

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Evangelism

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING A MINISTRY INTERVENTION FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG COUPLES IN MABVUKU COMMUNITY, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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Date Completed: June 2024

Problem

Couples in the Mabvuku Community frequently resorted to violence when faced with seemingly irreconcilable differences. Instead of amicably uniting and resolving together, facing the challenges as a combined force, some spouses blamed each other for the situation before them. In such disputes, domestic violence has often erupted. Many spouses seemed to be unable to resolve conflict amicably without resorting to violence. Others seemed unskilled enough to devise methods and strategies that were anti-violent. Spouses in Mabvuku seemed to have one antidote to family conflict—violence—like someone with only a hammer, treated every problem like a nail. Every week 10 to 12 instances of spousal violence were reported to the

Mabvuku Police station. Furthermore, one-third of women have experienced physical violence from the age of 15 as documented in the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey of 2015.

Purpose of the Study

The research project intended to develop, implement, and evaluate an intervention program aimed at reducing domestic violence and promoting love, respect, unity, and harmony among couples in the Mabvuku Community.

Methodology

The research program began in June 2021 to October 2023. The population targeted were couples experiencing domestic violence in the Mabvuku Community. The spousal duration in marriage ranged from 0- 30 years. The researcher worked with 8 couples recommended by the Mabvuku Adventist Church board. These couples became the focus group that assisted in mobilizing other couples to attend Happy Home Ministry for spousal enrichment programs and later recruit couples experiencing domestic violence and victimizers for counseling. The researcher applied the Qualitative method for the study. Focus group questions played an important role in information gathering. Data was collected from focus group discussions, interviews, and observations. Enrichment spousal seminars were conducted. Counseling of domestic violence victims and victimizers was executed. Materials were distributed to participants and visitations and prayers were offered to those who requested.

Results

Data collected from Focus Group, interviews, and observations after examination revealed that physical violence appeared predominant in Mabvuku.

78% of the respondents placed physical violence as the number one vice that militates against spousal harmony. Men emerged as the main perpetrators of domestic violence since 88% of domestic violence emanated from men. All this emerged from poor communication which is reflected at 85% (table 7) as the chief source of spousal violence in Mabvuku Community.

Conclusion

Happy Home strategy, a response to domestic violence among couples sought to improve couples' relationships by promoting love, respect, and harmony through spousal enrichment seminars and counseling of victims and abusers in the Mabvuku Community. The plan was successful. The research program effected inspired spouses to adapt positive interpersonal skills where love, respect, and harmony were cherished, and reconciliation pursued. Twenty couples whose spousal relationship had been ruined by domestic violence got reconciled. The Happy Home Ministry whose objective is to enhance spousal relationships through marriage seminars and counseling paid rich dividends at the end of seminars and marriage counseling sessions.

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DEVELOPING A MINISTRY INTERVENTION FOR DOMESTIC
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COMMUNITY, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Morgen Takaindisa

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VIOLENCE AMONG COUPLES IN MABVUKU
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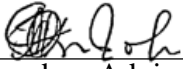
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Dedicated to couples in the Mabvuku Community and beyond.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A harmonious marriage relationship is critical to the well-being of the family unit and society. The family is the backbone of society and the nation at large. When it is plagued with violence and abuse, the whole society is broken and in desperate need of healing. Domestic violence begets traumatized families and leaves broken societies. If this vice goes unchecked heartbroken couples give birth to broken societies which consequently breed nations that are overwhelmed by grief or disappointment. So, harmony in family life should be prioritized for the well-being of its members and society as a whole.

This study focused on the plight of couples in the Mabvuku community who were plagued with violence and abuse. Married couples seemed to be enduring rather than enjoying marriage. Husbands physically assaulted their wives alleging that they verbally insulted them. This was sometimes triggered by arguments over the use of meager resources. Instead of cooperating and fighting as a team, wives blamed their husbands for not caring enough for their families. Other spouses accused each other of infidelity at the workplace. These disputes ignited domestic violence among couples in the Mabvuku community. Unfortunately, some church members experienced this phenomenon too.

There was gross instability among couples in Mabvuku. Divorces were rampant and at times loss of life was often experienced during these fights. According to Sergeant John Chimuti, a police officer at Mabvuku Police Station, between 10 to

12 cases of domestic violence were reported every week. Cases of spousal murder were often reported every forty nights.¹ This kind of situation militated against mission since church members entangled in squabbles and commotion misrepresented God and deprived the community of being exemplary in championing peace and harmony among spouses. Such kind of behavior hindered the progress of the mission. Ellen White stresses that it is the nature of Christianity to make happy families and a happy society. Discord, selfishness, and strife will be put away from every man and woman who possesses the true spirit of Christ.² Christian spouses ought to be exemplary in their daily conduct. They should cast light rather than darkness on their surroundings. Regrettably, some Christian spouses were destitute of these marriage virtues. Even those who were not attending church were supposed to pass on good manners to their children by encouraging love, respect, and unity. After all, children learn more through observation. It is disturbing to reflect on the kind of environment and generation perpetuated in domestic violence situations.

Description of the Ministry Context

Zimbabwe as a nation, is confronted with harsh economic challenges. The country has been experiencing drought for more than five successive years. It has been under economic sanctions for more than a decade. The unemployment rate stood at 95%,³ while 82.8% of all Zimbabweans lived in poverty.⁴ Even in big cities like

¹ John Chimuti, Police Officer, Mabvuku District, interview by the author, Harare, Zimbabwe, 13 April 2018.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1881), 5:520.

³ Staff Reporter, "Zimbabwe Unemployment Skyrockets," *Mail and Guardian*, January 29, 2009, accessed 25 April 2018, <https://mg.co.za/article/2009-01-29-zim-unemployment-skyrockets/>.

⁴ Macro Trends, "Poverty Rate," accessed 18 October 2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ZWE/zimbabwe/poverty-rate>.

Harare, the impact is felt, and societal stability is compromised due to a lack of basic life necessities. Couples experience strained relationships. Mabvuku community, being part of the city of Harare was no exception to these couples' challenges too.

Mabvuku is one of Harare's oldest and most overpopulated suburbs situated 15 kilometers east of the Central Business District. There are 6,259⁵ housing units with a population of 44,051⁶. On average, seven people are housed in those three to five-roomed shelters. Accommodation seemed to be affordable in this vicinity as reflected by the population the community sustained.

However, most people were out of employment due to the national economic meltdown. Circle Cement, the only heavy industrial company nearby remained the biggest employer. Besides Circle Cement, the government also employed teachers and auxiliary staff for both primary and secondary schools within the community. Moreover, the government took care of the security staff for Chikurubi National Maximum Prison within the surrounding area.

Due to a lack of adequate resources, couples struggled to provide for their family needs. Instead of cooperating and facing the challenges as a combined force, spouses blamed each other for not having cared enough. Wives accused husbands who drank beer of being extravagant while others charged each other of unfaithfulness or infidelity at work. In these disputes, domestic violence often erupted.

⁵ Charles Tavonezvi, Acting District Officer, Mabvuku District, interview by the author, Harare, 3 April 2018.

⁶ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, *Zimbabwe Population Census 2012* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Population Census Office, 2012), 3, <https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/publications/Population/population/census-2012-national-report.pdf>.

The Herald, Zimbabwe's largest daily newspaper, publicized that the government of Zimbabwe appointed a twelve-member Anti-Domestic Violence Council. The Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender, and Community Development, Nyasha Eunice Chikwanya revealed that the engagements were precipitated by the increase in cases of domestic violence that had caused families disintegration. Chikwanya lamented that each day gruesome stories of spouses dying in the hands of their loved ones were rampant and many other unpleasant experiences that could have been avoided.⁷ The promptness with which the government responded was a clear indication of a national challenge that required immediate attention and cooperation. Speaking on the same issue, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country representative Mr. Cheikh Cisse shared the same sentiments that issues of domestic violence had significantly increased, therefore the need for prompt action. The Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey of 2015 confirms that violence against women and girls remains a huge challenge. He bemoaned that one in every three women suffered physical abuse since the age of 15.⁸ The rate at which domestic violence offenses were perpetrated needed some intervention. If everyone cooperated and worked towards the reduction of this social illness, things would change for the better.

While domestic violence remains a societal vice strongly condemned, this issue calls for address without gender bias. Not only women were exposed to this problem, but some men were also victims of this vice and needed help too. Although government regulations were in place and gender activists were propagating against

⁷ Collen Murahwa, "Government Appoints Anti Domestic Violence Council," The Herald, April 13, 2017, accessed 18 October 2022, <https://www.herald.co.zw/government-appoints-anti-domestic-violence-council/>.

⁸ Ibid.

domestic violence, the graph of perpetrators seems to be escalating. Furthermore, the government correctional services department appeared to be struggling to reinstate domestic violence perpetrators since punitive measures did not necessarily remove what was engraved in mind. More often released prisoners committed the same offenses for which they had been incarcerated. What could be done differently to close the gap? What could transform the character and alter this paradigm? Could consultations with the principal initiator of marriage lead to the discovery of a lasting solution for a happy home and community? In such environments, ministry plays a critical role in promoting peace and conveying hope to the affected people. The researcher has been ministering in different suburbs in Harare for fifteen years.

Researcher's Analysis

The researcher grew up in an unchristian environment where couples did not find positive methods of conflict resolution. These conflicts at times ended up in domestic violence. Happy Home Strategy is an attempt to create and promote happy homes in the Mabvuku community. Being my 21st wedding anniversary and my 15th year in ministry serving as a district pastor, my studies in theology, mission, and counseling would provide competence and credibility in strategy implementation. The researcher would like to enhance family relations in this community by bringing family life lessons and seminars to couples in and outside church.

Having revived and restored many couple relationships, the researcher is positive the program would be of great benefit to those couples whose relationships are affected.

Statement of the Problem

Couples in Mabvuku Community frequently resorted to violence when faced with seemingly irreconcilable differences. Instead of amicably uniting and resolving together, facing the challenges as a combined force, some spouses blamed each other for the situation before them. In such disputes, domestic violence has often erupted. Many spouses seemed to be unable to resolve conflict amicably without resorting to violence. Others seemed unskilled enough to devise methods and strategies that were anti-violent. Spouses in Mabvuku seemed to have one antidote to family conflict—violence—like someone with only a hammer, treated every problem like a nail. Every week 10 to 12 incidents of domestic violence offenses were documented at Mabvuku police station. Furthermore, one-third of the women have experienced physical violence from the age of 15 according to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey of 2015.

Purpose of the Study

The research project intended to develop, implement, and evaluate an intervention program aimed at reducing domestic violence and promoting love, respect, unity, and harmony among couples in the Mabvuku Community.

Justification of the Study

Mabvuku spouses experienced the following challenges, Lack of interpersonal skills, ill-equipped to handle spousal conflict, High rate of spousal-related violence, lack of will on the part of one or both spouses to seek help when in conflict, unavailability of community mechanisms to deal with challenges spouses were experiencing and the impact of mental ill- health leading to violent behavior.

The study was worth engaging in as the researcher expected that its findings would promote and enhance spousal relationships and the reduction of domestic violence. Interpersonal skills imparted would enhance effective communication and positive conflict resolutions. Furthermore, the researcher anticipated establishing a family life counseling and training venue as a center of influence for the community thereby increasing the church's visibility and relevance in missions. Moreover, the researcher expected to be a community pastor and not merely a denominational minister.

Delimitations

The research developed, implemented, and evaluated an intervention to reduce domestic violence in the Mabvuku suburb dealing with couples (zero to 30 years) in marriage. In this study, domestic violence was limited to physical violence type only. The research was implemented between June 2020 and October 2022.

Description of Dissertation

The following stages shall be appropriately followed for this project to achieve its objectives. Chapter one entails the introduction of the research. Chapter 2 covers the theological foundation of a harmonious marriage. This chapter examines the Biblical basis of marriage and Ellen White's contribution to marriage. The main texts considered in this research include Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:21-23; 3:15-17, Psalms 133:1. A biblical model of marriage will be discussed. Chapter 3 provides a review of the contemporary literature on domestic violence. It covers what other authors and scholars say about domestic violence. Chapter 4 gives a detailed outline of the research initiatives. Chapter 5 covers the implementation/evaluation of narratives.

Chapter 6 deals with lessons learned observations, summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

Underneath is a summary of the outline

1. Introduction

This section provides an overview of the research project.

2. Theological Foundation of a Harmonious Marriage

The principal initiator of marriage is God who created Adam and Eve, and put them in Eden to live in harmony (Gen 1:1, 26, 27; 2:21-23; Ps 133:1).

Ellen White states, “human beings were to bear God’s image both in outward resemblance and in character.” Although harmony was disrupted by sin, Ellen White remarks, “to restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body and soul might be realized- this is the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.”

3. Literature Review

Other author’s writings will be used to provide an overview of domestic violence among couples. Domestic violence infringes spousal freedom, peace and militates against harmony.

4. Description of the Research initiative- this gives a detailed progressive outline of the research design.

After a thorough investigation of the theological basis of a harmonious marriage, the ensuing stages shall be considered for implantation, evaluation and writing of the research. The outline of the stages are:

- (a) The research project shall run in Mabvuku Community with the engagement of Mabvuku Adventist Church.

- (b) A focus group shall be formed, and data will be collected from focus group discussion, interviews, and observations.
 - (c) Data analysis and interpretation will be done
 - (d) The Happy Home program shall be launched
 - (e) Family life seminars and counseling of victims and abusers of domestic violence done.
 - (f) Evaluation shall be done
 - (g) Expected time of termination is October 2022.
5. Implementation/evaluation of Narratives. Activities carried out for a successful intervention of the study are outlined.
6. Lessons learned, observations, summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the research project.

Methodology and Procedures

This section entailed the research design, rationale for the research method, population, sample population, the criterion for sampling procedure and selection, data collection, instruments used, pilot study designed, ethical consideration, analysis, interpretation discussion of findings, strategy design, implementation, and evaluation.

Research Design

The phenomenological study was classified under the qualitative research methods design where the descriptive type of phenomenology was used. Qualitative research was allowable as it sought to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions.⁹ As stated by Julius Omona, Phenomenology is

⁹ Vibha Pathak, Bijayini Jena, and Sanjay Kalra, "Qualitative Research," *Perspectives in Clinical Research* 4, no. 3 (2013): 192, accessed 25 April 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4103/2229-3485.115389>.

the study of phenomena: the appearance of things or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meaning of things in our experiences.¹⁰ The objective was to discover the subjects' experiences and how they made sense of these experiences.¹¹ As a result, achieving a harmonious living together of couples in this study could not be achieved without appealing to the experiences, attitudes, and feelings of the very subjects.

Rationale for the Research Method

The study intended to understand the challenges and causes of domestic violence among couples and considered an intervention that could help couples live in harmony. Hence the choice of the qualitative method. Direct interaction with the community was initiated through a focus group. Since qualitative research entails Focus group discussions, this could be a relevant technique to consider. Furthermore, the qualitative method allowed comprehensive interviews using flexible questions and additional inquiries for clarity purposes. This method allowed the researcher to observe participants in action.

Since the qualitative method deals with people's daily experiences in life, both one-on-one and collective interaction approaches with couples in domestic violence, it was assumed the best method for collecting accurate data. John Creswell defines qualitative research as a technique for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.¹² In this case, domestic

¹⁰ Julius Omona, "Sampling in Qualitative Research: Improving the Quality of Research Outcome in High Education," *Makerere Journal of High Education* 4, no. 2 (2013): 171.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 4.

violence was the painstaking issue. This involved direct interaction with respondents. The intervention would be informed by the data collected and an assessment of the success or failure of the program would be carried out. The evaluation followed the intervention.

Population

A population referred to the entire group that was the focus of the researcher's interest and intended to conclude about. This had to be specified if the study met the standard. Murphy emphasizes that a lack of clarity in population definition may lead to misunderstanding and dysfunction among survey participants.¹³ Couples in Mabvuku Community experiencing domestic violence comprised the population targeted in this study. Precisely, the researcher targeted victims and victimizers of domestic violence within the Mabvuku Community. The researcher was cognizant of the significance of the community and the church in providing much-needed information for the success of the study.

Sample Population

A sample is a set of components drawn from a large population. From a scholarly perspective, sampling alludes to selecting a subset of items from a defined population for inclusion in a study.¹⁴ The population target in this research constituted couples experiencing domestic violence in the Mabvuku community. Those persons

¹³ Martin Murphy, *Population Definition for Comparative Surveys in Education* (Victoria, Australia: Australia Council for Educational Research, 2016), 6, accessed 14 January 2019, https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=ar_misc.

¹⁴ Greg Guest, Emily E. Namey, and Marilyn L. Mitchell, "Sampling in Qualitative Research," in *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 41.

who could provide the richest content according to Jeff Woods.¹⁵ The researcher then selected three samples from the population. These samples comprised reputable church members who were part of the focus group, domestic violence victims, and abusers or victimizers of domestic violence.

The Criterion for Sampling Procedures and Selection

A purposive sample method was administered in the process. Purposive sampling was relevant because it involved individuals who had an awareness of the situation and met the standards and attributes that were essential to the research.¹⁶ An appropriate principle guided the selection process. In this context, the chain sampling principle was preferred. Chain sampling identified or selected people with interest. The first selected person or group of people then led and connected to the next couple or group of people to interact with. Sensing affirms that people you interview first give you leads and connections about who, to ask next.¹⁷ The focus group and Mabvuku Adventist Church couples identified the first 11 couples experiencing domestic violence. These people led and connected the researcher to other couples encountering domestic violence. Through chain sampling, 30 more domestic violence victims were incorporated. The researcher worked with the focus group, domestic violence victims, and domestic violence victimizers.

Twelve focus interview guide questions were used. (See Appendix B). Open-ended questions gave respondents freedom of expression, and the researcher had the

¹⁵ C. Jeff Woods, *Designing Religious Research Studies: From Passion to Procedure* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 90.

¹⁶ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 83.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

latitude of making follow-up questions for further clarity. Recognizing the sensitivity of domestic violence matters and in trying to preserve confidentiality, the researcher decided to work with the district pastor and the head elder as assistants of the researcher. The researcher first gathered data from the focus group and later more information from domestic violence victims and victimizers. The researcher was assisted by the current district pastor and the first elder of the church in administering questions and collecting and analyzing data. An iPad was used for recording and capturing data after getting permission from the focus group and respondents. The information documented during discussions was analyzed, compared, and contrasted for accuracy purposes. More time was accorded to the respondents during and after focus group discussions. The researcher found it beneficial to interact with participants since the process accorded him more information relevant for the study. This also assisted in developing a mutual relationship with the concerned parties.

Translation of Research Guide Questions

The researcher considered the translation guide before espousing the natural, acceptable, and achievable, forward-translation initiative. Fundamentally, forward translation relates to the translation from the language of the research team to the local language Mr. Arnold Marunze, a polished translator in both English and Shona languages accepted the responsibility of translation. The translator was versatile in the Shona language, which was the primary language of the target group. Simplicity, clarity, and conciseness were vital guidelines followed in framing questions for the target audience. Twelve questions were prepared in three days.

Translation of questions from English to Shona took three days. It began on 20 to 22 November 2019. After receiving the translation, the researcher sent it to another different translator who translated it back into English. This translation happened

without the knowledge of the first translator. An English teacher who is an expert in instrument development did the second translation from 25-28 November 2019. The translation took four days to complete, and the meeting took place on 30 November 2019 where reconciliation of the translation transpired. The research team, first and second translators comprised the panel. A few discrepancies were noticed and rectified. Realizing how important pretesting was, the researcher scheduled a pretesting program at Mabvuku Church on 5 December 2019. The pretesting respondents comprised 3 couples, 3 victims, and 2 victimizers of domestic violence. They were all residents of the Mabvuku Community. They were representatives of those who were to be administered the instrument.

The pretesting session took place at Mabvuku Church on 5 December 2019 at 10:00 a.m. The research team arrived at 9:45 a.m. and made sure all preparations were in order. The pretesting respondents arrived at 9:55 a.m. At 10:00 a.m., a brief orientation came about to notify everyone about the program. Soon after, the pre-test respondents were administered with the instrument. Feedback from the respondents showed that the instrument was effective, and the exercise was successful. Focus Group Guide Questions Instruments in English and vernacular are reflected in Appendices B and C. The program concluded at 11:00 a.m.

Data Collection

The data collection acted as the mainstay of the study since findings, conclusions, and recommendations were supposed to be the anchor of sound data collection. The researcher decided to choose suitable instruments for data collection to ensure the study's reasonableness without which the whole research process would suffer. The use of incorrect instruments would result in misleading information, misconstrued data, and ridiculous conclusions and recommendations. Pretesting of

instruments, data collection procedures used, and ethical matters considered laid the foundation for compelling data gathering.

Data Collection Instruments

Although numerous instruments can be applied in quantitative research, a focus group, interviews, and observations were regarded as most appropriate for this research. The Focus group assisted in mobilizing couples who were involved in domestic violence. Interviews played a major role in data collection. Open-ended interviews served best for their inherent benefits for effective qualitative research implementation. The open interview guide (see Table 1) was the preferred instrument in this study. It had four questions intended to elicit the views and opinions of the participants. The use of open-ended interview questions gave the interviewer more freedom to modify the wording and order of questions. This made open-ended interviews the best collection instrument for the study. Open-ended questions gave respondents the freedom to express their views freely.

Table 1. Interview Guide

No.	Questions
1	In your view, how would you define domestic violence? Cite examples and causes.
2	How would you analyze domestic violence among Christians and non-Christians?
3	What justification would warrant spousal beating on the following offenses: Burning food, arguing in discussions, going out without informing a spouse, or refusing sexual intercourse?
4	What role could the church play in reducing domestic violence?

As the researcher was conducting the interviews, it was vital to audio record the interviews to preserve the responses and not lose important data. The recording was key to maintaining dialogue. The researcher used an iPad to capture the

interviews after receiving consent from the interviewees. The interview-recording inscription preceded data analysis preparation.

Intervention

The development of a family life program called the “Happy Home Ministry” for couples in Mabvuku began based on the primary data findings. As a response to domestic violence, the program sought to improve couples’ relationships by promoting love, respect, and harmony.

1. Strategy Implementation

- (a) The strategy ran in Mabvuku for 1 year and 6 months.

2. Strategy Evaluation.

- (a) Pre-implementation- data collection was gathered from three groups.

- Namely the focus group, victims of domestic violence and victimizers. To assess effectiveness after three months of implementation.

3. Data analysis and, interpretation led to deductive conclusions and the presentation of recommendations. The study employed thematic analysis of data. How the strategy addressed the problem and implications for practice formed the interpretation aspect.

4. Discussion of findings

- The findings addressed attitudes and knowledge about domestic violence services provided for and accessed by the couples in Mabvuku. The research findings informed the refinement of the implemented strategy.

- The development, implementation, and evaluation of the study were finished by October 2022 although the writing of the project continued after this date.

Research Gap

Although researches have been done on domestic violence, rarely has any study focused specifically on an intervention strategy that entailed victims and abusers of domestic violence in the Mabvuku Community. Furthermore, the issue of incarceration alone appears to be insufficient to address domestic violence challenges. Punitive measures do not necessarily transform evil tendencies hidden in the heart. While vehicles are serviced after a stipulated mileage for efficiency and effective performance, contrary, there are no spousal enrichment programs to revive couples after marriage. Though marriage has been perverted by sin, it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty through Christian education for character transformation that promotes harmony in marriage. Hence the need to link Mabvuku Community with the word of God.

Expectations from the Dissertation

A counseling and training program as mechanism to deal with spousal conflict resolution and other spousal challenges would be established. Spouses would appreciate the principles of harmonious marriage and be motivated to abstain from violence. Interpersonal skills would boost love and respect. Some couples would be inspired to quit domestic violence as a means of conflict management in preference to a harmonious lifestyle with their spouses. The results of the research would also benefit couples in the same situation beyond the Mabvuku region.

Research Questions

1. What is domestic violence and how is it impacting the lives of couples in Mabvuku Community?
2. What are the possible triggers for spousal domestic violence?

3. How can the church assist in alleviating the escalating levels of domestic violence and bring harmony to couples and communities?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate on causes of domestic violence among couples in the Mabvuku Community and find out possible solutions that inhibit this vice and promote harmony.
2. To discover how a holistic approach to health couple education and provision influences spousal relationships.
3. To highlight the perceptions that hinder couples from seeking help from toxic relationships and establish the church's role in building harmonious communities

Definition of Terms

Aberration: a departure from what is normal, usual, or expected, typically an unwelcome one. A deviation from truth or moral rectitude.

Abate: become less intense, decrease, lessen, or diminish.

Aggrandizement: to make appear great or greater; praise highly.

Azab: to lose, depart from, to leave behind, to let alone, to forsake, or to set free.

Berate: Scold or criticize someone angrily

Battered: injured by repeated blows/ having suffered repeated violence from a spouse, or partner.

Couple: refers to a married or engaged male and female.

