant women vulnerable to spousal/domestic abuse and violence is the lack of basic resources and skills. The human capital that immigrant women bring with them, such as education, occupation and the social networks that awaits them, foster their settlement and impact on their vulnerability to domestic violence (Menjicar, 2000, cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002). Another reason associated with
women’s lack of resources and skills, according to Miller-Perrin et al. (2018), is the fact that often, men immigrate earlier than their wives, which puts them in a better standing and advantaged positions, leaving the women to find their way through their husbands. The idea of men emigrating before their wives and other family members could be to ‘test the waters’ as the family heads, and thereby pave way for other members of the family, a situation that could be manipulated in an abusive relationship.

There are varying reports regarding resources and skills possessed by immigrant women. Other studies reported that immigrant women arrived at their host countries with disadvantages in social status and basic human capital resources, compared to immigrant men. This scenario is possible in the case of ‘mail brides’, where women/wives are sent to their husbands through arranged marriages, a situation that leaves the wives at the mercy of their stranger husbands (Bui and Morash, 1999).

2.4.5 Mail order brides/Arranged marriages

The practice of mail-order brides is a system created by men in industrialised countries, whereby, they marry domesticated women from countries where traditional gender relations are still upheld. The women are expected to succumb to submissive and subordinate roles in their relationships. This is an arrangement that increases isolation and vulnerability of such women to abuse and violence, especially where there is little or no support base for the foreign wives. A study of Filipina-Australian marriages revealed that social disapproval prevents women from speaking out about abuse in their marriages (Raj and Silverman, 2002).
Research on the effect of urbanisation on migration in Johannesburg (though not in the context of spousal abuse) reveals that immigrant women get involved in intimate relationships with male citizens or valid permanent residents to secure a safe haven, and cut a livelihood for themselves (Kihato, 2007). They also use that arrangement to secure their own legal status. Therefore, even when there is violence or abuse in the relationship, the women might find it difficult to leave so as not to compromise themselves.

2.4.6 Changes in economic status

Immigrant women’s lack of resources and skills has been reported to make them vulnerable to domestic/spousal abuse. However, for this group of women, gaining economic power through employment increases their power and control of resources, which leads to more freedom for the women along with some levels of equality with their partners (Beneria and Roldan, 1987; Safa, 1995). Some of these women might have never worked outside the home. Hence, they might have always been dependent on their husbands - a situation that leaves them in a subjective position. Therefore, being able to earn an income to support their families, give these women some leverage and improves their status in their homes (Krishnan et al., 2010; Rees and Pease, 2006).

Some studies have disputed this notion, indicating that women’s economic empowerment has little to do with their increased status at home, neither does it absolve them from domestic violence. This assertion is based on the view that conflict could arise if the man feels that his authority is threatened by the woman’s improved financial status (Menjivar, 1999; Krishnan et al., 2010; Kudat, 1982). This invariably implies that a woman’s paid
work may not be in her favour in an abusive relationship because the immigrant woman’s employment is operating within the socio-cultural and gender ideologies as well as the structural constraints that abound in the contextual setting (Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

As noted earlier, male dominance is a major component of patriarchy, which is unlikely to change whether a woman earns an income or not. This goes to show that the socio-cultural practice of male dominance and gender ideologies of men as providers may often override a woman’s economic prowess in an abusive relationship. Research has shown that immigrant women are usually able to secure jobs in menial work faster than men. This ‘advantaged’ position could lead to tension, especially if the man is unemployed, resulting in aggression and abuse in immigrant families (Krishnan et al, 2010: Rees and Pease, 2006).

2.4.7 Resident and legal status
The majority of research on immigrant women who experience domestic violence from the Northern hemisphere have identified residence and legal status of women as a risk factor for vulnerability to intimate partner violence. Menjivar and Salcido (2002) are of the view that when it comes to legal status, immigrant men are usually at a vantage position than immigrant women. This is because, in most cases, the women’s status is linked to their spouses’. Thus, family laws tend to make immigrant women too reliant on their spouses for them to acquire legal status. This is a situation that has been found to be capitalised on by some men to abuse and become violent towards their wives (Erez et
Research on undocumented migrant women across 12-member states in the European Union revealed that their fundamental human rights to access justice is usually superseded by migration control interests in Europe (McCracken et al., 2013). Therefore, resident or legal status is a major barrier to reporting abuse or violence by undocumented immigrant women. For example, Germany is reported to have a policy of not attending to such women in their public health facilities and the undocumented women could get reported to the immigration department through such channels. Furthermore, a study on Latina immigrants in the United States indicate that immigration and legal status were among the strong factors that prevented abused Latinas from reporting abuse and accessing state facilities (Reina et al., 2014).

2.4.8 Xenophobia

Last, but not least, on the discussion about factors that make immigrant women vulnerable to spousal abuse and violence, is xenophobic attitudes towards them. Xenophobia is the dislike of, or prejudice against, foreign nationals by nationals of a recipient state/country (Valji, 2003). It is worth noting that xenophobia transcends physical violence as it includes verbal and psychological abuse, structural and institutional violence, cultural and ethnic discrimination (Sigworths et al., 2008).
In reviewing the literatures on domestic violence, there was virtually no reference to xenophobia; However, McCracken et al. (2013) mentioned that xenophobia affected most economic migrants in Europe, but not in a violent manner. It usually manifests in bad experiences in interaction with public sector and government facilities such as clinics, hospitals, the Police and Home Offices (Sigworth et al, 2008). In South Africa, xenophobia is not only an attitude, it is an activity that results in bodily harm, damages to properties and fatal consequences for foreigners (Harris, 2002, cited in Valji, 2003).

2.5 Coping mechanisms and resistance to spousal abuse
From the literature reviewed, there are many ways abused or battered women resisted the abuse, depending on the resources at their disposal. For example, reports by Ting (2010) shows that the women adopted various coping mechanism to lighten the effect of domestic violence through self-agency. African immigrant women in America were reported to engage in strategies that included resorting to fate by accepting a subordinate position in a male dominated patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is sanctioned in most societies, thus, accepting that reality and the position of subordination that society places on women, apparently helped the women in coping with the abuse they suffered from their husbands. Resisting probably seemed to be a futile effort. Also, while rationalising abuse as love, some abused women might hope for change and an improved relationship with their partners in an attempt to minimise the effect of the abuse (Ahmed et al., 2009; Erez et al., 2009).
Ting (2010) and Ting and Panchandeswaran (2009) reported that, in the United States, many African immigrant women endured the abuse for their children’s sake or for them to obtain residence status (green card). The hope of securing better lives for their children and that of getting residence status in the United States helped the women to cope with the abuse. Another coping mechanism for the women is focusing on and building relationships with their children. Some of the women in the study chose to shift their focus from their abusive partners with whom they probably were not on much talking terms, to ensure better relationships with their children whom they may have accepted as their main source of joy (Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009).

Mexican immigrant women in the United States were reported to seek formal and informal help. They engaged in coping tactics such as avoidance, defence and escape strategies. They were also reported to make use of social or familial and religious strategies (Brabeck and Guzman, 2008, cited in Ting, 2010; Vidales, 2010).

Religion also played a part in helping women cope or minimise their abuse as they sought divine intervention through prayers. Religious women may also trust God for divine justice or karma, while engaging in informal counselling with religious leaders and community elders (Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009; Vidales, 2010: 537). In their study of various Asian immigrant communities, Lee and Hadeed (2009) reported that religion and spiritual leaders play powerful roles in providing support for battered women. However, there are varying opinions on the effect of religion in solving marital problems among Asian immigrant communities. For example, Lee (2003) cited in Lee and Hadeed, (2009),
suggests that among the Korean American immigrant women studied in Texas, “religious affiliations and involvement was a significant predictor of physical assault by their male partners” (Lee 2003:158). This means that religious affiliations and involvements of women increased their vulnerability to spousal abuse, probably because their husbands felt that their wives were exposing their private matters to their religious leaders and co-worshippers.

In South Africa, there are formal avenues through which abused women can resist or cope with their situation. One such avenues include getting a restraining or protection order against the perpetrator through the courts of law. Alternatively, the victim can access shelters for abused women to get temporary separation from the perpetrator in case of an emergency. However, despite the availability of these resources, it appears as if many abused immigrant women are unaware or unwilling to make use of them as I could not find literature on foreign women utilising these resources.

2.6 Theoretical approaches to immigrant women’s abuse

Social theories have been engaged over time to explain the reasons for various problematic social behaviours including violence within the family as a whole and between couples, specifically. There are different theories of causation with regard to domestic violence or wife abuse. These fall within three broad categories, namely, conflict, social learning, and feminist theories. However, this study will focus on feminist theories of patriarchy and intersectionality to understand the position of immigrant women in abusive relationships because their cases are different from mainstream women.
Feminist theory will be discussed under two main sections, namely, patriarchy and intersectionality, because they are mostly related to the factors that contribute to the vulnerabilities of immigrant women to domestic/spousal abuse. The main argument of feminist theories is focused on the connections and relationships between the patriarchal structure of society and wife abuse, which reflects in patterns of behaviours and attitudes towards women (Felser, 2014; Harne and Radford, 2008; Mekie, 2005).

A feminist theoretical application to domestic violence is largely conceptualized at the macro or socio-political level as to how men and women are acculturated into roles of power and passivity (Garden, 1994). Feminist theory views the root of domestic violence as the unequal distribution of power between the genders in a patriarchal society (Caesar and Hamberger, 1989; Garden, 1994; Rodning, 1988, all cited in Zosky1999: 56).

Men are perceived as having more access to resources and decision making, while women are devalued as secondary and inferior (Lee and Hadeed, 2009; Shirwadkar, 1998, cited in Shirwadkar, 2004). Men resort to domestic violence as a mechanism to maintain power, control and privilege in a patriarchal society (Felser, 2014; Hunnicut, 2009).

**2.6.1 Patriarchy**

Patriarchy has been defined as "social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically" Hunnicutt
(2009:557). By structure, she was referring to patriarchal systems that exist in bureaucracies, government, law and religion, whereas, ideology is an individual’s view or opinion on patriarchal values. Patriarchy embeds and aggravates gender inequality, an issue that is contended to be a major factor in male-female violence (Felser, 2014). Violence and abuse are expressions of social power, which has been adopted by men as a way of controlling and exercising dominion over their female partners (Felser, 2014).

Kurz (1989), cited in Felser, 2014, pointed out that the patriarchal arrangement of families, ideal forms of masculinity and cultural acceptance of the use of force in gaining control over others, foster violence and abuse of women, and other forms of family violence. Moreover, it has been noted that wife beating is more frequent in households with strong belief in traditional gender roles (Walker, 1977/1978, cited in Hunnicutt, 2009). In her discussions, Hunnicut (2009) further made a case for the fact that, although gender hierarchies are central to patriarchal system, other factors such as age, race, religion, historical location and nationality mediate gender statuses, thus, assigning varying amounts of social value, privilege and power to males and females.

