

Pathways to Change: Men's Experiences of a Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programme

by

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Philosophy

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Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to the men who shared sensitive parts of their lives with me in completing this work. The men's experiences, stories as well as courage to participate in this study were invaluable, considering the feelings evoked by their choice to participate and what this could have entailed. Their stories will hopefully be the basis for future research on interventions with men regarding domestic abuse and violence. I am hopeful that the views of the men have been represented accurately. To these men, I wish to convey my sincerest thanks for their participation in the research, despite the experiences evoking emotional pain this would have inevitably meant.

Reflection on Career as a Social Worker - Memo

The first thing I noticed about Miss X many years ago, was the bruises. Bruises on her face, on her wrists, and on her neck. We sat down together in my office and, while she cupped a mug of hot tea, told me what had happened the night before.

Her partner had exploded in anger over a compliment she had made about his friend. For years he had ordered her not to look another man in the eye, but she thought a compliment about an old mate of his would be okay. She was wrong. The argument escalated beyond her control, and, while their infant daughter watched TV in the next room, he had punched her between the eyes.

As a senior practitioner in social work, I have encountered many different versions of the same, horrific story. A victim trapped in a relationship with an abuser, feeling too scared or ashamed to seek help. A perpetrator exercising control in numerous ways - be it violence in a blind rage, or a constant drip-feed of emotional abuse.

The scale of the abuse that happens behind closed doors never fails to shock me. There is no question of desensitisation. But there is a driving force that compels me to want to help victims of abuse, to help them to heal, and to play my own small part to drive down the shockingly high statistics around domestic abuse and violence.

However, for the past nearly 20 years, I have witnessed different programmes of intervention, ranging from perpetrators programmes to caring dads, but none that got to the nub of the problem, as the statistics below will show. Since the 1970s, there has been a plethora of interventions established to address intimate partner violence (Wilson, 2003; Carter, 2009; Westmarland and Kelly, 2013).

Reflections on my career as a social worker and social work manager – Memo, March 2021

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Undertaking a PhD is not an individual experience. It takes many people to bring a thesis, such as this, to fruition, and I will forever be grateful to each of the people involved. Foremost of whom are the men who took part in the research. To each and every one of them, I would particularly want to thank them most sincerely. I am aware that this subject was an emotional journey and yet, the men gave me their time and emotional space to complete this piece of work.

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I would never have completed the studies had it not been for the sponsorship of the tuition fees from my employer the London Borough of *****, especially, the Training Development Manager to whom I will forever be grateful.

To my colleagues and friends who trialled the interview guides/research instruments, thank you for your helpful suggestions.

To be able to pursue a PhD part-time requires endurance. Therefore, sharing the pursuits with fellow PhD candidates for their camaraderie made it much more fun! Thanks to you all and best wishes in your studies.

And last, but certainly not the least, thank you to my family; Ziwase, Madalitso and Musawenkosi, for the sacrifices you made to help me through the process. Thank you for the moral and emotional support.

Along the way, I lost my father, Mr TJC Mwanza. You did not live long enough to see this project to the end. We all miss you!

Abstract

In this thesis, I have documented the experiences of men who have engaged in a perpetrator's programme in a London Borough and explored how they engaged in the change process around intimate partner violence.

The available literature shows that the subject of domestic violence among male perpetrators remains under-researched and unexplored. The men's experiences of the perpetrators' programmes need acknowledgement for the design of effective interventions that are responsive to the needs of the victims and the men themselves. The study offered a prospect to learn directly from the perpetrators.

The aim of the study was therefore to (a) explore the experiences of 11 men (using an interview guide) for both completers and non-completers of the community perpetrators programme between 2004 and 2008 in a North London Borough and (a) map the experiences and pathways towards change onto the Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation of model of Behaviour (COM-B model). This was a qualitative (interpretive) study with a constructivist grounded theory approach. Participants were recruited through an insider's knowledge of agencies working with the programme in the Borough. One programme coordinator was also interviewed.

The study findings highlight the new skills learnt (capability) from engaging in group work (opportunity) and negative consequences (before, during and after) of behaviours (motivation) as some of the key triggers for change to help the men reframe their understanding of domestic violence and abuse. It is notable that the behaviour change programme was characterised by high attrition levels highlighting the need for motivational interviewing.

While it cannot be stated which component represents the most salient influence on behaviour change around IPV interventions and the limitations of a small sample size of 11 participants drawn from one perpetrator programme delivered within one London Borough, which suggests caution around the generalisability of recommendations, the thesis presents a substantive theory; in order for change to be meaningful and salient, and due to the complex multi-faceted nature of domestic abuse, the study recommends an adapted version of COM-B to include the external features and attributes, by focusing on other motivations such as compassion and kindness, herein referred to as *active positive expressions of empathy*. It is further recommended that training curricula and evaluation metrics for compassion and kindness training are developed as part of the expanding body of literature on IPV interventions.

Key words: *Intimate Partner Violence, Active Positive Expressions of empathy, Compassion, Kindness, change trajectory.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Chapter Introduction

Since the 1970s, a plethora of interventions have been established (Wilson, 2003; Carter, 2009; Westmarland and Kelly, 2013) to address intimate partner violence (IPV¹). However, despite decades of intervention work, public policy efforts, and advocacy services, domestic violence and abuse remains a pervasive global public health and social challenge whose primary victims are women and children of all ethnicities, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds (Barner and Carney, 2011).

Research on perpetrators has predominantly focused on the efficacy of interventions, measured by recidivism as a proxy indicator. There are few scholarly and theoretical research pieces of work on the perpetrators' experiences of interventions and pathways towards change in intimate partner violence. If we comprehensively understand the pathways around the change process, we are invariably likely to also design effective interventions. The understanding of this process of the change trajectory forms the main thrust of this thesis.

¹ Intimate partner violence (IPV) also refers to 'domestic violence'/'domestic abuse' or 'battering'. It refers to partner violence, but the term can also encompass child or elderly abuse, or abuse by any member of a household. It also refers to a severe and escalating form of partner violence characterised by multiple forms of abuse, terrorisation, and threats as well as increasingly possessive and coercive controlling behaviours on the part of the abuser (WHO nd).

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- (a) provide an overview of the magnitude of domestic abuse and violence and outline the problems in tackling this issue.
- (b) provide a rationale for the study.
- (c) outline the approach of the study.
- (d) present research questions.
- (e) provide definitions of domestic violence and context; and
- (f) outline the structure of the thesis.

Overview and Statement of the Problem

According to the Office for National Statistics' Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (ONS, 2019:21),

2.4 million adults (5.7% of all UK adults) aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse between March 2018 and March 2019. This equates to a prevalence rate of approximately six per 100 adults. The March 2018-March 2019 figures also show that 746,219 out of 1,316,800 domestic abuse-related incidents attended by police were recorded as crimes - an increase of 24% from the previous year. This was an increase of 24% from the previous year.

It is common knowledge, however, that due to the stigma attached to reporting such private incidents, these figures may reflect only a small

fraction of the actual amount of domestic violence and abuse that occurs and goes unreported. Even without the assumption that the statistics are much higher, it is evident that there is an overwhelmingly high rate of domestic abuse in the UK. The UK government's Home Office noted a significant increase of 46% in calls to domestic abuse charities during the winter of 2020. In response, the government revived its *#YouAreNotAlone* campaign and the prime minister at that time approved an additional funding of £18 million towards the strategic response. This funding aimed to provide support to both victims of domestic abuse and programmes that intervene with perpetrators (Home Office, 2020).

Bearing these rising statistics in mind, which the UN population fund predicts will soar globally because of pandemic-related lockdowns, as well as limited resources available to commit to the cause, there is increasing pressure on current domestic abuse intervention programmes to demonstrate their success. Interestingly, however, researchers in the field (Gondolf, 2011; Bennet and Williams, 2001; LaFontaine and Lussier, 2005; Price and Rosenbaum, 2009) disagree about the effectiveness of these programmes and the extent of this based on recidivism rates and sometimes narrow definitions of what success of interventions might look like (Westmarland and Kelly, 2013).

The Duluth Model (the main approach for tackling intimate partner violence) was developed in the 1980s in Minnesota, US, by the battered women's

movement activists (Gondolf, 2007; Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006; Hellman et al. 2010; Sheehan et al. 2012;). Central to the Duluth Model is the idea that violent individuals do not have personal problems per se that can be explained by some form of psychological framework but are simply reflecting "... a culture that teaches men to dominate women" (Gondolf and Hanneken, 1987:5). The Duluth Model was originally termed the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DVIP²) and remains the internationally pre-eminent approach to working with men who engage in IPV.

This approach involves identifying power and coercive behaviours the men engage in, providing alternatives to these abusive behaviours, promoting changes in behaviour and attitudes, and confronting denial and minimising abusive patterns of behaviour. The programme aims to modify (by utilising the "Power and Control Wheel" and advocating for positive perspectives on relationship roles through the "Equality Wheel") men's negative attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, it employs tools that analyse intimate partner violence within the context of social processes that perpetuate male privilege and dominance (Gondolf and Hanneken, 1987:180). Additional techniques employed by the curriculum encompass helping perpetrators to practice tension reduction exercises, instruction in communication and

² Also referred to as Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPP), perpetrators' programmes, men's programmes or batterer's intervention programmes (BIPs). They are also referred to as domestic violence intervention programmes (DVPP), specifically targeted at male perpetrators of violence.

problem-solving skills, the appropriate utilisation of 'time out'³, and cultivating empathy towards victims. The training on the Duluth model thus helps men in actively confronting "patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes and behaviours that reinforce such attitudes towards women" (Gondolf and Hanneken, 1987:181).

The Duluth model has not been received without criticism. One of the criticisms is the narrow approach and scope of the analysis of relationship violence and abuse. Dutton and Corvo (2007) contend that the model's approach is inherently sexist and fails to consider the genuine predatory and opportunistic nature of relationship abuse. Furthermore, it fails to adequately address violence in same-sex relationships, nor does it consider other aspects of intersectionality in the context of intimate partner abuse.

Suffice it to say that perpetrators of IPV undertake interventions that last anywhere between eight (8) and fifty-two (52) weeks' (Babcock et al. 2004; Price and Rosenbaum, 2009) and focus on themes such as "negotiating and fairness, non-threatening behaviour, respect, trust, and support, honesty and accountability, responsible parenting, shared responsibility, and economic partnership" (Pence and Paymar, 1993:2). Participants demonstrate active involvement in the sessions by completing homework and documenting and

³ Ahimsa (n.d.) makes clear that time out is a transitional tool that can help one to avoid situations in which one may have previously acted violently until they learn how to handle them peacefully on a regular basis.

sharing behaviours and attitudes towards current or previous partners and spouses (Pence and Paymar, 1993) to demonstrate change.

Although there is notable variation in the goals and methods used, the primary and ultimate objective of perpetrators' programmes is to reduce the rates of IPV by rehabilitating perpetrators through psycho-educational and other therapeutic approaches (Saunders, 2008). However, research findings on outcomes or effectiveness of perpetrators' domestic violence programmes vary (Guy et al. 2014) and some of the criticisms include methodologies and sample sizes. As Carter (2010) posits, evaluation studies around the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes have thrown up many questions, leading many to downplay the relative merits of these interventions.

The additional reason for disagreement, which also informs the primary rationale for this work, is that the accounts of the men who engage in the programmes, especially voluntary ones, are largely inconspicuous. It is grossly under-researched (more on this issue in the next section).

Meta-analyses of programme evaluations from various parts of the world suggest that interventions contribute to a slight reduction in recidivism (Saunders, 2008). Eckhardt et al. (2006) also argue that the small number of randomised trials conducted uncovered a minimal effect in preventing future IPV resultant from these interventions. Scott and Wolfe (2003) argue that

change is possible but uncertain about the mechanisms of change. Boira et al., (2013), Chovanec (2012) and Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) contend that components of the interventions and programmes account for change, but that it remained unclear how the men had changed and what men had changed in their outlook. The general conclusion from these researchers is that current interventions and treatment-related effects are too small to be significant, suggesting relatively minimal impacts on reducing the incidents and prevalence of recidivism beyond the criminal arrest stage.

Need and Rationale for the Study

One of the key reasons for the lack of consensus about the impact of intervention programmes is because the subject of domestic violence from the viewpoint of male perpetrators is woefully under-researched. I conducted an audit of available literature on situations, factors, and trajectories of change among service users of perpetrators' programmes. Although some studies have explored this in terms of general offending, it was clear that the studies in these fields are extremely limited, with little attention paid to trajectories around desistance in intimate partner violence (Haggård et al. 2001).

Incidentally, hearing first-hand from the perpetrators' accounts of the effectiveness of these programmes is virtually uncharted territory. Consequently, there are few in-depth studies that use these vitally important

first-hand opinions to gauge how a programme can positively change a perpetrator's behaviour. As Westmarland and Kelly (2013:1092-1094) note, although there is considerable scholarship on domestic violence, the "focus has traditionally been on victims ... and there has been an "invisibility" of interventions of domestic violence perpetrators who are largely "screened out". Perpetrators are, at best, underrepresented in empirical research. Westmarland and Kelly (2013) argue that the experiences of perpetrators' programmes need acknowledgement for interventions to adequately respond to the needs of the victims. Tellingly, Carter (2010) notes that stories of reformed men circulated amongst evidence-based research circles are often dismissed as anecdotal.