Dabaq: to cling, stick, stay close, or join.

Demeaned: cause a severe loss in the dignity of and respect for (someone or something).

Denigrate: criticize unfairly/disparage/belittle/diminish.

Domestic violence: relates to abusive behaviors in which one individual gains power over another individual. It is a violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner.

Egocentric: thinking only of oneself, without regard for the feelings or desires of others; self-centered.

Euphemistic: The use of polite, pleasant neutral words and expressions referring to things that people may find unpleasant, upsetting, or embarrassing to talk about.

Ishsha: wife, a married female, one who is opposed to a man.

Heart trifling: treating or dealing with someone in a way that shows a lack of proper respect or seriousness.

Love: relates to an unconditional commitment, a promise that is never broken.

Marriage: an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supported partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children.¹⁸

Mayhem: violent or extreme disorder/chaos/confusion.

Plagued: causes continual trouble or distress.

Spouse: A husband or wife considered in relation to their partner.

Stalking: a pattern of unwanted behavior, directed at a specific person that causes the individual to change his/her routine, feel afraid, nervous, or in danger.

Unequal yoking: dating or marrying someone who does not share your belief.

¹⁸John Stott, *Involvement: Social and Sexual Relationship in the Modern World* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revel, 1985), 2:163.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF A HARMONIOUS MARRIAGE

This chapter focuses on God's model of marriage, which is ideal for humankind and worth emulating. The areas of concentration in this discussion include the origin of marriage, the creation of a suitable helper, Adam, and Eve's prefall life, the seven principles of marriage, the fall of humankind, what humanity lost through sin, the impact of sin on couples, polygamy, the flood incident, casting away the bond of self-restraint, toward restoration, Paul's counsel on sex and marriage, Paul's counsel on married believers, aspect of headship in marriage, love, and forgiveness principles.

The Origin of Marriage

Marriage is not a human invention. Its origin is beyond human scope and ability. This could be the reason why man-made strategies and methodologies have achieved so little or in fact, contributed retrogressively to the furtherance and success of this institution. However, there is a force outside human comprehension that is behind the primary inception and accomplishment of marriage, and this can only be traceable to the Creator God as the principal initiator (Gen 1:1).

After God created everything in six days, human beings emerged as the crown of His creation, resembling His creative art of beauty and relationship. God's relational attributes are exhibited in Genesis account when He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

and over the fowl of the air and the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen 1:26). This divine plan is immediately implemented in the following record, God created man in His image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them (Gen 1:27). It is interesting to note that man and woman are both created in the image of a loving Maker. Commenting on the phrase God’s image or likeness, Ellen G. White resonates that human beings were to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character.¹ Unlike any other creatures, people uniquely bear the resemblance of God. White reveals that humanity resembled the Creator in physical, mental, spiritual, and social facets. Every faculty of the soul reflected the Creator’s glory.² This also portrays that people were supposed to exemplify their God in word and deed.

More so the phrase “created He them” seems to highlight the notion that God had no plan to create a single human being from the beginning. It is equally fascinating to note the use of the plural word, ‘them.’ It shows that God planned from the very beginning to create more than one individual.³ In other words, human creation is not an afterthought initiative but clearly outlines God’s prearranged plan to create more than one human being as outlined by the phrase “created them.” It also suggests that God highly esteems people above His creation since they are the only species that resemble Him.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 45.

² Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 15, 20.

³ “Created He Them” [Gen 1:27], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 1:216.

Creation of a Suitable Helper

All the animals were created in pairs except the man, who was leading a solitary life. God in His wisdom saw that it was not good or valuable in estimation for Adam to remain alone. Therefore, God made a suitable helper for him (Gen 2:18). One who stands equal to Adam's task. Contrary, this does not suggest gender inequality but alludes to Eve's appropriate disposition as an assistant to her husband. In other words, Adam's inadequacies would be complemented by his dear wife. Adam alone was part of the family unit that would only be made whole with the presence of the wife. This also suggests that the wife emerges not as a competitor but rather as a companion to complement the husband's overwhelming tasks. She would be an appropriate reliever for her husband. How would this happen, would God be content to do it in the presence of Adam? Moses further narrates that the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and while he slept, God took one rib and made him a woman and presented her to him (Gen 2:21-22). Ellen White underscores that Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and be protected by him... she was his second self.⁴ The equality of man and woman is indisputably outlined from the beginning. While this equality of husband and wife is celebrated, it should also be observed that they have different roles to play in their relationship.

At first sight, Adam was overwhelmed by seeing a beautiful lady in front of him. He exclaimed that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh and would be called woman because she was taken out of man (Gen 2:23). Adam appreciated the

⁴ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 22.

privilege of having a companion and could not hide his gratitude. The word woman in Hebrew means a wife, a married female, one who is opposed to a man.¹¹ The issue of masculinity and femininity is God-ordained although it is not elevating one gender above the other. The presence of a wife brought joy and gladness to a man who had been lonely. Marriage is consummated with God's declaration that man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen 2:24). The words "leave and cleave" need special notice. The word "leave" in Hebrew is transliterated as *azab* which means to lose, depart from, leave behind, let alone, forsake, or set free.⁵ Does this mean that all relational ties should be left and forsaken when one gets married? Who was Adam supposed to leave since he had no parents?

Although Adam had no parents, God seemed to set a principle that should be heeded by every man and woman for a successful marriage to occur. This seems to suggest that man is to let loose the strong ties he enjoyed with his parents to begin a new life with his wife. In other words, this is leaving one's parents with the objective of making a new home. William Stanford remarks that because God made a woman, man must let go of his parents to establish his own home and family. There can be no family-established and lasting marriage without this first essential step.⁶ The aspect of leaving appears to be vital in the establishment of marriage. It suggests a new dawn to a new couple that has decided to build a new home with minimum interference from family members. This does not mean renouncing the responsibility of supporting parents and those in need. It is a matter of giving them space to establish their home and grow together in love.

⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Seoul, South Korea: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1940.

⁶ William Stanford Lasor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1972), 17.

The word cleave is transliterated *as dabaq* in Hebrew which means to cling, stick, stay close, stick to, or join to.⁷ This suggests a permanent relationship where the man sticks to his wife to become one in marriage. Harmony seems to be implied in this relationship. This husband-wife union is likened to two planks that have been glued together resulting in a strong bond. There is no way these planks could be separated without damaging the other. In like manner, there is no way a marriage could be interrupted without injuring the other. This union should be embraced permanently for the happiness of both spouses. None is allowed to destroy what God has joined together. Instead, married couples need great internal and external support. According to William Stanford, cleaving denotes a permanent bond or being permanently bound in a partnership as husband and wife. A physical embrace, becoming “one flesh” physically through sexual union.⁸ Knowing each other through sexual intimacy creates a bond of oneness in a love relationship between a husband and wife. This union also creates a safe environment for child-rearing where family values are esteemed thereby perpetuating a godly generation. Hence, total commitment, love, and respect are the hallmarks of a harmonious marriage.

The Prefall Life of Adam and Eve

Edenic life entailed numerous privileges from God that included delegated authority, the blessedness of labor, the blessing of pro-creatorship, the law of liberty, and the enjoyment of God’s righteousness. It was a life of bliss and happiness where peace reigned across the domain.

⁷ Bible Study Tools, “dāḇāq,” accessed 10 April 2019, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/exicons/hebrew/kjv/dabaq.html>.

⁸ Lasor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 27.

1. Delegated authority: Having been created in the image of God, Adam and Eve were entrusted with dominion over everything that God had made (Gen 1:26-28). As a new couple, Adam and Eve were entrusted with managerial assignments as God's stewards. This meant that they were accountable to their Maker who had entrusted them with that responsibility. They were supposed to demonstrate this stewardship component, share, and experience it, and pass it to the ensuing generations. As spouses, they were not mandated to exercise dominion over each other but over the things, God had created. Moreover, there was no control over the husband to his wife or wife to her husband.
2. The Blessedness of Labor: It is interesting to note that God gave labor as a blessing before the intrusion of sin. It brought joy and fulfillment to the Edenic family. Ellen White affirms that at creation, labor was appointed as a blessing. It meant development, power, and happiness.⁹ In their Edenic home, Adam was tasked to dress the garden and to keep it (Gen 2:15) even before he was given a wife. Could this be a lesson to the unmarried man that marriage should not precede occupation since man has the responsibility of looking after his family rather than offloading all his God-given responsibilities to the wife? Neglect of labor or employment places a family at risk of lacking life's necessities, which might trigger unhealthy relationships between couples.
3. Blessing of pro-creatorship: God blessed the new pair and charged them to be fruitful, multiply replenish the earth, and subdue it (Gen 1:28). They

⁹ White, *Education*, 214.

were entrusted with the gift of procreation to perpetuate humanity. God's love and trust for this couple demonstrate the kind of love and trust each couple ought to manifest to their Creator and each other.

4. The law of liberty: Adam and Eve were instructed to keep God's law. The instruction required that they guard against partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest the couple forfeit their happiness and ultimately die (Gen 2:17). Their happiness hinged on living within the confines of God's law. Of course, as free moral agents, they had the freedom of choice either to please their Maker through their obedience to Him or the adversary by disregarding God's clear prohibition. A stern warning was given. If the pair decided to violate God's clear instructions, death was imminent and inevitable. Obedience was key to their perpetual happiness and life.
5. In His righteousness: Both the man and his wife were naked, but they were not ashamed (Gen 2:25). Ellen White posits that the sinless pair wore no artificial garments. They were covered by the light and glory such as angels wear. As long they obeyed God, the circle of light enshrouded them¹⁰ It must have been beautiful to be clad in God's righteousness. Fresh from the Creator's arms, Adam and Eve had propensities to love in the same manner God loved as they continued to draw from God's inexhaustible fountain of love. Constant reliability to their Maker would intensify their love towards God and each other. They experienced a harmonious relationship without violence or acrimony.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Story of Redemption* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1947), 21.

Adam and Eve's pre-fall life resembled a perfect, sinless couple who lived in harmony with God and each other. Since they had been created in God's image, they reflected His love, peace, and unity in their husband-wife relationship. They could communicate well from a place of kindness, respect, and compassion. The man could appreciate his wife as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen 2:23). They cherished each other's company and affection. In this environment, the couple had a sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment from God, the principal initiator of marriage.

The Seven Principles of Marriage

Principles are an important foundational basis for every successful venture in life. These components are highly esteemed in marriage settings as well. Genesis 1 and 2 relay the fundamental principles for humankind. Rock outlines the following seven marriage principles that are key pillars for an enduring lifetime marriage relationship. "The principle of unity, interdependence, endogamy, monogamy, permanence, privacy, and exclusivity."¹¹ If couples adhered to these principles, spouses would live in joy and gladness. God-fearing generations would be established.

1. The principle of unity: Unity is crucial in all facets of life. The phrases bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh (Gen 2:23) seem to attest to unity. Married couples should cherish being one with each other rather than promoting divisions. Their joining would result in abiding unity. Harmony and coherence are the product of espoused unity by every couple that desires peace.

¹¹ Calvin B. Rock, "Marriage and Family," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 728-729.

2. The Principle of Interdependence: Married couples are interdependent. That is why the aspect of leaving and cleaving is so important in marriage formation. Self-centeredness seems to be foreign to an ideal home establishment. The adage spells that no man is an island. No one is self-sufficient in life. The aspect of relying on each other as couples remains crucial in all situations if relationships are to thrive.
4. The Principle of Endogamy: Marrying within one's group, for instance religious, educational, or cultural aspects should be highly considered if unnecessary clashes could be avoided in a new union. Enumerable conflicts erupt since there is no common ground between the spouses. There is a need for couples to find a common base or denominator to foster relational construction where love and harmony reign.
5. The Principle of Monogamy: Marriage should constitute one man and one wife as designed by God from the beginning. Although God had a remnant of the Spirit, God did not create many wives for Adam. Why? The reason being that He was seeking a godly offspring (Mal 2:15). Monogamous marriage is God's ideal to perpetuate a godly generation according to prophet Malachi. One of the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs affirms that a monogamous type of marriage provides couples with a sense of belonging that strengthens their intimacy and attachment. They realize that their relationship is unique and that no one else can share what they do. The exclusive affiliation reflects most clearly the relationship between Christ and His church, the individual, and God.¹² Issues of polygamy or

¹² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 300.

polyandry seem to have no place in ideal marriage settings as they distort the original plan. Conflict results from polygamy for instance Sarah and Abraham (Gen 16:1-6).

6. The Principle of Permanence: God intended marriage between man and woman to be a lifelong union, only to be terminated by the death of a partner. Unlike the world's perception regarding the marriage institution as contractual and dissolvable, Jesus Christ gave a permanent declaration when He declared that what God has joined together, let no man put asunder (Matt 19:6). This statement suggests that none of the couples is licensed to temper with or dissolve the marriage union, serve for unfaithfulness (Matt 19:9).
7. The Principle of Privacy: Some issues only pertain to the husband, wife, and God. These issues are not worth sharing with every person since this act does not enhance relationships but rather destroys them. The principle of privacy does not negate good conflict management thrust between spouses. There is an adage that says dirty linen should not be washed in public. Similarly, private issues should also be solved privately.
8. The Principle of Exclusivity: Respecting God's restrictions is a safeguard against life-threatening situations and an antidote to rebellion. Reiterating John Stott's definition of marriage, the union should be an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supported partnership, and

normally crowned by the gift of children.¹³ This explanation resonates well with God's original plan when He created Adam and Eve. If monogamous marriage was esteemed by all, there would be less misery between spouses as everyone upheld chastity.

The above seven marriage principles help to bring harmony between spouses. When couples recognize and obey these divine principles in their relationships as husband and wife, marriage remains a blessing. These principles guard and promote the purity and happiness of the home and society. They provide for the couple's social needs and elevate their physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature. However, going against these principles promotes toxic relationships through continual unresolved self-inflicted conflicts that have fanned domestic violence among couples in the Mabvuku community.

The Fall of Humanity

The deplorable state of this world is a result of Adam and Eve's choice. They violated God's command by yielding to the devil's temptation. Where harmony existed, dissonance erupted. Misery overtook the joy that permeated Edenic life. In the words of Fowler, "the seed of criticism and fault-finding germinated."¹⁴ Sin brought all kinds of suffering the world is experiencing today, including domestic violence that has negatively impacted couples.

The challenge emerged when our first parents, Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's insinuations and transgressed God's express command (Gen 3:1-8). Sin brought nakedness, shame, and fear to the pair. They improvised fig leaf aprons in

¹³ Stott, *Involvement*, 163.

¹⁴ John M. Fowler, "Sin," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 253.

substitution for the vanished glory of God that originally covered them. None accepted responsibility for their actions but rather blamed each other in the presence of their Maker. Strife and accusations became rife after sin. Adam accused his wife of his downfall, yet it was his deliberate choice to disregard God's instruction. The man also accused God of creating Eve for him. The emergency of sin brought with it all the misery, mistrust, selfishness, blame game, denigration, and degradation in couple relationships. Meanness, despair, and sorrow surrounded them. These dissonances have negatively impacted marriage relationships.

The results of their disobedience were costly to the serpent, Satan, Adam, and Eve; and its perpetual repercussions are grossly felt by humanity and all creation.

- (a) The serpent was the first to receive God's punishment. As it had allowed itself to be used as a medium by the devil, the Lord cursed it above all creatures. It would feed on dust and crawl for the rest of its life (Gen 3:14).
- (b) To the devil, Satan who crafted humanity's downfall, the Lord declared that He would put enmity between him (Satan) and the woman, and between his seed and her seed. Humanity would bruise the devil's head while the devil would bruise humanity's heel (Gen 3:15). The great controversy motif seems to be embedded in this statement and the eternal enmity between humanity and the devil portrayed, consummated by an ultimate victory through Jesus Christ.
- (c) To the woman, the lord pronounced that she would experience multiple sorrows in conception and childbearing. Her desire would be to her husband who would rule over her (Gen 3:16). Commenting on Eve's attitude, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes that the woman had broken her divinely appointed relationship with the man,

instead of being a help meet for him, she became his seducer. Therefore, her status of equality with the man was forfeited; he was to rule over her as lord and master.¹⁵ Analyzing the statement, this is a typical scenario of those who operate in sin but those who value the dignity of humanity in Christ would strive for the ideal marriage as espoused from the beginning. Marriage entails teamwork. Individual talents are not given to frustrate each other but to complement and enhance marriage relationships. Therefore, blending is quite crucial in maximizing every spousal potential. Adopting a life of sin would militate against God's ideal thereby negating unity and harmony which are fundamental ingredients for a peaceful marriage establishment.

- (d) To Adam, having regarded the plight of his wife as going against God's express command, he forfeited God's blessings and life itself. Moreover, the ground was cursed because of him. In sorrow, he would toil for a living till death (Gen 3:17-18). The land would produce thorns and thistles (Gen 3:19). Adam began to experience the sinfulness of sin, the intensity of his error when nature rebelled against him. However, in His mercy, God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve in place of humanly improvised fig leaf aprons. According to William E. Richardson in his book, *God's Relentless Pursuit of His Beloved Fugitives*, "The first powerful display of grace involved the shading of blood to cover the results of sin. As they stood helpless, exposed, and unpresentable, nothing they could do would resolve the dilemma. And that is always the context of grace. Grace is love and

¹⁵ "He Shall Rule over Thee" [Gen 3:16], *SDABC*, 1:234.

compassion, doing something for humans that they cannot possibly do for themselves.”¹⁶ It took God’s love to rescue the first couple. The kind of coverings God provided was permanent which might suggest also that all couples’ challenges could be met and solved better when they are directed to the principal initiator of marriage, God Himself.

Those who transgress God’s commandments become tempters to their spouses too. A good example is depicted in Eve’s action after succumbing to the devil’s trap; she became a devil’s tool to work for the downfall of her husband. Regrettably, Adam could not resist but yielded to sin as well. Instead of supporting each other and working toward spousal freedom and happiness, couples at times participate in the downfall of their loved ones by yielding to the devil’s snares and working as their agent.

What Humanity Lost through Sin

Doubting God’s word and questioning the validity of His instruction has caused serious problems throughout the world. Humanity lost God’s image as our first parents sold themselves to the devil. Commenting on the devastating effects of sin, Ellen White succinctly posits that through sin, the divine likeness was marred and well-nigh obliterated. Man’s physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was reduced, and his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death, yet the race was not left without hope.¹⁷ Sin distorted the perfect image of God. Perpetual life ceased and was substituted by mortality since man no longer had access to the Tree of

¹⁶ William E. Richardson, *God’s Relentless Pursuit of His Beloved Fugitives* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 19, 20.

¹⁷ White, *Education*, 15.

Life. God put angels in the Garden of Eden to guard the Tree of Life lest Adam would eat its fruits and live forever in his sinful state (Gen 3:22, 24).

Since man forfeited his position to the devil, he could not save himself, his life spelled doom and misery. Death was imminent. They also lost the glory of God that originally covered them. Where innocence characterized the first couple, guilty conscience haunted the pair. The dominion that had been entrusted to them was usurped by the devil who now claimed to be the ruler of this world. Genuine love and respect were replaced by fault-finding and accusations. Adam and Eve were banished from their Edenic home and there was no more direct interaction with God. This marked the entrance of sin whose results and effects are being felt across the realm. Victor P. Hamilton outlines the importance of obedience as the key to a human-creator relationship. He remarks that as long as one lives in the ways that honor God, one remains in the garden/Canaan. But defiance of the boundaries set by God means expulsion from the garden/Canaan.¹⁸ Living within the confines of God enhances humanity's relationship with their Maker and nourishes life. It also reinforces spousal relationships and creates admirable communities whose reputation outlives the bearers and sets a remarkable precedent for future generations. In like manner, breaching the boundaries that God has initiated for humanity's happiness breeds all kinds of immorality and unhappiness as the devil leads humanity in rebellion against its Creator and each other. Failure to exercise prudence in daily choices results in man becoming a victim of these vices.

¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2005), 29.

The Impact of Sin on Couples

Life is more productive and fulfilling when couples decide to adhere to God's principles of marriage. When they disobey God, sin finds its hold on humanity and consequently ruins their relationship, peace, and even life itself. The intrusion of sin caused unbearable effects on marriage. Our first parents lost the coherence they used to enjoy before sin. Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual traces the adverse effects of sin from Edenic marriage to the modern-day citing that their relationship became marked with guilt, shame, and pain. Wherever sin reigns, its sad effects on marriage include alienation, unfaithfulness, neglect, abuse, sexual perversion, domination of one partner by the other, violence, separation, desertion, and divorce.¹⁹ Although God hates divorce (Mal 2:16) and it was not part of His original plan, divorce is so rampant due to the shrewdness of the human heart (Matt 19:8). This unrestrained and violent act has undermined the sanctity and relevance of marriage.

Adultery, fornication, and debauchery also compound marriage challenges while polygamy and polyandry corrode the core fundamental principle of the marriage institution. Whereas exclusive matrimony provides couples with a sense of belonging that fortifies intimacy and bonding, polygamy instills couples with a sense of insecurity that weakens intimacy, and bond and creates great animosity in couples through mistrust.

In this postmodern era, domestic violence ranks among the top heinous family abuses that have quenched the fountain of love among couples. Rock laments that in almost all, an unfortunate percentage suffers as battered wives, berated, beaten, burnt,

¹⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 156.

demeaned, and destroyed.²⁰ This kind of life militates against family peace and what God intended marriage to be from the beginning. Instead of being a source of happiness, marriage can be a scene of dreadful hurt. Yet in all earnestness, God hates violence and divorce (Mal 2:16). The effect of fanning violence and divorce on couples places the family in danger of losing its unity, identity, and vitality if this behavior is perpetuated.

Polygamy

The first marriage distortion was initiated by Lamech whose lineage is from Cain, who murdered his brother Abel. Lamech perverted from God's monogamous marriage plan and esteemed polygamy. The Bible records that Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah and the name of the second was Zillah (Gen 4:19). Polygamous marriage robs couples of a sense of belonging and weakens intimacy and bond. It is inconceivable for a wife to cogitate her husband making love with another woman. It drains all the emotional bank accounts and leaves its victim with unbearable torment. It is not easy for someone to allow their spouse to share what they do together with other women or men. It is not comforting. This also distorts God's original plan and increases misery and mistrust.

Like his progenitor Cain, Lamech was a violent, vengeful, and murderous man. He bragged to his wives that he killed a man for wounding him (Gen 4:23). Again, how would the wives feel knowing that their husband was unforgiving and all the same a murderer? This kind of behavior could have instilled psychological trauma in his wives. Polygamy appears to be an outrageous sin in God's view because the Bible states that if Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech's punishment would

²⁰ Rock, "Marriage and Family," 738.

be seventy and sevenfold (Gen 4:24). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* observes that polygamy was a new evil that held its ground for long centuries.²¹ Sin tends to have a ripple effect and is attractive even to the once-faithful ones. Having introduced this new evil (polygamy), it cascaded even to the godly generations as they imitated the enemies of righteousness, and the fire of rebellion was kindled in generations that followed.

The Flood Incident

The flood incident must have been instigated by polygamy, intermarriages, and a host of other evils that were rampant during Noah's period. There seemed to be no bond of restraint on those who were supposed to be distinct and peculiar among the ungodly. The sons of God married whoever they desired even from the daughters of men with whom God had prohibited them from having such relationships (Gen 6:2). Ellen White comments that the wickedness of men was open and daring, and justice was trampled in the dust, and the cry of the oppressed reached unto heaven. Polygamy had been introduced, contrary to the divine arrangement at the beginning. Man chose to follow their sinful desires and as a result crime and misery rapidly increased. Neither the marriage relation nor the rights of property were respected. Whoever coveted the wives or the possessions of his neighbor, took them by force, and man exulted in their deeds of violence.²² It seems violence was at its highest-level during Noah's time. Selfishness led men to grab other people's wives and valuables by force. Covetousness and cruelty found domain in almost every heart except Noah and his family. God regretted why He had created men because their imaginations

²¹ "Polygamy" [Gen 4:23], *SDABC*, 1:243.

²² White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 92.

were evil continually (Gen 6:5). God destroyed the antediluvians because of their wickedness and preserved Noah and his family who were righteous before Him. It is fascinating to note that God intends to save people as families. This could be achieved on the condition of obedience as exhibited by the flood incident.

Casting Away the Bond of Self-Restraint

This same departure from God's ideal in marriage was followed by Abraham who agreed to his barren wife's suggestion to take their maid Hagar for her to bear children for her mistress. This kind of improvising was a digression from God's plan and indeed traumatic to the young slave girl who had no rights back then. Such kind of emotional abuse is prevalent in polygamous families. This polygamous trend did not end in the flood. Well after the flood, biblical patriarchs like Abraham, discussed above, Jacob, David, Solomon, Elkanah, and many others fell prone to the same old trap and their experiences were devastating.