Moreover, Steven (2007), in her discussions on patriarchy and domestic violence, provides various explanations for patriarchy being the ultimate cause of all abuse against women. There are contentions among religious feminists on the role of patriarchy, however, the general conclusion is that even though patriarchy may not be absolutely responsible for an individual husband’s abusive or violent actions towards his wife, patriarchal beliefs weaken the marital system, thereby, providing a platform for the entrenchment of violence and abuse (Steven, 2007). This could happen when the biblical
instructions by Apostle Paul on relations between husband and wife is misquoted and wrongly applied. Paul says, “wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and is the saviour of the body” (Ephesians 5:22-23). Meanwhile the preceding verse 21, says “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God”. This indicates that there should be mutual respect between partners in a marriage and the submission of the wife is to ensure orderliness in the home, not a licence for husbands to intimidate and abuse their wives. Thus, a wrong interpretation of biblical instruction has been termed as a patriarchal interpretation.

2.6.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality, in feminist research, is a term used to describe the oppression women experience due to their positionality with regard to gender, race and class. It is a theoretical framework used to explain the hierarchies of power that exist along multiple socially defined categories, such as race, class and gender, (Crenshaw, 1989; Erez et al., 2008).

Race can be defined as a group of people identified as distinct from other group because of a supposed physical or generic traits shared by the group—Thesaurus.

Class is the occupying of a socio economic position intermediate between those of the lower classes and the wealthy. It can also be defined, as a system of ordering society, whereby people are divided into sets based on perceived social or economic status.—Thesaurus.
Gender is defined as, a social construct, rooted in social institutions, resulting in patterns that structure the relationship between women and men, giving them differing positions of advantage or disadvantage within institutions (Anderson and Hills, 2004).

Contextually, the categories described above refers to being, a person of colour, low income earner, and female. From the foregoing, it is apparent that women of colour and women from marginalised groups are faced with multiple forms of oppression and domination. Therefore, in the context of spousal abuse among immigrant populations, the intersection of race, gender and immigration will play a significant role in the experience of the women involved as well as how they seek intervention (Vidales, 2010).

Hence building on literature on intersectionality, the intersection of gender, race, immigration and class is profound in unpacking how immigrant women experience spousal abuse in comparison to mainstream women. This intersection shapes the dynamics of their relationships as well as the opportunities for help seeking (Erez et al., 2008). For example, in a study of Mexican women facing domestic violence in the United States, Vidales (2010) discussed the ways in which intersections of structural, cultural and institutional barriers faced by women affected their pursuit of justice.

Structural barriers include unemployment, low income and poverty, which prevents abused immigrant women from leaving the abusive relationships. Also, the educational attainment of some immigrant women makes them ignorant of their rights when faced with domestic violence. Therefore, lack of educational and economic skills makes it
difficult for women to challenge or leave abusive relationships (Lee and Hadeed, 2009; Vidales, 2010).

Cultural barriers that affect abused women include the belief in familism, a concept among Latinas which means that a wife is responsible for keeping the family together. Therefore, even when there is abuse, she must endure, forgive the abuser and keep it within the family, without involving outsiders (Lee and Hadeed, 2009; Reina et al., 2014; Vidales, 2010). Language was another cultural barrier because the inability to speak the local language and the absence of multilingual services hold abused immigrant women back from reporting, seeking help and accessing social services.

Institutional barriers have to do with the inability of abused women to report their abuse and seek legal recourse due to their immigration status. Not being a legal citizen in a country puts them at risk of abuse. Even for women with legal status, ignorance of their rights regarding immigration rules keeps them in abusive relationships. For example, the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) in the United States affords abused women the opportunity to file immigration papers by themselves without depending on their husbands. However, ignorance of such laws keeps some women in abusive relationships for longer than necessary (Reina et al, 2014; Vidales, 2010).

2.6.3 Theorising patriarchy and social locations in fostering spousal abuse

Patriarchy and social locations are both interrogated by feminist theories. They both relate to unequal power dynamics and the forms of multiple oppressions that marginalised people face due to factors such as race, gender, location or nationality. Feminist theories focus on the connections between the patriarchal structure of society and wife abuse in
the sense that the structure of society gives more power and authority to men and women are expected to ‘take the back seat’ as subordinates to men, even at the home front; thereby, promoting the possibility of domestic violence or spousal abuse (Aldridge and Browne, 2003, cited in Steven, 2007; Bowman, 2003; Felser, 2014; Hunnicut, 2009). Women, especially immigrants are, therefore, doubly oppressed by their positionality as marginalised group in the society and as subordinate wives at home.

Patriarchy is a social arrangement that privileges men against women and is viewed as the main cause of male to female violence in most societies (Bograd, 1999; Hunnicut, 2009; Steven, 2007). Intersectionality, on the other hand, describes the oppression women face due to their positionality with regards to multiple hierarchies of power (Bograd, 1999; Erez et al., 2009; Sokoloff, 2008).

Through the development of the concept of intersectionality, it has been proposed that domestic violence is only one form of oppression (Crenshaw, 1992, 1993, 1994, cited in Bograd, 1999:2). In analysing intersectionality, battered women’s oppression has been found to be often multiplied by their location at the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and immigrant systems of oppression and discrimination. Therefore, for these women, domestic violence is not necessarily the only or primary violence shaping family life (Sokoloff, 2008).

Most importantly, for immigrant women, immigration has been found to create vulnerabilities, some of which have been discussed earlier in this chapter, such as changes in economic status, resident/legal status, lack of resources and skills, lack of knowledge and lack of access to social services. All these factors intensify the possibility
of domestic violence/spousal abuse. The multiple oppression faced by marginalised groups due to discriminations based on race, social class, gender nationality and immigration status, alongside the unequal power relations between men and women due to patriarchy, have made this study worthwhile. The study bridges the gap in the study of immigrant women in an African context, as against previous studies which were conducted in Western countries such as United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

2.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this review chapter was to examine what actions constitute spousal abuse/domestic violence. It also discussed various factors that contribute to the vulnerabilities of immigrant women to abuse or violence in their marital or intimate relationships and which make their experiences different to those of mainstream women. The review also looked at how women minimised the effect of their abuse by adopting various coping and resistant strategies to end their abuse by engaging formal and informal interventions including acceptance of their fate as subordinate to men, hoping for change in their partners and focusing on and building relationships with their children. Some also endured the abuse so that they could acquire residency permits. Abused women were also reported to use religion as a coping mechanism for hope and resilience through their spiritual leaders. Lastly, because the experiences of immigrant women are peculiar, feminist theories of patriarchy and intersectionality were engaged to explain their predicament in abusive relationships and why it is difficult for them to leave due to structural, cultural and institutional barriers.
CHAPTER 3
A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY APPROACH TO THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to explore the views of black immigrant women regarding the factors that make them vulnerable to spousal abuse. This is because despite extensive studies on domestic violence and spousal abuse within a South African context, there is little to no studies on the experiences of immigrant women in general, and black immigrant women in particular. A qualitative approach was applied to this study because the aim was to capture the lived experiences of the research participants and provide interpretations based on their frame of reference (Bless, Higson-Smyh and Sithole, 2013). Therefore, in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions, were used for data collection. This is because, as Lee (1993) argues, in-depth interviewing produces valid information and provides a means of getting beyond surface appearances, while allowing sensitivity to the meaning contexts surrounding the participants’ utterances.

This chapter will provide a discussion of the various stages of the qualitative research methodology that was used for this study. These include issues relating to ethical procedures undertaken in the course of data collection while on the field. Other issues that will be addressed are sampling methods, reflexivity, data collection and the instrument used, participants’ profile, process of data analysis and the limitations of the study.
3.2 Research design

The research was designed to explore the lived experiences of black immigrant women affected by spousal/intimate partner abuse in Johannesburg. Hence, a qualitative approach was adopted to enable a deep understanding of black immigrant women’s encounters and perceptions regarding intimate partner abuse. A qualitative approach is best suited for this study because it involves the use of cases and contexts as social issues, such as domestic abuse, are viewed and treated from the perspectives of people in specific social settings (Neuman, 2011; Seidman, 2006). The literature indicated that immigrant women’s experiences of domestic violence in other countries differs from that of women who are local citizens. Thus, considering the social context of immigrant women became crucial. Contexts and meanings are important elements in qualitative research because people experience social phenomena in various ways depending on their complex circumstances, hence the meanings they make of such experiences (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Lee, 1993; Seidman, 2006). This means that behaviour, values and whatever it is the researcher is studying, must be understood in terms of the specific environment in which they operate. As such, irrational behaviours could make sense when there is an understanding of the context in which such behaviour or action takes place (Bryman, 2016).

3.3 Ethical procedures

The study is of a sensitive nature, therefore, before embarking on the research, I needed to obtain ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg [Appendix A]. On the field, I also had to explain to the
participants the nature of the research and obtained voluntary participation consent from them. I also explained to them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time or decline to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; King and Horrocks, 2010; Neuman, 2014).

Informed consent is a crucial part of data collection and it entails the research participant being informed about the overall purpose of the investigation and the features of the research design (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). It must also outline possible risks and benefits for participating in the project (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, informed consent also entails obtaining voluntary participation from people and informing them of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time, while also ensuring confidentiality (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). These procedures were followed for this study, as each person that was approached during the sampling stage was put through the step-by-step protocol of informed consent and only those who consented were selected for the interviews. After the initial briefing, each of the consenting participants was given an informed consent form to sign before commencing the interviews [Appendix B]. They were informed that the interviews would be recorded, which they all consented to, except for three participants who did not want to be recorded. One of these participants declined being recorded out of a fear that her interview would be leaked, despite several assurances of protection of data, because at the time of the interview she had a pending divorce case. The other two participants did not give any reason, but presumably, it could be due to fear of being identified through their voices. Nonetheless, I made use of field notes and memory to transcribe their responses verbatim as soon as
I got home from conducting the interviews, so as not to miss out on important details (King and Horrocks, 2010).

To ensure the safety of participants, interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants, which included shelters, shopping malls, court premises and individual homes. This was to ensure the flexibility and credibility of responses from the participants (Lee, 1993; Seidman, 2006). Maintaining participants’ anonymity and confidentiality of data are important aspects of any research study, especially a qualitative research. Confidentiality and anonymity are often interchangeably used to mean the same thing. However, King and Horrocks (2010:117) state that rather than assuring confidentiality as researchers, we can offer anonymity whereby the identity of the participant is protected or concealed in all documents resulting from the research, which may include the transcripts of interviews. However, King and Horrocks, (2010) further suggested that confidentiality could be provided for data collected through interviews, whereby such information is treated with respect and discretion. This means that the data must be used for the purpose for which it was collected only. This is because qualitative research often involves getting information about the participants that could give away their identities. Hence, even in situations where true information was obtained during the process of data collection, they need to be covered up while doing analysis such that no information released in the analysis of data can be traced to an actual person.