Given this background, this study was motivated by the need to contribute to addressing the dearth of in-depth scholarship on domestic violence from the perpetrators' perspectives. It was also motivated by the equally important need to contribute to filling the information gap that exists regarding the change process in perpetrators that can be directly attributed to interventions. I hold the view that first-hand, evidence-based accounts of perpetrators are vital vehicles for informing the design and practice of effective interventions (Carlson and Rose, 2012). Furthermore, the UK government has acknowledged that changing the abusers' behaviours is key to driving down incidences of abuse and violence. Consequently, in November 2020, the government awarded £7.17m towards perpetrator intervention programmes

so that the abuse did not happen in the first place (ONS, 2020). This means there is an urgency to provide scholarly literature on the effectiveness of these anti-abuse intervention models to ensure value for taxpayers' money. Informative scholarly literature is also critical for establishing and deepening public understanding of the inner workings of intervention programmes and how they impact and induce change.

This is especially pertinent in view of the UK Home Office's staggering expenditure on addressing abuse-related cases. The Home Office (2019:5), for instance, reported that the:

Estimated cost' of domestic abuse in England and Wales in March 2016-March 2017, is a staggering '£66bn', and covers the cost of physical and emotional harms incurred by the victims and 'lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity.

Given the foregoing, this study presents a rare opportunity to learn directly from a diverse group of perpetrators of IPV in a London Borough. The aim is to comprehend how perpetrators might actively participate in the process of change. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the study's results would contribute to identifying strategies to effectively support both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse and violence.

The Approach of the Study

This study was qualitative (interpretive) in design, using the constructivist grounded theory approach. This was achieved by hearing firsthand personal expressions and accounts and privileging their individual interpretations of their experiences. Consequently, the study approach relied on ascertaining the abusers' experiences and decision-making concerning engaging with perpetrator programmes as a way of gaining an understanding and insight into this group's change trajectory. It then documents factors that account for the reported change. In doing this, the study seeks to identify factors that offer reasons behind these men's consequent desistance from domestic violence and abuse which ultimately provide important insights into whether this behavioural change is brought about consequent upon intervention services. The accounts of these men will allow practitioners to adequately recognize the personal and cultural intricacies that enlighten, and shape change in IPV, and are therefore integral to planning successful support interventions (Carlson and Rose, 2012).

The study acknowledges that it is impossible to completely eliminate domestic violence and abuse through any intervention process. However, by acknowledging the experiences of perpetrators with intervention programmes and focusing the change process on practice and policy (Chang

et al. 2010), the study aims to make a valuable contribution towards significantly reducing the incidences of these types of crimes worldwide.

The study participants included individuals who had previously engaged with the intervention or programme, with a minimum time lapse of five (5) years between their participation and our interviews. Thanks to this method, it was possible to do a comparison between individuals who recently participated in the programme and those who had participated several years before, as well as between those who completed all (sometimes more) sessions against those who dropped out.

This strategy helped to throw insight into criminology's concepts of 'primary' and 'secondary desistance' (King, 2013). Maruna and Farrall (2004:4) distinguish between primary and secondary desistance, stating that the former refers to the "interval between criminal behaviour" and the latter to an "interval between criminal behaviour but also associated with an awareness on the offender's part that he or she is not offending", and thus assuming a non-offender or changed identity. This suggests that desistance is by definition bidimensional: first, the interval between the offending behaviours; and second, the existence or nonexistence of self-conscious efforts to function as a restraint against offending behaviours, which may start to be linked to and/or result in a change in behaviours and, consequently, self-identity. The desistance theory provides valuable insights into the process of change from

violent and abusive behaviour both immediately and in the years following treatments. These insights have major implications for my study. To put it another way, how can men who access interventions put themselves on the path to stopping abusive practices and, in particular, develop secondary resistance? Emphasizing these elements will establish a strong base for understanding the mechanisms involved in devising effective approaches aimed at decreasing the prevalence of intimate partner violence.

That the focus of this thesis is on men and male perpetrators of violence and abuse does not suggest in any way the absence of female perpetrators and male victims. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of “the apparent disproportionate evidence that the men are the main perpetrators of reported cases of violence in intimate relationships and give weight to the voices historically excluded from the public realm” (Taylor, 2006:133). This is important in the sense that the most likely effective interventions are those that address the most significant group of perpetrators of IPV.

Statistics on IPV abound and funding has been increasing, yet there is a dearth of academic research to show how and why intervention programmes that focus on the perpetrator’s motives and perspective are vital for addressing the vice. This study tackles three key areas that will redress this imbalance. Firstly, the study provides much-needed academic literature that is specific to the perpetrators’ experiences with IPV, using the COM-B model

of change. Secondly, it extensively documents perpetrators' experiences with the change process as part of our widened understanding and discussions around the issue of violence and abuse in intimate relationships. Lastly, it highlights the intricacies of the change process and the need for thorough and multifaceted strategies to ensure its successful implementation. Achieving these essential goals will need enough resources to ensure effective and sustained efforts to eliminate intimate partner violence and abuse.

Research Questions

Arising from my literature review, it is evident that attention should be focused on understanding the process of, and triggers for, change, as well as content of interventions which can be directly linked to decision-making on engaging in the perpetrators' programmes. A further understanding is regarding which triggers were salient in ensuring that the change that results from engaging with the interventions were permanent over a sustained period. In this regard, it is important to explore the autonomous and reflective motivational factors in relation to domestic violence and abuse. Related to this is the need to explore the level and depth of engagement in the perpetrators' programme and the extent to which these can directly be attributed to the change process and the men's overall approaches to end abusive behaviours, actions, and attitudes. Exploring and understanding the

links between primary (short-term) and secondary (long-term) desistance is also key to addressing and ending abusive and minimising behaviours.

To better understand men's experiences and pathways through the perpetrators' programme and the trajectory of the change process, I framed my research questions using the COM-B model (Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation of Behaviour; more on this later). Understanding the experiences and trajectory of change around intimate partner abuse may be enhanced with the use of the COM-B model. This study provides important information on the potential significance of the perpetrators' programme and similar interventions, which may serve as a benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of such initiatives.

The primary aim of this study was to (i) explore the experiences of men who have utilised the perpetrators' programme in a London Borough and trajectory towards change, and (ii) map these experiences and pathways of change onto the COM-B model. Thus, to identify the change trajectory, the four sub-objectives of the study were as follows:

- How do perpetrators describe their experiences of engaging with the perpetrators' programmes?
- What characteristics of the intervention (programme content) are associated with changing attitudes towards violence and abuse?

- What factors motivate and trigger change in relation to IPV? Do factors triggering change remain constant over short (temporary) or long (sustained) term basis?
- What are the pathways to cessation of IPV?

Answering these research questions will shed light on strategies that could be useful in engaging men in interventions that effectively combat the scourge, and it will also help us understand the perpetrators' experiences with interventions. Encouraging perpetrators to be more engaged in perpetrators' programmes is crucial for the protection of victims and children, as well as for fostering good conduct among perpetrators.

Domestic Violence: Definitions and Magnitude

Worldwide, men disproportionately perpetrate and direct violence towards female partners or ex-partners, and this is a statistic that transcends age, wealth, race, or culture (WHO, 2005). Domestic violence causes serious physical and psychological health problems, which can persist long after abuse has ended (WHO, 2002) and contributes to female poverty and homelessness as well as mental health difficulties. The UN has recognised the lopsided nature and impact of violence against women as a human rights issue and ending violence and providing access to legal redress are, rightly considered priorities (Council of Europe, 2002).

It is probable that domestic violence and abuse was not deemed publicly reportable until relatively recently, which means that the amount of domestic violence and abuse could have been more in the past for all we know. It is noted that reported incidents of domestic violence have increased over the recent past, which highlights this issue as a major social problem (Kubany et al., 2003). According to the United Nations (2015), a third of women have experienced violence and abuse at some point in their lives, while two-thirds have been victimised by intimate partner/family-related homicide. Despite the high numbers, less than half of victims have sought help of any sort and rarely from the law-enforcement and criminal justice systems like the Police.

The UK Home Office statistics reveal that around one in four women will experience domestic violence at some point during their lifetimes and around 4-6% of women report abuse from an intimate partner every year (Chaplin et al., 2011). It further states the average length of abuse for a victim is three years (2019). This is estimated to cost the UK around £16 billion a year in additional pressure on services, lost economic output and human and emotional costs (Walby, 2009). In the Cambridgeshire context, British Crime Survey data suggest that 15,173 women aged 16-59 were the victims of domestic violence in 2010/11 and tackling domestic violence is considered a priority for improving health in the area (JSNA, 2011).

According to the UK Home Office (2020:2),

“For the 12-month period to year ending March 2020, it was estimated that 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 757,000 men), a slight but non-significant decrease from the previous year. The Police also recorded 758,941 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police), an increase of 9% from the previous year, referrals of suspects of domestic abuse-flagged cases from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision fell 19% to 79,965, from 98,470 in the year ending March 2019. There was a successful prosecution rate of 78% of domestic abuse. These figures demonstrated a 7% increase in police recorded offences flagged as domestic abuse-related between March and June 2020, compared with the same period in the previous year, 65% rise in demand for domestic abuse victim support services”.

While these figures are lower compared with 15 years ago, there was slight change in the prevalence of domestic abuse estimated by the crime survey in the year ending March 2020. The figures show that there has been an exponential increase in demand for domestic abuse support services.

Public financial and wider societal implications are that domestic violence and abuse cost the UK treasury over £20b annually in additional pressures on the treasury, as well as lost economic output in addition to human and emotional costs (Walby, 2009). The social costs are indeed extremely high.

Domestic violence has extensive consequences for both victims and society as a whole. Domestic violence is a significant contributor to mortality and disability among women aged 16 to 44 in several Western European nations, surpassing cancer and traffic accidents in terms of fatalities (Violence Against Women, 2010). According to the UK Office for National Statistics, there are “on average 2.4 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 – two-thirds of whom are women, and more than one in ten of all offences ... are domestic abuse-related” (2020:4). Other multiple impacts of domestic violence and abuse have been thoroughly recorded in a variety of literary works. According to the World Health Organisation (2017), women who have been victims of domestic violence are at a higher risk of experiencing adverse physical, emotional, and reproductive health consequences.

Krug et al. (2002) argue that violence can be categorised as self-directed (e.g., self-abuse and mutilation, suicide, and others), interpersonal (e.g., family, intimate partner, community (e.g. gang-rape), and institutional) or collective (e.g., political, social, economic, terrorism). Thus, it may be concluded that domestic abuse and violence refer to a type of interpersonal violence that occurs in a family or intimate relationship setting, aimed at an intimate partner but also having the potential to impact other family members.

While domestic violence and domestic abuse can be theoretically distinguished (Barocas et al., 2016), for this study, the concepts will be used

interchangeably. This is consistent with the UK Government Home Office (2019:1) who adopted and refers domestic abuse to:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. It also includes ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.”

Although there exists no commonly accepted definition, the terms ‘domestic violence or abuse’ indicate a systematic pattern of behaviours in a relationship aimed at gaining power and control over another. This can be a repeated pattern (Brodwin and Siu, 2007) of coercive control (Iwi and Newman, 2015), rape and other violent acts and threats that may cause an injury (Bograd and Mederos, 1999; Almeida and Durkin, 1999; Follingstad et al. 1990).

I have based this study on Brodwin and Siu's (2007:548) definition: "A type of repeated pattern of behaviours an abusive intimate partner, *consciously*, uses to gain power and control over another." The rationale for adopting this definition is that it comprehensively includes the physical and psychological (**capability**), reflective and automatic (**motivation**) and social and physical (**opportunity**) components (see COM-B system below) of violence and abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner (usually a male) towards the victim (usually female). Commonly accepted belief is that domestic abuse is characterised by the misuse of power and control, with the degree of impact of these factors differing according to the theoretical approach, such as CBT or psychoeducational (Babcock et al. 1993). This definition has guided the criteria for selecting certain studies and material about the definition of domestic violence and abuse in this study.

Given this background, there is a general consensus around the need to agree that there is no typical profile of victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse affects women regardless of age group, socio-economic status, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientations and often co-occurs in forms of physical and psychological abuse (Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

There are various and, sometimes, overlapping, and complementary approaches to conceptualize IPV. According to the WHO (2010), IPV can be conceptualised from:

(i) A **human rights perspective** (where violence against women – or anybody – is considered violence against their rights, dignity, liberty (e.g., LSHTM, 2010).

(ii) A **public health perspective** (prevention, including education (Krug et al. 2002).

(iii) A **gender perspective**, which combines both public health and human rights to focus on power derived from patriarchal structures in which men are valued higher than women (Abrahams et al. 2006; Heise, 2011; Jewkes, 2002; Fleming et al. 2013).

Bearing these premises in mind, I posit that IPV can be conceived within the context of one or both partners that have the physical and psychological **capability** to learn and subsequently perpetrate violence. Perpetrators have reflective and automatic **motivation for perpetrating abuse and violence**, while the family/intimate partner relationship provides the social and physical **opportunity** for perpetration of violence and abuse. This conceptualisation is consistent with the COM-B model propounded by Michie et al. (2014) and is an appropriate framework for exploring change because it focuses on capability, opportunity, and motivation and how these influence behavioural outcomes around intimate partner abuse. Within the debate around domestic abuse, the framework not only helps in exploring how IPV is learnt and perpetrated but also how perpetrators can ‘unlearn’ it.