Toward Restoration

Having lost God's image by succumbing to the devil's trap, Adam and Eve's lostness probed God's love which availed the plan of redemption that was laid out before the foundation of the world.²³ The apostle John outlines the fundamental attribute of God when he wrote that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him (including domestic violent perpetrators) should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). When God loved the world, He gave the best gift in Jesus Christ. In other words, God equated the value of a person with the life of His Son and desires that everyone be saved and come to the knowledge of

²³ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 519.

truth (1 Tim 2:4). No one is inherently evil, they are redeemable.²⁴ Norman Gulley concisely admits that redemption is not complete without restoration. ... The love of the cross will forever draw all created beings to their Creator and keep them in a loving relationship with Him.²⁵ Even domestic violence offenders are likewise eligible for salvation and restoration.

The Bible theme is about the restoration of humanity, which is two-dimensional. The first crucial aspect is the restoration of the image of God which entails physical, social, mental, and spiritual facets. The second feature is the restoration of dominion. Humanity enjoyed dominion before sin. God entrusted Adam and Eve with managerial responsibility. By succumbing to the devil's temptation, they lost rulership to the tempter and became slaves to sin. Nonetheless, God's outstretched hand of mercy, love, and restoration act was extended to sinners. Ellen White puts it remarkably clear when she said to restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body mind, and soul that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized- this is to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life,²⁶ a holistic restoration of God's image to all people is alluded to as God's intended plan for a lost planet. Moreover, the essence of true education is realized when humanity's image portrays that of its Maker. This same education extended to couples experiencing or causing domestic violence brings restoration and

²⁴ Alan Platt, *City Changers: Being the Presence of Christ in Your Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2017), 243.

²⁵ Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 303.

²⁶ White, *Education*, 15.

harmony. This is the main objective of true education that yields the best-expected achievements now and hereafter.

Ellen White further clarifies the objective of Jesus' mission when she observes that it was His (Christ's) mission to bring men complete restoration. He came to give them health peace and perfection of character.²⁷ God's restoration plan is for sure a full package that entails health, peace, and perfection of character. It addresses physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs. It is intriguing to note that without any extrinsic forces that compelled God to act in such a way His divine intrinsic love for His wayward people propelled Him to display unreservedly His goodness and extend His salvation to everyone who so ever desires. He exhibited His attribute of love to the lost race.

Although God has entrusted humanity with various gifts, sin has distorted all these including the marriage institution. As a result, people have gone astray trying to digress from the original plan and celebrate human waywardness. This kind of perversion needs God's intervention for the restoration of marriage. In her book, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, Ellen White notes that similar to another one of God's good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin, but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty.²⁸ Although the marriage institution has been corrupted by sin, the hope of renewing it by paying attention to the word of God is available. He is willing to restore the marriage relationship to its original test if couples listen attentively to His word. The benefits of

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 17.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Mount View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 64.

cooperating with God through obedience are attainable if couples observe the word of God in its purity and beauty.

The gospel tends to correct human distortions of marriage principles. In as much as God hates divorce, men are invited to embrace the good news for their restoration. Michael J. Wilkins celebrates and esteems the emergency of the gospel to revert people's minds to the Creator's original plan. He declares that with the arrival of the gospel of the kingdom, the reversal of the fallen order has begun which means the redemption of marriage as well. Hard hearts can be regenerated, and the divorce certificate made obsolete.²⁹ Responding positively to the transformative word of God restores peace and harmony among His repentant people including married couples. There is no more room to cherish the fallen order by yielding to sin and promoting such vices as domestic violence or divorce. Through the gospel commitment, people realize that marriage is a permanent institution to be honored by all for their benefit. It is the responsibility of those who have accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ to promote healthier living through the sharing of the gospel by word and deeds. When those who have accepted the gospel abide by its precepts, their lives reflect the character of Jesus Christ and illuminate society.

Paul's Counsel on Sex and Marriage

The apostle Paul seems to be responding to marriage issues that the church at Corinth had written to him before; probably seeking clarification on how married couples were to conduct themselves about sexual intimacy. He responds, "now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman, Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his wife, and

²⁹ Michael J. Wilkins, *1 Corinthians*, The New International Version Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2004), 644.

let each woman have her husband” (1 Cor 7:1-2). It appears that some of the church members had abstained from providing conjugal rights to their spouses on account of their new faith. Elaborating on the same line of thought, Simon Kistemaker posits, “The expression to touch a woman is a euphemistic term not for marriage but sexual intercourse (Gen 20:6, Prov 6:29).”³⁰ In other words, some of the Corinthian church members desired to be in marriage but depriving each other on conjugal rights. Paul elevates the monogamous type of marriage and exhorts his audience to remain faithful to God’s holy institution. He clearly explains that both the husband and the wife are obligated to render to each other the affection that is due to every one of them (1 Cor 7:4-5).

He also cites that because of gross sexual immorality, every man needed to cling to his wife and likewise the wife. Those who practiced celibacy while in marriage seemed to be intemperate and resorted to promiscuity, yet marriage was permissible from creation. Paul admonished them to desist from depriving each other except by consent while giving themselves to fasting and prayer afterward resorting to it again to avoid temptation (1 Cor 7:5). Kistemaker also argues that Marriage without sex is not only unnatural, but it is expressly forbidden.³¹ It appears as if some of these Corinthian church members were overzealous in refraining from sexual intimacy. One wonders how they would replenish the earth without touching a woman. It is often said that a hungry man is an angry one. Some other domestic issues stem from a neglected duty, not giving a spouse his or her conjugal rights. This kind of thinking is against God’s original plan and command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28).

³⁰ Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 210.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

In his high regard for marriage, Paul likens the relationship to the bond that exists between Christ and His church (Eph 4:32-33). In as much as Christ sacrifices for His church, man ought to do likewise to his wife. He also stresses that marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure or undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers (Heb 13:4). The phrase “and the bed undefiled,” denotes a sexual act that should be frequently practiced in marriage circles. Neither the husband nor the wife has the right to withhold sex to each other.

Furthermore, Paul addresses the singles. For those who are not yet married but feel the urge to have sexual intercourse and those who find it difficult to exercise self-control, Paul urges them to get married. He says it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Cor 7:9). While all sexual desires are only met in a marriage setting according to Paul, and the advice seems not to cover every situation. Kistemaker, quoting G.G Findlay, observes that it is “better to marry than to burn; but if marriage is impossible, better infinitely to burn than to sin.”³² While marriage is encouraged rather than burning with passion, the above statement seems to suggest that where one cannot marry, it would rather be advisable for the individual to infinitely burn with passion than to sin. In other words, one can deal with the pressure of incontinence rather than dealing with situations that attract sin and ultimately misrepresent God. Getting married merely because of passion might not be the noblest idea if couples would end up enduring marriage, rather than enjoying it. Solving issues in unhappy marriages might be an insurmountable task than controlling one’s passion. Putting all factors into consideration, taking time to find a life partner might result in a happy

³² G. G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. Robertson Nicoll (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 3:825, quoted in Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 218.

union rather than rushing the process. Rushed marriages without real maturity, lack compatibility and could breed all sorts of discomfort and regrets. Since there is an inevitable reality and life to face after passion, serious considerations should be factored in for a pleasant future.

Paul's Counsel on Married Believers

Paul speaks to believers who are married reminding them of the importance and permanence of marriage. Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife (1 Cor 7:10-11). Craig S. Keener sheds light on the background of these two verses. He reveals that many church members were likely remarried even before conversion; divorce was very common in Corinth. Paul addresses current choices, not their past, and notes that this divorce prohibition is from the Lord.³³ Furthermore, Keener notes the terms translated “leave,” “send away,” “separate,” and “divorce” were often synonymous with divorce and probably function as such in this context. However, where Paul refers to Jesus’ teaching, it may be significant that a wife in Jewish Palestine could only “leave” not “divorce,” in Roman society, either partner could divorce the other by a unilateral decision or abandonment.³⁴ However, marriage was designed to be indissoluble (Matt 19:6). Paul speaks to his believers who are married and admonishes them to preserve their marriages according to God’s original plan (Gen 2:24). Those people who enter into marriage are mandated to recall that the

³³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2014), 474.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

union was designed to be indissoluble³⁵ since it originates from God. Paul Gardner affirms that divorce is unacceptable.³⁶ Moreover, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* stresses that the command of Jesus leaves no room for the many excuses for legal separation that are accepted by the civil courts today such as incompatibility, mental cruelty, and others of a more trivial nature. Divorce is not in God's perfect plan for humanity. The only reason for which divorce is permitted is adultery (Matt 19:9).³⁷ Although God hates divorce (Mal 2:16), marriages are dissolved every now and then because of the intrusion of sin. Nonetheless, spouses should not take advantage or ill-treat each other but should espouse the ideal biblical model where love, respect and harmony are cherished.

Although there is no room for divorce in marriage from a scriptural perspective, Paul seems to leave room for digression from the norm that might consequently result in divorce. In such a situation, the wife is not allowed to remarry but to live alone or reconcile with her husband. Neither wife nor husband has the right to divorce each other. Simon J. Kistemaker remarks that so long the woman remains unmarried, there is hope for reconciliation.³⁸ Couples should obey God's instructions regarding the importance and permanence of marriage. Preserving marriage sanctity generates harmony and unity among couples. Forgiveness in marriage creates fertile ground for reconciliation and recommitment. This is vital to mending the relationship

³⁵ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 715.

³⁶ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2018), 311.

³⁷ "The Married" [Matt 19:6], *SDABC*, 6:708.

³⁸ Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 222.

resulting in reconnecting and ultimately reverting to the things that unified the couple before.

If the word “leave” was different from “divorce” in Christian spheres, then the aspect of separation helps to cool down tempers and reconsider whether the decision to move away permanently alone could be the best one or not. Each spouse has time to take an intro and retrospection of what would have transpired. See where and how one has adversely contributed to the straining of the relationship and be bold enough to take responsibility for their actions. For instance, if it means asking for forgiveness, that is done genuinely. It also gives room for dialogue that will improve spousal relationships and cooperation in coming up with lasting solutions. In the case of a workable reconciliation, such kinds of conflicts might be avoided as the couple resorts to cultivating and sustaining healthful relations. Forgiveness might also be the oil that soothes the wounds that might have been caused during the conflict.

Aspect of Headship in Marriage

The issue of headship has often caused a crisis in marriage. Man tries to exert pressure and control over his wife, treating her as inferior although she is an equal partner in marriage. When the wife presents facts that outweigh the husband's, the man reminds his wife that he is the head of the home. This kind of spirit does not encourage harmony but rather promotes tension and discord among couples. Regrettably, this distorted notion is prevalent and very much cherished by married men in Mabvuku. Is this the kind of headship enunciated by the Bible?

Headship entails responsibility, courtesy, and love in the harmonious collaboration of husband and wife. Head relates to the source of, not control or supremacy. It also attests to servant leadership where a husband serves his wife in love. However, the issue of headship often causes crises in marriage. At times men

assume a domineering spirit and start controlling their wives as if they are of little or less importance to them. Headship has nothing to do with the subjugation of wives in marriage but has everything to do with setting an example worth emulation. The husband should be able to put his interests aside and serve his wife.

The apostle Paul articulates the appropriate behavior in the wife-husband relationship to his Ephesian and Corinthian audience. He urges wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord since the husband is the head of the wife likewise Christ is the head of the church and is the Savior of the body. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything (Eph 5:22-24; 1 Cor 11:3). To men, Paul advises husbands to love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her (sacrificed for His bride) that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or anything, but that she be holy and blameless (Eph 5:25-27). Likewise, men ought to sacrifice for the welfare of their wives.

Does the word submission imply that the wife is inferior to the husband? Not at all. The apostle Paul recognizes that even before sin man was ordained head of the home (Gen 2:24). Hence, the wife ought to respect and support her husband for the harmonious sustenance of their marriage. Although Christ is equal to the Father, He voluntarily chose to be subordinate to Him for the redemption of humanity (Phil 2:5-10). Clinton and Gina Wahlen affirm that submission is a far-reaching biblical principle, epitomized by Jesus's submission to the Father. While on earth, Jesus never ceased to be God. He remained equal to the Father, yet He submitted His will to the Father's will. ... Therefore, submission, biblically understood and practiced, in no

way diminishes full equality, nor does it compromise one's value or personhood.³⁹

Likewise, a woman's submission does not hold her at any disadvantage, rather it capacitates her to rule through virtue of submission. No husband would make a family decision that warrants his wife's input without consulting with her first if genuine love is their ruling principle.

In as much as the church gives allegiance to the Lord, the wife should always give her full support to the husband. Darien Cooper unequivocally states that submission never means that our personalities, abilities, talents, or individuality should be buried, rather, they are to be channeled, maximized, and reflected to the goodness and glory of God. Another way of saying this is that women are to be responders to their husband's love, protection, and leadership.⁴⁰ As the head of the wife, the husband must radiate the light of love and respect he is drawing from Christ the head of the man. Even if the husband fails in his role, if the wife could focus on fulfilling her responsibilities to him, it would be easier for her to exert a positive influence that would challenge her husband to do well and ultimately bring good results in marriage. Some marriages are established and preserved because of the wife's prudence in her daily conduct.

Man as head of the family has a divine mandate to love his wife in the same way Jesus loves His church. God has given him the authority to respond as head of the family. Kistemaker observes that even though God has authority over Christ, Christ is not inferior to God the Father. Similarly, the authority of a man over a

³⁹ Clinton Wahlen and Gina Wahlen, *Women's Ordination Does It Matter* (Silver Spring, MD: Bright Shows Publishing, 2015), 133-134.

⁴⁰ Darien B. Cooper, *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband: Discovering the Key to Marital Success* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 23.

woman does not imply the inferiority of a woman or the superiority of a man.⁴¹

Tensions and violence often arise as a result of power struggles and issues of headship. However, a man should be the source of his wife's happiness. The aspect of servant leadership comes into play. The man should understudy how Jesus cares for His church and do the same to his wife. He must nourish, protect, and lead his family as expected.

Since Jesus is the head of man, the husband ought to establish a fervent relationship with his Master and get to know what Jesus desires of him to portray His image. In as much as Jesus values his church highly, man must esteem his wife too. The challenge comes when man disconnects himself from his Maker. Instead of light, there will be darkness, sorrow, force, and a dictatorial attitude, unlike the attitude of Jesus. Harmony, unity, and joy are only realized when the husband is connected to Jesus, the source of all goodness. Hence man should always enhance his relationship with his Lord for good family leadership.

It should be noted that submission is not the same as subjugation. This does not mean that a woman should accept or receive abuse from her husband. No man is authorized to treat his wife like an inferior. Headship does not mean rulership. But servanthood. The wife should feel secure in her husband's company. She is not his worker or slave but an equal partner in marriage whose rights should be respected. Issues of domestic violence militate against God's original plan of respect, equity, and happiness for every couple. In line with God's original plan, the husband should practice servant leadership, that is leadership through service. The husband should not

⁴¹ Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 366.

fight his wife but rather, he should fight for his wife. The wife must feel secure in the presence and company of her husband.

The Principle of Love

Love is a fundamental thread that binds and sustains every relationship. Unlike selfishness, genuine, authentic love thrives in being there for others out of one's own volition. There is no force or coercion induced but a free demonstration of courtesy. Love is a vital pillar in a marriage that seeks the best for others.

Reinforcing the importance of love, Nancy Van Pelt states that the cure for all ills and wrongs, the cares, the sorrows, and the crimes of humanity, all lie in one word: 'love.' It is the divine vitality that everywhere produces and restores life. To every one of us, it gives the power of working miracles if we will. Because of love deficiency, thousands commit suicide each year. Another multitude flock to the divorce courts to free themselves so that they can begin their search for love again. Mental hospitals hold many who for the want of human affection, have slipped beyond the reach of sanity.⁴² It is probably true that most of the sufferings people experience are a result of love deficiencies. There is no meaningful survival without love. It is the vitalizing force that adds meaning to life and value to relationships. The antidote to isolation, dejection, and rejection is love. Unfortunately, the word love has been grossly abused to promote egocentric and sentimentalistic ventures. People clamor for love rather than demonstrating it. Love is better demonstrated than mere utterance. Nancy further argues that when love fails, marriages fall into ruins and impossible frustrations deluge those involved and those around them.⁴³ If couples

⁴² Nancy van Pelt, *To Have & to Hold: A Guide to Successful Marriage* (Lincolnshire, UK: The Stanborough Press, 2012), 16.

⁴³ Ibid.

would demonstrate their affection through genuine love most of the current marriage aberrations the world is faced with would be abated. Moreover, marriage frustrations do not only affect the husband and wife but everyone around them gets entangled in the scum. Usually, relationships are left strained and at times irreconcilable.

It is a misconstrued notion to think that the Bible condones violence perpetuated in couples. People with such kind of thinking do abuse the word love and presumptuously oppress their spouses. Yet love is never oppressive but esteems others better than self. The apostle Paul gives a graphic description of genuine love to the Corinthians. He upholds that love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always preserves. Love never fails (1 Cor 13:4-8).

According to George Arthur Buttrick, this chapter falls into three clearly defined sections: (a) the superiority of love (v 1-3), (b) the nature of love (v 4-7), and (c) the permanence of love (v 8-13).⁴⁴ In addition to what Buttrick has noted, David Garland in his exegetical comment reinforces that love, not spiritual gifts, is the marrow of Christian existence. Paul intends to show how useless devoid of love, and virtue are and how limited these gifts are. Only when all the other virtues are exercised with love do they become useful in building the church. Otherwise, they are meaningless no matter how sublime and admirable they may seem.⁴⁵ In as much as Garland submits that love is the marrow of Christian existence, likewise, it is vital to

⁴⁴ John Short, "Exposition of the Book of 1 Corinthians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1953), 10:168.

⁴⁵ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy 2008), 608-609.

note that love is equally the morrow of marriage. Without love, marriage is reduced to a miserable act, and talent or giftedness amounts to nothing. Love is supreme as the underlying principle that sweetens and strengthens marriage.

Love is not static but rather dynamic and active. The benefit of spiritual gifts only finds meaning when they are shared in the context of love. Outside this love framework, speech, prophecy, mysteries, knowledge, and faith have no positive impact on relationships. The need for genuine, Christ-like love remains the greatest quest for many hearts today. Craig L. Blomberg bemoans that, one of our greatest problems is defining love. Popular culture in literature, music, advertising, and visual arts uses the word to mean just about everything except what the Bible means by it. So even Christians are easily misled into thinking love is primarily a feeling; something you fall in or out of. We equate it with lust or sexual intercourse itself, speaking of one's "lover." First of all, love is an action, an unconditional commitment, a promise that is never broken.⁴⁶ This misrepresentation of the true meaning of love is impacting negatively across the realm. Human hearts are left bruised and devastated due to a lack of unconditional commitment. Karen Holford further clarifies that "Love is not about loving the deserving but loving the undeserving as if they were the most deserving. This is the challenge of love in our everyday life."⁴⁷ Unconditional love warrants that even the unworthy deserve to be loved and respected. These include domestic violence victims and offenders too.

The word love is a doing word and as such, action is more apparent and appropriate than mere utterance. Simon J. Kistemaker affirms that true love reveals

⁴⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 644.

⁴⁷ Karen Holford, *The Family Book: Creative Ideas for Families* (Grantham, England: The Stanborough Press, 2004), 1.

itself in loving the unlovable, for this is what God does. God always comes to us first in love before we come to Him in repentance and faith.⁴⁸ On this note, the issue of one good turn deserves another cease to hold if loving the unlovable concept is pursued. Taking the first initiative in attesting love promotion resembles a selfless attitude akin to the Creator. This mandate is for every person who professes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

If Mabvuku spouses could be patient with each other and tolerate the mistakes of others, love would grow like a seed in their relationship. There would be no room for oppression or self-aggrandizement over others. Kindness would be the most cherished ingredient in seasoning spousal life and relationships. Envy, jealousy, pride, and domestic violence would be unheard of in marriage. Couples who do not keep any record of wrongs promote healthy relationships that reinforce trust, hope, and family togetherness. Love puts in motion the principle of forgiveness.

The Principle of Forgiveness

While some couples destroy love relations by keeping grudges in marriage and cherishing the spirit of revenge, forgiveness is another vital component in spousal relationships that helps bury past emotional hurts and builds new bridges of tolerance and love. In life, those who stay together are bound to step on each other's toes. Admittedly, being wronged by someone you trust, and respect is quite painful and aggravating. More so when that individual is your spouse. Most likely it results in a change of attitude towards the perpetrator. However, valuing relationships and understanding how these connections should be preserved, gives a positive attitude through the act of forgiveness.

⁴⁸ Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 453.

Conflict resolutions at times demands that spouses accommodate and forgive each other. Regrettably, selfishness and pride detract others from taking the reconciliation route. Every spouse has a choice whether to retaliate or to forgive and maintain the relationship. While other responsibilities can be delegated to others, forgiveness must be initiated and executed by the one who has been offended. It is therapeutic to the victim. The inability to forgive brings untold harm to the affected individual. Nelson Mandela affirms that resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.⁴⁹ Put differently, the inability to forgive destroys the wounded one more than it affects the perpetrator. By forgiving the offender, the offended set themselves free. John C. Maxwell expounding on effective leadership through interpersonal relationships comments that if you don't have peace, it is not because someone took it from you; you gave it away. You cannot always control what happens to you, but you can control what happens in you.⁵⁰ It is within every person's ability to entertain words or actions that build rather than those that are destructive. No one is capable of taking away one's inner peace unless the affected one decides to. Couples should never give away peace in exchange for hurt speech and resentment.

Paminus Machamire testifies that he learned that even though revenge looks attractive on the face of it, it leaves more pain than forgiveness does. Even as a selfish move, making the effort to forgive is more satisfying than revenging oneself. Being able to forgive is not a point of weakness as many people think. It is an enormous

⁴⁹ Nelson Mandela, "Resentment Is Like Drinking Poison and then Hoping It Will Kill Your Enemies," accessed 18 July 2019, <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/380685>.

⁵⁰ John C. Maxwell, *Be a People Person: Effective Leadership through Interpersonal Relationships* (Vereeniging, South Africa: Christian Art Publishers, 2011), 23.

strength.⁵¹ The act of forgiveness sets the offended free. It liberates the mind and promotes optimism and freedom. There is no excuse why couples should enslave themselves by cherishing an unforgiving attitude. Neil T. Anderson testifies, “forgiveness is the major reason why people remain in bondage to the past. People in bondage are not liberated by what others do but by what they choose to believe, confess, renounce, and forgive.”⁵² There is no point in why couples should be enslaved by cherishing an unforgiving spirit. This kind of attitude paralyzes relationships and ultimately destroys love. It also negatively impacts one’s health, especially the unforgiving one. On the other hand, concentrating on what builds relationships tends to bring more satisfying dividends, and promotes nourishment of the body and mind as observed by the wise man that a merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones (Prov 17:22).

Based on the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus outlines principles that must be adhered to for a prayer to be considered. He specifies that individual forgiveness precedes God’s pardon (Matt 6:12). This implies that one is forgiven by God after they have forgiven their fellow beings. Those who do not forgive others should not expect forgiveness from their Maker. In as much as people do wrong and expect pardon from God, couples should learn to be tolerant and forgive their trespassers. Morales Gudmundsson outlines that the mandate of forgiveness is so central to our faith that to ignore it is to ignore our very salvation.⁵³ Everyone is encouraged to seriously

⁵¹ Paminus Machamire, *The Power of Forgiveness* (Western Cape, South Africa: Africa Publishing Company, 2013), 64.

⁵² Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Oregon, OH: Harvest House Publishers 2000), 24, 62.

⁵³ Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson, *I Forgive You, But . . .* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 21.

consider the issue of forgiveness as a salvific matter. This is also reinforced by what Jesus said again in the same chapter that if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt 6:14-15). George Hebert admonishes that he who cannot forgive another breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.⁵⁴ The inability to forgive enslaves the offended and removes all the possibilities to cross to a blissful shore.

Retaliation sounds unacceptable in marriage as it strains relationships and militates against peace and unity. What sustains humanity is the principle of forgiveness. Citing one of Mahatma Gandhi's finest esteemed utterances, Gudmundsson reiterates that if we practice an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, soon the world will be blind and toothless.⁵⁵ What kind of a world would that be with all blind and toothless inhabitants? It is comforting to know that besides love, forgiveness is another universal force that sustains the world. Those who have been forgiven value an act of forgiveness very much and in turn forgive others as a clear demonstration of their love for erring fellow beings.

Forgiveness is limitless. It should be offered to every offender regardless of the intensity of the grievance. The issue of how many times one should forgive is expounded by Jesus Christ when He alluded to the seventy times seven concept (Matt 18:21). It is not feasible for an individual to sin against the other four hundred and ninety times a day. This only spells that forgiveness is limitless. Acts of kindness should be exhibited at all times. If couples in Mabvuku would choose to replace

⁵⁴ George Hebert, "He that Cannot Forgive Others, Breaks the Bridge over Which He Must Pass Himself; For Every Man Has Need to Be Forgiven.," accessed 23 March 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/6099/>.