For the purpose of this research report, to maintain the confidentiality of my participants, I allowed them to decide on where they would like to be interviewed. Moreover, during
In anticipation of the need for professional counselling for some of the participants, and as a way of giving back to them, I had obtained consent from a social worker for referrals in case any of them needed trauma counselling. However, it turned out that none of the participants made use of the service. An ethical issue arose concerning compensating the participants financially. This issue was raised by some of the gatekeepers at one of the organisations I visited. I declined to do this because I felt that it might compromise the responses that such participants would give. Paying participants has always been a controversial ethical issue because it could alter voluntary participation (King and Horrocks, 2010). Paying participants has also been identified to create uneven power relations between researcher and participants. This is because it presents a situation of buying information rather than co-production of knowledge, which could impact on data generated (King and Horrocks, 2010). However, when payment is made as compensation for participation rather than as an inducement to participate, it could be ethically justified. Inducement is when payment is made to participants to influence their responses. This is different from paying participants to cover costs after the data collection has been concluded. An example is the case of paying participants for transport costs after the completion of interviews (Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). In the same
manner, I reimbursed two participants for transport costs because I knew they were having financial challenges, and this was done after the interviews had been concluded, I did not pre-empt them about any payments to make them consent to participate in the data collection.

3.4 Sampling

This study involves researching a hidden and supposedly marginalised population, hence, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit participants for the study (Bless et al. 2013). Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling, whereby, the researcher does not seek to sample participants randomly. Purposive sampling is effective in sampling cases or participants in a strategic manner; such that those sampled are relevant to the research question by meeting certain criteria (Bryman, 2016). In addition, a purposive sample does not allow for generalisation and the criteria for sampling is usually guided or determined by the research question (Bryman, 2016). Hence, purposive sampling was effective for identifying various shelters for abused women as well as organisations that cater for victims of violence in Johannesburg. Neuman (2014) indicated that purposive sampling is useful for identifying particular types of cases for in-depth interviewing for the purpose of gaining deeper understanding of their experiences, rather than to generalise to a larger population. The organisations that were contacted for this study include Lawyers for Human Rights, Sonke Gender Justice, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and family courts in Germiston and Johannesburg. To my disappointment and wonder, most of the shelters did not seem to
cater for abused *immigrant* women. The reasons for this exclusion is unclear; however, the situation made it very difficult for me to recruit participants suitable for my study.

In all, two participants were recruited through purposive sampling from two shelters, although only one was a resident at the time of sampling. Also using purposive sampling, four participants were recruited from the family courts. The remaining two participants were recruited through snowball sampling by referrals from two of the participants who had been previously identified through purposive sampling, thus bringing the total number of research participants to eight black immigrant women.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of participants**

*N.B Pseudonyms are used in this profile table and for analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Immigration status</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>No. children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>Zimbabwean</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Unemployed (piece jobs)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>Unemployed (studying)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christiana</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>Unemployed (studying)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Zimbabwean</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Malawian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Unemployed (piece jobs)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Somalian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Congolese</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows the profile of the eight participants, which is a reflection of the responses to the close-ended questions in part A of the interview guide. The nationality
of the respondents spanned six countries. There were two Zimbabweans, two Nigerians, one Malawian, one Ghanaian, oneSomalian and one Congolese. The ages of the women ranged from 21 to 43 years, bringing the mean age to 35 years. Only one participant reported to be single, three were married, but separated from their partners at the time of the interview; the remaining four women were also married and were living with their spouses at the time of the interview.

Most of the participants did not report any concerns with their immigration status. Five of them had asylum seeker permits, which allowed them to work or study in South Africa. Two had permanent residence permits, while one participant reported to be using a passport, and probably had one form of temporary residence permit on it. The women’s education status ranged from high school to university education. Four women had high school education but none of them completed grade 12. One participant had a diploma and two had university degrees. Lastly, on employment status, two participants reported not being formally employed but they did odd jobs here and there. One participant was formally employed, two were unemployed but studying at post graduate levels and the remaining three participants were self-employed in informal trading. All eight participants had children. Two participants had one child each, one had two kids, three of them had three kids each and two had four kids each.

3.5 Data collection and Instrument

Data collection was done over a period of four and a half months, with eight participants that fit the criteria of black female immigrants within the age group of 18-50. They were
either married, separated or single and with experiences of spousal abuse in the past or, currently going through an abuse in their intimate relationships.

In-depth interview methods were adopted for data collection. Interviews involve direct and personal interaction with the participants who answer questions relating to the research question/problem (Bless et al. 2013). In-depth interviewing produces lucid information and provides a means of getting beyond surface appearances while allowing sensitivity to the meaning and contexts surrounding the participants' utterances (Bless et al., 2013; Lee, 1993). Moreover, in-depth interviews focus on understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meanings made by those experiences (Seidman, 2006). Interviewing also provides access to the context of people's behaviour; thus, researchers are provided with a way to understand the meaning of that behaviour.

For me to understand the meanings created by my research participants and the contexts surrounding their experiences, I made use of a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions [Appendix C]. The semi-structured interview guide enabled me to be able to probe further on the responses to questions for a better understanding of the participants' utterances and for clarity. Doing face-to-face interviews with the participants was also useful in capturing not only words, but also the emotions evoked in the course of our interaction, which conveyed the hurt, pain, confusion, relief and hope that formed part of the women's stories.
In his discussions on asking sensitive questions, Lee (1993) suggested that making use of familiar words in open-ended questions is reported to yield consistent improvement in levels of reporting. Hence, in order to get the women to respond to my questions with understanding, often, I had to explain the questions, especially if I perceived a lack of understanding on the part of a participant at any point in time. This process helped in clearing any ambiguity in the understanding of questions and responses. Putting into consideration the sensitive nature of the study, I ensured that ethical procedures were consistently upheld by reiterating the purpose of the study, which was purely for academic purpose and possible policy changes. I also reiterated the confidentiality of their responses and that they may not answer any questions they felt uncomfortable responding to, while showing empathy to participants that were still shaken by their experiences. These follows from Lee’s (1993) suggestion on asking sensitive questions, that, the researcher needs to establish trust, privacy, confidentiality and a non-condemnatory attitude to lead the participant to confront a deep, personally threatening and potentially painful issue.

3.6 Reflexivity and positionality

Reflexivity is a qualitative feminist research tool, which is a move from objectivity. Reflexivity in social science is the thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched. It provides a critical self-reflection on how the researcher’s background, race positioning and assumptions, impact on the research process. Reflexivity is used by researchers, for critical thinking about what they are researching and why they are researching the phenomenon. Furthermore, reflexivity
helps to question the researcher’s assumptions about the research and to document how his/her views and experiences shape the research. It also involves how the researcher interacts with the researched and how their responses are interpreted. As a feminist researcher, it is difficult to take a neutral position, hence the researcher's positionality often gives an advantage of allowing easy access to the world of the researched. Often, the nature of feminist qualitative research requires the physical and emotional involvement of the researcher (Ali, 2015; Van Stapele, 2014).

Reflecting on my positionality within the research, I believe, sharing some commonalities with the participants, such as being a black immigrant and a married woman fostered some level of trust with the participants. In fact, during the period of sampling, one woman I approached asked if I was also a foreigner. When I answered in the affirmative and presented my identity document, she became more relaxed around me. Being able to identify with these women enabled me to structure my questions to address the main issues regarding their vulnerabilities and challenges with coping and resistance. This stems from the experiences of a close friend who was the motivation for the study. Furthermore, this position also enabled the participants to relate more with me as a sister, rather than a researcher. Thus, we were able to build genuine rapport, which resulted in the collection of rich data regarding their experiences (Finch, 1984; Lee, 1993; Oakley, 1981). Out of trust some information was divulged which I participants pleaded that I should not reveal in my report. I gave my word not to include the information in my report and if for whatever reasons it became imperative for me to include some aspects of the information, directly or indirectly, the source will be absolutely concealed.
3.7 Process of data analysis

Data analysis is a process that involves various steps. Eight interviews were conducted for data collection, five of them were recorded with a voice recording device and three were recorded using field notes because the participants declined to allow the interviews to be recorded for various personal reasons. Transcription is the process of converting audio/spoken materials into text, and it serves as a necessary antecedent to getting started with the analysis of the interview data (King and Horrocks, 2010). I made the efforts to transcribe each interview shortly after it was concluded so that I don’t forget the nitty gritty of the conversations, especially the ones that were not audio-recorded.

Transcribing the recorded interviews took time because I had to listen to the responses over and over in order to capture the words of the respondents. This is because transcription was done verbatim, in the women’s exact words.

Writing on the importance of recording and transcribing interviews, Bryman (2016: 381) outlined the advantages stated by Heritage (1984: 238), which are summarised as follows:

- It helps with the natural limitation of researchers and the intuitive glosses that might be placed on participants’ responses.
- It enables a thorough examination of responses.
- It allows for repeated examination of interviewees’ answers.
- Data is open to public scrutiny, giving room for a re-valuation of initial data analysis that has been carried out by the original researcher, thereby enabling secondary analysis.
- It gives credibility to analysis.
- It makes data to become more versatile, making it useful for other purposes other than the ones initially intended by the original researcher.
While doing the transcription, data was cleaned by removing important personal information that could be traced to the participants such as names (Bless et al., 2013). After obtaining cleaned transcripts, the data was read several times in order to develop an understanding of the content of the dataset, a process known as immersion in data (Bless et al, 2013). While reading through the data, I had highlighters handy to note responses that were similar and spoke to the same issue. The texts that shared some similarities were categorised with a code. Coding is the putting together of texts that are similar (Bless et al., 2013). The codes generated were recorded again, to bring out themes that relate to the research question. Thematic content analysis was used for analysing themes that relate to vulnerabilities and coping/resistance strategies based on the narratives of the participants as reflected in the transcripts of the interviews. The themes that emerged are discussed in the next chapter.