Having accepted the fact that IPV has 'crossed over' from the private to the public realm and its victims are reporting incidents of IPV so that it is now a public issue no longer kept behind closed doors, the next issue occupying campaigners tackling the same is to identify an appropriate strategy to deal with it. This is the subject of the next section.

Domestic Violence Interventions

It is theoretically possible to distinguish at least four types of interventions that have been developed to, hopefully, change the character of men who perpetrate violence against women. These are:

- a) Law enforcement, including courts, probation, and cautions, fines, or incarceration.
- b) Mental health services, where domestic violence is treated with a focus on mental health issues and backgrounds.
- c) Substance misuse services, where substance misuse is also treated alongside domestic violence issues if there is a clear connection between the two.
- d) Community response, where domestic violence is treated at community level – so there may be a combination of referrals by social workers, probation officers and/or court-mandated sentences.

In practice, there are several overlaps between and among the strategies and, often, some strategies are actually an extension of others. Granted, the community response forms the main rubric of the Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes (DVIPs) and subject of this thesis.

Bowen (2011) states that in recent decades, the probation service has been the primary mechanism for delivering perpetrators' programmes in England and Wales, as well as worldwide. Dobash et al. (2000) suggest that DVIPs may lead to a lasting end to abuse by promoting introspection and change in the perpetrators' attitudes and behaviours. This is crucial for several reasons. Criminal consequences cannot result in criminals being permanently removed from their communities. Most perpetrators tend to remain in relationships, whether with the victim or a new partner (Respect, 2011). Many victims want their (ex)-partner to change and remain at home rather than face criminal sanctions like incarceration (Respect, 2011). The victim is concerned that the children would be adversely affected if one of the parents were to leave the family home (Respect, 2011). Thus, community-based programmes involve engaging perpetrators outside of the criminal justice system to safeguard the safety of victims (Respect, 2011). This method also guarantees the availability of prison capacity for other similarly serious offences (Gondolf, 2002).

Unfortunately, IPV is often seen as typical male behaviour that is reinforced through socialisation. Multiple studies (Zakar et al. 2013), support this claim.

Thus, interventions prescribe a gender re-education approach that links violence to behavioural problems, previous traumatic events, or psychopathology (Eckhardt et al. 2013). It is now a common and essential practice for IPV interventions to expose patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes, encouraging men to take responsibility for their violent behaviours. Some interventions also expose coercive strategies and promote positive attitudes and behaviours for handling intimate partner relationships. The ultimate goal is to potentially decrease violent attitudes and behaviours.

According to some (Gelles, 2001; Price and Rosenbaum, 2009; Barner and Carney, 2011), the key component of the widely emulated Duluth model approach to tackling domestic violence is 'treatment' (or 'therapy') for perpetrators. The model is a "psycho-educational treatment approach" (Condino et al. 2016:82) and is "the most widely adopted approach for intervening with men who batter and keeping women safer" (The Duluth Model, n.d.). According to Pence and Paymar (1993) and Condino et al. (2016:81-83) the model is "based on a feminist theory positing that domestic violence results from patriarchal ideology in which men are encouraged and expected to control their partners" through the 'Power and Wheel'⁴.

Notwithstanding widespread disputes over the central characteristics of the approach, the majority of current interventions do indeed champion key

⁴ A tool utilized to help explain the different tactics that perpetrators use against their partners, in the context of a larger construct of socialisation (Condino et al 2016, p.82)

aspects of feminist perspectives on the etiology of IPV (Maiuro and Eberle, 2008; Dutton and Nicholls, 2005; Straus, 2011). Commentators acknowledge that, on the whole, there is a gendered power disparity, and that this is a central reason women are victimised in intimate partner relationships.

In the late 1970s, several programmes began providing support and shelter to victims of abuse in the UK. But as is the case around the world, it was soon recognised that, without engaging perpetrators, no real headway into ending domestic violence could be made (Barner and Carney, 2011). Despite the Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004 which criminalizes domestic violence in the UK, once external monitoring had ended, many men continued to offend (Dobash et al. 2000). This necessitated more comprehensive approaches to changing perpetrators' attitudes and beliefs about the permissibility and tolerability of violence towards women. As a result, many UK (and US) women's groups began offering psycho-educational programmes to IPV perpetrators (Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

According to Price and Rosenbaum (2009), Williamson and Hester (2009) and Dobash et al. (2000), the first court-mandated DVIPs only appeared in Britain in the late 1990s, and, as of 2009, there were only 47 domestic violence intervention programmes operating within the criminal justice system. In England and Wales, Respect, a membership association for community based DVIPs, was established in 2000/1 (Respect, n.d.) and in 2007, introduced

Minimum Standards of Practice similar to the USA (Babcock et al. 2016). According to Respect (2021), to date only 34 programmes are fully accredited, with a few others certified to provide interventions on behalf of the family courts. It was also reported that other programmes exist that have not been accredited by Respect. Nonetheless, community-based programmes are generally sparse (Respect, 2021).

Research around the effectiveness of interventions has compelled considerable scholarship. These debates have centered around methodological difficulties (Dunford, 2000; Labriola et al. 2008); attrition at follow up evaluations (Davis et al. 2000, compounding factors such as the role of the justice systems (Gondolf, 2002; Labriola et al. 2008), generalizability (Williamson and Hester, 2009), lack of control groups (Murphy and Ting, 2010; Dobash et al. 2000).

Consequently, these inconsistent findings regarding the effectiveness have led others (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006) to argue that it is imperative to understand why men resort to violence and abuse and how they could change their abusive behaviours in the first instance and during the intervention (Hester and Lilley, 2014). From the analyses, what is less clear is how the men begin to engage with the processes of changing abusive behaviours. This information is critical to the design of effective models in

reducing the occurrence of domestic violence (Scott and Wolfe, 2000; Gondolf, 1997; Eckhardt et al. 2013; Walker et al. 2015; Feld and Straus, 1989).

Reflexive Personal Narrative

Prior to my decision to undertake the study as part of my doctoral studies, and subsequently started literature review, I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of referrals made to the Local Authority in which domestic abuse and violence was a feature. Referrals from the Metropolitan Police accounted for more than half the work and domestic violence and abuse was often a key feature. Alarming, more than 70% of the child protection plans issued within that London borough were to do with emotional and physical abuse connected to domestic abuse.

A closer review of performance indicators also led me to the realisation that the majority of repeat referrals to the local authority were related to domestic abuse. A wider review of the police reports also showed that most repeat crimes in relation to interpersonal violence was around domestic violence. My curiosity raised two issues. Firstly, what interventions had previously been offered to the men who had perpetrated violence? And, secondly, what was the impact of the interventions on the men themselves?

As I continued to review available literature, it became evident that there had been, in some cases, interventions had been offered in the past to the perpetrators in the form of perpetrators' programmes. I then asked myself a series of questions: Why then do these men continue to abuse their partners? Does that mean the interventions were ineffective? If so, why? And finally, what do men who have used these interventions say about their experiences of using these services? That last question was my biggest inspiration for undertaking this research because, as I have mentioned elsewhere, when I started to review literature on the subject, it was evident that the accounts of men who had used perpetrators' programmes, and what they found useful from those services, was conspicuously absent. This discovery culminated in my decision to study and bring to the fore the men's voices, their experiences of participation in the perpetrators' programme.

The Structure of this Thesis

The first chapter introduces the research topic, research aims and rationale, as well as the research questions and the significance of the research. The chapter also outlines the general research design and methodology.

Chapter two provides a historical background to the main themes and theories around domestic abuse. The chapter focuses on the extent of domestic abuse and competing theories around understanding the problem.

The literature review also focuses on the studies and research around approaches to addressing domestic abuse, including search criteria. More specifically, the chapter reviews key emergent themes from literature around the effectiveness of domestic violence interventions and contextualises the research questions.

Chapter three discusses the conceptual framework for the study, adapted from Michie et al.'s COM-B (2014), which is used to explore men's experiences with the perpetrators' programme.

Chapter four discusses the research methodology. The first subsection focuses on the research paradigms, before turning to the research design and justification for the choice of this design. The next section discusses the setting for the study. This is followed by a discussion of data collection procedures, how research participants were recruited, the procedure for data collection and analysis. The section also narrates what and how ethical considerations were taken into account in the process of collecting these accounts. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection.

Chapter five presents the key results of the study, including biological and cultural profiles of the men who had come into contact with the perpetrators' programme and their individual stories. The chapter sets the stage for the analysis of key findings and key themes of the study.

Chapter six discourses the study findings and the practice and research implications on the phenomenon of domestic violence and abuse. The chapter also discusses the key strengths and limitations of the study.

Chapter seven concludes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the ongoing and persistent global problems of domestic abuse and violence. It further highlights challenges that stymie efforts that are targeted at effectively tackling the soaring incidences on domestic abuse and violence, which have been exacerbated by the lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter has also discussed varying opinions regarding the effectiveness of intervention programmes and the awful lack of literature on perpetrators' experiences with domestic abuse intervention services and has offered a rationale for this particular study. Finally, it has provided a general overview of the methodology and research design for undertaking the study. The next chapter presents a literature review for understanding the problem, and an analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

This chapter focuses on the strategy for literature review. Among the key terms that I used to guide search literature review were intimate partner violence and related terminologies, effectiveness, turning points, pathways and trajectories, perpetrators stories and closely related terms. As such, I reviewed data bases such as International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSSS), Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Social Work Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts, Care Data, Journal Storage (JSTOR), PubMed, Sage Journals, Psych INFO, Google Scholar, ResearchGate and related sites. I also researched grey literature including government documents such as working documents and policies, programme, and intervention literature. This was done to improve reliability and validity (Wysocki, 2007; Brown, 2006; McNabb, 2008; Akoensi et al. 2013; Petticrew and Roberts, 2006; King et al. 2011) of the literature and inform the arguments underpinning this thesis.

Men who perpetrate domestic abuse and violence hold the key to why they commit these crimes. It is, therefore, imperative that we get to the heart of the abuse and violence they commit in intimate partner relationships and ask key questions around why, how, and what.

Their stories, as I argued in the first chapter, have been alarmingly absent in the quest to find an effective intervention model. Nevertheless, as with any focal point of research, we need to recognize the extensive research conducted in relation to these types of crimes.

In reviewing the five decades' worth of research into why perpetrators commit IPV, and how best to find effective interventions, I have pinpointed three key challenges: (a) considerable disagreements and doubts about the effectiveness of perpetrators' programmes; (b) ambiguities regarding how men engage in the change process; and (c) the woefully under-researched and undocumented accounts of the men who utilise perpetrators' programmes and sometimes disregarding their narratives as anecdotal. Westmarland and Kelly (2013) and Eckhardt et al. (2013) have also recognised these challenges.

This chapter establishes a conceptual framework of domestic abuse based on four key areas covered in the literature that is available on the subject. Specifically, chapter (a) explores theoretical approaches related to domestic violence; (b) discusses some of the interventions and approaches to address domestic violence, review their relative merits, and present a history of domestic violence interventions; (c) reviews the relative effectiveness of the different approaches and interventions; and (d) provides a review of literature and outline the key themes that underpins the current study.

Theorising Domestic Violence

The challenge with explaining reasons why people commit IPV is such that it cannot be boiled down to one theory around which all experts and researchers can build consensus. This assertion is clearly evident from the discordance of opinions on and approaches to IPV.

Given that IPV is mostly perpetrated by males against women, it is reasonable to conclude that gender plays a crucial role in understanding IPV. Durfee (2011:522) summarises the primary gender issue that divides scholars in the discussion:

“Family violence researchers argue that domestic violence is gender symmetrical – men and women are equally likely to both use violence and to be victimised in their intimate relationships. Research by feminist researchers, however, argues that domestic violence is gender asymmetrical – men are far more likely than women to use violence and women are far more likely than men to be victimised by an intimate partner.”

In the 1990s (but not published until 2008) Johnson (2008:323) developed a typology that attempted to conflate the divisions of opinion about what constitutes IPV by rejecting it as a ‘unitary phenomenon’ and instead delineating it into three major forms: “intimate terrorism”, “violent resistance”, and “situational couple violence”.

The first, referred to as "intimate terrorism," is primarily perpetrated by men and is characterized by an underlying pattern of coercive "control by one partner and to exert general control over the relationship" (Ferguson et al. 2020:323). According to Johnson (2008), the second type, known as "violent resistance," refers to the self-defense mechanisms employed primarily by women towards a perpetrator of intimate terrorism.

The third type of violence in relationships is known as "situational couple violence," which is defined as an altercation that occurs in an intimate relationship outside of a control framework. It involves acts of aggression and violence (verbal or physical) and property damage, and it escalates between a couple who typically has poor communication skills (Project Safe, 2021). It is thought to be "rooted in the stresses of family life and that some of the conflict situations may escalate to violence" (Johnson, 2008:324).

However, Johnson has been criticised for not adequately addressing a fourth category he briefly mentioned. This form is known as "mutual violent control," (Durfee, 2011:523) when one or both spouses use violence to gain control. Hines and Douglas (2016) have questioned Johnson's typology based on the sample biases and asserted that violence is exclusively perpetrated by men and that it is not always driven by motives of control.

I agree with Dixon and Graham-Kevan (2011) in their assertion that intimate partner violence cannot be adequately characterized by any single perspective, theory, or factor. However, factors such as lower socioeconomic status, unemployment, adverse childhood experiences, a hostile home environment, poor executive function, low empathy, relationship conflicts, and support for gender-specific roles are commonly found in cases of IPV (Stith et al. 2004; Capaldi et al. 2012; Cummings et al. 2013; Oram et al. 2014; Mancera et al. 2017; Cafferky et al. 2018; Fazel et al. 2018, Golding,1992).