⁵⁵ Morales-Gudmundsson, *I Forgive You, But ...*, 35.

resentment with grace and forgiveness, marriages would be sweeter, relationships healed, harmony restored, God's ideals elevated, and societies blessed.

Again, if couples would imitate Jesus Christ the author of love and forgiveness by reflecting on how each one of them was forgiven while they were wondering about their lostness, they would cast the light of forgiveness to their surroundings. Furthermore, they would be exemplary of a love-deficient society and set a tone for meaningful living. These principles would be emulated and cherished by other spouses too and peace-loving communities would be established.

Benefits of Forgiveness

The following constitute benefits of forgiveness to spouses who champion this cause and desire for healing and restoration:

1. Attainment of peace of mind. Forgiveness is therapeutic to the one who has been wounded.
2. It fosters reconciliation and promotes healing.
3. Forgiveness reinforces unity and restoration,
4. Blessings are promised to the one who forgives others.

Summary

Having discovered that the principal initiator of marriage is God the Creator, humanity must typify God in word and character. Equality of couples before God does not negate unique roles and responsibilities to be performed by every spouse. While the issue of masculine and feminine is God-ordained, this does not elevate one gender above the other. Motivated by love, couples should freely offer themselves to one another as they work towards building their homes. There should be minimum interference from relatives when a new home is established. Since marriage is a

permanent union between husband and wife, there is no way it could be interrupted without affecting both parties. Couples need to know that they are accountable to God for the success or failure of their matrimony.

Labor was given as a blessing to man. If it is neglected, it places a family at risk of lacking life's necessities which might trigger unhealthy relationships between couples. Adhering to marriage principles brings happiness and joy to couples, who in unity and harmony will establish a peaceful marriage. The intrusion of sin distorted all the good the Creator intended for the couples. Only God can restore what the devil has stolen from couples through sin. The purpose of the gospel is to restore marriage sanctity and beauty through obedience to His word.

Marriage entails the enjoyment of conjugal rights. Couples can only refrain from having sex on mutual agreement and make sure that they do not starve each other for long since marriage without sex is not in essence marriage at all. A couple's relationship should be anchored on love, faithfulness, forgiveness, trust, and respect. However, couples have a choice in deciding the kind of marriage model they wish to pursue. They have the right to either choose the prefall model which God initiated in the beginning and is the ideal marriage or the post-fall model, which has been marred by sin, compounded by domestic violence, and all other aberrations. The next chapter deals with a literature analysis of domestic violence.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This section's thrust is on the domestic violence literature review. The main areas of concentration include the introduction, definitions, Zimbabwean legislation, types, perceptions, religion, causes, implications, and summary of domestic violence.

While marriage is meant to provide the deepest and most satisfactory emotional experiences in life such as love, attachment, dedication, sympathy, empathy, assistance, and reassurance among couples, the situation seems to have grossly shifted to the negative extreme. Domestic violence has become a painstaking issue among spouses. Regardless of gender, culture, or race. This vice has caused instability, misery, and heartaches in married couples. The importance of marriage appears to have been substituted by cruelty and a domineering attitude that tends to leave the victim regretting why one agreed to enter into such a union. Where an atmosphere of pleasantness, love, empathy, and respect once prevailed in marriage is now replaced by brutality, impatience, disrespect, and egoism. Hence ignoring such grave issues is the same as destroying ourselves. Russell Wilson asserts that the more that we choose not to talk about domestic violence, the more we shy away from the issue, and the more we lose.¹ Silence is not golden when it comes to spousal ferocity matters. Everyone must cooperate and boldly talk about domestic violence issues,

¹ Russel Wilson, "Russell Wilson Quotes," accessed 24 November 2021, <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1731361/Russell-Wilson-The-more-that-we-choose-not-to-talk-about-domestic-violence-the-more-we>.

how they disrupt harmony in couples, and then explore possible solutions to alleviate the scourge. While Wilson's view that no one should be quiet about domestic violence sounds good, the writer offers no solution besides raising the alarm about the vice. There is a need for proper teaching to refrain abusers from this evil behavior. Victims of this scourge need help in the form of counseling too.

Definitions of Domestic Violence

Several definitions come into play in trying to define domestic violence. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines domestic violence as a behavior that is intended to hurt or kill that happens between members of the same family.² The action exhibited is intended to harm a family member. In this context, a spouse deliberately inflicts pain on his or her partner. On the same issue, Samuel T. Gladding endorses that domestic violence refers to aggression that takes place in intimate relationships, usually between adults. It is the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, and other abusive behavior perpetrated on one intimate partner or another. It is an attempt by one to control the thoughts, beliefs, or behaviors of the other partner to resist one's control.³ Gladding seems to reveal the hostility directed by a person very close to the offended. On the other hand, Leslie Ackie calls this kind of behavior intimate terrorism which denotes to calculated use of violence (threat of violence) against civilians to attain goals that are political religious, or ideological; this is done through intimidation coercion, or instilling fear.⁴ Recently spousal

² *Oxford Learner's Advanced Dictionary* (2010), s.v. "Domestic Violence."

³ Samuel T. Gladding, *Family Therapy, History and Practice* (London: Prentice Hall Publishers, 2011), 56.

⁴ Leslie Ackie, "The Paradox of Intimate Terrorism: 4 Steps Every Church Must Take," *Ministry*, March 2019, accessed 30 November 2022, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2019/03/The-paradox-of-intimate-terrorism>.

violence has been identified as Intimate partner violence (IPV). According to P. Patra et al., IPV is defined as any behavior within an intimate relationship (married, unmarried, and living in) that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship.⁵ What is apparent with the above definitions is the intentional behavior of the abuser to cause harm or fear to the spouse. The issue of intimate terrorism which Leslie mentions is the brutal treatment of the spouse. In addition, Gladding highlights the reason for this awkward behavior that the victimizer wants to dominate the thoughts, beliefs, or behavior of the partner. This action could be an indication of a lack of love. How could one be hostile to a spouse? The issue of force does more harm to a couple's relationship than good. This kind of behavior could infringe on spousal freedom and peace or perhaps militate against the laws of the land; hence, it warrants examination and assistance where possible.

Types of Domestic Violence

Samuel Gladding outlines four forms of domestic violence namely the physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. Physical abuse includes spitting, scratching, biting, grabbing, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, throwing, twisting, slapping, punching, choking, burning, or using a weapon. Sexual violence includes pressured, coerced, unwanted, inappropriately timed, and forced sex. The psychological elements of domestic violence entail threats, attacks on property, isolation, and the use of children. The economic abuse includes transportation, food, clothing, shelter, and money.⁶ The most prevalent type of domestic violence in

⁵ P. Patra et al., "Intimate Partner Violence: Wounds Are Deeper," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 60, no. 4 (2018): 494-498, accessed 30 November 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6278226/>.

⁶ Gladding, *Family Therapy, History and Practice*, 56.

Mabvuku is physical abuse. Men in Mabvuku resort to wife beating when they confront seemingly irresolvable issues with their spouses. Does one wonder what kind of offense warrants all this brutality metered against a spouse? How can a normal individual find joy in inflicting such pain on a loved one? What exactly causes domestic violence? Could this be the best way of solving spousal problems? With this plethora of questions, there is an ardent need for a thorough exploration to discover more about the causes of domestic violence and investigate possible reductive measures that might be used to deal with such a vice that has ruffled peace in married couples and caused excruciating pain on its victims. Is there no government regulation against domestic violence?

Zimbabwean Legislation and Domestic Violence

The Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16] enacted on 26th February 2007, defines domestic violence as

Any unlawful act, omission, or behavior which results in death or the direct infliction of physical, sexual, or mental injury to any complainant by a respondent and including the following – physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, malicious damage to property, forcible entry into the complainant’s residence where the parties do not share the same residence; depriving the complainant of or hindering the complainant from access to or a reasonable share of the use of the facilities associated with the complainant’s place of residence; the unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property in which the complainant has an interest or abuse derived from cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate against or degrade women.⁷

It is with a lot of perplexity to note that family members who are supposed to protect each other and feel secure in each other’s company, especially couples who willingly joined in holy matrimony because of love abruptly turn into enemies. On the contrary, those who intended to be happy and be there for each other have drastically

⁷ Zimbabwe Legal Information Institute, “Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16],” accessed 23 June 2021, <https://zimlii.org/akn/zw/act/2006/14/eng@2016-12-31>.

turned out to be abusive. Moreover, that which was initially presumed as an empire of love and joy has translated into a kingdom of tears and sorrows. On the other hand, persuasion has been substituted by aggression while sympathy and empathy have been replaced by brutality and cruelty. All this occurs as a result of power obsession, and one wonders what kind of power this is and where it emanates from. Could this be a sign of an inferiority complex on the part of the abuser or even a mental challenge?

Engaging in the above-stipulated acts is a direct violation of the laws of Zimbabwe and warrants the prosecution of such perpetrators. However, this can only be effected if the complainant raises the issue with the courts. But if the victim decides to keep quiet or is oblivious of which procedures to take, the abuser will continue with his behavior without reproof or transformation of character. Although the Zimbabwean domestic violence law is so clearly spelled, it appears that the majority are not aware of this statutory instrument as reflected by the increased number of perpetrators. As a result, more efforts need to be channeled toward bringing domestic violence awareness programs to communities and encouraging victims to report their cases to law enforcement agents. It is disturbing to note that humanity is usually on the reactive side yet positive thoughts trigger actions instead of reactions.⁸ Rarely do people proactively consider having a contingent approach to mitigate such challenges. Could this be the reason why little is achieved where much is expected?

While it is true that vehicles are serviced after a stipulated mileage for efficiency and effective purposes; contrary, there are no servicing programs or

⁸ Sarah Sutton, *Say It with Confidence* (Harlow, England: Ashford Color Press, 2006), 76.

couple's enrichment seminars after marriage. Books and other resources that enhance love relationships between couples are rarely secured. Similarly, how on earth should somebody expect to pass an examination without appropriate resources or desired information? Likewise, couples should strive to have all the necessary resources for a fruitful and constantly revived marriage.

Furthermore, the issue of incarceration alone appears to be insufficient to address domestic violence challenges. The Minister of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development, Oppah Muchinguri clamored for stiffer penalties to be metered on domestic violence perpetrators. Muchinguri noted with concern that the current sentences being handed down to perpetrators for rape and sexual violence were not deterrent enough and legislators should pass laws to ensure there are stiffer penalties for perpetrators. The minimum sentence for rape should be 20 years. It should be more deterrent than a cattle theft sentence.⁹ Patra et al. add that law enforcement agents frequently reinforce the batterers' attempts to control and demean their victims. Despite the legislation in place, the perpetrators of IPV are dealt with more leniently compared to perpetrators of similar violence with strangers.¹⁰ While the minister is clamoring for more drastic measures against domestic violence perpetrators, as a means of deterring offenses, punitive measures do not necessarily transform evil tendencies hidden in the human heart. No wonder released prisoners frequently commit the same offenses. Rather than relying on jails alone, heart transforming programs should be put in place as mitigatory measures. Waiting for people to commit offenses and then applying the rule of law might not be the best the

⁹ Veneranda Longa, "Shocking Statistics on Gender-based Violence," December 2, 2013, accessed 14 October 2018, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/12/shocking-statistics-gender-based-violence>.

¹⁰ Patra et al., "Intimate Partner Violence," 494-498.

government could do for its people. Vigorous induction of people before any crime is committed might help deter others from committing similar offenses. Awareness campaigns could be held to sensitize people before breaking the law. Patra et al. admit that despite its prevalence (domestic violence), it is not a well-understood phenomenon.¹¹ If this is not a well understood issue according to Patra et al., what then has been done to reveal the mysteries of this vice? Rather, folding of hands, implies consenting with domestic violent perpetrators at the expense of justice and harmony. Nogget Matope bemoans that the domestication of elective protocols that Zimbabwe complied with has been obstructed by poor implementation and administrative practices by state and non-state institutions.¹² While plans and strategies are in place, nothing materializes if there is no proper implementation. The inclusion of God and His word could change bitter situations in couple experiences for the better if they would willingly cooperate. However, more often cooperation is lacking due to contradicting perceptions of domestic violence.

Perceptions of Domestic Violence

There are divergent opinions on domestic violence. Some tend to classify it on racial grounds or minimize it to low-income earners and illiterate societies. Others hide under a cultural cover that seldom a wife should be beaten to instill discipline and to stamp authority as head of the house. How can a man harm his spouse to protect her? Speaking on domestic violence, David Kaur asserts that not at any time should one believe a man's claim that he has to harm his partner to protect her; only

¹¹ Patra et al., "Intimate Partner Violence," 494-498.

¹² Nogget Matope and Mathabo Khau, "Women Educators Narrative on Intimate Partner Violence: The Case of a State University in Zimbabwe," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 2084889, accessed 22 October 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2022.2084889>.

abusers think this way.¹³ Abusers hide with a finger when they assume they protect their spouses by inflicting pain on them. Such practice does more harm than good. Watering one's happiness with the tears of a spouse is evil and warrants outright condemnation. This kind of thinking sounds retrogressive in establishing harmonious marriages.

Marry-Ann Lamanna and Agnes Riedmann claim that violence against women partners occurs in all social spheres, but abused women are more likely to be young, nonwhite, less educated, and with lower household incomes.¹⁴ While to a certain extent, domestic violence has indeed been so frequent throughout history, this behavior should be rightly condemned regardless of race or status. The fact that anti-social conduct has been in existence for a while does not make it acceptable. From this perspective, it appears that only young women, nonwhite, less educated, and with lower household incomes are victims of abuse yet domestic violence knows no age, gender, race, or level of education. Regrettably, a person's disposition is not influenced by age alone as much as it is influenced by one's upbringing, temperament, attitude, and other societal variables. Moreover, domestic violence has become a global vice experienced in all nations. A case in point is outlined by George Vandeman and Mark Finley in their book, *The Overcomers*. The writers claim "The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that every fifteen seconds someone is abused in America. ... Every year 800 to 1200 women kill the men who abuse them. Most wounded wives just suffer in silence, hoping someday the abuse will stop. But it

¹³ Davinder Kaur, "Domestic Violence," accessed 14 November 2019, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1216488-never-believe-a-man-s-clsim-that-he-has-to-harm>.

¹⁴ Mary Ann Lamanna and Agnes Riedmann, *Marriages and Families: Making Choices in a Diverse Society* (Toronto, Canada: Nelson Thompson Learning, 2003), 348.

doesn't."¹⁵ Even in the first world like America, where democracy appears to be upheld, abuse cases are rampant, and the victims are no longer watching but are now reacting in self-defense. The rate of crime and the annual figures for those who kill their abusers are a cause of apprehension. More so, it is worrisome to note that the majority of these wounded wives endure in silence hoping that things will change for the better when in reality there is no transformation of character on the part of the abusers and no mitigating programs. Domestic violence becomes complicated when the victim becomes the abuser. Taking the law into one's hands is equally wrong. Life should be valued by all. This trails down to the importance of constant teaching.

Furthermore, it is appalling to note that some of the abusers are the most literate people in society. Abuse seems to be occurring everywhere. For instance, at home, workplace, and school. It is alarming to observe that some of the richest people are the greatest domestic violence offenders in life. Jeane MacIntosh, the New York Post reporter on the subject, "Battered- and Wealthy- Wives- Silent Victims who think they are alone" writes that in the past decade Weitzman has discovered, hundreds of wealthy, well-educated women who have been battered by their husbands. But the silent victims assume they are, and they don't call the police, press charges, or tell a friend.¹⁶ Sin does not categorize people according to education or amount of fortune accumulated. Concealing domestic violence issues seems to be the worst thing these battered wives could do. There is no reason why victims of domestic violence should keep quiet otherwise the perpetrator will never change for the better

¹⁵George E. Vandeman and Mark Finley, *The Overcomers* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 1992), 34.

¹⁶ Jeane MacIntosh, "Battered and Wealthy Wives Silent Victims Who Think They're Alone," New York Post, November 6, 2000, accessed 20 May 2019, <https://nypost.com/2000/11/06/battered-and-wealthy-wives-silent-victims-who-think-theyre-alone/>.

since his actions are covered. The victims should remember that a problem shared is half solved. The law should be allowed to take its course if the situation is to be corrected. MacIntosh further asserts that a recent New York City study revealed that spousal abuse by wealthy, powerful men rarely leads to police intervention. Government figures show that 8 percent of reported domestic violence attacks come from people with incomes higher than 75,000-00 American dollars.¹⁷ Although it is factual that low income brings with it innumerable challenges that may escalate to domestic violence, those who seem to be highly remunerated are not exempted from this ill as evident in MacIntosh's assertion. The percentage raised is quite significant and indeed worrisome. It might be a misrepresentation of facts to assume that spousal ferocity is merely perpetrated by the impoverished or penniless category. Both the rich and the poor seem to be victims of this vice. The educated and the illiterate are all entangled in it, and this now warrants for everyone to be intentional in fighting against this scourge.

Religion and Domestic Violence

With the level of estimation some people hold on religion, some assume that abuse happens only to people who have no religious affiliation. Nonetheless, Vandeman and Finley spell out that issues of abuse have no religious exemption. They reveal, "Some psychologists suggest that up to 80% of abuse takes place in religious homes."¹⁸ The issue of palliating what is wrong under the guise of religion is equally unacceptable. Religious domains are supposed to be centers of positive

¹⁷ MacIntosh, "Battered and Wealthy Wives Silent Victims Who Think They're Alone."

¹⁸ Vandeman and Finley, *The Overcomers*, 34.

influence on the abusers and cities of refuge for the abused, setting a good example to society.

However, it is deplorable to observe that some of these religious empires have become breeding environments for abuse. Veneranda Longa, a senior parliamentary reporter bemoaned that there is a lot of concern that victims of gender-based violence sometimes have nowhere to run to as they find more vultures in institutions like churches where they are supposed to seek solace but end up being abused by people of the cloth who are supposed to protect them.¹⁹ Church members should expose abusers by reporting such issues to law enforcement agents. A lot of harm is precipitated by those who keep such issues under cover in trying to protect the church and its leadership in an unscrupulous manner. Yet, there is no virtue in concealing what is wrong.

Leslie Acklie, in his article on the paradox of terrorism, reveals research on intimate partner violence conducted by Dr. Rene Drumm among 49 Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the United States. The study indicated that 90 percent of abusers were active members. These included church leaders such as deacons, elders, pastors, chaplains, a Pathfinder leader, a conference secretary, and a university professor.²⁰ The study revealed that women in the church are just as likely to be abused by their spouses as their counterparts who are not affiliated to any church. Probably, it could be a sign of godlessness among those who claim to be church members. The issue of domestic violence needs every individual's cooperation. Nothing should be concealed if help should come by. Marriage seems to be under attack, be it in religious or circular circles. Matope and Khau grieve that culture and

¹⁹ Longa, "Shocking Statistics on Gender-based Violence."

²⁰ Ackie, "The Paradox of Intimate Terrorism."

religion continue to disadvantage most women in Africa from enjoying universal human rights.²¹ However, Matope and Khau offer no solution to domestic violence challenges in religious and cultural circles. While this line of thinking is overstretched by some people with other ultra-motives, everyone's rights should be preserved including those of men.

To assume that there is a certain class of people completely exempted from domestic violence appears to be a deviation from reality. Michele Weldon reiterates that domestic violence knows no boundaries, affecting women and some men- who meet every descriptor of race, age, socioeconomic or educational status, sexual orientation, demography, geography, ideology, disability, or theology. Domestic violence is more common than breast cancer and left-handedness. Sometimes a batterer is the most charismatic man in the room; they are the lawyers, doctors, politicians, business titans, actors, celebrities, singers, and professional athletes.²² Those who are charming and outstanding in society are usually the unexpected perpetrators of domestic violence. As clearly outlined above, domestic violence is prevalent across the divide and its dominance affects every person in this world regardless of status. It is also a disruption of human justice that should be fought against by every person for the safety and gladness of everyone regardless of race, gender, economic, educational status, or religious affiliation. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity.

²¹ Matope and Khau, "Women Educators Narrative on Intimate Partner Violence."

²² Michele Weldon, "The Rich and Famous Are Not Immune to Domestic Violence Abuse," Cable News Network, Opinion, June 18, 2013, accessed 24 September 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/17/living/opinion-lawson-alleged-abuse/index.html>.

Causes of Domestic Violence

More often, domestic violence does not happen in vacuum. Several triggers punctuate, fan, and hatch this vice. These causes range from social to economic matters and if they were guarded against, most marriages could be transformed from bitterness to sweetness while relationships would be reinforced. These causes include the following: verbal abuse, financial issues, insecurity, poverty, infidelity, alcoholism, unnecessary demands, victims of the past, lack of appreciation, and failure to leave and cling.

Verbal Abuse

No abuse happens in a vacuum. Most domestic violence issues stem from verbal abuse. Patricia Evans outlines that verbal abuse is a kind of battering that doesn't leave evidence comparable to the bruises of physical battering. It can be painful, and recovery can take much longer.²³ Reinforcing verbal abuse, Justin and Lindsay Holcomb argue that emotional abuse is not always so easily identified. It's hard to pinpoint exactly what's wrong, and easier to minimize what is going on. It doesn't leave you bleeding or bruised. The neighbors can't hear it through the walls. But emotional abuse is no less destructive than physical abuse and it is no less wrong.²⁴ What writers seem to agree on is that verbal violence is problematic to deal with because there is no tangible witness to it. The person can be very different in public and at the same time very vicious in private. While outside, friends and relatives view the abuser as a good person, yet he is very brutal. The effects of verbal abuse are so devastating to its victim although they are invisible. The victim is

²³ Patricia Evans, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2010), 15.

²⁴ Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Is It My Faulty: Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 37.

psychologically wounded and internally bleeding. The surroundings are not aware of what is happening. Furthermore, the abuser usually denies the charge since the abuse takes place in secluded environments. Commenting on verbal abuse, Aisha Mirza reaffirms, “It is not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind”²⁵ Unknown to the public, close relatives, and acquaintances, these invisible traits of verbal abuse silently destroy life.

While nobody condones wife-beating, it is equally good to consider both sides of the same coin. Prudence calls for reasoning from cause to effect. At times one wonders how a man comes to beat his wife, yet the wife’s words might be the cause of the husband’s emotional abuse. Claudia Hammond observes that women use an average of 20,000 words a day, in comparison to a mere 7,000 words that men utter.²⁶ There could be a high probability of insulting one’s spouse consciously or unconsciously. Emerson Eggerichs remarks, “As a rule, women have learned to fight with words. They are masters of the art, and husbands can feel helpless before the on-slaughter.”²⁷ In this case, the victim ends up being the victimizer. At times domestic violence is initiated by poor communication.

The secretive nature of verbal abuse is quite a betrayal to the victim as it gradually becomes more intense over time. It also takes different forms and disguises itself more frequently. The ultimate result is the erection of a gulf between the abuser and the victim, yet no distance should be kept between spouses. Seeing things

²⁵ Aisha Mirza, “Because Domestic Violence...” accessed 24 September 2019, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/7824043.Aisha_Mirza#:~:text=Aisha%20Mirza%20Quotes&text=It%20is%20not%20the%20the,the%20scars%20on%20the%20mind.

²⁶ Claudia Hammond, “Prattle of Sexes: When It Comes to Conversation, Are Women More Likely to Be Bigger Talkers than Men?” 12 November 2013, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20131112-do-women-talk-more-than-men>.

²⁷ Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires and the Respect He Desperately Needs* (Brantwood, TN: Integrity Publishers 2004), 39.

differently does not mean that a husband is losing control and dominance over the wife. Rather, independent thinking enhances decision-making since issues are analyzed from different angles, and sound judgment is reinforced. Allowing each other to finish their statements and respond respectfully even when they see differently promotes healthy discussions. Meanwhile, disruptions and interruptions cultivate unhealthy communications and ultimately spoil conversation. Interpersonal skill impartation to spouses could enhance spousal interactions.

By all means, yelling at each other should be avoided among couples unless a house is on fire, and you are warning your spouse of the impending danger. Trying to understand what one is conveying is important to effective communication and relationship enhancement. Evans mourns that physical abuse is always preceded by verbal abuse.²⁸ Being mindful of how spouses converse is a sign of maturity that should be espoused by every couple. Verbal insults disrupt spousal harmony. In some of his finest utterances, Robert Fulghum observes that yelling at living things does tend to kill the spirit in them. Sticks and stones may break our bones, but words will break our hearts.²⁹ While the statement is true that yelling at people demotivates them, beating and stoning may break the bones, nonetheless, words indeed destroy an individual's personality. Incautious words do reduce the dignity of the affected spouse even to the level of starting to doubt one's perceptions because of the way the abuser counteracts her feelings. It also breeds an inferiority complex for the abused.

With respect, facts clearly stated should be acknowledged and not avoided but should be appreciated even if it is contrary to what one wants to hear. When the

²⁸ Evans, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, 15.