3.8 Limitations of the study
The study is set within the city of Johannesburg, and the experiences of immigrants within the city may not be the same with those living in rural areas. So, the findings from this report do not represent the experiences of all abused immigrant women. This is to say that the experiences of the few immigrant women interviewed do not allow for general claims about the factors affecting and shaping the lives of all immigrant women in South Africa. In addition, the focus of the research question is on factors that make black immigrant women vulnerable and how they have coped or resisted spousal abuse. There was no investigation of the health implications of spousal abuse on the participants.
A major challenge in this study was the difficulty in getting participants through agencies for abused women such as shelters, which could be an indication that black immigrant women in abusive relationships are either unaware or wary of accessing such facilities. On the other hand, it could be due to the fear of institutional xenophobia (McCracken et al., 2013; Sigworths et al, 2008). In researching a larger population, a quantitative research approach with the use of questionnaires will be ideal but obtaining data that will be sufficient to understand the deep meanings of the women’s experiences may be difficult.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with the various processes involved in data collection. The chapter addressed issues relating to the nature of the research such as its qualitative nature. Data was collected using interview methods with open-ended questions to allow for probing. Ethical issues were also addressed with a focus on ensuring anonymity of participants and protecting the confidentiality of data. Two sampling procedures were used for this study: purposive sampling to identify research sites and snowball sampling from referrals. A profile of the participants was also presented. The researcher’s reflections on how her positionality influenced the research process was also noted, as feminist research is never value-neutral. The process of data analysis was explicitly explained leading to themes on how the participants described their experiences of spousal abuse. Lastly, the chapter ended with brief a discussion on the limitations of the
study, with emphasis on the context in which the study was conducted. The succeeding chapter will focus on the thematic analysis of data and discussion of findings.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction
This chapter offers a presentation of the findings that emerged from interviews with eight immigrant women who had been or were in intimate relationships (married or cohabiting) in the Johannesburg area. The emerging themes from these women’s responses will be discussed with the aim of answering the research question: *What are the views of black immigrant women concerning the factors that make them vulnerable to spousal abuse?*

The chapter will show various factors that black immigrant women in Johannesburg perceive to make them vulnerable to spousal abuse; irrespective of their country of origin, education status, length of being in the relationship and immigration/legal status in the host country. Furthermore, the chapter will also look into the various avenues through which the women coped with, or resisted, abuse by showing the effectiveness of agency in the resistance of spousal abuse by people who otherwise, would have been perceived as not having any form of agency because of their minority status in the society.

The chapter also presents the effectiveness of formal intervention strategies utilised by the women to end their sufferings and serve as punitive measures for the perpetrators. In order to effectively do this, the analysis and discussions will focus on four main areas of the women’s experiences, which are: knowledge about the concept of domestic abuse, factors that made them vulnerable, coping and resistant strategies, and outcomes of formal interventions utilised.

4.2 General experiences making women vulnerable to abuse

4.2.1 Impact of education on knowledge of spousal abuse
This theme emerged because of its importance in deciding how the women reacted to the maltreatment they received from their partners. From the onset of the interview, I
asked each of the participant what they understood by the term ‘domestic violence’. Only six of the women could respond in ways that showed some understanding of what domestic abuse is, and this is reflected in answers such as this:

I think domestic violence is when some people think they have power over others in the family, especially men, over their wives and children by the way they talk to them, treat them and ultimately using physical violence to express themselves over these people under them (Christiana, 27 March, 2018).

Other participants who shared the same sentiments responded to the same question on their understanding of the term domestic violence in the following manner:

I think it is when a man does not treat his wife or children well, for example, beating his wife and making her feel inferior to him. Usually in a marriage husband and wife are supposed to be partners, isn’t it? (Helen, 12 April, 2018)

I think it’s when my husband beats me or treats me as inferior to him, calling me names and making me unhappy (Joyce, 27 June, 2018)

I think abuse is for example, when a husband beats his wife or treats her like a slave, even the children (Margaret, 20 June, 2018)

I think it is a term that involves all forms of maltreatment of people that are close to you. for example, treating your wife badly, not listening to her opinions, beating her and making her feel like a slave, more than a wife. It can also extend to the children. (Sandra, 26 July, 2018)
I believe it is violence encountered within the home, usually directed to women and children

............. you know, it has to do with family or home (Grace, 24 March, 2018).

4.3 Emerging themes on Vulnerability

Various reasons were discussed by the research participants as contributing factors to them being vulnerable to abuse by their partners. These factors have been analysed and merged together under categories that have been put together as themes. Seven themes were identified for factors that contribute to the women’s vulnerability to spousal abuse, and the themes are discussed in the following sections. These include unemployment and financial problems, patriarchy and cultural expectations, culture of non-disclosure, socialisation, living far from family and isolation from friends, lack of knowledge about social services, indifferent attitude towards utilising social services, third party influence, alcohol and substance use and infidelity.

4.3.1 Unemployment and financial problems at home

This sub-theme stems from the question on what the women perceived as factors contributing to fights between couples from their own experiences. Most of them had relatively similar answers to this question by referring to their husband’s and their own unemployment as leading to financial problems in the home. This tension often led to stress for men and they unleashed their stress and frustrations on their partners. Some of the responses that describe this situation includes Sandra’s comment that,

[there is] another thing, especially in this country, when a man is not working, it affects

their ego, and they will take it out on their wives, whether that one is working

or not (Sandra, 26 July, 2018).

This is also expressed in Joyce’s response that “money issues cause problems, especially if both of them are not contributing to the family expenses”. This goes to show
that frictions do occur due to family financial issues, especially if one party is not contributing financially. Moreover, whichever way it comes, it is the women that are usually on the receiving end. Ideas about masculinity will be suited for understanding why unemployed husbands are stressed and take out their frustrations on their wives. Gender roles are played out at three different levels: production, emotional attachment and power. Focusing on the area of production, the sexual division of labour expects women to ensure social production in the private sphere, while men ensure capital production in the public sphere (Connell, 1995). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity, a concept based on practices that permit men's collective dominance over women to continue. This could manifest in men's engagement with dangerous practices, such as physical violence that stabilise gender dominance in a particular setting, such as the home or family (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006). The perspectives of the research participants, appears to suggest that men’s unemployment is a threat to their masculinity and one of the ways they reaffirm their position as men is by using violence to exert control.

Moreover, frustration-aggression theory can also be used to understand why conflicts arise among couples, especially when there are challenges in meeting up with family responsibilities and obligations. The theory provides a psychological explanation of aggressive behaviour as stemming from the frustration of goals. It postulates that as sources of frustration accumulate during an economic crisis, for example, frustrated groups may unleash their aggression on a convenient social target, which is often a minority group (Jost and Mentovich, 2017).

It is not unusual for immigrant women to find themselves unemployed at their host countries due to lack of basic resources and skills such as education, occupation and social networks that await them, and which could either foster their settlement or impact on their vulnerability to domestic violence (Menjiva, 2000, cited in Menjiva and Salcido, 2002). This sentiment is echoed by Margaret, who comes from Malawi:

I don’t understand, maybe because [i] am not working, [and] my other kids are in [home country], we don’t have enough money to send to them; I tried looking
for work, even as domestic [worker] but there is nothing (Margaret, 20 June, 2018)

In the same vein, Joyce also says:

you know, getting a job is not easy for foreigners, things were difficult compared to the way we were living back home. I had no money......
when I ask for money, it was always trouble, we will end up fighting and he would beat me up (Joyce, 27 June, 2018)

Miller-Perin et al. (2018) argued that most often, men emigrate earlier than their wives, thus having more knowledge about navigating their social contexts and probably having secured some form of livelihood before the wife’s arrival. This could put men in more advantaged positions and, in some cases, the women may have to navigate their ways through their husbands. A similar scenario is reflected in the experience of Christiana whose husband had arrived in South Africa two years before her. He runs a business and she used to work with him. She had this to say:

He’s the main bread winner, so he takes charge of all the money that comes in, even though I assist him with his business, he doesn’t see it as work, so I get no financial reward. When I bring up the issue of being paid something, he would respond with something like, ‘are you not eating what else do you want?’ so I believe financial dependence on him is one of the reasons he beats me (Christiana, 27 March, 2018).

4.3.2 Male dominance and cultural expectations
Conflict over money, dependence, powerlessness and financial stress make women vulnerable. This theme, therefore, encompasses a variety of issues such as husbands that are too controlling, wives that are perceived to be insubordinate, husbands feeling
disrespected, wives viewed as slacking in domestic work or being lazy around the house, and husbands having legitimate power over their wives.

Patriarchal practices and cultural expectations on women is a major factor that puts women in a precarious position for the perpetration of domestic abuse. Research has shown that the experiences of the participants in this study are not unusual to the experiences of women in other social contexts, including those outside of the African continent. While patriarchy is universal, the way it manifests itself in various contexts are sometimes different. Hence, the strict adherence to gender norms by men, whereby certain chores, such as cleaning, cooking and child care are designated to women, while provision and control of financial resources are assigned to men (Ajila, 2002; Bograd, 1999; Koening et al., 2003; Schuler et al., 1989; Thistlewaite, 1981). In many societies, men are also culturally permitted to discipline their wives as they deem fit, which includes beating them up to set them straight. The responses of the research participants said it all. For example, Christiana, who had been married for 16 years emphasised excessive control from her husband, and her opposition to it as one of the reasons she gets beaten. This reflects agency on her part because she opposed her husband’s overbearing control. Likewise, another participant, Mariam, who had been married for six years, stated:

[with] most ladies, the husband controls you, for example in my culture, the husband is the head of the house, whatever the husband says goes and if you don’t listen maybe, you get a beating. He was so controlling, I could not go anywhere or do anything, even visit my friends without his permission

(Mariam, 19 July, 2018).

Mariam further shared an experience whereby she got beaten up by her husband because she challenged his opposition to her spending time with her friends. He picked her up from the street, took her home and beat her up. Mariam’s standing up to her
husband for excessive controlling behaviour shows another example of women exercising agency by themselves. She had this to tell:

[there was] one time I was walking with my friend, then he drove up to me and asked what I was doing, I told him, don’t ask me that kind of question; then he put me in the car, drove me home and beat me up (Mariam, 19 July, 2018)

The voice of another participant echoes the sentiment against patriarchy and the cultural expectations that increases women’s vulnerabilities to spousal abuse. Sandra, from Congo responded to the question of why her husband maltreats and beats her by saying:

he feels I don’t respect him, because I speak my mind when I feel offended;
he wanted a quiet wife, which I am not. He was very controlling, it was either his way, or the high way. You know our culture give men so much power over women, once you are married, it’s like you have signed away your life

(Sandra, 26 July 2018).

The subordinate position of women to men, especially within the context of marriage, is upheld in most societies and cultures. This invariably makes women more susceptible to spousal abuse. As indicated in the first theme discussed on the impact of education on domestic violence, the responses of the women speak volumes. This is further reiterated by Helen. She says:

anything the woman says, even if you bring an idea to the table, they will take it as your [own] opinion because the woman’s voice must not be heard

(Helen, 12 April, 2018).
It appears that more women are exercising agency by standing up to challenge the controlling habit of their husbands, thus, in a way, resisting such behaviours. This is evident again in Sandra’s statement in the quote above.