Debate and division still rage over the significance of gender inequalities and patriarchy as causal factors, relative to specific social contexts and situations (Azam and Naylor, 2013) leading Heise (1998:262) to conclude that our understanding of IPV:

“...has been severely hampered by the narrowness of traditional academic disciplines and by the tendency of both academics and activists to advance single-factor theories rather than explanations that reflect the full complexity and messiness of real life.”

Thus, Heise instead proposes an integrative theory that considers the “interplay among personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors” (1998: 263-264). Thus, according to LSHTM, 2010, Krug et al. (2002), Abrahams et al., 2006, Heise, 2011, Jewkes, 2002, Fleming et al. 2013, domestic violence and abuse is a gender, public health, and human rights concern. I will return to this model

later. The next part, however, focuses on the beliefs that have shaped past and contemporary theories of domestic violence and abuse causation and, consequently, directed most interventions in this area.

Pathology has historically been one of the primary explanations for IPV that has influenced interventions and treatments (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994; Gibbons et al. 2011). According to Burelomova et al. (2018:135), abusive men typically have some form of mental health disorders. Earlier, LaFontaine and Lussier (2005) found a close association between IPV and insecure attachments. The three types of violence are categorized as "family only, generally violent/antisocial, and dysphoric/borderline". The primary claim of this theory is that the factors most intricately linked to violence against women are trauma (LaFontaine and Lussier, 2005), reactive aggressiveness (Berkowitz, 1989), learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), prenatal factors, attachment, personality disorder, anger, and depression (Sonkin and Dutton, 2003). These factors can account for maladaptive conflict-resolution strategies in adulthood and intimate relationships.

Consequent upon this perspective leads to the conceptualization of the two primary intervention methods or approaches. Firstly, interventions aim to address mental health disorders therapeutically—this includes cognitive behavioural therapy and other approaches—and secondly, they support people in developing pro-social behaviours.

However, it has been argued that this theory is insufficient, particularly in cases when the majority of perpetrators rarely fit the typical profile for mental illness (Ouellet-Morin et al. 2015). Similarly, Amirthalingam, a human rights lawyer and expert on domestic violence, argued that because the "root cause of violence lies in an unequal power relationship between men and women that is compounded in male dominated societies," the adoption of the idea that violence is pathological ignored the role of gender in society (2005:684). Thus, according to Riggs et al. (2000), it is imperative to emphasize the importance of "power and dominance" in explaining domestic abuse in intimate partner relationships.

Loss of control, anger, and frustration may sometimes be due to alcohol use or the use of psychotropic medications (Graham et al. 2011; Shorey et al. 2015; Riggs and O'Leary, 1996). This is another reason for the perpetration of IPV that has been advanced. Therefore, violence could be viewed as a result of inadequate communication and conflict-resolution techniques (Saunders 1998) resulting from the above.

In this regard, family therapies (e.g. couple therapy), could be one approach to resolving these problems, especially the victims' and the perpetrators' communication difficulties. While family therapies, such as couple counselling, can enhance individuals' negotiation skills, they may also reduce the necessity for separation to ensure victims' safety and discourage victims

from voicing their concerns during sessions. It is indeed a fact that certain individuals, in specific circumstances and locations, may sometimes experience violence after such sessions (Hyde-Nolan and Juliao, 2012).

Ecological theorists argue that violence can be explained by a variety of interacting factors, including societal, individual, and other factors, depending on the contexts (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Dasgupta, 2002; Dasgupta, 2019). According to Danis (2003), this theory suggests that risk factors, which are typically a combination of individual, community, and societal factors, can be identified and linked to domestic violence and abuse at three different levels: micro (such as programmes for perpetrators), meso (such as arrests and court mandates), and macro (coordinated practices).

There exist other non-explanatory theories per se, but rather speak to compounding factors. For example, the 'helplessness'⁵ (Hyde-Nolan and Juliao, 2012; Seligman, 1975; Strong et al 2011; Maier and Seligman, 2016; Cherry, 2017) where migration is one factor (Westmarland and Kelly, 2013) can complicate our understanding of, and attitudes towards, decision-making within the context of intimate partner violence.

In my 20 years of experience as a social worker, I believe that the learned helplessness theory is inconsistent with many women's experiences who find

⁵ Helplessness theory refers to unwillingness to escape an abusive relationship rendering them 'helpless' which consequently leads to flight/escape/deactivation (Maier and Seligman, 2016)

themselves in abusive relationships. Downs and Fisher (2005) also agree that the helplessness theory is inconsistent and based on limited sample of women. Rather than being helpless, it is evident that, in a lot of cases, victims sometimes dynamically attempt to secure their safety and that of their children in very conscious ways. This can happen by, for example, leaving multiple times or otherwise trying to minimise the abuse and how they might sometimes blame themselves for the abuse or retaining hope that their partners might change, especially if the perpetrators might have offered what the victims might consider to be contrition. I have experienced situations where instead of succumbing to a life of 'learned helplessness', the victims may at times engage in the process of 'staying, leaving and returning'.

It is evident that intimate partner relationships can be dynamic and sometimes it is hard to deal with intentionality. This position also belies the experiences of women who indicate, sometimes, that the process of making-up or reconstructing relationships occurs against the background of unique experiences of abuse and in the context of few viable alternatives to ending these relationships. Therefore, the helplessness theory rarely captures the unique dynamics of relationships and what are sometimes other complicating factors. It is also the case that both men and women can, and do, contribute to violence (Cercone et al. 2005; Nichols and Schwartz, 2004; Orcutt, et al. 2005). This can sometimes diminish the perpetrator's responsibility for their abusive actions (Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Berkel et al. 2004).

The social and learning theory has emerged to be the most influential explanatory element in the contemporary discourse on domestic violence and abuse. The main argument posits that social norms and attitudes regarding violence are acquired through modelling and reinforcement (Bandura,1973; Ehrensaft et al. 2003; Powers et al. 2017). According to this perspective, children who are frequently exposed to peer and parental conflict within families during their formative years, might internalise aggressive practices for resolving problems (Wareham et al. 2009). According to Vung and Krantz (2009) and Murrell et al. (2007), the majority of victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse themselves either witnessed or experienced abuse as children, which led to a level of acceptance or tolerance of violence in the family. Explicit and implicit in this theory is that children who experienced abuse would subsequently engage in similar behaviours in adult intimate and other relationships. The key attributes of the social and learning theory are ideas around masculinity, heroism, hedonism, and attribution. For example, Hearn (1998) has agreed with this perspective, arguing that domestic violence and abuse are deeply entwined with masculinity, where violence is tolerated to reinforce hierarchical gender roles.

Commenting on the concept of masculinity (a social construct), Bourdieu (2001) argues that manliness effectively needs to be acknowledged and validated by others and that men are socialised to play a variety of "masculine games of competition" (Bourdieu, 2001:52), which can include violence.

Whitehead (2005) agrees with this perspective that violence, in many ways, is exacerbated by societal masculine dominance and gender inequality.

Similarly, some other conceptions of masculinity (Robertson, 2007) assert that conformance are created by an individual's social status (e.g., parent, neighbour, doctor) (Jewkes et al. 2016). This is not only internalised as cultural norms associated with masculinity, but also feasible to envision violence as a method of controlling others to conform to their social status.

Whitehead (2005) argues that heroism is among the most important masculinity elements of contemporary societies. This can be the case especially in armed conflict where masculinity takes a unique perspective. In the face of conflict, interpersonal violence is a desirable (occasionally the only) default choice of action relative to others to reaffirm their status as man. The victim is therefore devalued, feminised, and endangered (Whitehead, 2005, Ferrales et al. 2016) in what is considered the reproduction of 'masculinity as heroism'. Thus heroism can explain male-female partner violence.

White et al. (2008) contributes to the debate by arguing that attributions for IPV have purchase in dominance or hedonism, although there are notable similarities and differences between victims and perpetrators based on the types of abuse. For example, Dutton (2006) argues that the victims' attributions for perpetration of physical violence is strongly associated with

anger, control, jealousy, and substance misuse. On the other hand, psychological abuse is strongly associated with perpetrator's personality, relationships being dissolved, substance misuse, and their partners' jealousy. According to Dutton (2006), sexual violence slightly differs between victims and perpetrators and is often attributed to substance misuse or falsely equating violence to love.

Mullaney (2007) offers a very illuminating two-pronged explanation for the perpetration of violence. She separates this into "accountability and blame attribution." The main argument of the blame attribution theory is that society upholds negative stereotypes of women by placing the blame on IPV victims. Shaver (1970) previously suggested that those who have close relationships with IPV victims are less inclined to hold the victim accountable, and that while attribution of guilt declines, similarity with victims increases. However, Lerner (1980:229) advanced the case—based on the just world hypotheses—that perpetrators have a tendency to believe that they live in a just world “where people get what they deserve”. Consequently, from this theory, it can be concluded that victims of violence and abuse receive justice and that those who commit acts of violence face no consequences.

Some ‘power and resource’ theorists (Goode, 1971; Bostock et al. 2009; Fahmy and Williamson, 2018; Westmarland and Kelly, 2013) argue that violence can result from perpetrators’ needs to gain and maintain power and control

within relationships based on the victims' perceived limited options for independence. As such powerful members of the family (husbands, fathers) often use threats or force (coercion, isolation) and socio-economic status to control partners (Mihalic and Elliot, 2005; Choudry, 1996). Implicit in this premise is that the victims become compliant for survival. Those unable to control others in this way may resort to violence. Hence, the need for "expanded space for action" for victims (Westmarland and Kelly, 2013:1100).

The basic premise posits that the patriarchal systems of male privilege (characterised by gender inequalities and sexism), power and control encourage men to be violent towards women (WHO 2002; Maurico and Gormley, 2001 Abrar et al. 2000, Zakar et al. 2013, Yllö, 2005). Jewkes (2002) asserts that the masculine identity is the culture within which violence is encouraged (Bell and Naugle, 2008; Dutton, 2006).

Therefore, gender-focused interventions typically use operant conditioning to teach perpetrators multiple ways to behave differently towards others. Therefore, perpetrators are 'forced' to learn by rewarding good behaviour and punishing or negatively reinforcing bad behaviour. This framework aids in defining the parameters within which we may be able to locate the process of change but suggesting that effective interventions must start with perpetrators acknowledging their abusive behaviours.

The approaches, on the other hand, do not answer the questions of why most men who had experienced abuse in childhood do not abuse their own children in adulthood. It is true that not all adults grow up to commit IPV themselves (Daigneault et al. 2009; Steel et al. 2017; Riggs, et al. 2000) and that witnessing violence is insufficient to explain perpetration of IPV in adulthood.

Another more recent proposition, which arguably strongly influenced this study is that of Javier and Herron (2018) who argue that the two theories of 'mentalisation' and 'revenge' form a strong foundational base for understanding domestic abuse and interventions. With regards to mentalisation (the inability or unwillingness to see the viewpoint of others is used to justify violence), the abusers' empathy is either underdeveloped or disappears in the context of being in the right and the abused being in the wrong. This often starts with pathological theory of the mind (deficient mentalisation) involving a false sense of reality. On the other hand, revenge is about a degree of denial of shame and obsessive rage resulting in a damaged sense of individual meaning and the abusers seeking revenge as restoration that includes being valued by others. Thus, violence and abuse suggest relative failure of mentalisation resulting in the need to harm others.

This analysis demonstrates the complexity of any attempt to define IPV and therefore conceptualise appropriate and effective interventions. In the end, this has led some to argue for a more integrative model that takes account of

the complex nature of intimate partner violence and abuse. For example, the pre-eminent emergence of the Duluth Model with the 'Power and Control Wheel' in the 60s and 70s being the main operational and analytical framework (Mihalic and Elliot, 2005; Dutton, 2011) to unpick the diverse schemes abusive men employ to preserve and strengthen power and control over their current or ex-partners.

The main argument put forth in the intervention is that instances of violence are seldom standalone occurrences of losing control, or even recurring displays of anger and frustration. Instead, these actions are part of a broader pattern of behaviour aimed at asserting and retaining power and control over victims. Although individuals may have experienced violence and substance misuse during childhood, these factors alone may not fully account for the occurrence of violence in intimate relationships. It is clear that political, cultural, and economic structures at times tolerate, enforce and perpetuate the subordination of women to men, resulting in unequal power dynamics.

Recently, other integrative models have also been developed to both understand IPV and devise interventions for tackling the same. For example, Bell and Naugle (2008) hypothesize that to effectively address IPV, it is imperative to target behaviour (e.g. physical, sexual or psychological aggression); antecedents of target behaviour; discriminative stimuli (e.g. presence/absence of others); motivating factors (e.g. substance abuse,

emotional distress); behavioural repertoire (e.g. coping skills, anger management skills); verbal rules (e.g. beliefs about violence or women); and consequences (reinforcement and punishment) should all be included in the analysis and therefore the formulation of interventions. However, to establish its usefulness and relevance to the debate, this model must firstly undergo systematic scrutiny.

Winstok (2007:357) developed an “Integrative Structural Model of Violence (ISMV)” to assist in understanding and intervening in IPV but that this should be conceived at four levels; violent behaviour (motive, action itself, consequences); the situation in which the violence occurs; the relationships between the parties; and the sociocultural context of the relationships. This model needs rigorous testing.