²⁹ Robert Fulghum, "Yelling at Living Things," accessed on 24 February 2019, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/22265-yelling-at-living-things-does-tend-to-kill-the-spirit>.

wife's reasoning capacity far outweighs the husband's, he tries to demonstrate his superiority as head of the family by beating his wife. Tuntufye Mwamwenda argues, "wife beating is also a way for a man to reassert his status as head of the family particularly when he is threatened by the wife's superior intellectual power."³⁰ It sounds illogical for a man to stamp authority on his spouse through brutality. The husband should never feel threatened by his wife's acumen since the two do not compete in running their marriage. They should rather complement each other and always bear in mind that constructive ideas need not be shunned but ought to be communicated in a respectful, non-threatening manner and should also be welcomed. The husband should ask himself, what is it that makes the woman submissive without aggression or cohesion? Reasserting one's status by beating a wife is a form of domestic violence.

Financial Issues

Financial issues are also a cause of domestic violence. Questions on how couples should use their hard-earned income, who should be responsible for all family financial obligations, or how relatives should be supported seem to be draining peace in married homes. In the words of Mwamwenda, "Money can also become a controversial issue. In the case of a housewife, she may feel that the husband is not providing her with enough money to meet the domestic means.... Couples may accuse each other of either overspending or being stingy."³¹ Disputes involving money issues can be the cause of domestic violence. Couples should understand that times have changed. Depending on a single income alone might not suffice for family

³⁰ Tuntufye S. Mwamwande, *Education Psychology: An African Perspective* (Durban, South Africa: Butterworth, 1996), 182.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 479.

financial obligations. These days the husband and wife contribute to the welfare of their family. While it is true that the husband might be giving insufficient funds for all domestic expenses, the issue of overspending cannot be ignored. At times, impulse buying overrides the budget and this sudden purchase of items without any pre-shopping intention becomes the basis of contention. Sometimes if the husband's income is too little for the family and the financial obligations overwhelm every cent, it also promotes discordance due to frustrations.

On the other hand, a wife might feel that she is not under obligation to use her money on family duties but spend everything on personal or selfish needs. The husband is left alone to meet all the family's financial necessities. This becomes unbearable on the part of the husband who might be frustrated about bearing all the family's financial burdens alone. Although every spouse is entitled to their money, there is a need to assist each other according to the family budget.

Another disgraceful scenario could be when the husband is domineering, dictating how every cent should be used. In some instances, the man does not allow his wife to be employed for him to control her through his financial muscle. The wife begs for money while the husband demands accountability for every cent spent. This kind of behavior is abusive and brings torment to the spouse. The wife also needs pocket money she uses on her own without accountability to the husband. The aspect of budgeting plays a pivotal role in solving financial challenges. Living within a couple's means boosts contentment and reduces unnecessary anxiety which might escalate to domestic violence. Solving financial problems can help solve marriage challenges too.

Insecurity

If the wife is more educated and remunerated better than the husband, it sometimes breeds an inferiority complex in the husband who in turn uses threats or beatings as a scapegoat for his deficiencies. Even those who are reputable in society might also be abusers. Does one wonder why husbands become abusers? Why do they batter their wives? Vandeman and Finley affirm that abusers are insecure people who consider anyone who crosses their path to be a personal threat.³² One wonders how a spouse could be a personal threat instead of a suitable helper. Those people with a sense of insecurity tend to resist any noble suggestion from their spouse. They usually become nagging or hot-tempered for no apparent reason even on an innocent oversight. This kind of compensatory behavior sounds retrogressive to marriage relationships.

The wife is not in any way a rival but is there to assist and advise as an equal partner for the good of their marriage. Any sign of an inferiority complex on the part of the husband does more harm in conflict management than good. A domineering spirit is not called for where love reigns. Success comes through spousal support, care, and understanding while accusations, dislikes, and quarrels breed failure. Couples should learn to support each other for the success of their marriage and their endeavors.

Competition

Husband and wife are not opponents in marriage and should by no means be competing against each other. Darien B. Cooper confesses that several wives have changed from competing with their husbands to the astonishment of their husbands.

³² Vandeman and Finley, *The Overcomers*, 35.

Cooper affirms “Several women have changed from competitor to partners much to the amazement of their husband. Man must take pride in what his wife does and stop “the blame game.”³³ When spouses begin to compete with each other they have lost the essence of marriage. Instead of cherishing the spirit of rivalry, spouses should learn to complement one another and celebrate their achievements together. The focus should shift from what one should get to what positive contribution one should bring to the relationship. Selfishness has bred most of the spousal challenges that have caused domestic violence in most families. When the husband finds happiness in meeting the needs of the wife and the wife finds amusement in meeting the happiness of her husband harmony, and peace are generated in this home. This removes competition between spouses.

Poverty

The absence of enough means to meet necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter remains a challenge in underdeveloped countries and Zimbabwe is no exception. Patra et al. bemoan that the link between violence and lack of economic resources and dependence is very evident; they are stuck in an abusive relationship.³⁴ What Patra et al. observe is quite valid in many poor societies. Most people take advantage of the poor and this misconduct is also experienced by spouses. It is pathetic that those who lack resources subscribe to their spouses not as a sign of loyalty but as a form of slavery. Drawing from Professor Kinoti of Nairobi University, Tokunboh Adeyemo notes that poverty is at the heart of all the important problems in Africa, be they social, spiritual, or moral. Africa’s poverty is expressed in

³³ Cooper, *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband*, 23.

³⁴ Patra et al., “Intimate Partner Violence,” 494-498.

five significant areas: hunger, low income, disease, dehumanization, and injustice.³⁵ These five poverty factors contribute immensely as causes of domestic violence. Most family instability stems from inadequate resources. Sheila Mahere, the Director of Musasa Project (an organization against gender-based violence in Harare) bemoans that the harsh economic atmosphere we are working under does give rise to additional stress on the family. Husbands are unemployed and spending the little bit of money that the woman earned on drinking or his girlfriend. The mother needs to use the money for healthcare or school fees and gets very upset. The husband will then vent his frustration on his wife because she is weak. These households become unbearable, and it is the woman who suffers most.³⁶ While a harsh economic environment adds stress to families, it should be the duty of every couple to set their priorities all right. Prudence should be exercised especially in the use of depleted resources. Sacrificing family resources for pleasure could be the worst thing a normal person could do. A man should learn to work for the family and appreciate the toils of the wife. Venting one's frustrations on the wife is unacceptable. It is not proper for a husband to find joy in the pain and tears of his wife. Poor spouses can live in harmony even in their poverty if love and respect are esteemed.

Quoting from Regis Mututu, Executive Director of Padare, a Harare Non-Governmental Organization whose mandate is to alter male behavior, Mahere states that a lot of men feel that once they pay the bride price, they have 100 percent control over their wives. This means controlling the woman's sexuality, earnings, and

³⁵ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa's Enigma and Leadership Solutions* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2009), 10.

³⁶ Sheila Mahere, "To Sleep with Anger: Domestic Violence and Rape Fuel Aids in Zimbabwe," August 16, 2021, accessed 14 November 2019, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/sleep-anger-domestic-violence-and-rape-fuel-aids-zimbabwe>.

reproductive health.³⁷ Payment of lobola does not mean that a wife's rights have been relinquished or she has become a subject of abuse by the husband. While lobola is a mere token of appreciation, man should learn to respect and honor his wife. Too much control might be an indication of a lack of love. This kind of behavior erodes innovation and motivation on the part of the abused spouse.

Poverty seems to negatively impact couples as it brings with it a lot of deficiencies and if couples fail to manage their crisis, they end up being frustrated and trapped in the net of squabbles and commotion. Theodora Ooms and Pamela Wilson argue that being poor or near-poor brings with it a host of factors: chronic shortages of money, accumulating debts, low levels of literacy, high rates of unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse, depression, and domestic violence, poor houses and unsafe neighborhoods.³⁸ Although scarcity is not the only source of domestic violence, the above observation seems to be prevalent in third-world countries like Zimbabwe; where inflation is ever on the rise and the unemployment rate has escalated to unbearable levels. It becomes difficult to live in such an environment even if one is very educated. While the essence of education is partly to reduce poverty through employment, nonetheless, education without a source of stable income leads to poverty. Chronic food insecurity and lack of access to health and education might negatively impact spouses living in poverty. In addition, if all these chronic shortages are not managed properly, there will always be mayhem in couples. Spouses will blame each other for basic shortages and inadequate resources.

³⁷ Mahere, "To Sleep with Anger."

³⁸ Theodora Ooms and Pamela Wilson, "The Challenges of Relationship and Marriage Education to Low-income Populations," *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Science* 53, no. 5 (2004): 440-447, accessed 26 April 2020, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2004.00052.x>.

Infidelity

Infidelity, or cheating is another marriage aberration that has negatively impacted spouses. By definition, infidelity is the act of being unfaithful to a spouse or other partner. It typically means engaging in sexual or romantic relations with a person other than one's significant other, breaking a commitment or promise in the act.³⁹ Infidelity comes off as another devastating cause of domestic violence. If a spouse discovers or suspects that the partner is cheating on him or her, there is bound to be an uproar. At times these suspicions are necessitated by jealousy. Mwamwenda posits "Jealousy seems to be a common phenomenon among married couples. The problem with jealousy is that it undermines both the trust and love on which a marriage relationship is based. The society holds that your wife or husband is exclusively yours and therefore is intimately unshareable."⁴⁰ The aspect of exclusivity in sexual intimacy in couples appears to be a genuine cause since this promotes faithfulness among couples and also curbs sexually transmitted diseases. Could this be the appropriate place for the phrase, "Love is jealousy?" People with jealousy easily succumb to domestic violence. Once they suspect that the spouse is cheating on them, they resort to domestic violence. Julian Melgosa affirms that the jealous individual often criticizes, scolds, insults and physically attacks the partner.⁴¹ Usually, ladies are very sensitive to the unusual movements of their husbands.

On the other hand, it appears love is not jealousy since jealousy is a sign of insecurity. However, couples should build trust in each other if love should flourish

³⁹ "Infidelity," accessed 14 November 2019, https://www.google.com/search?q=definition+of+infidelity&oq=Definition+of+infidelity&gs_lcrp.

⁴⁰ Mwamwande, *Education Psychology*, 479.

⁴¹ Julian Melgosa, *Positive Mind: A Practical Guide for Any Situation* (Madrid, Spain: Editorial Safeliz, 2014), 204.

between them and should abhor multiple partners. Where there is trust and respect, there is less suspicion. Nonetheless, some people do not care whether they obtain money through dignified means or not. Their quest for money may lead them to infidelity. Others can abuse other people's wives for sexual pleasure. At times promotion at work comes with sexual favors first. No wonder some spouses are accused of infidelity in the workplace. These accusations spark domestic violence between spouses. Integrity is an essential ingredient in spousal relationships. Spouses should remain faithful to each other no matter what.

Alcoholism/Drunkenness

Alcoholism is another reason why couples live in quarrels and tumult. Sara Markowitz confirm that most husbands beat their wives when they are drunk because they also abuse alcohol.⁴² The World Health Organization (WHO) affirms that approximately 55 percent of domestic abuse culprits were drinking alcohol before the assault.⁴³ Those who are under the influence of alcohol tend to be more vicious than when they are sober. The husband hides his evil treatment of the wife by blaming beer, yet it is a prearranged plan. Beer is used as a stimulant to gather the courage to exercise cruelty towards the spouse. On the other end, the family is deprived of the resources that are meant to benefit them all.

Some husbands cannot afford to buy food for the family, alleging that they do not have the money, yet they are always drunk. Others feel good buying beer for strangers when their families are victims of hunger. They cannot even pay for their

⁴² Sara Markowitz, "The Price of Alcohol, Wife Abuse, and Husband Abuse," *Southern Economic Journal* 67, no. 2 (2000): 279.

⁴³ Cooper Smith, "Alcohol and Domestic Abuse," last updated November 9, 2023, accessed 23 August 2022, <https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/alcohol/crimes/domestic-abuse/>.

children's educational expenses although they are always drunk. It comes as a shock how a father of a household could enjoy a life of drunkenness when the entire family is languishing in scarcity. Could this be misplaced priorities? Patra et al. bemoan that excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs has also been noted as a consistent factor incident of IPV.⁴⁴ Although it is admitted that alcohol consumption plays a significant role in instigating domestic violence, little is done to refrain dealers from providing such beverages. They continue to make money regardless of the negative impact alcohol brings in families. Dealers of alcohol and drugs perpetuate domestic violence rather than abolishing it. More should be done to help beer-drinking spouses prioritize their families over pleasure.

Unnecessary Demands

Abusers at times clamor for unnecessary demands. They claim exclusive attention, and when the spouse is overwhelmed, they do not assist but rather insult and assault her. These kinds of husbands are always suspicious of any move the wife takes and enjoy unnecessary restrictions. They lack appreciation for every good the spouse does and are not sensitive to the feelings of others. Vandeman and Finley state, "Most wounded wives suffer in silence, hoping someday the abuser will stop. But it doesn't."⁴⁵ The assumption that the abuser will change from nowhere is unfounded. Issues of this nature must be exposed if transformation should occur. The victim must be bold enough to volunteer information to people who can assist even if it means informing law enforcement agents. The abuser keeps on taking advantage of the wife's silence and continues to persist in his brutal acts. It calls for bravery on the part

⁴⁴ Patra et al., "Intimate Partner Violence," 494-498.

⁴⁵ Vandeman and Finley, *The Overcomers*, 34.

of the victim to break the silence and claim her freedom. Otherwise, this challenge may persist continuously without remedy.

Victims of the Past

People have different backgrounds and experiences that either affect them positively or negatively in daily life. Some spouses are victims of their past. They have been grossly mistreated at one point and they now think it is their right to ill-treat others too. Some spouses come from abused homes. Joseph Lasong et al. remark that husbands who are from abusive homes, thus ever experienced their fathers beating their mothers stand a higher risk of domestic violence.⁴⁶ While copying is a skill, it should only be applauded for what is good and noble. Others have learned great lessons in adversity and have extracted good morals from bad experiences. Nonetheless, some people do not care that they are abusing their loved ones although they grew up hating such kind of treatment. Sympathy and empathy seem to have been erased from their conscience. Obtaining satisfaction through spousal agony and tears should not be entertained in marriage. A vengeful spirit should never be cherished since it denigrates love relations.

Unnecessary Restrictions

Unnecessary restrictions are leveled against the spouse. The abuser dictates to the wife whom she should communicate with and whose phone calls to attend to. Any violation of these restrictions is bound to trigger domestic violence. It appears that the wife is in prison rather than in marriage. The wife is not in any way supposed to be a slave. She is a free moral being whose rights and liberty should not be infringed.

⁴⁶ Joseph Lasong et al., “Domestic Violence among Married Women of Productive Age in Zimbabwe: A Cross-sectional Study,” *BMC Public Health* 20, no. 1 (2020): 354, accessed 23 August 2022, <https://bmcpublikealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-8447-9>.

Furthermore, as an equal partner in marriage, no one should undermine her entitlements.

Lack of Spousal Appreciation

Recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of a spouse are commendable sources of inspiration among spouses. Appreciating one another as a couple strengthens relationships and motivates one to do more. On the contrary, an unappreciative gesture demoralizes the individual who might end up giving minimum or no support at all. Some men find it difficult to extend a gesture of appreciation to their wives. They only wait to vent their anger on them when relish is burnt or when they feel that food is not palatable. This kind of behavior traumatizes a defenseless wife. When a husband fails to give complementary remarks on what is good, the wife is left in a dilemma of whether she has done well or not. Samuel Waje Kanhiyop mourns that a husband shows no appreciation for his wife and instead makes her fear his physical violence and his humiliation of her in public and before the family. Violent husbands control their wives' movements, and what they can and cannot do.⁴⁷ This level of torture affects the mind of the victim and erases enthusiasm and esteem. The fact that all the wife's movements are approved and monitored by the husband leaves the wife in a lonesome life. How does she feel being humiliated in public or in front of family members? What kind of society will be established if domestic violence is perpetuated? This social evil should be condemned outright for the preservation and future of the family unit and society.

⁴⁷ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Ethics* (Nairobi, Kenya: World Alive Publishers, 2008), 244.

Failure to Leave and Cling

The issue of leaving one's parents and relatives and clinging to one's spouse is vital in marriage establishment. However, if spouses ignore this step, unnecessary animosity is ignited which may spill into domestic violence. For instance, when spouses enter into a marriage relationship with a negative worldview of their upbringing unresolved conflicts emerge as no one desires to meet halfway. Allowing external forces to dictate every pace may create unresolved conflicts which may ultimately end in domestic violence. Marriages that are run by the in-laws rarely last. Leaving and clinging allows the husband and wife to begin their marriage with minimum interference. This allows the couple to bond and to do their things independently of their parents.

Having discussed domestic violence and witnessed how it affects both the affluent and the underprivileged, well-informed, and ignorant, it now calls for united efforts from everyone to fight against this vice. Most problems seem to emanate from unhealthy communications between husband and wife, yet relationships should be built on effective conversations without threats or trivializing issues. Undermining each other destroys trust, love, and openness. It creates a gulf that might be difficult to fill when the relationship gets strained. Spouses should not take advantage of each other's patience and meekness and manipulate each other. Mutual respect reinforces togetherness, sympathy, and empathy are important ingredients for a happy home. If couples could embrace this notion peace and harmony would punctuate every marriage.

The Implication and Impact of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence's consequences and effects are more devastating than the fantasized good anticipated by the abuser. In the words of Joseph Lasong et al., domestic violence does not only violate women's fundamental human rights, but it also undermines them from achieving their fullest potential around the world.⁴⁸ The fact that domestic violence victims are under strict restrictions implies that their potential is not maximized. This retrogressive behavior destroys talent, society, the nation, and the victim's future.

Domestic violence negatively impacts its victims. The wife lives as though she is in prison with so many restrictions around her. She rarely exercises her rights since she is always under her husband's surveillance. As a result, she lives under traumatic conditions unknown to her friends, relatives, or neighbors. The victim and children may experience constant insecurity.

Domestic violence divides family members. The abuser and the abused both have sympathizers. In such a family, children are bound to take sides depending on who their favorite is between mom and dad. Family unity is threatened and consequently dismantled. There are also increased occurrences of misery, nervousness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-destruction. Increased risk of heart ailment and untimely death also impact heavily on domestic violence victims. Domestic violence disturbs the budget of the nation in several ways which includes costs of police, hospital and health services, legal costs, and social services.⁴⁹ It is indeed a risk to all forms of human progress. Tom Tom and Maxwell Constantine

⁴⁸ Lasong et al., "Domestic Violence among Married Women of Productive Age in Zimbabwe."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Chando state that domestic violence extinguishes human life and connections all over the world. It affects all nationalities, ethnic groups, and cults across the entire social strata, undermines social structures, hinders economic development, increases impoverishment, and is a burden unswervingly concerned as well as for national budgets.⁵⁰ Spousal viciousness impacts negatively on relationships. It brings with it misery and despondency to every family member. Since domestic violence brings with it all kinds of ills that rob couples and society of love, peace, and harmony, every spouse should do everything within their power to eradicate this vice.

Summary

Domestic violence is such a societal ill that has disrupted spousal harmony across the globe. While marriage is meant to provide couples with deep and satisfying emotional experiences, this has regrettably been replaced by brutality, impatience, disrespect, and self-centeredness. Such intimate terrorism dries love that should permeate and sustain marriage relations. Attempting to control a spouse's thoughts, beliefs or behavior negates individual freedom of choice. Hence the intentional behavior of the abuser to cause harm or fear to the spouse is unwarranted.

For effective, harmonious marriage to occur, spouses need couple enrichment seminars that rejuvenate love, respect, and commitment. Appropriate resources should be channeled toward the welfare of the family. Hence, every spouse should meaningfully contribute to the happiness and success of their marriage.

⁵⁰ Tom Tom and Maxwell C. C. Musingafi, "Domestic Violence in Urban Areas in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Glen Norah (Harare)," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2021): 45, accessed 23 August 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256113936_DOMESTIC_VIOLENCE_IN_URBAN_AREAS_IN_ZIMBABWE_A_CASE_STUDY_OF_GLEN_NORAH_HARARE.

Punitive measures do not necessarily transform evil tendencies hidden in human hearts. Incarceration alone appears inadequate to address domestic violence issues. People should be inducted on healthier marriage living. Appropriate societal inductions should be carried out regularly without intimidation.

Domestic violence does not segregate people on professional, educational, racial, or economic status but affects the affluent and the impoverished, the accomplished and the unschooled. It knows no gender or race. Types of domestic violence include physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. Physical violence seems to be prevalent in Mabvuku Community where husbands resort to wife beating when they fail to resolve conflicts. Its causes include the following: verbal abuse, financial issues, insecurity, poverty, infidelity, victims of the past, unnecessary demands, and lack of appreciation.

Couples should not be competing but rather complement each other. They should not try to instill loyalty by beating each other. Constructive ideas should be welcomed. On issues of domestic violence, silence is never golden. To assume that the abuser will ultimately change from nowhere is a real fantasy. It calls for courage on the part of the victim to break the silence and claim her freedom.

Spousal viciousness not only violates women's essential entitlements but also prevents them from attaining their maximum potential. Its victims live under traumatic conditions unknown to friends, relatives, or neighbors. Domestic violence divides family members, destroys family unity, and brings with it several ailments. Could there be an intervention that would counteract domestic violence and bring spousal harmony in marriage? The ensuing chapter discusses a description of research initiatives to formulate an intervention strategy against domestic violence.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH INITIATIVE

This study aimed to identify spouses who were experiencing domestic violence in Mabvuku Community. Thereafter, a strategy for assisting domestic violence victims and victimizers was developed for both the abused and the abuser. The current situation in Zimbabwe from a social economic, political, and religious was also covered in this section. An appreciation of the various challenges the couple faces enhanced one's knowledge of domestic violence and the causes that affected harmony in Mabvuku Community couples. The church's existence and office in Mabvuku created a point of departure for the study. The study procedure followed the reflection of the ministry framework. The application of the research and intervention process was vindicated by the facts collected from the discoveries.

Ministry Context

This section gives a background of Zimbabwe. Understanding the context enables one to appreciate the account behind domestic violence among couples.

Geographical Background of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is part of the southern countries in Africa. As a landlocked nation, it borders with four countries: Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east, Botswana to the west, and South Africa to the south. It is situated between two big rivers, the mighty Zambezi to the north and the Limpopo to the south.

The capital city of Zimbabwe is Harare located northeast of the country in Mashonaland province. The nature of the suburbs falls into two divisions. Those made for the poor during the colonial era are called townships and those for the affluent, the avenues, and the brooks. The townships are densely populated by those who come from rural areas in search of work.

Climatic Situation

Zimbabwean climate has acutely changed probably due to the global effects. The nation used to receive adequate rainfall, but the situation has drastically changed. For more than a decade the country has been experiencing continuous famine. All four seasons, summer, autumn winter, and spring have been affected by climate change adversely affecting its farming and tourism programs. Because of these variations in weather conditions, and political and economic disputes in the past two decades, the country is struggling to bring back its vanished image. Once the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe is on the brink of man-made starvation.¹ One wonders if the nation will be able to restore its lost glory soon.

Zimbabwe's Economic Structure

Both agriculture and mining are the backbones of the Zimbabwean economy. Gold, chrome, platinum, diamond, nickel, and iron ore are some of the major minerals mined in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the Zimbabwean economy has collapsed due to severe drought caused by the change in rainfall pattern, and national sanctions imposed by the western giants because of the sour relationship with the government's land redistribution reform executed in 2000. Industries have shut down. The

¹ United Nations, "Once the Breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe Now on Brink of Man-made Starvation, UN Rights Expert Warns," accessed 23 June 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/11/once-breadbasket-africa-zimbabwe-now-brink-man-made-starvation-un-rights>.

unemployment rate stands at 95%.² Hyperinflation continues to skyrocket. People are living in dire need. So many university graduates are roaming in the streets. The situation has fanned corruption, thuggery, and prostitution, which are now at an alarming level. Marriages are also vulnerable due to domestic violence hence family sustainability challenges have become insurmountable.

Family

A family is an important unit in society. It is the fundamental base of a community. People in Mabvuku uphold the heterosexual relationship. Monogamous marriages are mostly upheld in Mabvuku. However, polygamy is acceptable in some parts of the region to those who are married under customary law. Although there are different forms of families which include husband and wife, husband, wife, and children, mother and children or father and children; and orphaned children, husband, and wife remain the fundamental pillars of the marriage base. The husband used to be regarded as the breadwinner while the wife took care of the children. Boys were exposed to hard labor as part of training while girls were trained in domestic chores.³ This has since been abolished with the emergency of equal rights that promote gender equality in every workplace.

According to Granny Nyarugwe, parents played a crucial role in the upbringing of their children, and they used to be their principal tutors. They were concerned about the character-building of their children and created ample time for interaction. Moreover, they had uncles and aunts to instill values in children and give counsel to the grown-ups and those who were about to be married. They would also

² Staff Reporter, “Zimbabwe Unemployment Skyrockets.”