4.3.3 Image management and non-disclosure
Many women in abusive relationships often do not speak out due to shame. Several research reports have indicated that women who speak out are portrayed as being disloyal to their husbands and families (Erez et al, 2009; Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009). Furthermore, patriarchal structures of most societies are permissive of spousal abuse. As a result, even when the women speak out, they are perceived as weak and immature because bearing pain is part of women’s calling. Moreover, they are responsible for keeping the family together; they are also expected to make their husband’s happy at the expense of their own misery (Jewkes et al. 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Schuer et al., 1996). Some of the women’s responses captured this sentiment appropriately. According to Christiana from Nigeria, she dared not complain or report her marriage problems to their friends in order not to tarnish the ‘perfect family’ image the husband has created. Also, speaking out has been termed as ‘uncivilised’ behaviour by her husband when she attempted sharing her issues with one of her female friends.

Another participant, Helen, who hails from Zimbabwe, had this to say about speaking out:

you know these men, they are very secretive about such things. Also, in trying to protect his image, I never told his friends and brothers here..............those friends hit their wives too, so there’s nothing they could say or do to change him

(Helen, Zimbabwean; 12 April, 2018).
Some of the women did not speak out about their abuse earlier on because they felt that would not solve their problems. This is because, apparently, there were no trustworthy enough people around them that could initiate any tangible intervention. As Joyce, a Ghanaian, said,

> we have some country men and women here, but they are not close enough to disclose such shameful acts to......”.

With a tone of helplessness, Margaret, and Sandra had this to say:

> I don’t have anyone, even at home, his parents are dead, and my mother too [is dead], my father is old, I can’t be bothering him with my problems..., even I decided not to tell my brother and sisters and my in-laws because there is nothing they can do (Margaret, 20 June, 2018)

> [Even] though there are a few relatives here but you can’t be taking your problems to them all the time, they have their own problems too which they may not open up about; so it’s every man for himself. Besides, when you are always complaining, you will lose respect and people won’t like having you around. After everything, what can they do to help you, nothing!

> (Sandra, 26 July, 2018)

From the discussions above, it is apparent that many women suffer abuse in silence for various reasons, including keeping the family together, protecting the perpetrators and not having credible people who could ensure any meaningful intervention.
4.3.4 Influence of early socialisation

Socialisation plays a significant role in human development because it is the process of internalising the norms and ideologies of a society. The process of socialisation for a child starts from the family, thus shaping the character, beliefs and disposition of an individual. Chodorow’s (1944) reproduction of mothering explicitly argued that differential experiences in infancy produces different development paths for girls and boys. Similarly, Parsons made some assumptions regarding the family role structures, such as the attribution of certain tasks to specific genders (Parsons and Bales, 1955, cited in White and Klein, 2008). Parsons indicated that females are more expressive, which has to do with maintaining the internal affairs of the system or family, while males are more instrumental, that is, men are orientated to deal with the relations of the family to its situation outside the home. This assertion resonates with the experience of one participant, a Zimbabwean, whose spouse is from another African country. She responded to the question on why her husband is abusive to her by saying:

In his culture, the boy is treated better than a girl child, and that is how he was raised. So, when you go into a marriage or relationship with a man with that mentality, he would expect the same thing because his mother was treating him that way; and his sisters were not valued.... anything the woman says, even if you bring an idea to the table, they will take it as your opinion, because the woman’s voice must not be heard (Helen, 12 April 2018)

Only one participant gave a direct response that gave rise to this theme. However, the responses of a few others also reflect the impact of socialisation on how men and women behave in intimate or marital relationships. The following statements illuminate this:

you know there can’t be two masters, one has to come down and that person is expected to be the woman (Joyce, Ghanaian)
it is a man’s world, and women are weak and discriminated against
women are perceived as the weaker vessel, yet they are the ones who
must carry the burden of the family on their shoulders

(Grace, Nigerian)

It is the woman’s duty to keep the home together, isn’t it?

(Sandra, Congolese)

Most women are socialised as young girls to engage more in domestic chores and household duties, thus, growing up to believe it is their duty to hold the family together. They learn from their mothers and, sometimes, other adult females around them, how to behave as good wives by taking a subordinate or submissive position in relation to their husbands. Hence, any deviation from such norms could portray the woman as either a bad wife or mother. This is reflected in the response of one participant, whose perspective is expressed herewith:

I would not want to cause a rift between the families
[her family and husband’s family] back home. I would
not want to give myself a bad name as the wife that sent
her husband to prison (Christiana, Nigerian).

4.3.5 Living far from family and isolation from friends
Virtually all the women interviewed for this research study gave answers that reflected the impact of living far away from their immediate family members, such as parents and siblings, on their experiences of spousal abuse. Living far away from family members and
not having adequate or any social network at all impacted negatively on the women. When situations became unbearable at home there were hardly any support systems that the women could fall back on, as one woman responded:

when you don’t have your family around, it’s difficult. There is no one to turn to,
even if you go to friends, some of them will only sympathise with you and tell you
to go back home as they don’t want trouble from their own husbands
(Helen, Zimbabwean).

This state of being isolated, with little or no support has been a tool in the hands of the abusers for perpetrating their wicked acts. For example, extreme cases of isolation have been identified as leading to suicide attempts by Asian women in Canada (Morison et al. 1999, cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002). Similarly, one of the participants, Grace (Nigerian), also expressed having suicidal thoughts during the time of the abuse because she was suffering alone in silence until she broke the silence by speaking out and seeking help. With some of the participants, they could report their partners to their husbands' parents who live in their home countries, but the support the parents could offer were very limited and minimal as making international calls for intervention was not realistic for most of them, due to financial constraints.

In responding to the question of how being a foreigner has impacted on the women’s experiences with spousal abuse, below are some of their responses:

with me, he knows there are no relatives, so he can do whatever he likes,
I can’t go to the extreme [in order] to get him punished, he is all I’ve got here
(Christiana, Nigerian).

when you don’t have your family here, it is possible that your husband or
boyfriend can treat you badly, because you have nowhere to go or anyone
to turn to (Beatrice, Zimbabwean)

things would have been different if it were to be back home. When the
man sees you’ve got no one, like a brother, then he will always abuse
you. When you don’t have parents and family [members] around the
man [can do] whatever he likes (Mariam, Somalian),

Spousal abuse happens everywhere and under many circumstances. However, the
context of immigration, which often results in some form of isolated living condition,
makes it more difficult for immigrant women to bear. The words of Sandra (Congolese),
says it all:

somewhat, being a foreigner has made it last for longer than necessary,

there is abuse everywhere, it’s just that, as a foreigner, you may not

know what to do and who to trust.

Most of these women could have experienced their abuse differently if the context had
been different, they could have gone to their parents’ homes or close friends to calm down
and avoid contacts with their abusers, even if only for a short time. Moreover, the abuse
may not have happened at all, or, at least, could have been better contained, if they had
been in their home countries with familiar faces around. This goes to show the extent to
which patriarchal beliefs and practices are entrenched in most societies.

4.3.6 Limited knowledge about social services and indifferent attitudes to
utilisation

There is a saying that knowledge is power. The experiences of some of my research
participants indicated that, not knowing about available social services made them endure
abuse for longer than they would have if they knew. Also, some of them expressed an
indifferent attitude to what could have been achieved through the utilisation of the social services. In research conducted on South Asian and East Asian immigrants in the United States (Bhuyan, 2012; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Rizo and Macy, 2011), it was observed that lack of knowledge about social services resulted in women remaining in abusive relationships, and even when they knew about available services, language barriers prevented the women from accessing such services. Similarly, with this study, lack of knowledge and indifferent attitudes significantly prevented some of the women from accessing resources which could have assisted them. In responding to the question on the women’s awareness about social services, three of the women (Mariam, Beatrice, Margaret and Joyce) were not aware. This is reflected in their responses:

No I didn’t know anything, when I was told there is a place that can help you, I said which kind of place is that........ I never think government can take care of people like this........ (Beatrice, Zimbabwean).

No, I did not know I could go to the police to report my husband (Margaret, Malawian).

I did not know anything (Joyce, Ghanaian).

Some of the women expressed indifferent attitudes to utilising social services due to cultural/religious beliefs, not trusting the police and a sheer lack of interest. With Mariam, cultural/religious practices prevented her from utilising social services because as a Somali and Muslim, they do not involve people outside the immigrant community in marital problems. The community elders are the mediators between couples. They perform civil duties, such as, getting people married, dissolution of the marriage and anything else in between. This appears to be a cultural practice among Somalis, which they also practice in their host country irrespective of the civil laws around marriage and family in such countries. Mariam’s disposition is also a reflection of how many people view
marriage or relationship issues - as being private or personal. Therefore, talking about such issues to people that are perceived as outsiders is regarded as either weakness on the part of the woman or as a sign of disloyalty to the family. Her indifferent attitude is expressed in the statement below:

I was not aware of government programmes ... when there is problem between husband and wife, you don’t involve outsiders, you report to the elders, and they will settle it ... (Mariam, Somalian).

Her stance is also in line with how immigrant communities in countries like the United States and Canada do not like getting outside forces, such as law enforcement agents, involved in their members’ marital conflicts (Sokoloff, 2008) Similarly, studies by Erez et al. (2009) revealed that their participants did not report abuse because according to their immigrant communities, marital strife was to be kept, not disclosed, and public intervention was not allowed. On the other hand, Beatrice, expressed lack of trust in the police because she had witnessed her former neighbour not getting any assistance from the police when she called them to intervene when her husband beat her. Her reservations are expressed thus:

where I lived before, my neighbours used to fight and when she goes to police to report, the police will come and say “how can we arrest you people, you must fix things...... that’s why when my baby daddy [former boyfriend] beat me, I say to myself what’s the point of reporting to police,

I don’t believe in police, especially here in South Africa (Beatrice, Zimbabwean).
A slightly different perspective was presented by Joyce who felt that involving the court is a waste of her time, probably because it usually takes long for cases to be finalised in courts. She said:

I did not know, but even if I knew, I don’t think it would make any difference because I don’t have time for station [police station], and going to court everyday (Joyce, Ghanaian).

Another issue that came up as expressed by Margaret was the fear of her husband being deported if she reported to officials, because she heard that domestic violence is a criminal offence in South Africa.

Feminist theories of patriarchy and intersectionality are both hinged on unequal power dynamics and multiple forms of oppression encountered by marginalised groups, such as immigrant women. Women are subjected to patriarchal demands at home due to patriarchy (Bograd, 1999; Hunnicut, 2009; Steven, 2007), and the intersection of various factors, such as structural, cultural and institutional barriers hold abused immigrant women back from seeking or accessing help and intervention (Erez et al. 2008; Lee and Hadeed, 2009; Vidales, 2010).