Suffice to reiterate what Heise (1998 and 2011), Krug et al. (2002), Jewkes (2002), LSHTM (2010), Abrahams et al. (2006), Fleming et al. (2013) argue that domestic violence and abuse are a gender, public health, and human rights concern due to the interplay among personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors. It is notable, that traditional theories of violence, however frequently incorrectly interpreted, have continued to influence victim protection strategies as well as perpetrators interventions, despite the absence of straightforward explanations for family violence, that it occurs and is

prevalent in many societies regardless of relative levels of economic development and sophistication.

In the context of this thesis, the elements of theoretical formulations around the causes of IPV and therefore interventions, could be located within the **capability, motivations, and opportunity** (see Michie et al. 2014 below). It is, therefore, the case that based on the theories above, the majority of domestic violence and abuse is built around and sustained by a process of **socialisation** or **learning** (of both the perpetrators and victims), there can be a clear **motive** for engaging in violent behaviours (including masculinity, dominance, power and control) and intimate partner relationships provide the **opportunity** to do so. This conceptual framework helps to locate the levels at which the turning points towards the change process or desistance from violent and abusive behaviour, which can be directly attributed to the interventions. The forgoing seems to imply that interventions must concurrently address the three essential components of learning, motivations, and opportunities in order to be meaningful and effective.

Domestic Violence Interventions: A Historical Overview

Each of the theoretical orientation discussed above offers meaningful insight into the characterization of domestic violence and abuse. For example, the learning theory helps to explain why exposure to childhood trauma

occasioned by violence can lead to adults who become abusers themselves. This can form the strongest rationale for the design of corrective interventions with a focus on unlearning abusive behaviours. Similarly, feminist theory justifies reformist interventions to reframe the victim-perpetrator dynamics, with a focus on broadening women's options for independence from male control. The social exchange theory is the strongest basis for law enforcement and prosecution for offenders and perpetrators of IPV.

Having accepted that the issue of intimate partner violence has 'crossed over' from being a private matter to a public one, the next question occupying those in positions of leadership is to identify what the appropriate strategy is to deal with the scourge, especially with respect to perpetrators. It is theoretically possible to distinguish two (2) broad scholarly approaches occupying research around how violence can cease: *structural events* (such as maturation/adulthood, parenthood, employment) that create systems of social control (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Farrall, 2022) the *change directly attributable to perpetrator's programmes* (Dobash et al. 2000; Sheehan et al. 2012). Arising from this are therefore a spectrum of four (4) main approaches or strategies, for addressing intimate partner violence.

The first intervention strategy for addressing intimate partner violent perpetrators involves mandatory arrest when violence is considered a criminal offence. This approach primarily focuses on law enforcement, which

includes police arrests, legal restrictions, court proceedings, imprisonment, and probation. An essential component of this strategy is that any form of violence, even within intimate relationships, is considered a criminal act that may result in legal action, such as prosecution, imprisonment, fines, warnings, and other associated outcomes. This approach may involve engaging perpetrators in perpetrators' programmes. (Wilson, 2003; Carter, 2009; Saunders, 2008; Westmarland and Kelly, 2013; Pence and Paymar, 1993; Murphy and Eckhardt, 2005).

The second distinct strategy is to provide interventions related to violence in conjunction with mental health services. An essential part of this strategy is recognising the significant link between mental health and domestic violence. This method primarily emphasises mental health (including personality disorders) as the main contributor to violent and abusive behaviours. The fundamental idea is that when men's mental health is adequately addressed, they are less likely to engage in abusive behaviours.

The third approach considers the influence of substance misuse in explaining violent behaviours. This is derived from research indicating that a significant number of domestic abuse incidents involve substance misuse, such as alcohol or other harmful substances, as contributing factors. Similar to the approach mentioned earlier, this presupposes that addressing substance misuse among men can lead to a decrease in domestic abuse cases.

And lastly, the community response is where domestic violence is treated at the community level mainly on a voluntary manner. This includes programmes that are run by voluntary services and referrals to such services may be voluntary and may be a combination of referrals by social workers, probation officers or court mandated sentences.

Recently, many programmes combined two or more of these four approaches in the design of interventions (Babcock et al. 2004). For example, it is not uncommon for perpetrators to receive a fine and court mandated to attend a community and voluntary perpetrators programme. The key strategy relevant to this thesis is the community response.

Suffice to say that, since the 1970s and 80s, work with perpetrators has gradually developed as the central element of domestic violence support services (Wilson, 2003; Carter, 2009; Saunders, 2008; Westmarland and Kelly, 2013). As well as policies and laws including criminalising abusive behaviours in intimate partner relationships (Barney and Carney, 2011), the key component of the United States (US) Duluth model for tackling domestic violence is psycho-educational 'treatment' or 'therapy' for perpetrators. As Pence and Paymar (1993) argue, this approach helps to shine the light on

negative patriarchal ideology which socializes men to control their partners within the context of the control wheel⁶.

This programme, developed from a social work perspective, typically disdains Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-type diagnoses, and hardly views the intervention as therapeutic (Mederos, 1999; Pence and Paymar, 1993; Dutton and Corvo, 2007). The interventions last anywhere between 8 and 52 weeks. The goal is to re-educate men in order for them to shift their beliefs and behaviors toward treating women as equals (Lawson, 2012) and unpick tactics they use to control women (Pence and Paymar, 1993), which other interventions such as couple counselling do not do (Morran, 2011). The feminist Duluth-type model remains the unopposed approach to treat IPV perpetrators in most communities, globally.

According to Bowen (2011), the perpetrators programmes emerged in the UK in the 1970s directly out of the women's shelter movement influenced by the North America's Duluth model (ManAlive, Emerge, DAIP). They were driven in the UK by 2 related factors. The first in England was due to other men's concern with male violence whilst in Scotland, it appears that they emerged due to the unsatisfactory criminal justice processes of consequences of abusive actions on the perpetrators.

⁶ A tool often employed to help explain the different tactics that perpetrators use against partners, in the context of a larger construct of socialization (Pence and Paymar 1993).

Deemed an “educational” programme (Pence and Paymar, 1993:1), the developers took inspiration from Paulo Friere’s notion of education to foster “reflexive and critical thinking” (ibid:67) rather than a form of a didactic approach. By far the most important aspect of the Duluth model, however, is the CCR from which the men’s group was a secondary development. The majority of British programmes, however, originated outside of the resources and reach of the statutory sector in a coordinated manner. Despite differentiated origins of Scottish and English programmes, English DVPP developed from pro-feminist men’s groups concerned about male violence and specifically violence against women mainly located within the voluntary sector (Phillips et al. 2013; Scourfield and Dobash, 1999). The Scottish programmes were influenced by feminist activists in government and academia (The CHANGE programme; Phillips, 2013).

The women's movement had brought about a huge shift in public awareness of domestic violence and, as a result of the work being done with female victim-survivors, there was an increasing recognition of the need to confront men’s violence in a unique way. Alongside this were shifts within the criminal justice system which were also influential in a broader sense, both in the development of programmes and in the emerging issue of programme integrity. This begins with the ‘rehabilitative ideal’ – the idea that offenders could be rehabilitated, rather than simply incarcerated – a concept that has always been contested.

However, before turning to the programmes themselves, it is important to learn from the perpetrators who have come to the notice of authorities specifically rationalise and account for their use of violence. Based on several interviews with men, Hearn (1998) on 'the violences of men' and Dobash et al. (2000) on study of court-mandated programmes, there appears to be a considerable alarming rate of inconsistencies in men's testimonials. As well as including repudiation, justifications, excuses and sometimes confessions about the use of violence in intimate relationships, testimonials are characterized by elevated levels of ambiguity, ambivalence, and paradoxes about the connection between masculinity and intimate partner violence.

These key factors have implications for engagements with the perpetrators of violence and abuse. For example, ambivalent men repudiate, justify, and excuse their behaviours and are more likely to be resistant to engagement in interventions. Conversely, those who admit to and acknowledge their abusive behaviours are more likely to accept interventions, albeit with additional motives being brought to bear on their decisions. However, it is also likely the case that some who may repudiate, justify, or minimise their actions, publicly, or before a professional may also cease their abusive behaviours, privately. It is equally likely that those who publicly confess may continue to behave in abusive manners, privately. These implications suggest the complexity of making singular conclusions from these testimonials.

Perpetrators Programmes; Typologies, Structures and Content

Concerted efforts have been made worldwide to tackle the scourge of domestic violence, and specifically, intimate partner violence. After initially experimenting with the provision of services to women to keep them safe, and the overwhelming number of men arrested for assaulting their partners, it was recognised that the men cannot be kept in prison indefinitely, and that others did not meet the criteria for imprisonment. Naturally, the logical question arose about what to do with the male perpetrators of violence. As such, domestic violence perpetrators programmes emerged in the 1970s and 80s in the USA as an experimental way to explore whether men can be engaged in a process of change of attitude towards violence against women. The interventions have since spread around the world with some adaptations.

It has been argued that perpetrators' programmes offer the possibility of a permanent cessation of abuse through the encouragement of internal reflection and change in the perpetrators' attitudes and behaviours (Dobash et al. 2000). This is particularly important as criminal sanctions cannot completely remove perpetrators from the community and, in any case, most perpetrators remain in relationships, either with their victim or with a new partner (Jewkes, 2014). Indeed, many victims do not want their (ex)-partner to be imprisoned and would rather the men be supported to change while remaining at home (Jewkes, 2014). If the perpetrator is the sole breadwinner

removing them can worsen a victim's quality of life (Jewkes, 2014; Fahmy and Williamson, 2018). As well as working with perpetrators outside of the criminal justice system to provide risk management, community-based programmes can free up prison capacities (Jewkes, 2014; Gondolf, 2002).

As argued above, the women's refuge movement in the UK began providing coordinated support to victims of abuse in the late 1970s but quickly recognised the need to engage perpetrators to make real headways in ending domestic violence (Barner and Carney, 2011). The recognition came on the back of the realization that abuse may continue post monitoring mechanisms (Dobash et al. 2000) while beliefs about the tolerability of violence towards women remain. As such, many UK and US women's groups began offering psycho-educational programmes (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). According to Bowen (2011) most of the perpetrators' programmes were initially located and provided outside of the criminal justice system (such as the Chiswick Shelter and the Men's Centre). Due to a push for criminalising of domestic violence offences, the Probation Service took a centre stage in funding perpetrators' programmes (Kelly and Westmarland, 2013) as well as other voluntary and community programmes introduced such as Change and Lothian project.

According to Bloomfield and Dixon (2015) and Phillips (2013), there are essentially four (4) types of perpetrators' programmes that have been implemented in the UK and around the world. They are mainly grouped

according to who delivers them. The first group is those delivered within the prison system and some specific programmes include the Healthy Relationships Programme (HRP) for sex offenders and domestic abuse. The focus of this intervention is on offenders who meet criteria for incarceration, and which also forms part of the conditions for discharge from prison.

The second is the probation-led behavioural change programme for convicted perpetrators which is mainly run by the voluntary agencies. These have included, *inter alia*, the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP). The third type is the community-based behavioural and attitude change programmes. These types are primarily delivered by agencies with links to the criminal justice system (for example perpetrators may be referred to these agencies as part of case disposal from the criminal justice systems). An example of this is the Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP).

These three types fall under the prison and probation services and mainly administered to high-risk offenders. The fourth type is the community-based behavioural and attitude change perpetrator programme. The unique feature of this type is that it has no clear link to the criminal justice system. Its voluntary nature suggests that perpetrators may be known to or are outside the criminal justice system for low to medium-risk violence offenders. This type falls under the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) scheme and is commonly referred to as the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP).

In the UK, the DVIP have been pioneered by the Standing Together (a Charity) for the last two decades. They take a whole systems approach and have tended to be co-located within children's social care services (Phillips, 2013; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015; Lilley-Walker et al. 2018). Under the DVIP, a coordinated community response requires perpetrators' programmes to work with male perpetrators of domestic abuse, partners and ex-partners and their children. According to Kelly and Westmarland (2013), perpetrators might be known to or outside of the criminal justice system. However, the interventions seek to take a holistic approach by ensuring simultaneous support to and for victims and their children. According to Bowen (2011), the core elements of the DVIP are expert risk assessments, change perpetrators' attitudes and behaviours around violence, and women and children's safety. The ultimate objective is to minimise the level of risks to victims and children that can result from attempts to change perpetrators' behaviours.

While Hamilton et al. (2012) and Akoensi et al. (2013) argue that it is theoretically possible to distinguish three main approaches and models to treating perpetrators of IPV: namely (a) psycho-educational feminist approach (b) psychological treatment based on psychopathologies and (c) dysfunctional family systems, Iwi and Newman (2015) and Jilozian (2019) dispute this that these are two (2) distinguishable primary models: feminist perspective and cognitive behavioural therapy. The first, feminist model

(constructed around, and inspired by Duluth model - Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989) predominantly firmly informs the majority of perpetrators' programmes. The fundamental idea behind perpetrators' programmes is that domestic abuse stems from men's learned dysfunctional behaviour used to gain power and control over partners, often driven by a sense of entitlement. It is a reflection of patriarchy that remains consistent across different societies.