³ Granny Elizabeth Nyarugwe, retired citizen, interview by the author, Harare, 25 July 2018.

be involved in resolving spousal conflicts.⁴ Aunts and uncles played a major role in resolving seemingly irreconcilable issues.

Relationships are held dear in families. Family members sacrifice talent, time, and other resources for the well-being of their families and relatives since according to their cultural values, relationships supersede possessions. At times this creates conflicts as people differ to what extent help should be offered to either the husband or the wife's relatives. This issue sometimes blows out of proportion when resources are depleted or inadequate thereby straining the relationship between married couples

Demographics of Mabvuku Community

Mabvuku Community is one of the oldest and overpopulated suburbs in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. This suburb lies 15km east of the central business district. There are 6,259⁵ housing units with a population of 44,051.⁶

Cultural Beliefs

Mabvuku is a multicultural community. A variety of ethnic groups reside in this densely populated township. The native people of Mabvuku originate from mainly the Shona royal families of Chishawasha of the Soko Mbire clan.⁷ This group of people is traditional peasant farmers. The Mabvuku community also contains people of Malawian and Asian origin. The main religious groups in this area include Christianity, Islam, and African Tradition. The Mabvuku people have a strong regard for family. When a man gets married, the wife belongs to the whole clan. The family

⁴ Nyarugwe, interview.

⁵ Tavonezvi, interview.

⁶ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, *Zimbabwe Population Census 2012*, 3.

⁷ Chief Mbire, Traditional Chief of Mabvuku, interview by the author, Mabvuku, 28 August 2018.

members are the ones who approve or disapprove of her acceptance. His relatives have the power to reproof or punish her if she does wrong. She is not a key player in family decision-making meetings. Usually, she is not invited to those important meetings. Her husband gives her updates on family decisions solely for execution. Cultural prescriptions for manhood should be scrutinized lest they remain the source of abuse.

Having livestock is regarded as a symbol of status. An individual who possesses such beasts is regarded as rich in society. However, the status could decline if one loses the livestock. Mabvuku people employ various cultural beliefs that are considered necessary for the acquisition of wealth. Some people in Mabvuku consult with n'angas (witch doctors) and spirit mediums in search of fortune. They believe that wealth could be multiplied by using charms from fortune-tellers and witch doctors.

Another cultural element that appears to be strong is that of informing and requesting the “living dead” that a family member is going to look for employment or getting married. The “living dead” are appeased by paying a certain amount of money. They also believe that a family member should not spend their first salary before buying clothes or blankets for their parents. Giving is prompted by the quest to become richer in the future. Others do give to invoke the spirits to sustain their marriage. If these beliefs are not adhered to, misfortunes or upheavals are anticipated in couples. Some do believe that domestic violence might be a sign of ancestral displeasure.

Socio-economic Status

Both agriculture and mining are the backbones of the Zimbabwean economy. Crop farming and animal husbandry contribute much to the nation's economy. Gold,

chrome, platinum, diamond, nickel, and iron ore are some of the major minerals mined in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the Zimbabwean economy collapsed due to severe drought caused by changes in rainfall patterns, and national sanctions imposed by the Western giants because of sour relations with the government's land redistribution reforms executed in 2000. Industries have shut down. The unemployment rate stands at 95%.⁸ Hyperinflation skyrocketed. People are living in abject poverty. So many university graduates roam the streets. On the other hand, corruption, thuggery, promiscuity, and addiction have become uncontrollable. Unfaithfulness in workplaces is rampant. Marriages are vulnerable as family sustainability challenges become insurmountable.

Religious Setting

Mabvuku has several different denominations in and around the community. These include Roman Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Dutch Reformed, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Indigenous Apostolic churches. Islam and Hinduism are also gaining a grip in Mabvuku. Because of the economic crisis, people visit these religious centers of influence to seek divine healing, blessings, and protection. However, some churches have become business institutions rather than centers of refuge. Pentecostalism has taken the community by storm with its prosperity gospel. These self-professed prophets have reaped congregants' hard earnings as seed money. It is unbelievable that recently a meal cob was being sold for ten United States dollars by the so-called self-styled prophet of God. Unplanned giving is another cause of conflict among couples.

⁸ Staff Reporter, "Zimbabwe Unemployment Skyrockets."

African tradition relates to the local people's beliefs that are passed on to the next generation through oral methods rather than scriptural.⁹ These beliefs entail belief in spirits, the use of magic, and veneration of the dead. They have the notion that the dead are not completely dead but are 'living dead. They believe that these dead people have the power to bless or curse the living. They also teach that marriage, employment, protection, and wealth come as a result of appeased spirits.

Although Christians constitute a significant number in Mabvuku, most people believe much in Spiritism. They practice dual allegiance. When they encounter challenges, they revert to spirit mediums and witchcraft thereby becoming syncretistic. The general populace believes in animism. They attach every misfortune to ancestral spirits' displeasure, which in their belief, should be appeased by beer and the slaughtering of animals. Some surrender their wives or children to evil spirits as a way of buying favors from them to be rich, to get employment, or to get married.

When a marriage breaks, it is attributed to the disgruntlement of ancestral spirits though it could be the spouses' failure to resolve conflicts. The inability to be married in time is interpreted as a spiritual problem.

Education

Zimbabwean education is two-dimensional. It is comprised of formal and informal forms of education. The formal aspect includes schools, colleges, and universities. Informal education is inculcated in homes, churches, and societal gatherings. Some forms of informal education are sporadic. Elderly people have a

⁹Valentine U. Iheanacho, "The Significance of African Oral Tradition in the Making of African Christianity," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (2021): a6819, accessed 25 April 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6819>.

responsibility to educate, reproof, or punish the perpetrator. Informal education tends to be superior to formal one, especially in religion.

Since independence, the government introduced education for all, for the young and old alike both in rural and urban areas. Several educational structures have been constructed. Primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities have been expanded and new ones were constructed too. Early centers were also introduced. According to the Country Leads, Zimbabwe had the topmost literacy rate in Africa which stood at 92%.¹⁰ Even when a person is academically highly qualified, informal education seems to be regarded more superior to formal education, especially in issues that deal with belief systems in death, marriage, misfortune, and illness. They quickly revert to traditional ways of solving problems. Every challenge is attributed to spiritualism.

Food

The people of Mabvuku's staple food like all Zimbabweans includes sadza (cornmeal), rice, and bread. All these can be served in the relish of one's choice. Due to inadequate rains and a shortage of money, many people are languishing in hunger. Decent meals are rare in many households. Poverty and hunger tend to fan disharmony, disunity, and domestic violence among couples where the basics for a living are scarcely met. Family fragmentation is usually inevitable as they pursue greener pastures in other countries. Distant marriages are difficult to manage as these couples do not travel together.

¹⁰ Kitsepile Nyathi, "Zimbabwe: Country Leads in Africa Literacy Race," July 14, 2010, accessed 24 September 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201007150032.html>.

Entertainment

Entertainment in Mabvuku comes in different forms. Most people love to watch soccer, especially on weekends. Others love to watch television movies and dramas while others love listening to music. On the other hand, some desire to relax in parks or gardens. Internet access has exposed others to movies and pornography. Others resort to beer drinking as a solution to subdue economic pressure. However, this creates another problem for the married. Coming home drunk when there is no food on the table or when school fees are not paid breeds quarrels. Families end up in heated arguments that may erupt into domestic violence.

Technology and Domestic Violence

Due to technological advancement, the world has become a global village in terms of communication. People are exposed to mobile phones, the internet, Facebook, Skype, and Twitter for easy communication. While these means of communication have made life easier, others can afford to talk to an individual far away, failing to converse with a spouse under the same roof. This also creates suspicion as to whom their spouses are conversing with. The result is unnecessary quarrels and fights. Technology is also often misused by abusers to harass, threaten, coerce, monitor, exploit, and violate their victims.¹¹ This amounts to digital technological violence. It involves the use of technologies such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, stalk, or intimidate a partner.¹² This is termed cyberbullying.

¹¹ Kimberly Jacobs, "Understanding the Impact of Technology on Domestic Violence," accessed 24 September 2018, <https://womenwhocode.com/blog/understanding-the-impact-of-technology-on-domestic-violence>.

¹² Ibid.

The History of Mabvuku Seventh-day Adventist Church

Mabvuku Church is situated in Mabvuku Community. The congregation was established in 1971,¹³ according to the narration by a church member. At its initial stage, the church was once vibrant. Various approaches were implored towards accessing the gospel to the community. When Mabvuku Church was flourishing, she managed to plant eight more churches namely Old Mabvuku, Mabvuku South, Mabvuku North, Chikurubi, Circle Cement, Support Unit, Manresa, and Tafara Main. Whereas some of the church's evangelistic techniques yielded results back then, old strategies seemed to be outdated for effective evangelism in this present era. Although Mabvuku Church is one of the oldest churches in Harare, its total membership is 200¹⁴ and has been stagnant for a while.

Challenges of Mabvuku Seventh-day Adventist Church

Mabvuku Adventist Church did not have a counseling venue for its community. Couples who got involved in heated arguments had no one to assist in resolving their conflicts through counseling. Domestic violence occurred among both the church and unchurched couples.

Moreover, a sense of mission seemed to be declining as the members were no longer passionate about seeking souls for Christ. The church appeared to be indifferent although there were so many unchurched people within the community. Meanwhile, they baptized less than five people per year. Yet there was great potential

¹³ Solo Siriro, Mabvuku Church member, interview by the author, Harare, 17 October 2019.

¹⁴ Chipso Sauti, Mabvuku Church Clerk, interview by the author, Harare, 17 October 2019.

if the church could change its evangelism strategy and explore family life enhancement plans as part of community need-based programs.

Community Outreach

The church thrived on outdoor big tent evangelism. Long ago this strategy used to attract so many people but with the change of time, tent meetings no longer appealed to this busy generation. These big tent meetings seemed to be chief contributors to the loss of new members as they were only linked to the invited preacher with no relationship established with local church members who appeared as spectators in the mission. Ronald Sider bemoans that love for God and neighbor, a commitment to reaching out beyond the walls of the church, spiritual and relational vitality within the congregation, a visionary leadership team, mission-centered organizational practices, and ministry partnerships are key to a church that desires to accomplish its Biblical task of loving its community in wholeness.¹⁵ Mabvuku Church seemed to have ignored some critical community needy-based programs. Yet the church needed to care for families and demonstrate to its community how important and amiable it is when couples dwell together in harmony (Ps 133:1).

Mabvuku Seventh-day Adventist Church Plateau

Although Mabvuku Church worked hard after its establishment and planted eight churches, the spirit of arrival seemed to have overwhelmed the church members. They have since ceased to be steadfast in their mission. They have also neglected community challenges, and this has dwindled their societal relevance and influence.

¹⁵ Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches that Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 15.

This ultimately resulted in the loss of members. By neglecting the mission, the church has lost its server and could not link to the community. Yet, couples as disciples of Jesus, must demonstrate the truth of what they believe to those around them, not just in words but in action

Mabvuku Church Financial Record

No financial record was presented to the researcher. Nonetheless, the church owes the community its services especially on family life issues because of rampant domestic violence.

Ministry Activities at Mabvuku Seventh-day Adventist Church

The church was accustomed to the traditional method of evangelism where they pitched a big tent expecting people to flock in, in numbers. However, with the change of times, the traditional method no longer sustained the mission. Not so many different activities were lined up for the community to appreciate the church's presence in Mabvuku besides street cleaning and sporadic supplying of foodstuff to inmates at Chikurubi Maximum Prison. Allen Platt observes that when we start to serve our communities, we have a far greater link to its people than when we come out preaching the gospel only. We have to earn the right to speak to people, especially when we are asking them to change their lives.¹⁶ The lack of family life enrichment programs affected couples, both in church and outside church. Access to conflict resolution programs and other empowering couples' initiatives that reinforced relationships and reduced domestic violence between spouses was minimal. Yet, if

¹⁶ Allen Platt, *City Changers: Being the Presence of Christ in Your Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Publishers, 2017), 226.

religion is to influence society, it must first influence the home circle.¹⁷ Platt emphasizes “To embrace God’s mission is to offer our communities the love, wisdom, respect, and service they so desperately need.”¹⁸ It is from this perspective that this research initiated an intervention plan to address the situation.

Pastoral Leadership

Although Mabvuku Church witnessed a membership deterioration, there were reflections of noble pastoral guidance that kept the church in existence. The resident pastor and the church members played a key role in assisting the research team.

Methods and Strategy Design

This section introduced and outlined the research design for the project. It explains why qualitative research methods were appropriate for the study. Moreover, it presented the population and justified the appropriateness of purposive sampling. Open-ended interview questions, a focus group, and observation were regarded as the most appropriate for effective data collection. Data collection considered pretesting its use and collected data outlining. The intervention strategy consideration, development, and presentation were vital parts of the chapter. Ethical applications in data collection before developing the strategy constituted an important part of the procedure.

The Type of Research

The phenomenological study was classified under the qualitative research methods design. The researcher used the descriptive type of phenomenology.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1952), 384.

¹⁸ Platt, *City Changers*, 29.

Qualitative research was allowable as it sought to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions.¹⁹ As stated by Julius Omona, phenomenology is the study of "phenomena": the appearance of things or things as they appear in our experience, or ways we experience things, thus the meaning of things have in our experiences.²⁰ The objective aimed at discovering the respondents' experiences, and how they made sense of these experiences.²¹ As a result, achieving a harmonious living together with couples in this study could not have succeeded without appealing to the experiences, attitudes, and feelings of the very subjects.

Rationale for the Research Method

This research study sought to understand the challenges and bases of domestic violence among couples in Mabvuku and considered an intervention that could help couples live in harmony. Hence the choice of the qualitative method. Direct interaction with the community was initiated through focus groups. Since qualitative research entails Focus group discussions, this could be a relevant technique to consider. Furthermore, the qualitative method allowed comprehensive interviews using open-ended questions and follow-up queries for clarity purposes. This method allowed the researcher to observe participants in action.

Appropriateness of the Study

Since the qualitative method deals with people's daily experiences in life, both one-on-one and collective interaction approaches with couples in domestic violence, the researcher assumed it as the best method for collecting accurate data. John

¹⁹ Pathak, Jena, and Kalra, "Qualitative Research," 192.

²⁰ Omona, "Sampling in Qualitative Research," 171.

²¹ Ibid.

Creswell defines qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem.²² In this case, domestic violence was the painstaking issue. This involved direct interaction with respondents. The data collected informed the intervention and an assessment of the success or failure of the program was carried out. The evaluation followed the intervention.

The Research Study Location

Mabvuku Community was the area of study because of the high incidences of domestic violence among couples. These couples had serious challenges in conflict resolution. According to Mabvuku Police Inspector John Chimuti, “cases of domestic violence ranged from 10-12 per week.”²³ The place was accessible to the researcher and economically favorable for the participants who played a pivotal role in assisting the research team.

Population

A population referred to the entire group that constituted the focus of the researcher’s interest and intended to conclude about. A specified population assisted the study in meeting the standard. According to Murphy, without a clear target population, resources will likely be wasted. Moreover, a lack of clarity in the population definition leads to misunderstanding and dissatisfaction among survey participants.²⁴ Couples in Mabvuku experiencing domestic violence comprised the population targeted in this study. Precisely, the researcher targeted victims and

²² Creswell, *Research Design*, 4.

²³ Chimuti, interview.

²⁴ Murphy, *Population Definition for Comparative Surveys in Education*, 6.

victimizers of domestic violence within the Mabvuku Community. The researcher was cognizant of the significance of the community and the church in providing much pertinent data for the attainment of the study.

Sample Population

A sample relates to a set of components drawn from a considerable population. From a scholarly perspective, sampling refers to selecting a subset of items from a defined population for inclusion in a study.²⁵ The population target in this research constituted couples experiencing domestic violence in the Mabvuku community. According to Jeff Woods, those persons who could provide “the richest content.”²⁶ The researcher then selected three samples from the population. These samples comprised reputable church members who were part of the focus group, domestic violence victims, and abusers or victimizers of domestic violence.

The Criterion for Sampling Procedures and Selection

A purposive sample technique was administered in this study. This procedure was relevant as the formula involved people who had an awareness of the situation and met the criteria and attributes that are essential to the research.²⁷ An appropriate principle guided the selection process. In this context, the researcher preferred the chain sampling principle.

Chain sampling identifies or selects individuals with interest. The first selected person or group then leads and connects to the next couple, or group of people to

²⁵ Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, “Sampling in Qualitative Research,” 41.

²⁶ C. Jeff Woods, *Designing Religious Research Studies: From Passion to Procedure* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 90.

²⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 83.

interact with. Sensing affirms that in chain sampling the people you interview first give you leads and connections about who, to ask next.²⁸ With the assistance of the focus group and couples at Mabvuku Adventist Church, the first eleven couples experiencing domestic violence voluntarily enrolled themselves. These people led and connected the researcher to other couples encountering domestic violence. In this framework, other couples kept on leading the research team, and 30 more people experiencing domestic violence joined the first group. The researcher worked with three samples, which comprised church members, domestic violence victims, and domestic violence victimizers.

Four focus group guide questions comprised the interview questions for the targeted group. Open-ended questions accorded respondents freedom of expression, and the researcher had the latitude of making follow-up questions for further clarity. Recognizing the sensitivity of domestic violence matters, the researcher co-opted the district pastor and the head elder as research team members to preserve confidentiality. The researcher first gathered data from the focus group and later more information from domestic violence victims and victimizers using twelve guided open-ended questions. (See Appendix B). The district pastor and the first elder assisted the researcher in administering questions and collecting and analyzing data. An iPad recorded and captured data after getting permission from the focus group and respondents. Information documentation ensued during discussions. Analysis, comparison, and contrasting of data necessitated its accuracy purpose in data capturing. The respondents got more time allocation during and after focus group discussions. The researcher found it beneficial to interact with participants because

²⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 84.

the process helped to discover and collect relevant data for research. This also assisted in developing a mutual relationship with the concerned parties.

Data Collection

The data collection acted as the mainstay of the study since findings, conclusions, and recommendations were supposed to be the anchor of sound data collection. The researcher decided to choose suitable instruments for data collection to ensure the study's reasonableness without which the whole research process would suffer. The use of incorrect instruments would result in misleading information, misconstrued data, and ridiculous conclusions and recommendations. Pretesting of instruments, data collection procedures used, and ethical matters considered laid the foundation for compelling data gathering.

Data Collection Instruments

Although numerous data collection instruments are accessible in qualitative research, a focus group, open-ended interviews, and observations were regarded as most appropriate for this research. The focus group assisted in mobilizing individuals who would attend the Happy Home program and later involved in recruiting domestic violence victims. Interviews played a major role in data collection. Open-ended interviews served best for their inherent benefits for effective qualitative research implementation.

The open interview guide as shown in Table 2 was the preferred instrument in this study. The interview guide had four inquiries projected to elicit the views and opinions of the participants. The use of open-ended interview questions gave the interviewer more freedom to modify the wording and order of questions. This made open-ended interviews the best collection instrument for the study. Since interview

questions were open-ended, they permitted respondents freedom to express their views freely.

Table 2. Interview Guide for the Focus Group

No.	Question
1	In your opinion, How would you define domestic violence? Give examples and causes.
2	How would you analyze domestic violence among Christians and non-Christian in your community?
3	What justification would warrant spousal beating on following offenses: Burning food, arguing in discussions, going out without informing a spouse, or refusing sexual intercourse?
4	What role could the church play in reducing domestic violence?

As the researcher was conducting the interviews, it was vital to audio record the interviews to preserve the responses and not lose important data. The recording was key to maintaining dialogue. The researcher used an iPad to capture the interviews after receiving consent from the interviewees. The interview-recording transcription followed in preparation for data analysis.

Table 3 below provides the characteristics of the interview respondents namely focus group, domestic violence victims, and domestic violence victimizers.

Table 3. Characteristics of the Interview Respondents

Participants Category	Number of Participants
Focus group	16
Domestic violence victims	15
Domestic violence victimizers	10

Pretesting of Instruments

The initial data collection instrument went under scrutiny, refinement, and improvement before the collection of data from the respondents. This was done through the pretesting process. Pretesting served to identify any potential errors that would affect the credibility of the study. Pretesting ensured the respondents' interpretation or understanding of questions as intended. Moreover, the questions were open-ended.

Three respondents, a couple from the focus group, a domestic violence victim, and a domestic violent victimizer pretested the instrument on 30 November 2019. After the pretesting, the respondents gave feedback. They all appreciated the relevance of the study with a few adjustments on word phrasing in question two. After correcting question two, the research questions were ready for use as open-ended interview guide questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics played a major role in this research. Upholding moral principles that govern ethical research was quite important to ensure confidentiality on the part of the respondents' contributions. Respect, justice, academic freedom, legitimacy, consent, and ethical clearance were the basis of academic morals. The research participants had the right to exercise their will and power of choice as a sign of respect. Adequate information was given to the respondents by explaining the study and choosing whether to participate. The researcher regarded all responses as valuable to the study.

First Orientation of the Research Team

First meeting. The orientation of the research team was vital for the commencement of the research program since the induction would give efficiency and

effectiveness to the research team. On 24 June 2020 preparation meeting was held at Mabvuku Adventist Church. The meeting began at 10:00 a.m. and finished at noon. The researcher met with the local church pastor and the first elder to discuss the importance of the research topic, share the vision, and envision how the program would run. The pastor and the elder welcomed the program and promised to give it full support. They also agreed to participate as part of the exploration team. Toward the end of the meeting, the pastor was requested to convene a church board meeting and recommend 8 reputable couples who would comprise the focus group. The meeting was closed by a word of prayer from the local church pastor.

Second meeting. The second meeting scheduled for 10 July 2020 at 2 p.m. began on time. The research team met with the focus group and the church board members to induct them into the research program, its vision, and its thrust. The meeting lasted two hours as people took turns to appreciate the relevance of the study and sought further clarification in areas they had not understood. The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m. after a prayer from the head elder.

Third meeting. The focus group assembled on 15 July 2020 at 10 am at Mabvuku Church where some further training on how to recruit respondents was done. Interacting with respondents was vital since qualitative research requires that data collection be done at a site where participants experience the challenge under study. The investigator operated with 8 couples led by the Mabvuku Adventist Church family life director. These couples were recommended by Mabvuku Adventist Church through a board meeting. This team worked as a focus group intended to mobilize other couples to attend the Happy Home program and later recruit couples experiencing domestic violence.

The focus group team members were competent in their assignment. They were chosen because of their maturity, knowledge of the community, and respectable character in the Mabvuku Community. Their way of life was exemplary too. This focus group worked with church members to recruit couples who were involved in domestic violence.

Observation Plan

Being aware of the problem and purpose statement when the observation plan was conceived, the researcher saw the need to come up with precise guidelines for the research team. Sensing validates that the decision of what to observe is dictated by the problem and the purpose statement of the project.²⁹ The observation plan was vital for the effective capturing of data. Sensing affirms that observation is a powerful way to check the consistency of what people subjectively report about themselves during interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups.³⁰ In addition, Sensing observes, that by observing the interactions of the participants in the study, the investigator can understand more about their relationships, ideas, norms, habits, and practices.³¹ Planning is very important in all processes. A little preparation implied in the protocol will ease any misrepresentation that occurs. The researcher found James Spradley's nine dimensions of every social structure helpful regarding the kind of data gathered from observation. These dimensions constitute space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal, and feeling.³² Sensing affirms that by selecting the nine dimensions

²⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 182.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² James Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview: Developmental Research Sequence* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston 1979), 78.

one at a time, you can describe most features of any social situation.³³ The researcher applied seven of the nine dimensions (space, act, activity, event, time, goal, and feeling) and they featured well with spousal domestic violence. The research team observed spousal context, people involved, activity, act, time, goal, and feeling during participant observation.

The observation design spelled out the purposes and responsibilities of the research team and the respondents. There was a need for the research team to note site location, commencement time, domestic violence victims /victimizers, appearance, activities, behavior, and people who stand out. Data collected would be assessed and reconciled later. Observations were done with due diligence and respect for every respondent as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Outline of the Observation Plan

Area of observation	Remarks	Duration/ Frequency	Meaning/Reflective understanding from observer
Location	What are the structures of the site? Which type of building or structure is nearby? What influence do these structures have on couples?		
Appearance	Anything remarkable on clothing, age, gender, physical appearance		
Oral conduct and interaction	Who speaks to whom and for how long? Who initiates interactions, language spoken, and tone of voice?		
Bodily behavior and gestures	What do people do, and who does what? Who relates with whom? Who is not interacting?		
Private space	How adjacent do people stand to one another?		
Outstanding Figures	Identification of persons who get a lot of care from the other spouse		

³³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 96.

The meeting went well and was successful. Team members were highly motivated. The team resolved to meet with the focus group on 12 October 2020 to map up on motivating the focus group and local church members to recruit domestic violence-affected spouses for an interview with the research team. Mabvuku Church was voted for as the most appropriate venue to meet with the affected spouses. The research team agreed to meet on 20 February 2020 with the first recruits.