4.3.7 Influence of third party, alcohol and substance use

I decided to group these three factors together because they are variables outside of the domain of intimate or spousal relationships. A cross-sectional research conducted by Jewkes et al. (2002) on the factors that lead to domestic violence highlighted alcohol consumption and substance abuse. When men or women are under the influence of alcohol and drugs, they tend to behave irrationally. It is not easy to determine why people use alcohol and drugs, however, some of the social factors could be peer pressure, desire to fit in, especially for people with low self-esteem, and to relieve stress from work and family problems. Furthermore, as Jewkes et al. (2002) suggested, some South African men drink in order to give women the beating of their lives because the disinhibiting effect of alcohol is likely to make conflict result in violence. Their studies further suggest that
alcohol consumption for women was strongly associated with domestic violence, irrespective of whether it was itself a source of conflict. Grace, who is married to a white South African reported substance abuse and outside influence as the major reasons for the psychological abuse she suffered from her husband;

my experience is mostly psychological and emotional abuse, he
never raised his hands on me.... but he would be checking my phone,
stalking my movements and stuff like that; with him it was outside
influence from his mother, and substance abuse (Grace, Nigerian)

Some of the other participants also refer to alcohol abuse as triggers for domestic abuse but not that their partners consumed them. However, with Grace, especially since she was not physically battered by her husband, the effect of substance abuse, on her husband had the same devastating effect on her marriage and life as those that were beaten up by their partners.

4.3.8 Accusations of Infidelity
Unfaithfulness in a relationship often leads to a lack of trust and respect for the cheating spouse and it could also be an indicator of the cheating partner’s commitment to the relationship. Studies on the impact of infidelity in intimate partner violence indicate that women’s suspicion of partners’ infidelity were associated with higher reports of physical abuse among both women and their male partners (Conroy, 2014). Moreover, a woman’s refusal of sexual advances from a partner suspected of infidelity for fear of HIV infection may result in physical abuse by the male partner (Balmer et al., 1995, cited in Conroym 2014). In some instances, physical abuse could also result from a woman raising concerns about a partner’s extramarital relationship (van der Straten et al., 1995).

In this study, two participants alluded to the impact of infidelity on their experiences of spousal abuse. Christiana believes her husband beats her because she is a foreigner, who does not have any rights or does not know her rights, because the husband treats
his girlfriends who are South African citizens differently. This is expressly stated in her words:

..... as much as I know, he doesn’t treat his South African
girlfriends badly, he knows with them, ‘he can’t get away
with murder’; they know their rights and they won’t hesitate
to exercise them (Christiana, Nigerian)

Similarly, Joyce, who has been separated from her husband for over two years also believes that her husband’s extra marital affair contributed in some ways to her abuse. This presumption is reflected in her statement:

when I came to join him, I didn’t know he had got involved with
a South African lady....... We will end up fighting and he would
beat me up, it was later I got to know that there is a girl by the
side, maybe they are married now, I don’t know (Joyce, Ghanaian).

4.3.9 Illegal immigration status
Irregular or illegal immigration status has been identified as one of the factors that make immigrant women susceptible to spousal abuse. Although none of the participants reported having illegal or irregular immigration status at the time of study, one participant, Christiana, however, perceived her abuse to be related to her immigration status because the husband once saw her as helpless when she had illegal status. Her response to why she is being maltreated or abused by her husband was:

......... another reason I think he was abusive was because of my
immigration status; he believes he can do whatever he likes.
there was a time I was illegal in the country, so we had a fight and
I threatened to report him to the police. All he could say was that I
would get myself into trouble if I dared go to the police (Christiana, Nigerian)

Similar studies show that perpetrators take advantage of their spouses’ immigration
status to perpetrate their atrocities because such spouses fear that they or their husband,
who is also the perpetrator, or the entire family may be deported if authorities were to be
involved. Thus, abused women do not report their abuse in order to protect themselves
and their families (Reina et al., 2014; Raj and Silverman, 2002).

4.4 Reflecting on coping and resistance strategies
The narratives of the participants in this study revealed various ways the women coped
with their abuse and, for those who dared, how they resisted in order to bring an end to
the abuse. Research among African immigrant women in the United States revealed
various coping mechanisms adopted by immigrant women (Ting, 2010; Ting and
Panchandeswaran, 2009). These include accepting an inferior position for their peace of
mind or resorting to fate and enduring the abuse for the sake of their children or until they
obtain their resident permits (green card), in cases where the women’s resident status
were dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, some of the women were reported to
seek to engage higher powers through religion to help them cope by praying for their
husbands, while hoping that there would be divine justice of karma. Similarly, a study
conducted by Zakar et al. (2012) on Pakistani women’s coping strategies indicated the
strong use of religion, through prayers, by women to avoid or minimise conflicts in their
marriages. They also used religion for emotional release, increased social integration and
for developing some hope.

Literatures have indicated that abused women respond based on the circumstances of
the abuse and their assessment of available options such as class, ethnicity, socio
economic viability and access to alternative support systems (Ellsberg et al., 2001, cited
in Zakar et al., 2012). Hence, the coping mechanisms of this study’s participants is no
less different from what had been found to exist in other social contexts. Three sub-themes emerged from the data that relate specifically to coping and resistance mechanisms and these are discussed in the next section.

4.4.1 Engaging informal intervention
In an attempt to minimise their suffering, most of the women reported making use of family intervention by reporting the abuse to their husbands’ families, especially to the parents. They might have adopted this strategy in the hope that the perpetrators would, at least, respect and listen to the counsel of their parents and change their behaviours. As three participants narrated:

I would plead with him ... and, if it seemed beyond my control, I
would ask his parents to beg him for me (Margaret, Malawian).

I used to report him to his parents, but there was not much they could do,
especially since we were far away from them, and intervention over the
phone could be quite expensive (Christiana, Nigerian).

I used to call his mother and sisters in [husband’s country to report him].
the mother would cry and plead with him to stop behaving that way, even
his sisters too. He would apologise and behave nicely afterwards (Helen, Zimbabwean).

The responses of these participants indicated the willingness of the women to keep their issues within the family by engaging the interventions of close family members. Also drawing from their use of language, they probably adopted this strategy at the initial stage of the abuse with the hope that their partners would heed the pleas from their parents and change their behaviours. The experiences of these women are a contrast to other studies that portrayed the extended family, especially the husband's family as being complicit to abuse, as found among Indian immigrant families in Canada (Shirwardkar, 2004).
Another informal support the women sought was spiritual in nature. Some participants reported getting support from their spiritual leaders/pastors to cope with their situations. This is reflected in the accounts of Grace, Sandra and Joyce who praised the churches and their pastors (spiritual leaders) for giving them strong moral support. Joyce even reported receiving financial assistance from her pastor who had become more like a father to her. She had been able to start a business with the money he gave her, from which she could support herself and her daughter, since she separated from her husband. The roles of the churches and pastors as coping mechanisms for these women were echoed in their voices, reflected in the following statements

Oh! thank God for my spiritual father and my church [names withheld], he was always there to listen and encourage me.

the church was my home, because people were always willing
to lend a hand. In fact, where I am staying presently, my pastor
is taking care of the payments. I can’t imagine how things would
have been without them (Grace, 24 March 2018).

I would cry and pray, church was my solace, I got lots of support
from my pastor and his wife (Sandra, 26 July 2018).

at church, I told the Pastor so that he can advise me, and he has really
been very kind, he’s like a father to me. The business am doing, he was
the one that gave me money to start up ... (Joyce, 27 June 2018)

Studies among African immigrants to the United States also indicate that women got moral and informal support from their pastors; while also engaging in prayers for change
in their partners, thereby gaining strength to endure the abuse (Ting, 2010; Ting and Panchandeswaran, 2009).

4.4.2 Taking their destinies into their hands
In resisting abuse from their spouses, some of the women reported getting a separation from their husbands. For example, Joyce, is separated from her husband and has custody of their young daughter. She did not want to utilise social services because she does not believe it would help, probably, because her suffering is not limited to physical abuse. It involved neglect and infidelity. When she was asked about the current state of her marital relationship, since she is not yet divorced, she had this to say:

there is no relationship, as I no longer live with him. Marriage is a relationship, a man can’t be beating me, not provide for me, and even cheating on me and still call himself a husband, no ways (Joyce, 27 June 2018)

The same goes with Grace, a Nigerian, who has separated from her husband, while having a divorce suit in court. The situation with Grace was apparently complicated because of her inter-racial marriage, which the husband’s parents were not supportive of. Hence, instead of helping to resolve the situation or giving her support, they seemed to be more interested in getting her out of their son’s life, thereby, making her more miserable. They saw her as a gold digger who married their son for financial gains. Beatrice, a Zimbabwean, also broke up with her boyfriend, two months after giving birth to her child and lived in a shelter for abused women. Mariam, from Somalia, also divorced her husband for one year, living alone with her baby. However, in her case, the husband apologised and with community elders’ intervention, they re-married and were now living together with their kids. The role of community elders in keeping marital issues within the immigrant group is reiterated again in this participant’s narrative. This practice seems to be commonplace among most immigrant groups, maybe in a bid to protect their members or to present a good image of their communities.
In a bit of a twist, Margaret, a Malawian was also separated from her husband, but not of her own free will. She was chased away by her husband with her young child. Indeed, the circumstances of each woman determined the actions that were taken to address the situation.

4.4.3 Utilising formal social services

As a last resort in resisting spousal abuse, some women went all out to make use of available social resources to put an end to their suffering. They took this step after all other options had been exhausted and in an attempt to protect themselves. Some of them had called in family members, talked back and or kept quiet, but these actions did not seem to have any meaningful effect in stopping the perpetrators. Christiana, who had been married for 16 years and suffered physical abuse for almost 12 years, aside emotional abuse, neglect and financial deprivation, had this to say:

Initially, I would fight back when I couldn’t take it anymore, I would talk back at him and we would yell at each other. Then sometimes, I would just keep quiet, even when he was insulting me because I got tired of fighting. Recently though, when he started making threats of killing me when I confronted him over his extra marital affairs, I started finding ways of stopping the nonsense........ eventually I was able to get a protection order against him (Christiana, Nigerian, 27 March, 2018).

In this woman’s case, she had endured all forms of abuse from her husband, as illustrated in the statement above, while devising various coping mechanisms to deal with her situation. However, a direct threat to her life made her to take a more drastic step to take charge of the situation. From her statement, one can see that she realised a need for a higher and probably neutral authority to put her husband under control for his unacceptable behaviours and she went all out until she got the court order for her protection, which, if violated, will get the perpetrator arrested and probably jailed. There was a time she was illegal in the country, due to immigration anomalies, and her husband used that situation to torture her. However, she was able to obtain an asylum seeker
temporary permit, which enabled her to involve the police and access the courts for assistance at different times in her abusive marital relationship.