The second primary model is the recognition of maladaptive thinking, attitudes and beliefs about power and control. Some scholars (Dixon et al., 2012; Henwood et al. 2015) argue that the intervention approach and strategy typically employs a nuanced analysis of gender in their work with IPV perpetrators using a combination of cognitive-behavioural and psycho-educational techniques. According to Adam (1988), Henwood et al. (2015), Smedslund et al. (2011), this approach includes teaching perpetrators skills such as anger management, how to effectively communicate in a non-violent manner, how to relax and calm down/deescalate and how to be aware of alternative violent behaviors and events likely to result in violent incidents.

Closely related to cognitive behavioural therapy is the psychotherapeutic approaches which maintain that perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse should receive extensive psychotherapeutic counselling for the trauma, often caused by childhood experiences (Stosny, 1995). According to Hickie (2018) and Andruczyk (2015), trauma-informed care (developed in the USA and

grounded in trauma recovery model of Skuse and Matthew (2015) recognises the role of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or trauma to explain why perpetrators' abuse victims. Similarly, Stevens (2017) argues that traditional perpetrators' programmes have often ignored ACEs in explaining the impact of childhood trauma on perpetrators and how relevant this is to the design of perpetrators' programmes. Hence, proponents of ACEs have argued for inclusion of the same to help the perpetrators connect past experiences to abuse. It has further been argued that ACEs should focus towards including the individual circumstances beyond gender attribution, in understanding personality disorders and substance abuse problems (Dutton and Corvo, 2006). Taft et al. (2016) adds to this debate by lamenting the limited framework for the integration of trauma-informed practice in most perpetrators' programmes. Examples of these include 'another way' and 'choosing to change' in the US. While some may argue that this approach seeks to excuse holding perpetrators accountable and assumes that they do not deserve kindness or respect, it is consistent with the good lives model of Ward et al. (2007) (see below). In addition, I contend that while there is no explicitly stated incorporation of trauma-informed care's adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) into existing perpetrator programmes, there is some prior evidence of their inclusion in the curricula of some. Anecdotal evidence from works by Ruhs (2022) with refugee men as well as the works of Dheensa et al. (2022) on the evaluation of the 'advance intervention' around IPV and substance misuse show some promising results in this regard.

Jenkins (2009) and Ward et al. (2007) have contributed to this debate by adding two (2) interrelated models referred to as the 'invitational model' and 'good lives model'. Both models propose an insight-oriented approach which mainly focuses on identifying values and a commitment to life goals of pro-social behaviours. Both these models essentially recognise and promote interventions that refocus abusers' commitment to ethical and pro-social behaviours, such as developing perpetrators' empathy towards victims. As Simons et al. (2006) argue, both models have a strength-based approach and calls for individualised methods to augment risks/needs and place less emphasis on deficiencies that underpin and explain violent and abusive behaviours. Other less popular approaches and models exist that are largely based on psychodynamic oriented theories tend to not directly address abusive behaviours. For instance, Butters et al. (2021) and Vigurs et al. (2016) contend that while individual needs play a significant role, the therapeutic approaches are mostly motivation-based and/or recovery-focused.

Based on the notion that (i) some men change when they perceive a bright future or (ii) some men change when they experience heat, it seems that the coordinated response has two primary foci (Iwi and Newman, 2015). In other words, the victims are encouraged or "forced" to make the perpetrator stay away from them or face repercussions, and the perpetrators are effectively obliged to avoid the victims or face consequences. This appears to be the most desirable default setting, particularly for child protection services. For

instance, in cases where abusers have children, the most severe penalties for their actions may be the removal of the children or restrictions of contact between the children and the perpetrators.

According to many academics (Iwi and Newman, 2015; Healey et al. 1998), perpetrators' programmes aim to broaden the definition of intimate partner violence (IPV) among perpetrators, raise their awareness of warning signs before violence escalates, and assist them in realising that violence is typically set within the context of power and coercive control as well as attitudes and behaviours that support patriarchy. This endeavour aims to assist perpetrators in developing empathy for victims and a critical understanding of the debilitating effects of abuse and violence on victims, especially children. Consequently, perpetrators would be compelled to stop their violent and abusive acts, attitudes, and behaviours. This perspective concurs with that of Maruna and Roy (2007) who argue that the negative consequences of intimate partner violence appear and ought to be replaced by a provision of new scripts for future identity (accompanied by new sets of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours) of what it means to be good men, good partner, good father, and positive role model.

Suffice to say that most programmes use group formats, although there is equally ongoing debate (McGinn et al. 2020) as to whether interventions with perpetrators are best delivered on an individual basis. While costs

affordability is one of the primary drivers for delivering programmes in group settings, I agree that attitudinal and belief system changes can also be best achieved on an individual basis. In fact, this forms the core of motivational interviewing and also closely related to the good lives model approaches. It is the case that most attitudes and beliefs and behaviours around women are learnt through specific forms of masculinity and associated socialisation processes. Consequently, it has been determined that the most effective method for promoting a new form of masculinity free from violence and abuse is through the re-socialization of perpetrators. Group formats are premised on the understanding and beliefs that intimate partner violence⁷ is a social construct. Thus, the programmes heavily draw on feminist approaches to analysis of IPV and thus deliver the programmes using techniques from group work and group dynamics (Labriola et al. 2008). Some scholars have pointed out that the intervention has been successful in breaking down violence and changing attitudes towards women, encouraging peer support, and promoting mutual self-help (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Mullender and Burton, 2001). Group work offers the opportunity to engage in role-play, elicit feedback from others (such as mentors, trainers, and fellow trainees), and safely challenge and confront beliefs around IPV.

As previously stated, one of the primary outcomes of the interventions is to help participants to be held accountable for their abusive behaviours and

⁷ Intimate partner violence is interchangeably used with domestic violence and domestic abuse, partner abuse or violence, battering, spousal abuse/violence, dating abuse (Smith et al. 2017)

actions and to highlight alternate ways of how to manage intimate relationships in non-abusive manners (Davis and Taylor, 1999). Through the group processes, men learn skills in critical thinking, strategies for resolving conflict, and new ways of relating to intimate partners. It is hoped that this in turn, will help the men incline their behaviours and realise the benefits of non-violent, respectful, supportive, trusting, honest and partnership working as well as how to negotiate fairly without resorting to violence.

According to Healey et al. (1998), Iwi and Newman (2015), Barnish (2004:84-85) there are essentially five (5) interrelated steps in setting up typical and successful perpetrators' programmes. It is important to determine that the perpetrators are motivated to engage in the programme. Motivation for change is strongly associated with recruitment, retention, and retention on perpetrators programmes. Drieschner et al. (2004) and Ward and Mann (2004) also agree with this position contending the importance of motivation for change to setting goals and construction. Therefore, in the intake and preparation stage, perpetrators need to acknowledge their abusive behaviours and demonstrate a sufficiently strong motivation to stop abuse. The perpetrators need to be convinced of their suitability to the programme. Central to this is the safety of the victims such that no one (including the perpetrators themselves) is harmed by virtual of a perpetrator accessing this intervention. Therefore, the victim's workers are informed of the readiness of the perpetrators to engage in the interventions and prepare the victims for

any potential effects of the perpetrator interventions (both positive and negative). Thirdly, the men are then oriented to the programme including how long the intervention will last and timing and expectations. The men will then start participating in the programme before they are offered additional or supplementary interventions and discharged from the interventions. It is crucial that these well-coordinated processes and stages are in place to guarantee that only appropriate candidates receive the intervention and that the victims are also protected.

The main goal of the intervention is to raise perpetrators' awareness of the progression towards violence and assist them in acquiring the skills to cease violent and abusive behaviours independently. Bates et al. (2019) confirm and argue that perpetrators programmes operate in tandem with CBT-informed therapeutic techniques to re-educating the men. Perpetrators must take responsibility for their actions, which may lead to feelings of sorrow and regret, ultimately fostering empathy for their victims. Perpetrators are urged to understand the expanded definition of abusive acts, which now includes non-physical abuse, and how they are connected to broader structural views against females. The perpetrators are also urged to practice non-abusive behaviours and contemplate how ACEs contribute to the perpetuation of IPV.

Contemporary UK DVPPs still draws on the Duluth model (Phillips, 2015), and many still use the early Duluth-based group-work manuals, albeit with

updates and adaptations, as the basis for their work. Modern respect accredited DVPPs have an integrated women's support service to increase the safety of women and children facilitated by trainers/facilitators (from both male and female). According to Respect (2017) standards, the perpetrators' group-work sessions are run by two facilitators, a male, and a female. When there are more than two facilitators, it is important to have at least one female to ensure that female voices and perspectives are represented in the work. A standard DVPP might simultaneously conduct multiple men's groups. It is the responsibility of the facilitators or trainers to clarify the purpose of the intervention, the methodology used in the sessions, the order of the sessions, and consistently assess and decide on the participants suitable for the intervention, as well as establish the anticipated outcomes of the intervention. According to Ross et al (2008) and Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003), the capacity and success of intervention plays a significant role in increasing perpetrators engagement, participation, and motivation for change. Bent-Goodley et al. (2007) support this viewpoint and suggest that interventions are most effective when led by trainers with a comprehensive understanding of race, culture, and the complexities of intimate partner violence, including masculinity and associated identity attributes. This is because as Sartin et al. (2006) argue, engaging with men who abuse can be difficult because men can be defensive, unmotivated, if insufficient care is given to the dynamics of IPV. Facilitators must have a thorough awareness of IPV and know how to handle it effectively without alienating the perpetrators from the interventions.

Recording (audio and video) sessions in men's group-work is a common practice for training and supervision purposes. The supervision task is carried out by all group-work facilitators, who watch the videos with an internal or external 'treatment/practice manager' to analyze the work delivery and propose potential areas for enhancement. The aim is to exchange pertinent information related to risk, as well as topics concerning men's engagement and accountability. Further, it is aimed at ensuring that facilitators continue to collaborate closely with the participants in a responsive manner, incorporating the subjective experiences they bring into the group discussions, all within the structure of a standardized curriculum.

Whilst most DVPPs continue to take 'voluntary' referrals from men, it has been noted that a growing proportion of referrals come from statutory services (Kelly and Westmarland, 2013). This is because the greater responsibility of perpetrators' programmes to wider society cannot be overemphasised. Explicitly, the programmes are squarely based on the premise that the perpetrators recruited to the programme have the ability to change and should be held accountable for not just their violence but also the consequences of these acts and are given the realistic opportunity to sustain change. Hence, the main focus is on ensuring that perpetrators are motivated to change their behaviours, and that a supportive environment is established to encourage participants to share information while also safeguarding the victims. The Home Office (2018) has summarised these

considerations into basic standards of which are subdivided into seven (7). As such, perpetrators are treated with respect and accorded their intrinsic worth (Respect, 2017; Respect, 2022; WWP EN, 2018; Home Office, 2023). A typical programme starts with participants describing their behaviours and rehearsing alternative substitute behaviours (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Healey et al. 1998). The programmes and trainers need the skills to help the men to understand that using violence is a learnt choice and therefore can be unlearned. In the initial stages, perpetrators are respectfully challenged and discourses around denial and justification as well as excuses are deconstructed. As such, the programmes encourage pro-social attitudes and goals whose purpose is to help people develop new skills that help them to problem-solve, take perspectives, manage relationships, and manage themselves. As Hamberger and Hastings (1988, 1993) and Davis and Taylor (1999) argue, the training also involves teaching the men cognitive-behavioural skills in managing stressful situations, being assertive in non-aggressive and abusive ways and how to control anger.

Throughout the intervention, practitioners and facilitators alike aim to ensure that no one is harmed by virtue of enrolment on the programme. As such, some perpetrators may become ineligible for these interventions and subsequently excluded before and during the interventions. In certain cases, in-depth psychotherapeutic counselling is also included (National Probation Directorate, 2005). According to Stanley et al. (2012), upon evaluation of the

Strength to Change Programme in North-East England, current domestic violence programmes have increasingly started to incorporate perspectives taking i.e., incorporating concepts of empathy and fatherhood in programming. As Davys and Beddie (2020), Stover and Lent (2014) and Morrison et al. (2019) argue, this process therefore requires that staff who deliver perpetrators programmes are skilled in managing group or individual processes of domestic violence and abuse, who are adequately supported and also treat perpetrators with respect and dignity but also holding them to account for their abusive behaviours and attitudes.

Notably, society has generally and increasingly become more aware about and pre-occupied with people who abuse others, with often low levels of empathy, through what could be coined as the 'empathy gap' (Home Office, 2018). Whatever persuasion, as a concept, empathy (whose etymology is found in Greek concepts 'empathia' and 'en pathos' (de Waal, 2008; Fitzmaurice, 2015) is often understood at two primary levels - cognitive and affective. According to Kerr-Gaffney et al. (2019) and Goubert et al. (2011), cognitive empathy involves one's awareness of emotional distress experienced by another. It refers to possessing the intellect, intent, and ability to make decisions that impact on others. Within the context of IPV, it entails understanding the impact of causing harm to someone and making a conscious decision on whether to inflict pain on them.

According to Marshall and Marshall (2011) and affective empathy involves one responding appropriately to the other's distress. This can include how the feelings and emotions experienced by others affect an individual. Expanding on the debate, mutual empathy has been described by some (Freedberg, 2007; Goubert et al. 2005) to refer to the type of empathy which incorporates power dynamics and similar aspects and how these explain social connectedness. Contributing to the debate regarding empathy, Dahlberg (2013:122) have added "action-oriented empathy", which refers to attempts to assuage another's distress and is often motivated by perspective-taking but also preventing one from inflicting harm on another person. Goubert et al. (2005) has added anticipatory empathy as the type of empathy that is used to explain and therefore understand how people can understand other people's feelings. The above suggests that the concept of empathy is evolving and therefore needs further development.