On 7 November 2020, the researcher gathered eight couples who became the focus group comprised of sixteen people. These people were further divided into four groups to discuss questions regarding domestic violence. Each group attempted one question. The meeting was scheduled from 2 pm to 4 pm and it stretched for 2 hours without breaks. There was live participation among the groups. The researcher sought permission to audio record all the discussions and members unanimously consented. Table 5 shows the questions and responses as per the group discussion.

Table 5. Research Questions and Sample Responses

Question	Response
1 In your opinion, how would you define domestic violence? Give examples and causes.	<p>It is an action intended to cause pain, destruction, and suffering to the victim.</p> <p>Examples: threats, beating, slapping, arm twisting, restraining, or forced sex.</p> <p>Causes: financial constraints, poor communication, nagging, unable to say sorry, suspicion, not living within one’s means, laziness, infidelity, lack of transparency, violation of one’s feelings, or unplanned pregnancy (irritates the husband).</p>
2 How would you analyze the prevalence of domestic violence among both Christian and non-Christian couples?	<p>“Oh yes, domestic violence is so rampant among many couples regardless of religious affiliation” (There was an overwhelming acknowledgment of domestic violence by all group members.) “Wife beating and Infidelity are prevalent in society.” “These issues are kept under cover and do not help the victim at all.” said another.</p>
3 What justification would warrant spousal beating on following offenses: burning food, an argument in a discussion, going out without informing the other spouse, or refusing sexual intercourse? Give reasons for your response.	<p>“No, no, no to beating each other, we all make mistakes” anchored some group members.</p> <p>Reasons cited: “Husband and wife are one flesh according to God’s plan. Nobody should inflict pain on one another. Women are overburdened due to multiple roles hence men should always assist. Tolerance should prevail. Spouses should not deprive each other sexually; a mutual agreement is required. Forgiveness is key to spousal challenges.”</p>
4 What role could the church play in reducing domestic violence?	<p>The following programs could be facilitated by the church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) family life enrichment programs, (b) counseling sessions (c) awareness campaigns (d) conducting finance seminars (e) lessons on faithfulness within couples (f) seminars on good and effective communication (g) spousal role relationships (h) Teaching biblical family values (i) Invite law enforcement agents

The researcher found this to be quite informative and relevant to the research intended. This group continued to work together with the researcher in the planning and execution of programs that benefited the Mabvuku community. After the meeting, the group was served refreshments and parted by a word of prayer from the family life director.

Data Analysis Plan

A data analysis plan was put in place to enhance proper decision-making, identification of possible risks, and improve efficiency. This data analysis plan was set before information collection. The method involved intended to check the data gathered from the focus group and observations from victims/victimizers of domestic violence.

Data collection and editing were crucial. The initial editing was managed by note-takers who also reviewed respondents' reports. Central editing involved receiving and editing collective respondents' reports. This was done by the researcher. Coding as another pertinent approach was incorporated into this study. Coding refers to any analytical process in which data are categorized to facilitate analysis.³⁴ This process reduces the amount of data without losing its meaning. The main ideas and issues were captured. Tabulation was useful in arranging data in concise logical order. Data cleaning was helpful as the final step for consistency and treatment of missing values.

³⁴ Alyona Medelyan, "Coding Qualitative Data: How to Code Qualitative Research," accessed 24 September 2018, <https://getthematic.com/insights/coding-qualitative-data/>.

Consciousness and Acknowledgement of Domestic Violence in Mabvuku Community

Following an interview that was carried out on 13 January 2020 by the researcher to find out if people were aware of domestic violence and which type of violence was prevalent in Mabvuku Community and attempting to discover which gender between males and females were the chief perpetrators. The interview attracted 41 participants, and the following were the gathered results. The majority of the respondents revealed that they had heard about domestic violence. News and media have been the main channels through which people have accessed domestic violence information. Others admitted that they had witnessed it from their neighbors. The table 6 below reveals the types and levels of domestic violence in Mabvuku Community.

Table 6. Classification Levels of Domestic Violence in Mabvuku

Type of Abuse	Total Sampling (N=41)	Percentage (%)
Physical	32	78
Economic	6	15
Sexual	2	5
Psychological	1	2

Among the four types of abuse, physical violence appeared to be dominant in Mabvuku. 78% of the respondents indicated that physical violence is on the top list, followed by economic abuse constituting 15%. Sexual abuse ranks third, at 5%. Psychological abuse seats at the bottom representing 2%.

Data reflecting on which gender dominates more than the other in domestic violence was also gathered. Below is an alternative table revealing the perpetrators of domestic violence.

On the issue of ascertaining the main perpetrators of domestic violence, Table 7 shows how the respondents reacted. The table reveals that 88% of domestic violence emanated from men while women perpetrators constituted 7%. Only 5% stemmed from both men and women.

Table 7. Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Mabvuku

Perpetrators	Grand Sample (N=41)	Percentage (%)
Men	36	88
Women	3	7
Men and Women	2	5

On 27 January 2020, an interview was conducted by the researcher to discover on the main causes of spousal violence in Mabvuku Community. The Table 8 below shows the findings established.

Table 8. Causes of Domestic Violence in Mabvuku

Causes	Grand Sample (N=41)	Percentage (%)
Poor Communication	35	85
Finances	4	10
Unfaithful	2	5

The above results reflected that poor communication stood at 85% and emerged as the chief cause of spousal violence among couples in Mabvuku. Interpersonal communication should be enhanced among couples. This was followed by finance challenges that stood at 10%. Unfaithfulness ranked number three constituting 5% of the grand sample.

Summary of Main Findings

Physical violence appeared predominant in Mabvuku. 78% of the respondents placed physical violence as the number one vice that militates against spousal harmony. Men emerged as the leading offenders of domestic ferocity. 88% of domestic violence emanated from men. Poor communication is reflected as the key cause of domestic violence in Mabvuku. Percentage analysis stood at 85%.

Happy Home Ministry

The happy home strategy is a response to domestic violence among couples and seeks to improve couples' relationships by promoting love, respect, and harmony in Mabvuku Community. Another objective of this strategy is to be able to link the church to its community and create long-lasting relations. To create an awareness of Christ's interest in marriage as its initiator and encourage every spouse to learn and rely on Him as the anchor of these relationships. To build an awareness that Jesus' intention is to save people in families as depicted by the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Lot.

Vision: To create an environment of love, respect, and tolerant society among couples in Mabvuku.

Theology: Marriage is the fundamental pillar of the home establishment.

Mission: To revive and reflect Christ-like love to my spouse and community.

Moto: Behold how good and pleasant it is when spouses live together in peace (Ps 133:1).

Plan

- Encouraging building relationships among spouses; both church and unchurched couples.
- Creation of a happy home family through a Christ-like life.

- Visitations and interaction with church and non-churched couples.
- Family life enhancement seminars.
- Counseling and prayers for the concerned couples.
- Conscientizing couples on little foxes that spoil the marriage vine.
- Effective communication
- Couples' Birthday and anniversary celebrations
- Couple's Outings

Implementation

My Happy Home Strategy will begin by meeting and sharing my vision with the local church pastor and the first elder of Mabvuku Church. Then the pastor through his board will recommend to the researcher 8 couples who will be assimilated into a focus group. After sharing my vision with the focus group, the same cluster will coordinate the program and mobilize people. Then a meeting will be scheduled with couples (church members) who will invite community couples through invitation letters addressed by names stating the date and time. At the meeting, the researcher wishes to share on advantages of Happy Home seminars and launch the program. Then the group will choose how many times they will be willing to meet. Interviews will be conducted as we progress. Refreshments will be served during these meetings.

Evaluations

Evaluations will be carried out every week at the beginning of the program and as time progresses, resort to monthly evaluations.

The Researcher's Values

1. Prayer: Prayer is an important tool for any successful venture. Since God remains the principal initiator of marriage, the researcher would solicit His

divine intervention for the revival and restoration of love and respect in spouses.

2. **People Skills:** The researcher will incorporate different talented people to assist in this project; lay people, marriage counselors, and family life therapists
3. **Motivation, and Commitment:** Self-dedication and intrinsic motivation are the essential ingredients for this project. Balance of work and projects is crucial.
4. **Teamwork:** Mutual respect, love, support, and cooperation promote Happy Home Ministry to flourish. The creation of team leaders in this project would help in work distribution.
5. **Creativity, Variety:** Creating a link between spouses as a result of effective communication in a non-threatening environment saturated by love, respect, and tolerance in all circles is a key value to a Happy Home Ministry.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION OF NARRATIVE

The research proof discovered from the Bible, Ellen G. White, and Scholarly sources, support harmony, love, respect, and cooperation between spouses. There is no room for domestic violence although sin has caused humanity to rebel against its Maker and now behaves contrary to God's original plan. The Bible spells that, how good and pleasant it is when brethren live in peace and harmony (Ps 133:1). This also applies to the harmonious living together of couples. Ellen White advised the husband-wife relationship. Scholarly literature contributed extensively to the ills of violence and the need for harmony among couples. The proof discovered by the researcher from the mentioned sources models the reinforcement for intervention.

This segment gives a comprehensive account of the phases embarked on implementation of the research strategy. The research team worked diligently for the success of the research. Data gathered from focus group discussions and interviews enthused the research team toward program execution.

Having obtained authorization from authorities to do research in the Mabvuku Community, as shown in Appendix A, the execution of the intervention program began. Although we had a setback of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 and part of 2020. It was observed that without peace and harmony in the home, marriage was a nightmare. There was an ardent need to work on improving interpersonal skills to fight against domestic violence. Couples' enhancement seminars were the entry wage for the progression of the intervention program.

Christ-centered Life Vital for Couples in Mabvuku Community

The most urgent need of the world is the manifestation of the Savior's love through humankind. Its presence in people promotes love, harmony, and peace. Ellen White argues that when Christ reigns in the person, there is purity and freedom from sin. The glory, fullness, and completeness of the gospel plan are fulfilled in life. The acceptance of the savior brings a glow of perfect peace, love, and assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Savior."¹ This is the most important need for couples in Mabvuku. The absence of Christ creates unnecessary animosity among spouses where disrespect, disharmony, and selfishness thrive. A life of squabbles and commotion ensues.

When spouses neglect each other and focus on themselves, they distance themselves from Christ, the fountain of peace and harmony. Rick Warren candidly states that it is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other part leads to a dead end.² When spouses take time to discover God's ideal for them in marriage, they learn to esteem others better than themselves. The more they keep their vertical relationship with God, the more they draw closer to each other. Weakening their relationship with God increases the rift between spouses and brings with it love parasites that take all the love away. Usually, spousal misunderstandings emanate when one drifts away from the fundamental principles of marriage. The triangular diagram shown in Figure

¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald 1900),419

² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2002), 18.

1 illustrates a vital spousal relationship that breeds peace, respect, and harmonious affiliation if precisely adhered to.

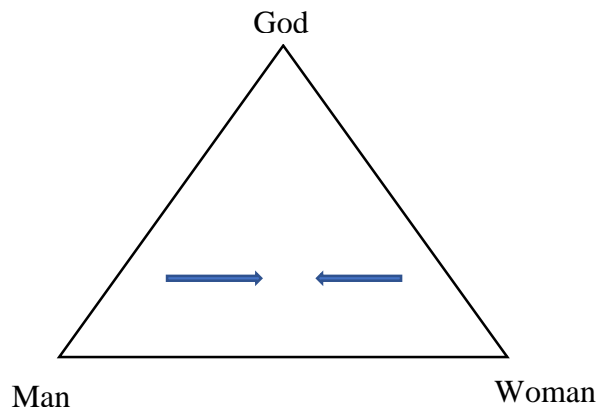


Figure 1. Spousal Vertical- Horizontal Relationship Model

The most important step in sound relationships should be triangular based, where an individual must first establish a fervent relationship with God and fellow beings. In marriage circles, both husband and wife must connect to God, the source of love. Hence, the couple should reflect this love to each other. When each spouse moves toward God, automatically both husband and wife move closer to each other. Vertical connection with the principal initiator of marriage equally boosts spousal relationships with each other. Contrary, when man decides to separate himself from God, it widens his separation from his spouse. Ellen White clearly states that in the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulse, and controls the passions. This love cherished in the soul sweetens life and sheds a refining influence on all around.³ It is to every spousal

³ White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 551.2.

advantage to maintain a close relationship with God for the achievement of peace and harmony.

The more spouses decide to distance themselves from God, the wider the rift they create for each other. White bemoans that the cause of division and discord in families and the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties- though there will be much of this to do but union with Christ.⁴ Sin breaks the relationship with God and ultimately with the spouse. Sin creates a gulf not only between God and man but also concerning man and his wife. Besides bearing the name of Christ, couples must possess His spirit too. This enables them to love, respect, and support each other and harmony will pervade the relationship.

The church comes in to bridge the gap as it bears the responsibility to illuminate the Mabvuku spousal community with love, respect, and harmony. The church should encourage the community to draw from Christ's example, the originator of every good thing (Jas 1:17). Ellen White unequivocally states that the restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home.⁵ Therefore, it is the responsibility of the church to impact Mabvuku spouses with spiritual knowledge for their love restoration, happiness, and upliftment.

Education for Spousal Harmonious Living in Mabvuku Community

Education remains the fundamental pillar by which couples should be conscientious about love, respect, peace, and harmony. This vein of thought resonates

⁴ White, *Adventist Home*, 179.

⁵ White, *Ministry of Healing*, 349.

well with Mandela's perception of education when he notes that education is the most powerful weapon that one can use to change the world. The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation.⁶ Couples in Mabvuku need family life and Christian education regarding living together in peace as spouses. They need marriage enhancement seminars and counseling programs. Rick Warren remarks that the deepest kind of teaching is that which makes a difference in people's day-to-day lives.⁷ True education is transformative, and it is the privilege of every spouse to access it. It is in this same spirit that the researcher proposes the Happy Home Ministry.

This chapter deals with program design, implementation, and evaluation. The program design's thrust was to address the identified spousal challenges that cause domestic violence. Implementation would take a period that allows observation. The assessment will evaluate the input of the implemented program.

The program is intended to assist spouses in appreciating the significance of effective communication. It aids spouses to relate respectfully and peacefully. The anticipated outcomes of this education will be to reduce domestic violence and enhance spousal relationships through harmonious living where love, peace, and harmony reign.

⁶ Paul Ellis, "Changing the World through Education – How Nelson Mandela Created the Conditions for Success," accessed 21 June 2021, <https://blog.cambridgeinternational.org/nelson-mandela/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CEducation%20is%20the%20most%20powerful,on%20the%20value%20of%20education.>

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 210.

Program Design

Program Title: Happy Home Ministry (Table 9)

Vision: To create an environment of love, respect, tolerant society among couples in Mabvuku.

Time Frame: One and a half years.

The intervention package entailed three things namely:

1. Family life enhancement programs.
2. Domestic violence victims counseling program
3. Domestic violence victimizers/abusers counseling program

Table 9. Timetable of Activities

Time Frame	Activity	Facilitator
June- July 2021	Meeting with:	
	1. the local church pastor and first elder,	Researcher
	2. Focus Group and church board members	Research Team
September-October 2021	Family Life Enhancement Programs, Book distribution	Research Team,
November-December 2021	Identification of Domestic Violence Victims and Victimizers	Focus group and Mabvuku SDA spouses
February-March 2022	Domestic violence counseling program with victims	Researcher, and marriage counselors.
April- May 2022	Domestic violence counseling program with victimizers/Abusers	Researchers, marriage counselors
June- July 2022	Visitations and prayer	Research Team
August-September 2022	Family life weekend outing, communication enrichment program	Researcher, Family Life tutors
January-July 2023	Program conclusion, Reports evaluation, and writing	Researcher and Research Team

First Meeting

On 24 June 2021, the researcher met with the local church pastor and the first elder at Mabvuku Church at 10:00 a.m. The main agenda was to discuss the importance of the research topic, share the vision, and envision how the program would run. This was the first preparation meeting. At this meeting, the local church pastor and the first elder agreed to work together with the researcher as the research team. The pastor agreed to go and recommend through the church board eight couples who would comprise the focus group. After the closing prayer from the local church pastor, the meeting ended.

Second Meeting

The Mabvuku Church through the aid of the pastor convened a board meeting on 5 July 2021 and recommended eight couples who would constitute the focus group that would work with the research team. The criterion for the selection of this group entailed maturity, integrity, and moral aptitude considerations.

Third Meeting

On 10 July 2021, the search team met with the focus group and the church board at Mabvuku Adventist Church. The first elder gave the first prayer. The local church pastor welcomed the attendees and introduced the researcher. After a few remarks, the local church pastor invited the researcher to share the vision and inducted the audience regarding the Happy Home Ministry. Their task centered on inviting and recruiting members to join the Happy Ministry and later to enroll domestic violent victims and victimizers. After serving everyone with refreshments, the pastor dismissed the meeting with prayer.

Fourth Meeting

The research team met with the focus group and reminded them of the objective of the research. After splitting the focus group into four groups, each group discussed in full a question on domestic violence while being recorded with the group's consent.

Happy Home Promotion Program

The Happy Home Promotion Program began by coordinating the focus group and all Mabvuku Adventist Church couples in mobilizing Mabvuku community couples for the program. The meeting took place on 3 September 2021 at Mabvuku Adventist Church. By 10:00 a.m. all the invited participants were ready for the meeting. The first prayer was given by the local church pastor. The researcher led discussions on how people were to be invited to the Happy Home program. After a lengthy discussion, the team resolved to invite community couples in Mabvuku through invitation letters addressed to couples by names stating, the date, starting and closing time, and venue for the program. (See Appendix A). For the whole month of September 2021, invitation letters were delivered to the Mabvuku community. In preparation for the Happy Home program launch scheduled for the 3 October 2021 at Mabvuku Community Hall at 2:00 p.m.

The Happy Home program acted as a launching pad to enhance spousal love respect and harmony in couples. On 3 October 2021, Mabvuku couples converged at Mabvuku Community Hall to hold the couple's first family life enhancement program. "Happy Home" was the theme of the program. By 1:45 p.m. the hall was filled. Each attendee was served with a pen and a writing pad.

Family Harmony, a gospel couple's musical choir took the stage to entertain couples through music. Songs like Tis love that makes us happy, love at home, what

can wash away my sins, come the fount of every blessing, oh! Happy day and what a fellowship, ignited the program and soothed the couple's minds.

Over 100 couples graced the occasion. At exactly 2 p.m., the local church pastor welcomed the people, gave a prayer, and introduced the researcher as a guest speaker. The researcher entitled his discourse Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren (couples) to dwell together in unity (Ps 133:1). The presenter outlined how the principal initiator (God) intended marriage to run spelling out the advantages of living in harmony as a couple. The presentation lasted an hour and 30 minutes were given for reflective purposes. The couples who participated in the presentation reflections thanked the presenter for speaking directly to them and requested more lessons on family life. After a musical interlude, the local pastor invited couples to form an association group that would participate in family life programs. "Happy home ministry" was born. Seventy couples registered their names.

The couples also demanded a whole week spousal enhancement program. After consulting with the research team, a family life seminar for the Mabvuku community was scheduled for 19-24 October 2021 at the same venue, Mabvuku Community Hall. The program ended on a very high note where every couple vowed to invite friends, neighbors, and relatives. A Happy Home flier was distributed in the Mabvuku Community by couples who attended the first program.

Happy Home Marriage Seminar

The Happy Home Seminar was held from 19-24 October 2021. The research team comprised of the local church pastor, the first elder, and the researcher conducted a series of two-hour- seminars from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mabvuku Community Hall was secured as the appropriate venue because of its centrality and

accessibility to all participants. The hall could accommodate both the churched and unchurched couples without prejudice.

The following topics were covered during a week-long seminar: The supremacy of love (1 Cor 13:1-8), interpersonal relationship management, effective communication, how to manage your anger, little foxes that spoil the marriage vine, verbal abuse, and domestic violence. Over 200 couples attended the seminar. Sixty more couples joined the Happy Home Association.

Material Distribution

The researcher got a donation of 400 copies of Health and Wellness written by Mark A. Finley and Peter N. Landless from the East Zimbabwe Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. More than 200 copies of this donation were distributed on 24 October 2021 to every couple that attended the meetings. The remaining ones were distributed to new attendees after every Happy Home Ministry session. Furthermore, audio materials from all presentations were shared with every couple.

Identification of Domestic Violence Victims and Victimizer

The months of November and December 2021 were designated for the identification and recruitment of domestic violence victims and victimizers/abusers. Through a purposive thrust, chain sampling was applied to select people with interest. Fifteen domestic violence victims and ten domestic violence victimizers came forth for counseling through interaction with the focus group and couples at Mabvuku Adventist Church.

Domestic Violence Victim Counselling in Mabvuku

Domestic violence counseling could be therapeutic to the victim and victimizer/abuser as well. Individual counseling helped to address spousal distinctive needs. Individuals were free to express themselves and worked together with their counselor for positive goals. Since people experienced domestic violence differently, it warranted individual treatment as well.

Domestic violence victims counseling program took place from 6th February 2022 to 27th March 2022. This program involved an interaction of the victim with the researcher and the professional family life counselor. In this process, the victims were assisted to improve their communication skills to enhance sound relationships. Assistance was also furnished to the victims on how to deal with spousal problems, challenges, and conflicts and reach solutions that contribute to healthy spousal relationships. Positive interaction with the abusive spouse was encouraged since no spouse should hinder each other from recovering. Instead, spouses were encouraged to help each other access the recovery pathway.

Counseling objective. To equip the victim with knowledge and skills to help solve their problems amicably and independently. In other words, helping the victims find appropriate ways of solving their problems.

Although domestic violence counseling involves many processes, the researcher chose a simple three-dimensional approach that would empower the victim in resolving spousal conflicts. The counseling program entailed three stages that included the initial, the central, and the last stage.

The initial stage. The counselee/victim was given time to explain how domestic violence is experienced in the home. What happens and how it happens was key in articulating and assessing the problem. Questions for further clarification were

pertinent during the discussion. The process assisted in outlining the root cause of the problems.

The middle stage. At this stage, the researcher/counselor took time to evaluate the nature of the problem and see how both spouses could have contributed since it costs two or more people to make an argument. Assessment as to how the problem could be solved took place at this stage.

The last stage. When the victim fully understood how domestic violence erupted and saw how she might also have contributed to the problem, a task to seek alternative ways of solving the problem was presented to her. The victim's involvement in seeking solutions to solve their problems aided in promoting love, respect, peace, and harmony between spouses.

Preventive Measures for Domestic Violence Victims

The following helpful points extracted from Julian Melgosa's book, *Positive Mind*, present key preventive steps the victim should always be cognizant of in domestic violence situations.⁸

1. The victim should take signs and warnings seriously.
2. Should assess the risk and seek help if in danger.
3. Should share this with a trusted friend or relative.
4. Should observe her partner and the changes in his personality, words, message, and accusations that may lead to violence.
5. Prepare an emergency plan to protect herself in case of need.
6. Arrange for a place (for example, the house of someone you trust) as a refuge in case things get complicated.

⁸ Melgosa, *Positive Mind*, 223.

Reasons Why Women in Mabvuku Continue to Live with Domestic Violent Spouses

At times one, wonders why victims of domestic violence persist in such brutal relationships. Beneath are some of the reasons women in Mabvuku cited for their endurance in marriage.

1. Fear. They are so obsessed with fear that their spouses may kill them. They are also afraid of their children's insecurity in their absence. Most women would not want their children to be raised by another woman.
2. Financial dependence. Some women are prohibited from seeking formal employment by their spouses and largely depend on their husbands for livelihood.
3. Love. The women remain hopeful that their husbands will one day wake up reformed.
4. Cultural reason to preserve her marriage. Some cultures believe that it is the primary obligation of a woman to keep her marriage from breaking regardless of the nasty experiences she encounters.
5. Childhood experiences. Some of the people who experienced violence in their parents' homes while growing up may regard beatings as part of the marriage package.
6. Low self-esteem. Their self-esteem has been destroyed by bully husbands.

Domestic Violence Counseling for the Victimizer/Abuser in Mabvuku

A sample of ten domestic violence abusers came forth for counseling. The program ran from 3rd April to 29th May 2022. Four individual counseling sessions were held for each participant at Mabvuku Adventist Church. These counselees were

apportioned at different times for their counseling sessions. The program involved the interaction of the abuser with the researcher and a professional family life counselor.

Domestic Violence Abuser Counseling Objectives

The following key points constituted the objectives in counseling the abuser in spousal domestic violence.

1. Promote positive behavior change.
2. Improve spousal relationship.
3. Improve communication skills.
4. Managing emotions and stress.

The counseling program involved three stages namely the initial, the central, and the last stage.

The Initial Stage

The abuser was given time to explain how domestic violence erupted. Questions were asked to get to the root of the matter. This process helped to ascertain the basis for such a strange behavior.