In another situation similar to Christiana’s experience, Helen also got a permanent protection order against her husband who refused to heed any therapeutic/counselling programmes ordered by the courts to intervene in their situation. She had this to say,

the magistrate is very good woman, she does not want people to divorce

so she ordered my husband to go for anger management, but he would

not go, so the interim protection order was confirmed into a permanent

one, which is final, you know we have been on this case for some time now

(Helen, 12 April, 2018)

Sandra was also successful in getting a protection order against her husband, after she was severely beaten sometime in the past year. Like Chistiana and Helen, this also led her to take extra measures against her husband, as indicated in her words:

……. I didn’t come immediately [to the courts]. Last year we had a

quarrel and he beat me so much I thought I was going to die, that

was when I decided to get a protection order against him

(Sandra, 26 July 2018)

Grace also went the legal route to challenge her husband and fight back by getting a restraining order against her husband. She also spoke highly of the services rendered by the Community Safety Forum and social workers that offered her counselling. In fact, it was the social workers who introduced her to the shelter where she stayed temporarily until she was able to find her feet again. When asked how she managed to cope and whether she used any formal social resources for intervention, she responded this way:
the Community Safety Forum helped me a lot, they were always patrolling, ever
since they knew about my case; the social workers also helped me with counselling, and
brought me to the shelter where we met....... I used the legal route to fight back. I got a
restraining order against him, I also involved a host of formal support including the
Embassy of my country.... the Community Safety Forum played a big role in supporting me
(Grace, Nigerian).

Margaret’s story, however, did not go as smoothly as that of the other three women. In
her case, even though she went to the courts to open a case against her husband, she
could not get the required assistance. This was because she had no means of
identification. She had legal residence, but there was no way to prove it because her
husband had withheld her passport and sent her away. In responding to the question on
whether she was able to get the assistance needed by the court officials, she responded,
they allowed me to write my statement, but now they are saying they
can’t really open a case because I don’t have any means of
identification, I must go and get my passport, now I don’t know what
to do.... [devastated and crying at this point] (Margaret, 20 June 2018).

Going through the stories of these women, it was evident that despite their desire for
intervention in their marital troubles, most of them were unwilling to go to the shelters.
Only one participant was identified as residing in a shelter, the other ones that utilised
social services were identified at the courts. Most of the participant appeared to still want
to be with their spouses, but wanted the abuse to end so that they would have better
quality of marital relationships. Three participants, in answering the question on the
impact of the protection order, if they obtained one, and the current state of their
relationships, responded like this:

........ He wants me to withdraw the case, so that we can settle it at
home; but that will take time and I needed to be sure that he has changed for real before I can take that step. However, he has not been physical with me ever since I got the protection order (Helen, Zimbabwean).

I am back in court now to apply for the order to be cancelled, because I have seen a lot of changes in him and I want to give him another chance, I still love him (Sandra, Congolese).

The elders talk to him, you know, in my culture, the elders come in. They told him if you hit a girl, she’s going leave you. So, for one year I was staying alone with my baby; then he started pleading for me to come back home. The elders come in again, then we re-married, and since then he has been behaving well, he doesn’t beat me anymore (Mariam, Somalian).

Contrary to literature that indicates that xenophobia keeps women away from reporting abuse or utilising social resources (Sigworths et al. 2008), the outcome of this study reveals otherwise. Out of the eight participants, five actually made use of social resources, especially the courts, while one reported calling the police once when she was locked out of her home by her husband. According to all these women, they got favourable responses from the police and court officials and their satisfaction levels are reflected in their responses in the next subsection. This assertion does not rule out possibilities of xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants. However, in the context of domestic violence, the battered immigrant women received valuable services from relevant public officials regarding their cases. Nonetheless, at the time of conducting these research interviews, it was observed that bureaucratic protocols prevented one participant from receiving timely assistance to alleviate her sufferings. However, there were chances of her
receiving the assistance sometime later, but the upholding of principles, in the face of the imminent danger that the woman faced, can be perceived as an impediment which indirectly violates women.

4.5 Genuine outcomes of using formal social services
All four participants that were able to effectively access social services reported satisfaction with the outcomes and the services they received, most especially from the courts. The protection orders had served in bringing an end to physical abuse and, or, transforming the perpetrators to develop better relationships with their wives. These are reflected in the statements below:

The magistrate is a very good woman, she doesn’t want people to divorce. So, she ordered my husband to go for anger management, but he would not go; so the interim order was confirmed into a temporary one........ He wants me to withdraw the case, so we could settle it at home, but that will take time and I needed to be sure that he has changed for real before I can take that step. However, he has not been violent with me ever since I got the protection order (Helen, Zimbabwean).

He has changed a lot and he is pleading with me to withdraw the protection order. I am back in court now to apply for the order to be cancelled, I have seen a lot of changes in him and I want to give him a second chance, I still love him (Sandra).

Ah! it has been very helpful, there has been no physical violence since I got the protection order; even though conflicts have not stopped completely, but he knows he cannot raise his hands on me, and despite him bragging that he is not afraid of the police, he has not dared to violate the order, that makes me feel protected and I try not to look for trouble also...... [laughs] (Christiana, Nigerian).
The court system was helpful in many ways, for example, there was no bias against me as a foreigner. The court was ethical in how they handled and treated my case (Grace, Nigerian, 24 March, 2018).

Overall, most of the women that went through the legal route expressed satisfaction with the services they received. Their being foreigners was not a source of discrimination and, to a large extent, their partners had stopped beating them, and some of the perpetrators were seeking to make peace with their wives and restore peaceful and satisfying marital relationships.

4.6 Conclusion

The experiences of eight immigrant women who had experienced spousal abuse were explored with a focus on factors that make them vulnerable, how they coped with, or resisted abuse and the level of satisfaction obtained from using social resources. With the use of thematic analysis, eight interviews were transcribed and the narratives from the transcripts were coded and placed in the themes discussed above. The emerging themes on factors for vulnerability were similar to those found in previous literatures. These include unemployment and financial problems, male dominance, image management and non-disclosure, influence of early socialisation, living far from family and isolation from friends, limited knowledge of social services and indifferent attitudes towards using such services, influence of third party, alcohol and substance abuse and infidelity.

The participants in this study also shared similar coping strategies with the women in previous studies. The strategies include engaging informal intervention through family members and using religion and spiritual leaders. Furthermore, some decided to put themselves first by separating from their abusers, and those who did not want separation
or divorce sought formal intervention through the courts by obtaining protection orders against their abusers, while still working on having better marital relationships. Foreign women are vulnerable in relationships as they find themselves at greater risk of isolation and lack of familiarity with how to properly engage with socialised notions of appropriate behaviour for men and women. These issues will be elaborated on further, in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION: REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The experiences of black immigrant women affected by spousal abuse were investigated in this qualitative study with the focus being on female migrants in Johannesburg who were either married or in a co-habiting relationship. With the use of feminist perspectives, the study explored what immigrant women perceived as factors that made them vulnerable to abuse in their marriages and intimate relationships, and how they coped with the abuse. This research sought to investigate if and how they resisted the abuse, and what agencies were involved in standing up to their abusers, all within the context of immigration in an African setting. The study made use of a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, using open-ended questions, as the method for data collection, which allowed probing and going beyond surface knowledge of the participants’ narratives and experiences. Thematic analysis was adopted for the analysis of the collected data, which offered insights on emerging themes linked to the vulnerability and coping/resistance strategies of women who experienced domestic/intimate partner abuse. The study aimed to add to existing knowledge on immigrant women’s experiences and to suggest changes to improve their lives.

5.2 Addressing the research question

The research question: ‘what are the experiences of black immigrant women with spousal abuse?’ came up because, despite extensive research on domestic violence in South Africa, there is little to no literature on the experiences of certain marginalised groups, such as black immigrant women, compared to women in the larger population. In order to answer this question, literatures on spousal abuse among immigrant communities emerging from countries outside Africa were reviewed to draw out factors that contribute to women’s vulnerability and how they coped or resisted. Various factors that emerged from the reviews assisted in the framing of the questions that were used during the in-
depth interviews for this study. Moreover, eight women that fit the sampling criteria were selected using a mix of purposive and snowball sampling methods.

5.3 Key arguments and themes

From the study, there are several similarities in the experiences of the study participants to those found in existing literature on factors that make women vulnerable to abuse. The major themes that emerged from the study were grouped into three categories, namely, vulnerabilities, coping and resistance mechanisms and genuine outcomes from utilising social resources. One of the themes on vulnerability that is similar to those found in previous literatures is unemployment and financial problems. The unemployment of both or either partner caused tension and often led to spousal abuse. Another theme that emerged is patriarchy and cultural expectations, which ascribe a superior position to men and a subordinate position to women. These practices also determine how men and women ought to each behave, especially in an intimate relationship (Ahmed et al., 2009; Ajila, 2002; Felser, 2014). There is also a culture of non-disclosure, whereby women don’t speak openly about abuse due to various reasons, such as women being obliged to keep the family together and avoid being perceived in a bad light (Jewkes et al. 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002). Some women were quiet in order to protect the abuser (Erez et al. 2009; Ting, 2010).

Socialisation is another theme that came up from the participants’ narratives; this has to do with ideas and beliefs that were imbibed from childhood which impact the way people behave as adults. For example, a man that grew up within a cultural context that puts greater value on the boy-child, whereas the girl-child is perceived as not having any value aside from being a wife and raising children, might have a tendency to disrespect women including his own wife. This confirms findings by Martin et al., (2002) that male superiority and low status of women is a risk factor for spousal abuse.

Another emerging theme is living far from family and isolation from friends. The situation of not having close family members around, and being isolated from friends, was reported
by most of the participants as a risk factor for them because when there were evasion, they did not have anyone to turn to, or a safe place to cool off. Abusers have been reported to take advantage of such situations and, in extreme cases of isolation, abused women have contemplated suicide (Morison et al., cited in Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

Lack of knowledge about social services was also identified as a factor in the abuse of women by their intimate partners. When abusers realised that their partners were unaware of intervention plans in their host countries, they used such knowledge to manipulate and abuse. Some participants reported ignorance of social resources, which resonates with research findings on Asian and East Asian women in the United States (Bhuyan, 2012, Raj and Silverman, 2002). However, alongside ignorance about social services, the indifferent attitudes of some participants also emerged as affecting their use of relevant services.

The influence or role of a third party also made women vulnerable to spousal abuse. These third parties might include husband’s parents or alcohol consumption and substance use. The same is found in a cross-sectional research on main stream men in Cape Town (Jewkes et al., 2002). Infidelity is another valuable theme that came up, as Sigler (1989) indicated, abuse includes infidelity on the part of the man. Although not indicated in this study, infidelity could also reflect in accusations of women being unfaithful.

Various coping and resistance strategies were adopted by the women at different stages of the abuse, depending also on the level of risk they perceived in their lives, resulting from threats and actions meted out by the abusers. Most of the study participants initially engaged in the use of informal avenues, such as family members, to stop their abuse. Some found solace in religion and turned to spiritual leaders for comfort and hope, which is in line with findings among African women in the United states. Ting, (2010); Ting and Panchandeswaran, (2009) found the use of similar coping mechanisms among their study participants. However, contrary to their study participants’ resignation to fate and accepting a subordinate position to their abusers, the women in my study stood up to their
abusers by asserting their agency to bring an end to abuse. This was further discussed in the theme titled, ‘taking their destinies into their hands and utilising social resources’.