Regarding empathy, Mayer et al. (2018), Mariano et al. (2016), Covell et al. (2007), Bach et al. (2017), Trivedi-Bateman (2021) note that weak empathy is often associated with, although also mediated by a multitude of factors, higher anti-social behaviours such as IPV. Thus, society is, rightly, concerned about the low levels of empathy manifested by the penchant and proclivity for abusive behaviours and attitudes and are usually accompanied by the tendency to minimise or deny abusive behaviour. As such the concept of empathy has taken a centre-stage in programming of perpetrators

programmes in the recent past, although most programmes have included this element historically (van Wormer and Bednar, 2002). This view is also shared by Marshall and Marshall (2011) and van Wormer and Bednar (2002). Jolliffe and Farrington (2021) take this argument further and assert that this has necessitated interventions targeted at developing offenders' (such as perpetrators') high levels of empathy towards the victims.

It is the case that despite not explicitly stated as such (until recently), most programmes have traditionally included empathy. This can be confirmed by the fact that focusing attention on the impact of violence on the victims does, in fact, constitute empathy training (Preston and de Waal, 2002; Batson et al. 2003, Feldman, 2007; Hoffman, 2000). I agree with Hoffman (2000), Batson et al. (2003), Feldman (2007) that empathy can be fully developed as part of moral development throughout an individual's lifespan. Preston and De Waal (2002) have added to the debate and taken a position that empathy is important to emotional connectedness and social development of individuals. This can be confirmed by the emphasis on empathy in religion, socialisation, parenting, philosophy, psychology, and social work which have all taken a keen interest in how abusive behaviours are learnt and can be unlearned (van der Helm et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2017; Boele et al. 2019).

Therefore, I agree with van Wormer and Bednar (2002) that although current perpetrators programmes have incorporated empathy in their designs, they

rarely distinguish the types of empathy they seek to address. For example, while some programmes and interventions incorporate fatherhood (such as the caring dad's programmes), being good partners, and others, there is rarely a distinction with respect to what specific types of empathy are addressed. This view has at least two implications. Firstly, there needs to be an expansion of the definition of the concept of empathy, and secondly, there needs to be a careful interrogation of the specific aspects of empathy that current interventions address. This understanding of the change process, through this study, is part basis of this endeavour and has laid the theoretical foundations for testing the applicability of the COM-B model. This also lays the base for this research as to what type of empathy the perpetrators would benefit from perpetrators programmes and similar interventions.

Hester and Lilley (2014:9) argue that the "majority of current domestic violence perpetrator programmes comprise a cognitive-behavioural or psycho-educational approach to perpetrator treatment". Other programmes may be psychodynamic in approach but are structured around the Duluth approach (Walker et al. 2015; Eckhardt et al. 2006). Therefore, I agree with Babcock (2002:1026) that any "distinction between CBT (maladaptive behaviours change work) and Duluth model (learnt behaviour and patriarchy) in most contemporary interventions are significantly and increasingly unclear." Likewise, Bowen (2011) and Phillips (2013) also argue that distinctions between the models are theoretical and that the emphasis of

most interventions also includes holding perpetrators accountable and helping them take perspectives of the victims and children.

Nonetheless, DVPPs have developed slowly in the UK, especially in comparison to the United States, which by 2007 had 2,500 DVIPs in criminal justice settings (Price and Rosenbaum, 2009 in Saunders, 2008). The first court mandated DVIPs only appeared in Britain in the late nineties (Dobash et al, 2000) and, as of 2009, there were only 47 DVPPs operating within the criminal justice system (Williamson and Hester, 2009). Community-based programmes are also sparse. A membership association for community-based DVPPs, “Respect”, was established in 2000/1 with a Minimum Standards of Practice established 2007. However, to date, only 34 programmes are fully accredited out of which with 13 are audited for the provision of interventions on behalf of the family courts (Williamson and Hester, 2009; Phillips 2015).

Despite multiple interventions, domestic violence (which largely affects women – Barner and Carney, 2011) remains a pervasive global public health challenge, a human rights conundrum, and a developmental bottleneck. Noteworthy is the fact that perpetrators of IPV are extremely difficult to engage in interventions, especially due to the presence of other complicating factors around IPV such as (Delsol and Margolin, 2004; Gortner et al. 1998), personality pathologies (Fowler and Westen, 2010; Jackson et al. 2015; Porcerelli et al. 2004) and substance abuse problems (Kraanen et al. 2014).

Further, perpetrators' programmes and related interventions are frequently an amalgam of punishment, education, and therapy (Eckhardt et al., 2006). I agree with Eckhardt et al and contend that it is difficult to extricate which one of punishment, education or therapy contributes significantly to noticeable changes resultant from a particular intervention or programme.

Furthermore, Yllö (1993) argues that the Duluth model inadequately takes into account the extent to which sexual abuse and IPV are interrelated. Eckhardt et al. (2013), Maiuro and Erbele (2008), Dutton and Nicholls (2005), and Straus (2011) contend that some gender-focused initiatives overlook psychotherapy. Scourfield and Dobash (1999) claim that invitational approaches (GLMs) rarely openly address abusive behaviour, such as power and control tactics, and rarely hold abusers accountable. However, the alternative DVPP typologies such as the invitational and good lives models are rare (Babcock and LaTaillade, 2000) and lack strong theoretical grounding.

As stated above, (Morley and Mullender, 1992; Babcock and LaTaillade, 2000; Pence and Paymar, 1993; Adams, 1988; Healey et al. 1998), the argument is presented that interventions with perpetrators involve three main stages: taking full responsibility for abusive behaviours, increasing awareness of what constitutes abuse, and acknowledging the impact of their actions on others. This is accomplished by providing perpetrators with alternative

responses to potentially abusive situations and, in some cases, by removing obstacles that may impede men's efforts to change. (Gondolf, 2002).

From an ethical perspective, some approaches allow perpetrators to sidestep responsibility for their actions and decrease compulsion and motivation to change especially in the absence of intra-psychic disorders (Adams, 1988; Hester and Lilley, 2014). Many argue that therapists are, 'taken in' by perpetrator claims to be out of control when in reality they are highly selective, both in their use of behaviours, and target victims (Ptacek, 1988).

Evidence denying a gendered dimension to domestic violence is also weak. The argument that violent and abusive behaviours are equal in men and women has faced significant criticism for overlooking the context and motivation of violence. It has been pointed out that women are frequently violent in self-defense (Belknap and Melton, 2005). Claims that there, "is no norm of wife assault" (Dutton, 2010:8) and accepting such views at face value goes against the findings of most social psychological research, indicating that a straightforward, context-free statement of attitude is not a reliable indicator of behaviour. Evidence shows that while most perpetrators of IPV may outrightly denounce, they can sometimes rationalise its occurrence in certain situations (Dobash et al. 2000). Therefore, by rejecting the idea of a gendered foundation, psychotherapeutic interventions are theoretically flawed and, by concentrating on psychological trauma, are not suitable for most perpetrators.

They are not supported by the leading researchers in the field (Gondolf, 2011) or by Respect, the UK's accreditation agency (Respect n.d.).

Interactional and invitational models for DVPPs have been strongly criticised for 'letting men off the hook' and allowing perpetrators to minimise responsibility and blame victims for the abuse (Adams, 1988). This may be exacerbated by therapist's commitment to neutrality when working with the couple at the same time (Adams, 1988). Victims may be too afraid to speak freely and can, therefore, face retribution from their partners later on if they do (Adams, 1988). More recently there has been some evidence that suggests that couples therapy may be useful for a specific sub-group of couples (Gondolf, 2011). Some victims, especially those in less controlling relationships, want to work through problems as a couple and it is thought that some joint counselling could combine the work of traditional DVIPs with that of women's support services into one programme (Stith and McCollum, 2011).

However, only a select sub-group of couples fit this typology, and considering funding difficulties facing many programmes, it is not practical to screen and provide specialist support for perpetrator sub-groups that mostly do well in traditional programmes (Gondolf, 2011). These programmes are, however, not supported by prominent researchers in the field.

How Effective are Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes

Granted, as outlined above, the often-asked question about the few men who have voiced their perspectives on interventions has led researchers to understand this further and hopefully consider how men position themselves. A closer review across the range of domestic violence programmes reveals a tremendously notable variation in the goals and methods of delivery. Research on outcomes or effectiveness of perpetrator's domestic violence programmes, invariably, vary (Guy et al. 2014). Doubts around efficacy have compelled considerable research and debates with some scholars (Arias et al. 2013; Novo et al. 2012; Carter, 2009; Dunford, 2000; Feder and Dugan, 2002; Babcock et al. 2004; Alexander et al. 2010) imploring the need to comprehend how perpetrators can and could change their abusive behaviours.

Recent meta-analyses of evaluations suggest that interventions contribute to a minor and insufficient reduction in recidivism (Eckhardt et al. 2006; Saunders, 2008). Scott and Wolfe (2003) argue that change is possible but uncertain about the mechanisms of it. Boira et al. (2015), Chovanes (2012) and Silvergleid and Mankowski (2005) contend that components of the programmes account for change but unclear what the men had changed.

Experimental manipulations from around the world such as the US have shown, that when measured by either the police reports or by (ex)-partner

reports, no significant impact of DVPP attendance on recidivism in comparison to judicial monitoring, probation, or incarceration (Dunford, 2000; Davis et al. 2000; Labriola et al. 2008). However, these studies have notable limitations. Most of them suffer from considerable response attrition at follow-up, particularly from (ex)-partners, and as single-site studies could not distinguish efficacy of the DVPP from that of the community and justice system response as a whole (Gondolf, 2002). This is particularly relevant for the Labriola study where judicial monitoring was judged as extremely poor (Labriola et al. 2008) and Dunford's study, which was conducted in a naval base and so is not generalizable (Williamson and Hester, 2009).

These approaches have been challenged for lowering ecological validity by including otherwise unsuitable candidates on the DVPPs (Dobash et al. 2000), non-equivalency between the intervention and control groups (Gondolf, 2002), which is nearly impossible for social interventions, efficacy and integrity of programme and the whole system in isolation from other responses such as courts mandates, probation officers (Gondolf, 2000).

Quasi-experimental studies (conducted to overcome the difficulties of implementing experimental design) such as Dobash et al. (2000) using a pre-assigned DVIPs or control groups and followed up at 12 months, and Gondolf (2002) on a multi-site study completed a follow up after four years have been

criticised for uncertainty of causality (Murphy and Ting, 2010) and low interview response rates at follow-up (Davis et al. 2000).

It has become evident from reviewing work on perpetrators of IPV that at least 3 fundamental issues have emerged. By far, the most significant is that despite arrests and charges against perpetrators of IPV, conviction rates, recruitment and retention of perpetrators on interventions remain low. Donovan et al. (2010) conducted an evaluation of perpetrators programmes in Northeastern England and conclude that retention of perpetrators on programmes was low and also characterised by partner agencies' reluctance to work with perpetrators in their work, at best, and not perceiving this work as central to their remit, at worst. Other demographics risk factors (not necessarily causes) such as lifestyles, educational status (Tittlova and Papáček, 2018) but these factors have been identified to be strongly correlated to perpetrators' significantly high unwillingness to engage with interventions.

Consequently, one of the recommendations from these evaluations is to implement two complementary strategies to decrease or improve attrition rates. First and foremost, to enhance the reporting and coordinated response mechanisms between the criminal justice and other institutions. The second necessitates that before perpetrators are referred to the programmes, a significant amount of preparatory work must be done with them. Rooney and Hanson (2001), Scott and Wolfe (2003), Gondolf (2002), Saunders and

Hanul (2003) all argue for professionals to engage the perpetrators in a more robust manner to enable them to realise the benefits of accessing interventions. Motivational interviewing has also been highly recommended as a vehicle for offering opportunities for increasing perpetrators' receptivity to interventions. Musser et al. (2009) and Walker et al. (2015) have argued and concluded that motivational interviewing can help in reducing initial hostility towards interventions and increase motivation to change. can help to reduce initial hostility towards interventions and increase motivation to change. As such, it suggests the need for professionals who come into contact with perpetrators must possess a firm set of skills to motivate perpetrators to voluntarily engage in interventions, at their earliest possible opportunity. I agree with Safe Together (2019) conclusion that motivational interviewing should not be primarily focused on perpetrators' confession (accountability and responsibility), but that also on connecting behaviours to their impact on outcomes (terror) on others as well as parenting expectations.

The second key issue is around the components of the training and its curriculum. There appears to be limited or no research into components of the training that can predominantly account for the establishment of the change process. Implicit in this argument is an acknowledgement that, in assessing the quality and effectiveness of an intervention, focus must be firmly placed on the content. More specifically, the focus should be on what is covered by a particular intervention and the characteristics of the targeted

groups, including the medium of delivery and what the recipients of the intervention say about it. Some, such as Jackson et al. (2003), have argued for the need to explore the differential effect and impact of specific components as well as the programme implementation quality to counterbalance other evaluations already undertaken. Taken together, as Eckhardt et al. (2006) argue, it is clear that evaluations offer limited evidence and support for assessing the effectiveness of perpetrators' programmes, especially without delving into the content of these programmes.