The Central Stage

The counselor took time to assess the nature of the problem and see how the abuser negatively contributed to disharmony in spousal relations. How he thought the situation could be alleviated.

The Last Stage

The abuser was challenged to examine the consequences that could result from his behavior if he insisted on domestic violence. He was also allowed to take an intro and retrospection of his actions, see where he did not do well, admit his errors, and

seek help. The abuser was also asked how he could do it differently if the same issues arose again.

Referral for Medication

There were two men whom, the researcher referred to medical professionals since their condition warranted immediate medical attention. These men's situation has since improved since they are now on medication.

Domestic Violence Victimizer's Testimony

Mr. Mago (pseudo name) narrated his testimony, "Men are not made to physically abuse women but to protect them. Men are quiet. However, most physical abuse of men is a response to emotional abuse caused by the woman. Women talk a lot and end up insulting their husbands. Women can easily lose respect for men. When men cannot contain the emotional torture, they resort to physical abuse. Women's emancipation is not to dominate in marriage but to occupy positions in government. A woman can be a president but cannot be a husband. Husband is a God-ordained responsibility. Society seems to have no ear for the plight of the abused men and culturally, men do not always share publicly the abuses they encounter from women most of the time. They chose to remain quiet under this harsh treatment. Consequently, men remain the victim of emotional abuse from the women."

What Could Change an Abuser to a Better Husband?

Acknowledge himself as a sinner in need of Christ. Genuine repentance is much more than being merely religious. A personal encounter with Jesus Christ is necessary. The love of Jesus must be allowed to melt the hard heart of the abuser and dispel anger and that vengeful spirit. Spouses should guard against the whiles of the

devil lest they become his agent in perpetuating one's downfall. Rather they should cooperate with God and try to help each other to gain a better perception about God and His plans for them.

Visitations

The months of June and July 2022 were designated for visitations to victims and victimizers of domestic violence first and Happy Home members thereafter. The visitations were executed by the research team on special request. The main thrust was to get a feel of the couple related after the counseling program and to pray for and with them.

Special Donation

A special consignment of 30 *To Have and to Hold* books by Nancy Van Pelt was donated to the researcher by a church well-wisher. These books were distributed to couples who first came forth for counseling as either domestic violence victims or victimizers.

Spousal Provocation

The researcher did not lightly regard Mr. Mago's testimony that most physical abuse of men happened as a response to emotional abuse by the woman. The spousal relationship does not warrant any provocation by those who married as an expression of love. Emotional abuse is equally wrong and should never be cherished between spouses. Gary and Barbara Rosberg confirm that verbal abuse is every bit as bad as physical abuse. It doesn't leave any physical scars, but the emotional damage is just as devastating and painful.⁹ Admittedly, domestic violence issues become intricate when

⁹ Gary Rosberg and Barbara Rosberg, *The 5 Love Needs of Men and Women* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000), 93.

the abuser becomes the victim, and the victim ends up the abuser. More often the abuser blames the victim, arguing that she provoked him.

Assuming that because spouses live together, they instinctively know and understand what one means remains a fallacy. To address the issue of emotional abuse, a seminar on effective communication was organized for all the couples under the Happy Home program. This took place at Lake Chivero, 40km west of Harare.

Chivero Couple Outing

On 26th - 28th August Mabvuku couples went for a three-day outing to Lake Chivero Holiday Resort. The couples arrived around 4:00 p.m. and had time to view the sceneries around. After supper, the Local pastor gave a devotion on the power of the tongue, to build or to destroy (Prov 18:21). It was such a powerful presentation that couples spent time reflecting on the kind of fruits they were reaping by use of the tongue.

On the 26th of August around 10:00 a.m. couples had a group therapy by gender where men and women engaged in these groups received lessons on effective communication and how to deal with anger. The researcher and four family life tutors facilitated the program on a rotational hourly shift.

Effective Communication

This exercise centered on the importance of exchanging opinions, knowledge, and data in a way that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose¹⁰ to the satisfaction of both the sender and the receiver. The value of active listening, receiving, and giving information, empathy, and respectfulness was

¹⁰ Coursera Staff, "What Is Effective Communication? Skills for the Work, School, and Life." Updated February 1, 2024, accessed 13 February 2024, coursera.org/articles/communication-effectiveness.

clarified. Topics on how to improve communication skills were dealt with. For illustration purposes, one facilitator brought a plank, a hammer, and some nails with him and began to insert the nails into the plank, then removed them. He then explained the effects of bad conversations that they leave holes in the spouse's heart that are difficult to mend. The facilitator further stressed that even in hot discussions, spouses should not undermine or insult each other. Rather, they should respectfully state facts since most disputes stem from disrespectful discourses which are the antithesis of love and harmony. Most people regretted how they had abused their spouses emotionally through thoughtless words. On that note, spouses were encouraged to value each other more in every conversation as they worked towards each other's happiness.

Dealing with Spousal Anger

The facilitators began by highlighting that anger occurs when personal preferences are thwarted or when personal pride has been wounded. Anger could be used as a means of coercing the victim into cooperation. More often anger is accompanied by threats and at times the abuser speaks unkindly and acts violently that the victim fears for life. There is no joy in bullying others to get one's way. Outbursts are never good for couples. The spousal emotional reserve should not be depleted in marriage circles. Patience is an indispensable virtue needed as oil to soothe the wounds caused by a partner. Impatience results in more losses than the intended correction.

Disadvantages of Outbursts

The following were outlined disadvantages of uncontrolled anger.

1. Misunderstanding with the spouse.

2. Anger is a threat to happiness and harmony.
3. Embarrassing to family members, friends, and neighbors.
4. Set a bad example to children. Some will imitate those bad traits.
5. Exposes the victim and the abuser to diseases for instance heart problems, chronic headaches, high blood pressure, or depression.
6. Lose credibility to friends and neighbors.

Spouses should invest in each other's success through sound, generous relationships and should by all means strive to model Jesus Christ in their daily conduct.

Solutions to Spousal Anger

It was noted that the discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression (Prov 19:11). The ability to practice self-control was viewed as vital for the happiness of the family. Cultivating the spirit of forgiveness was important between spouses. It was observed that those who sincerely wanted to do away with anger were to submit themselves to God for the transformation of character. Assurance was given that God could indulge in human anger and create a new heart (Ezek 36:26). Through Christ self-control could be gained and thoughts and words could be subjected to the will of God. Anger could be managed, and the heart renewed with tolerance and kindness. Couples were advised to avoid bottling up. Rather, they were encouraged to take a brisk walk or work in the garden when arrested by anger. Consulting with marriage counselors or family life therapists was also recommended.

On 28th August 2022, the couples had a counseling session soon after breakfast. The researcher and the four marriage tutors participated in counseling with spouses who needed assistance. After a three-hour counseling session, couples gathered for games and gifts. The pastor gave the final remarks emphasizing how

good and pleasant it is when spouses live together in peace and harmony (Ps 133:1).

At 4:00 p.m. the pastor declared the outing over.

What Hinders Couples in Mabvuku from Seeking Help

As an adage says no man is an island, one wonders why spouses at times do not seek assistance when experiencing a toxic relationship. The researcher extrapolated the following reasons:

1. Cultural orientation blended with pride. At times man thinks that he is self-sufficient to the extent that he needs no advice from anyone.
2. Mental illness. Other people think that some situations are habitual, yet it is a mental challenge that needs medical attention.
3. Ignorance. Other people are not aware of how positive survival skills and as a result, they suffer to their peril.
4. Absence of permissible facilities/infrastructure. The church should help come up with such structures to alleviate human suffering.

Spousal Self-Introspection Principles

The following are key self-examination areas spouses were challenged to reflect on individually and try to grow because of the process.

1. Rather than criticizing your spouse all the time learn to be quiet or compliment on the efforts.
2. Instead of complaining, come up with proposals.
3. Instead of faultfinding, come up with a solution.
4. Strive to win as a couple and not as an individual. Desist playing the victim.

5. Learn from your mistakes and turn your scars into stars instead of justifying your failures.
6. Scrutinize your attitude instead of judging others.

Rules for a Happy Marriage

The subsequent insights were shared among spouses as guidelines for a peaceful marriage:

1. Spouses should never both be angry at the same time.
2. Do not scream at each other unless there is an impending danger.
3. Criticize tactfully, lovingly, and accept feedback.
4. Never bring up past mistakes.
5. Be ever there for each other.
6. Never go to sleep with an unresolved argument.
7. Always purpose to say a kind word to your spouse
8. Admit your errors and ask for forgiveness.
9. Better to lose an argument and win a spouse than win an argument and lose your partner.
10. Remember, it takes two to make an argument. The one who is wrong is the one who will be doing most of the talking.¹¹

Evaluation

Positive evaluation of the implemented intervention came through testimonies, observation, and participant evaluation form.

¹¹ Ann Landers, "Ann Landers Quotes," accessed 10 February 2024, <https://quotefancy.com/quote/766518/Ann-Landers-Remember-it-takes-two-to-make-an-argument-The-one-who-is-wrong-is-the-one-who>.

Testimonies

During the Happy Home program, spouses requested for time to reflect and verbally appreciate the relevance of lessons presented. Some testified that these lessons brought peace and harmony in their homes since they acquired interpersonal skills.

Observations

The way people attended the Happy Home meetings brought success to the program. There was an overwhelming attendance on every meeting. Admittedly, domestic violence issues are very sensitive but the way the victims and abusers opened up to the research team during interviews and counseling sessions, was quite humbling. Some of these couples invited the research team to their homes for prayer and counseling.

Participant Evaluation Form

At the end of program, there was an evaluation form to be filled by the participant. This instrument evaluated the relevance and effectiveness of the program, and the results were tremendous. This also boosted the Happy Home membership to 215 couples.

The study accomplished its purpose. The Happy Home strategy yielded appropriate results. Although the invitation letters to attend the Happy Home launch meeting were well received, the assumption that all Mabvuku community couples could read and write was unrealistic because few couples were illiterate yet needed to be invited by word of mouth. The error was corrected when people were invited for a family life enhancement week. Domestic violence victims appreciated the importance of effective communication between spouses where love, respect, and peace are

crucial ingredients for the establishment of a happy home. Domestic violence abusers cooperated and learned to control their tempers. Love was restored in couples' homes as they appreciated the importance of accepting responsibility and being able to say sorry when one has grieved his/her partner.

Although both books, *Health and Wellness* and *To Have and to Hold* were received with gratitude, there were no books in vernacular distributed to those who could not read in English.

In as much as the research team would have desired to visit all couples, this could not happen because they were overwhelmed by so many people who had opened their homes to them, and time could not suffice.

Couples were so excited about the Chivero outing and the issuing of gifts. Once in a while couples should plan for outings as husband and wife or as a Happy Home group.

As part of connecting with the community through service, the family enhancement program played a pivotal role in mobilizing couples for the Happy Home Ministry which now has a great following.

CHAPTER 6

LESSONS LEARNED, OBSERVATIONS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Spouses in Mabvuku Community were plagued by domestic violence due to a lack of communication compounded by the non-existence of marriage enhancement programs and adequate materials to fan and boost couple relationships. A program was implemented which ensued into a successful intervention for spouses whose peace was disrupted by domestic violence. The research program executed inspired spouses to adapt positive interpersonal skills where love, respect, and harmony were cherished, and reconciliation pursued. Twenty couples whose spousal relationship had been ruined by domestic violence got reconciled. The Happy Home Ministry whose objective is to enhance spousal relationships through marriage seminars and counseling paid dividends. A pastor counsels with couples every Sunday and Wednesday at Mabvuku Adventist Church.

Summary of the Dissertation

The first chapter provided a detailed background of the spousal situation in Mabvuku Township. The study focused on the plight of couples in Mabvuku who were plagued with violence and abuse. Husbands physically assaulted their spouses alleging that they verbally insulted them. This chapter covers the following topics, narrative of the ministry context, account of the problem, purpose of the study, validation of the study, demarcations, and procedures.

Chapter two discussed on Theological foundation of a harmonious marriage covering the following topics: the origin of marriage, the creation of a suitable helper, the prefall of Adam and Eve, the principles of marriage, the fall of humankind, what humanity lost through sin, the impact of sin on couples, polygamy, the flood incident, casting away the bond of self-restraint, toward restoration, Paul's counsel on sex and marriage, Paul's counsel on married believers, aspect of headship in marriage, the principle of love, and the principle of forgiveness.

Chapter three's thrust was on the domestic violence literature review. The main areas of concentration include the introduction, definitions, types, Zimbabwean legislation, perception, causes of domestic violence, religion, ferocity, and implications of spousal cruelty.

Chapter four began by reflecting on the ministry context, geographical background of Zimbabwe, climatic situation, Zimbabwean economic structure, family, demographics of Mabvuku Township, cultural beliefs, socio-economic status, religious settings, education, food, entertainment, technology and domestic violence, history of Mabvuku Adventist Church, challenges of Mabvuku Church Adventist Church, community outreach, Mabvuku Adventist Church plateau, financial records, ministry activities at Mabvuku Adventist Church, pastoral leadership, methods and strategy design. This study implored qualitative methods in research design, the rationale of the research method, suitability of the study, the research study location, population, sample, the criterion for selection procedures, data collection instruments, pretesting instruments, ethical, considerations, the first orientation of research team, observation plan, data analysis, consciousness and knowledge of domestic violence in Mabvuku, a summary of main findings, Happy Home Ministry, implementation and researcher's values.

Chapter Five dealt with the implementation, and evaluation, of the narrative. It spelled the introduction, Christ-centered life vital for couples in Mabvuku, education for spousal harmonious living in Mabvuku, program design, Happy Home Ministry, domestic violence victim counseling, domestic violence abusers counseling, spousal provocation, Chivero couples outing, effective communication, dealing with spousal anger, solutions to spousal anger, what hinders couples in Mabvuku from seeking help, and evaluation.

Chapter Six involved lessons learned, observations, summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

Observations

Few spouses seem to have the desire to look for materials that can enhance their marriages. Worldviews on how families are run especially in this postmodern era vacillate, and prudence calls for spouses to have an opportune time to discover God's perspective from His word and complementary information.

In young spouses, unplanned pregnancy emerged part of the chief causes of spousal violence. Contemplating the financial implications scares and irritates the husband who through an uncontrolled temper ends up beating his wife.

The other challenge in pregnancy is that the husband is oblivious to the hormonal changes in his wife that make her behave awkwardly. This is a passing phrase, and the husband should practice tolerance.

During the counseling sessions, it was observed that anger emerged as the major catalyst for domestic violence. Some spouses were quick to temper. They easily broke down and resorted to physical violence. Temperament management seemed vital in every conversation.

Men seem to be obsessed with their cultures to the extent that some of them are prone to return to their worldviews even after joining the church. This retards growth and spousal harmony.

Final Evaluation

The research program started quite well without any hindrances until Covid-19 emerged and lockdowns were gazetted. Health restrictions delayed the research team from physically meeting with the respondents for one and a half years. Because of these health restrictions, one out of the four intervention programs that were scheduled for implementation was abandoned. The program intervention was postponed until Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed in early 2021. That is when the data collection program ensued.

The initiative design, execution, and intervention gave birth to new experiences and perceptions for the investigation team, Mabvuku Adventist Church, and couples in Mabvuku Community. With regards to spouses experiencing domestic violence, new communication skills were imparted, and reconciliation was initiated through marriage enhancement seminars and counseling sessions. Material donated in the form of books was highly received and boosted spousal knowledge necessary for relationship preservation.

Lessons Learnt

Domestic violence is a result of poorly managed conflict.

Verbal abuse is the chief contributor to domestic violence. Spouses should learn to communicate well from a place of kindness, respect, and compassion.

Separation from Christ is the chief cause of discord and despondency between spouses. Drawing close to the principal initiator of marriage bridges the spousal gap.

Domestic violence is a worldwide vice that affects both the opulent and the needy, the knowledgeable and the ignorant.

Love is a fundamental pillar that sustains all relationships. Everyone has a quest for it. Love is the most essential influence conducive to our total well-being. It sustains us through all life's vicissitudes.

There is no room for arrogance in married couples. Hence spouses must learn to put away arrogance and selfishness toward each other. They should not cherish anger and cruelty.

Married couples must learn to prioritize each other more than anything else. They need to sympathize and empathize with each other. Esteeming the other more important than highly regarding self and this act reinforces relationships and values time together.

Appreciating one another as spouses is an important ingredient in love enhancement. When couples appreciate great or small things done by a partner, it kindles a merry heart in both husband and wife resulting in willingly making some sacrifices to support, encourage love, and comfort one another.

The importance of effective communication and transparency is another vital lesson learned.

Even when spouses disagree, they can still be kind to each other as the word of God commands (Eph 4:32).

Although retaliation looks attractive on the face of it, it leads to more pain than forgiveness.

Christian counseling is vital if disagreements seem to be perpetuated in most conversations. It is important to note that if couples cannot find solutions to their challenges, they can consult with others who can assist.

The importance of family life seminars, resources, and outings as part of a couple's enrichment programs are keys to reviving love and harmony.

Conclusion

Husband and wife should be bound by a love that reflects the character and image of God. When a couple has this mutual love and respect, society reflects their harmony. Contrarily, squabbles and commotion breed a hostile environment. The seed of despondence suddenly germinates, and the result will be family disintegration and society consequently bleeding. Violence and murder occupy the center stage of life instead of harmony and happiness. Yet following divinely laid up procedures creates successful families where spousal love, happiness, joy, and gladness are celebrated and reflected in daily life.

The research design, operation, and involvement fetched new experiences to the student, research team, Mabvuku Community, and Mabvuku SDA Church. Couples gained much from couples' enhancement seminars, and books distributed. Communication skills were imparted, and interpersonal skills were boosted. Domestic violence abusers cooperated much in providing suggested remedies to alleviate domestic violence.

The church's social relationship was rejuvenated as the members sensed the need to remain the salt of their community.

Recommendations

The Happy Home Ministry went on well with minimum hitches. The reformation of abusers was significantly noted, and harmony was restored in couple relationships. Below are recommendations from the study.

1. The church should be deeply involved in family life programs as part of community healing and harmony restoration. As it is usually said, prevention is better than cure, the church must take an active part in bringing family life enhancement seminars.
2. Ministers of the gospel and church members must walk the streets acquaint themselves with community challenges and explore ways to alleviate them.
3. The church must establish a family life library where couples can borrow books and other materials to equip them to enrich their relationship.
4. Frequent medical assessment of spouses to explore the correct remedial measures for domestic violence abusers.
5. Exploration of social intelligence lessons could assist spouses in mitigation measures under domestic violence situations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTERS

East Zimbabwe Conference Seventh-day Adventist Church

SECRETARIAT

4 Thorn Road, Waterfalls, Harare
P.O Box W19, Waterfalls
Telephone: +263 867 7700 8295



April 14, 2021

Pastor Morgen Takaindisa
East Zimbabwe Conference
Zimbabwe

Dear Pastor Takaindisa

Request To Conduct A Research in EZC Territory

The EZC ADCOM took an action allowing you to conduct a Research in EZC Territory as follows:

Course of Study: DMin in Evangelism and Church Growth (Urban Setting)

Institution: Adventist University of Africa, Kenya

Research Topic: DEVELOPING A MINISTRY : INTERVENTION FOR DOMESTIC

VIOLENCE : Among Couples In Mabvuku, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Further that you share with the Conference the results of your Research.

May the Lord bless you in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Sunny Musiiwa

Invitation Letter

HAPPY HOME: COUPLE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The pleasure of the company of Mr. and Mrs. is cordially invited to attend a couple enhancement program on 3rd September 2020, at Mabvuku Community Hall in Mabvuku Township. The program starts at 2:00 p.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m.

We hope to see you there.

Yours

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH



Could you take us through your age, educational level, occupation, and how long you have stayed in marriage?

1. In your own opinion, how would you define domestic violence?
2. How prevalent is spousal violence among couples in Mabvuku?
3. What are the kinds of domestic violence forms experienced by couples?
4. Have you been physically assaulted by your spouse and why?
5. What might be the causes of domestic violence in Mabvuku?
6. Some people assume that men are the chief culprits of domestic violence whereas others allege that ladies are the main instigators, what do you think?
7. How do you view culture in light of domestic violence? what role is culture playing in fanning or quelling domestic violence?
8. What do you envision the ideal marriage to be like?
9. What have the surrounding people done or not done to condone the vice?
10. What are you also doing to reduce domestic violence levels in the area?
11. What could be the abuser's objective in perpetrating domestic violence?
12. How do you feel being a victim of domestic violence?

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SHONA (Local language)



1. Mungasununguka kutitauriravo zera renyu, pamakasvika pakudzidza, basa ramuri kuiita muupenyu uye nguva yamagara mumuchato?
2. Mukufunga kwenyu, chii chinonzi mhirizhonga?
3. Mhirizhonga yakakurumbira zvakadii mumabvuku?
4. Ndedzipi mhando dzemhiri zhonga dzinowanikwa mumabvuku?
5. Makamborobwa here kana kurova umwe wenyu uye zvanga zvaita sei?
6. Mungadoma here bviro- bviro dzemhirizhonga mumabvuku?
7. Vamwe vanoti varume ndivo vana mupara nzvongo panyaya mhirizhonga vamwe vachiti vakadzi ndivo honzeri, imi munozvivona sei?
8. Munovona sei tsika yedu maringe nemhirizhonga?
9. Magariro akanaka pakati pababa namai mumuchato anofanora kunge akaita sei?
10. Vanhu venharaunda vati vaitei kushora mhirizhonga uye ndezvipi zvavangaita kushora chiitiko ichi? Imwi muri kuitei kuderedza mhirizhonga munharaunda yenyu?
11. Chii chingava chinangwa chemunhu anoshungurudza mudzimai kana murume wake?
12. Munonzwa sei pamusoro pekushungurudzwa nemhirizhonga?

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM

Developing A Ministry Intervention for Domestic Violence Among Couples in Mabvuku, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Principal Investigator: Morgen Takaindisa (Doctor of Ministries).

Contact Details: +263773069939

Kindly assess this agreement form carefully and solicit clarification before you commit yourself.

Important to Know About This Research Study

- . This consent form is brought to your attention so that you understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of this research study.
- . Attention is founded upon the best-known conduct and is offered with the thrust of assisting domestic violence victims and victimizers. The main objective of the study is to increase awareness that will help restore /reinforce love, respect, and harmony in couples.
- . There is no guarantee that this exercise will benefit you directly, but the objective is an attempt to create happy homes and reduce domestic violence.
- . Participants have the right to agree/refuse to contribute or change.
- . This involvement is purely charitable.

Commitment

Requested to volunteer your service in this study of Doctor of Ministry in Urban Evangelism. The assignment aims to assess the level of domestic violence and explore ways to improve love, respect, and harmony among couples. You are selected as a potential contributor /key informant in family matters. The study will engage a maximum number of for months on participants from Mabvuku Township.

Procedure and Duration

With your consent, we will request that you participate in interviews and strategy implementation activities. Interviews will be utilized at the end of the study. These are meant to get information on your understanding and attitude toward domestic violence and ways to improve a couple's relationship. This will be done over four months, and the meeting will not exceed four meetings at most, one and a half hours each. The standard practice will be the collection of data through the stipulated data collection means. No experimental study will be done on any individual.

Statement of Consent to be Audio-Recorded

Interviews will be documented using an audio recorder. The objective will be to help accurately capture the discussions in full as writing notes of all key points may be challenging. The information will be transcribed later, and the audio recorded deleted. The audio will only be used for this study.

Permission to audio record discussions is in order.

Kindly select and tick Yes or No

Name of participant (kindly print). Signature

Date:

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This study may lead to unexpected discomforts that may emerge as discussions will happen on domestic violence experiences and challenges leading possibly to self-inspection by the participant. In that situation, the researcher will be patient with you and accord you time to time to express yourself, cool down and if possible, proceed with the discussion. In severe cases, the individual will be directed to a professional counselor.

ADVANTAGES /COMPENSATION

The researcher may assist participants with knowledge on the importance of harmonious living of couples, and how to join a Happy Home Ministry where skills to deal with domestic violence are imparted. Participants will also be empowered to offer support to others experiencing domestic violence at the end of the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The element of confidentiality is highly esteemed and unreservedly guaranteed to those who will participate in the study by appending their signatures to this document. No personal information will be disclosed without the consent of the individual in question.

ADDITIONAL COSTS

The study will cater for the costs of the research, material to be used, implementation of the strategy, and any other research assistants and facilitators involved in this study. No costs will be charged to the study participants. The research team will meet participants at convenient walking distance to them.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation is purely voluntary. No relations between you and the researcher will be strained if you decide to relinquish your service.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Developing a Ministry Intervention for Domestic Violence Couples in
Mabvuku, Harare, Zimbabwe.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Kindly ask any questions you might have regarding this study before signing this
form.

Name of Respondent (*please print*) Date

A copy of the consent form will be provided for your records.

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