Three out of the eight participants halted their intimate relationships in an attempt to stop spousal abuse, one broke up with her boyfriend, despite having a child together, two married women also separated from their husbands, with one divorce case in court. One participant who was chased out of her home by her husband also sought to get a protection order against him so that she could be go back home.

The three other participants were able to obtain protection orders through the courts against their abusive husbands, not minding what the consequences would be, because of the murder threats they received from their spouses or after being stabbed with a knife; and, in another situation, after the woman was beaten to a pulp by her husband.

All the women expressed satisfaction with the services they received from facilities such as courts and law enforcement officers. This is a contrast to the fear of xenophobia which has been identified as a factor preventing immigrant women from speaking out, thus keeping them in abusive relationships. Even though there may be differences in factors leading or contributing to abuse among immigrant women and mainstream South African women, the process of seeking recourse and justice are the same for all victims.

5.4 Applying theory to understand immigrant women’s plight with spousal abuse
As discussed in the literature review, a feminist theoretical framework has been used to explain the situation of immigrant women in abusive spousal relationships. They are doubly affected by patriarchy and the various identities that play out in the multiple oppressions that marginalised people face. Patriarchy is a social arrangement that privileges men over women, both structurally and ideologically (Hunnicut, 2009). Furthermore, the patriarchal arrangements of families, coupled with imagined ideal forms of masculinity and cultural acceptance of the use of force to gain control over others, foster violence and abuse of women (Kurz, 1989, cited in Felser, 2014). Patriarchy is further entrenched in households with strong beliefs in traditional gender roles, which

The multiple identities of marginalised groups affect immigrant women in the context of spousal abuse as a result of intersecting factors such as race, gender, immigration status, economic status, to mention a few. These intersections are significant in the experience of immigrant women with spousal abuse and their help-seeking and intervention strategies (Vidales, 2010). The intersection of various barriers such as structural, cultural and institutional barriers, influence the experiences of immigrant women, compared to the experiences of mainstream women in the United States (Hadeed, 2009; Vidales, 2010).

5.5 Strategies for intervention

The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 states what domestic violence entails and the duties of law enforcement agencies in assisting abused women. However, despite the commitment of government to eradicate this menace, it is still presumed to be under-reported. I believe the situation is critical among immigrant communities and households because they are a group with less power, security and awareness of entitlements. Hence, more consciousness-raising campaigns focusing on immigrant women should be in place through community outreaches and churches, so that the fear of prejudice can be alleviated. From my experience in having difficulties identifying participants through shelters for abused immigrant women, I will suggest that more shelters be made available to cater for these abused immigrant women who are desperately in need of a place of safety, where they will not feel intimidated by being among local women, with language challenges and fear of xenophobic attitudes.

5.6 Methodological lessons

The major methodological lesson from this study was my assumption that I would easily recruit participants from shelters that have been purposively sampled. To my dismay, when it was time for data collection, it was difficult to get participants, which also made
data collection take longer than anticipated. Another challenge I faced was gaining access, I made several calls and emails to organisations, but I never got any responses. It was only after my supervisor issued me an introduction letter supervisor that I was granted access into some of the organisations and courts. For future studies, these aspects of the methodology and research design would have to be adequately planned without assuming anything.

All was not gloom and doom, because despite the sensitive nature of the study and the challenges in getting research participants for the study, being an insider motivated the women to speak freely about their experiences. As a foreign black married woman and student researcher, it was easy to approach the participants and gain their trust on the basis that the study was for academic purpose and not to get them into any trouble.

5.7 Recommendations for future study
This study has focused on examining the factors that make immigrant women vulnerable to abuse and how they have coped or resisted the abuse. A qualitative approach was used to interview eight immigrant women from within Africa. More research still needs to be conducted on immigrants to explore the impact of other factors that this study did not cover such as immigration status and local language proficiency. More participants would also be recommended to allow for more diversity in responses and experiences, including of more unmarried women. Topics for future studies may include:

- Social networks and how they can assist immigrant women.
- Differences in the experiences of immigrant women married to local men and those married to immigrant men.
- The role of religious institutions and spiritual leaders regarding spousal abuse in immigrant communities.

5.8 Conclusion
Spousal abuse or domestic violence happens to people of all backgrounds. However, immigrant women’s experiences differ in many ways from those of mainstream women
due to various structural and institutional barriers. Structural barriers include unemployment, low income and poverty. Institutional barriers have to do with issues regarding immigration status and lack of knowledge about rights. Immigrant women, like others, want peaceful marriages and happy families, which makes them inclined to endure abuse in their relationships, while seeking means of amicable resolutions in times of conflict.

The different stages and types of abuse they suffer have been identified as determining factors shaping how they react to abuse. Some participants separated from their perpetrators those who were not ready to leave their marriages made use of the law to protect themselves, while taking power from the abusers. This study shows how women exercise agency in seemingly helpless situations, thereby, setting themselves free and removing the stigma of helplessness that is associated with battered women.

Lastly, in answering the research question on the views of immigrant women on factors that make them vulnerable to spousal abuse, patriarchal factors were prominent in the participants’ responses. These include factors such as male dominance and cultural expectations, image management and non-disclosure of the abuse and the influence of early socialisation regarding gender roles. From the participants’ responses also, the intersection of various other factors stood out as contributing to their vulnerabilities to spousal abuse. Among them was limited knowledge about social services, illegal immigrant status, living far from family, isolation from friends, and infidelity. These issues will have to be seriously addressed to enable immigrant women to participate with confidence and without fear of being violated in the South African society.
Reference List


Accessed on 05/04/2018 @ 5.40 am


APPENDIX A

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

16 November 2017

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<tr>
<th>ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER</th>
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<td>REVIEW OUTCOME</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPLICANT</td>
<td>Mrs T A Ajayi</td>
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<tr>
<td>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
<td>Vulnerability and resistance: Black immigrant women’s experiences of spousal abuse in Johannesburg</td>
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<td>DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUPERVISOR/S</td>
<td>Mr Muhammad Soleman &amp; Prof Kammila Naidoo</td>
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Dear Mrs Ajayi,

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg. We have made some recommendations, set out below, for consideration in consultation with your supervisors.

The REC would like to extend their best wishes to you with your postgraduate studies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Tharina Guse
Chair: Faculty of Humanities REC
Tel: 011 559 3248
email: tguse@uj.ac.za
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Titilade Ajayi (Mrs) and I am a student at the University of Johannesburg. I am conducting research as part of my Master's Degree in Sociology. My supervisors are Mr. Muhammed Suleman and Prof. Kammila Naidoo at the UJ Department of Sociology. You are welcome to confirm this from the department on 011-5592879.

Following the recent surge of domestic violence cases in the country and most especially in Gauteng province, I have chosen to do research focused on the experiences of migrant women or foreign women in violent/abusive relationships. The focus of my research project is, How Do Black Migrant Women Experience Spousal/Intimate Partner Abuse in Johannesburg? I would therefore like to ask for your formal permission to be interviewed about your own experiences relating to this topic.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to participate, not to be involved, or to withdraw from the interview. During the interview, you may choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with. Furthermore, your real name, identity and affiliations will not be revealed in my report.

I would like to record the interview on a digital (voice recording) device. This is purely so that I will not have to rely on my memory to report on this interview. I will not share the recording or excerpts of it with anyone. I will share only my written report in which your identity will be protected – it will not be made known.

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to request that you please sign the consent form in the space allocated below. If you have any questions about any aspect of this research, now, in the course of this study, or later, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0820710776. I will be glad to answer all questions. Thank you.

_______________________
Titilade Ajayi

Formal consent from Participant.
I agree to participate in the interview.

Name: ........................................ Place: .................................

Signed: ................................. Date: .................................
APPENDIX C   INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE

Section A: Basic/Demographic questions (structured)

1. Can you please tell me your name?
2. How old are you?
3. May I know which country you are from?
4. Are you married to your partner or you are just boyfriend and girlfriend?
5. How long have you been in the relationship?
6. Do you have any kids together?
7. Are you using passport or asylum permit?
8. Are you currently employed or looking for a job?

Section B: Childhood exposure to domestic violence

9. Can you please tell me about your growing up years and your relationships with your family members, such as father, mother, siblings or teachers?
10. Did you ever witness violence with any people close to you? If yes, where did it happen and were there any consequences for the perpetrator?

Section C: Knowledge/ perceptions about spousal/intimate partner abuse

11. Can you please explain to me what you understand by the term domestic abuse / violence?
12. What would you consider as some of the reasons leading to conflicts or fights between husband and wife/ boyfriend and girlfriend?

Section D: Experience of abuse as a foreigner

13. Did you get married in your country or here in South Africa? If married in home
country, did you experience any form of physical violence from your spouse, such as slapping, or punching etc?.

13b What did you think was responsible for such behaviours towards you?

14. How did you cope with the situation back at home, were there any support systems in place such as among family members, and friends?

15. How would you describe your relationship with your spouse/boyfriend here in South Africa?

16. As a foreigner, what would you consider as the reasons for your husband’s maltreatment or abuse towards you?

17. Can you please explain to me how you have coped with the abuse?

18. Have you ever fought back?

19. If yes, how did you manage to do so?

20. Do you have any form of informal support system here in South Africa that could intervene between you and your partner in the time of conflict?

21. Please tell me if you are aware of government initiatives to intervene in domestic violence, and, also provide support for abused women in South Africa, including foreigners?

22. In attempting to stop your partner from his abusive behaviours, have you ever made use of any formal support such as the police, shelter, or court system?

23. If yes, how was the move helpful to you? If no, why did you not use any of those support systems?

24. Generally, do you think that being a foreigner has made you more exposed to abuse from your partner, and can you please explain to me why?
25. Do you feel there are some questions that have been left out?

26. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your time!!!
15 March 2018

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOMETRY

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Mohammed Suleman. I am the head supervisor for Titilade Ajayi who is a registered full time masters student, doing her minor dissertation on foreign national women’s experiences on domestic violence. The co-supervisor is Prof Kamilla Naidoo, Vice Dean of Humanities for Research at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Johannesburg. Her proposal titled: Vulnerability and Resistance: Black Immigrant Women’s Experiences of Spousal Abuse in Johannesburg was approved by the departmental HDC and the university’s ethics committee. Your assistance in providing Titilade with participants will be of great help. This is an important piece of work as we believe that her research will add to not only current literature on domestic violence, but also influence issues on a policy level regarding the issue of domestic violence which affects many women around the globe. If you have any questions regarding her research, you are more than welcome to contact me.

Kind Regards

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