Parenting expectations and abilities are becoming a more important notion in the context of current perpetrator interventions, as child protection workers attempt to address typical cases involving children. Several research have observed that violent behaviour and inadequate and authoritarian parenting practises towards children are related in this regard. The evaluation of Project Mirabal (2015) showed the value of targeted work aimed at assisting males in connecting abusive behaviours to parenting. Stanley et al. (2012) similarly came to the conclusion that a parent's identity can serve as a driving force behind increased motivation to intervention engagement.

Considerable controversy has arisen as to whether individualised or group-based work is the most appropriate form of intervention. This is because as some (Hearn, 1998) argue, many men (in group settings) remarkably seem unwilling to challenge other men's violence and abuse against women. It is,

therefore, the case that change can occur in any social situation apart from anti-sexist and pro-feminist milieu. Consequently, it is might often be sensible to appeal to abuser's emotional levers rather than strategies that provoke shame and humiliation. The intervention should emphasise to perpetrators that their strong adherence to prevailing notions of abusive relationships is detrimental to both the victims and themselves.

The Project Mirabal, on the other hand, argues that group-based interventions help participants to gain new and positive skills and enable men take accountability for their abusive behaviours. Walker et al. (2015) and Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) also agree that group-based interventions are helpful in behavioural change, though this requires strong group cohesion and recognition of boundaries between participation and accountability.

Related to the content of the training curriculum, is the practical value of the interventions and how the perpetrators negotiate the pathways towards achieving this. This raises questions as to how men position themselves with respect to the interventions. According to Hearn (1998), when men talk about domestic violence and abuse, in child protection work and evaluation of perpetrators programmes, they often try to establish their credibility by, sometimes, playing victims and reproducing silences. In fact, Blacklock (2001) agrees that perpetrators of violence can minimise, deny responsibility, and feel a sense of entitlement around their behaviours. These three factors

are present in both desisters and persisters, completers and non-completers, successful/unsuccessful stories of domestic violence. The implication of this is that the voices of perpetrators in practice and research can provide misleading versions of the incidents, repudiate incidents, or provide excuses and justifications for their use of violence. Interestingly, perpetrators can, in certain cases, confess to the incidents of abuse in some detail. The general portrayal of events from their perspective is quite often to recentre the concept of masculinity. As Hearn (1998) and others argue, men rarely connect DVA to childhood trauma, but often ascribe it to stresses, drugs, blame victims. The result is that men rarely take responsibility for their abusive behaviours. Paradoxically, this very process of minimising abusive behaviours, a sense of entitlement and denial of responsibility may exacerbate any well-meaning attempts to engage them in the change process.

Notwithstanding, it is recognised that when perpetrators have an expanded understanding and awareness of the impact of violence on others, they are likely to be more reflective of their actions. For example, the Project Mirabal evaluation by Kelly and Westmarland (2015) on the impact on behaviours of raising perpetrators' awareness about the negative effects of violence. The study concluded that perpetrators who successfully completed the programme began to think about the consequences of their behaviours on themselves. This process also helped them to take responsibility for their actions. What are less clear are the pathways towards engagement, but also

retention in interventions. Taken together, these three related fundamental issues form part of the key themes that underpin the rationale for my study.

Overall, the key messages from men who have attended the perpetrators programmes reveal that the common themes emergent from accessing interventions include gaining an improved understanding of domestic violence and abuse, self-awareness, empathy for others, improving communication with themselves and others, the significance of the direct or confrontational nature of interventions/professionals in determining reasons for engaging fully in the programme and shaping and addressing abusive behaviours, understanding how the brain functions and how this formulates links to emotions and how to manage actions, attitudes and behaviours. However, as others (Hearn, 1998; Dobash et al. 2000; McCall, 2017) argue, with these thoughts in mind, various levels of men can justify, excuse, rationalise, minimise, and sometimes confess violent behaviours. In almost all cases, it seems to me that both qualities of cognitive and affective empathy are developed by virtue of being on perpetrators' programmes.

Key Themes and Study Rationale

The key theme emerging from the literature is the patent lack of visibility of men in child protection processes and research (Kelly and Westmarland, 2013), especially concerning engagement with perpetrators' programmes and

pathways towards change. The voices of the limited number of men who have engaged in programmes and their views on the same is highlighted in this section. Therefore, this section discusses findings from literature review and how this constitutes part of the basis for my research.

It is thought that, in order to reduce and, hopefully, eliminate the climate in which intimate partner violence thrives, it would require comprehensive and multi-faceted strategies as vehicles for upscaling the scope of the challenge from the micro level (traits of the abusers and victims) to the macro level (culture, economic, socio-political, institutional). This is because of the intricate and interwoven nature of the scourge and the long-established views of its attendant public-private nexus.

Most academics and critics argue that, despite the huge bulk of available literature, most studies examining domestic violence programmes cast doubt on whether changes in perpetrators' behaviours can be solely attributed to them (Kalaga and Kingston, 2007). This holds particularly true when the negative aspects associated with IPV are not thoroughly understood and factored in the design of interventions at both programme and policy levels.

Of the several difficulties highlighted regarding intervention effectiveness, I will focus on five in this section. One important aspect to consider is the measurement of recidivism, typically relying on official records and accounts

provided by perpetrators and/or victims. Furthermore, some argue that the current measures of recidivism may significantly underestimate the true occurrence of repeat offences, leading to overly positive assessments of intervention effectiveness. The high attrition rates in interventions and evaluations, fail to differentiate the effectiveness of the services from the effectiveness of the community and justice system measures.

This can be attributed to the possibility of intimate partner relationships ending, victims relocating, fear of further abusive behaviours, and the unknown identity of the characters of new partners. Moreover, victim accounts may be influenced by response biases (over and underreporting violence) and are probably emotionally distressing for the victims to provide accurate accounts. There is substantial evidence supporting the validity of this statement, particularly within black and ethnic minority communities. It can be inferred that both the perpetrator and victim may be hesitant to report ongoing abuse if being honest about it could result in adverse outcomes for either party. In this regard, ensuring confidentiality is crucial for facilitating future research recruitment of participants and ensuring victims' safety.

Secondly, the very definition of success of interventions is highly contested within academic and practice literature. For example, Carter (2009) and Westmarland and Kelly (2013) suggest that definitions and methods for measuring success or identifying changes in men's attitudes are mostly absent

from the analyses. An outcome measure that fails to consider the significant impacts of historical and ongoing abuses may lead to an overestimation of programme success due to substitution effects. This is due to the fact that violence often persists through different means even after interventions have taken place. Thus, neglecting to quantify the substitution effects could lead to an overestimation of the impacts of interventions.

Thirdly, in addition to high attrition rates associated with evaluations of interventions, there is considerable disagreement regarding the representativeness of samples of research participants. Most evaluations, for instance, have been criticised for lack of sample representativeness, high attrition levels and exclusion of perpetrators who drop out of interventions. For example, Flinck and Paavilainen (2008) conducted an Husserlian descriptive phenomenology study on men's experiences of violent behaviour within intimate relationships. As part of the study, they conducted twenty-one (21) interviews with ten (10) Finish men who had a history of intimate partner violence. The study found that the men considered the importance of learning to communicate effectively and that abusive men exhibited an inherent need for respect in relationships. Consequently, they concluded that it is essential to readapt the interpersonal violence framework, give voice to the men, and advance intervention strategies that focus on preventing, early detection and support to men, couples, and families.

Like most studies, the study (Flinck and Paavilainen, 2008) excludes hard and difficult-to-reach) perpetrators leading to an overestimation of the programme success. This raises the question of validity and generalizability. Other studies conclude that the initial measure of effectiveness might be positive but declines steadily and disappears when other variables including difficult to reach service users are added to the model. Davis and Taylor (1999) argue that perpetrators from higher socio-economic and educational backgrounds are highly likely to respond to future research. The implications omission of hard to reach populations can lead to misleading assessment of relative effectiveness of programme outcomes.

Similarly, Haggård et al. (2001) conducted a study to describe the desistance process of high risk violent and chronic offenders with a view to identifying factors relevant to recidivism. They interviewed (using semi-structure interview guides) four (4) participants in the study. The participants shared that their present life experiences were greatly influenced by avoiding risky situations. One of the main recurring themes that were pinpointed as factors leading to desistance from violence were feelings of shock upon reflecting on their actions, social separation, and the individual's focus on family. Study participants were not typical IPV perpetrators but rather four high-risk violent male offenders. The individuals had not been involved in any violent incidents for over a decade before the study and were deemed desisters.

Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) also conducted a study that explored men's perception of the nature of abuse and how they ceased their abusive behaviours. They interviewed twelve (12) male reformed wife batterers who participated in a men's counselling programme and remained non-violent for 10 months or more months. The findings were that the men justified IPV on failed macho complex and regarded the counselling programme as reinforcing their self-determination to change. They also described the change process in terms of personal growth, acceptance of responsibility and became more empathetic and redefined their perception of being a man.

Another study by Scott and Wolfe (2003) looked at how domestic abusers changed over time, employing qualitative analysis to interview nine (9) reformed men who were recommended by their partners and counsellors and who had completed a median of thirty-five sessions at a group treatment programme with a feminist focus. To comprehend men's change, they participated in approximately one-hour semi-structured interviews. The study employed around twenty-eight (28) apriori determined codes for data analysis, which were based on theoretical understandings of how abusive behaviours develop over time. The study found that more than 75% reported that the four main variables that contributed to change were men's reported increased willingness to take responsibility for their previous abusive behaviours, their growing empathy for the victims, their decreased reliance on their relationships, and their improved communication skills among.

The fact that the participants in Scott and Wolfe (2003) study were chosen by the facilitators based on their perceived effectiveness in altering their behaviour is one of the study's primary criticisms. This raised the possibility that the sample's involuntary character may have contributed to its bias. Arguments about the efficacy of domestic violence intervention programmes are strengthened by this criticism.

The fourth concern is regarding the follow up period for evaluations of the studies. For example, Catlett et al. (2010) undertook a study on men's gendered constructions of IPV of a court-mandated batterer treatment programmes. The mixed methods study of 154 men sought to explore what the men understood to be the meaning of their violence towards intimate partners and the extent to which the attached meanings could predict commitment to interventions. The study found that men generally minimised and denied responsibility by rationalising IPV. They concluded that denial and minimisation are useful in understanding how men construct masculinity and established this to be a strong predictive variable for attrition from interventions. Logistic regression also supports the findings that socio-economic status, dissolution of relationships and other factors also significantly positively correlates to high attrition from the interventions.

One of the main criticisms against Catlett et al. (2010) study is the timing of the research study. This study appears to have been conducted during

programme or shortly after. There are limited conclusions that can be made as to what participants say about what the changes to their behaviours over a period of time after the training. Furthermore, the issue at hand involves secondary or more autonomous change and the potential for it to occur.

Further, Catlett et al.'s study was limited to participants drawn from court-mandated interventions/programmes. Court-mandated interventions often have elements of coercion by their very nature both at the engagement level and therefore any evaluation attached to them. It possible that participants drawn from non-court managed interventions would offer useful insights into reasons for non-completion/attrition.

Several studies that have been undertaken show that follow-up intervals differ greatly and range from several weeks to many years. It is, therefore, likely that superior confidence can be placed to those studies that have employed longer follow up periods, because in the immediate aftermath of the interventions, there is a decreased probability that further incidents of abuse would be reported. While longer periods increase the likelihood of the quality of responses being more reliable, the number of study participants typically and sadly declines consistent with interval to the follow-up. Unfortunately, this also throws into sharp focus questions the validity and reliability of responses and, ultimately evidence in support of the effectiveness of the interventions.

As Gondolf (2002) argues, follow up periods were not differential indicators determining that the highest rate of recidivism happens during the first few months of treatment. It is, therefore, questionable whether triggers for change in primary desistance are similar to secondary or more permanent desistance. Further, although this study offers some insight into the processes of change, it is unknown and unclear (due to unavailability of data) whether or not men had continued perpetrating violence in subsequent relationships.

Hence, differentiating the intensity and frequency of IPV before, during, and after the intervention is challenging. This suggests that it remains unclear whether and how relevant the interventions are to the desistance agenda in the long-term, especially several years post interventions.

Lastly, the validity of conclusions are questionable stemming from experimental study designs lacking random assignment, potentially leading to treatment effects that are influenced by assignment criteria (Scott and Wolfe, 2003). Additionally, from a social justice standpoint, this could be viewed as unethical (Mullender and Burton, 2001; Ames and Dunham, 2002; Gondolf, 2002). Moreover, because most men are required to attend perpetrator programmes through the criminal justice system, it is inherently challenging to fully acknowledge the potential for accountability without being influenced by the same system..

According to Holdsworth et al. (2014), Jayasundara et al. (2014), Brownlee and Chlebovec (2004) and Covanec (2012), research on perpetrators engagement with interventions has often neglected and been insensitive to culture, religion, and other factors that can potentially significantly impact on interventions. This view is also historically shared by McMurrin and Theodasi (2007) and Moran et al. (2004) who argue that contextual and strategic factors are important to understanding how men engage in interventions around domestic violence. Engagement in interventions is a function of practical, relational, and cultural considerations. As Soleymani et al. (2018) argue, engagement is strongly associated with and important to effectiveness of interventions. Research by Babcock et al. (2016) shows that preliminary stages of interventions can be characterised by resistance to engagement.

There are several other reasons for resistance to engagement perpetrators programmes some of which are personal. Addis and Mahalik (2003) argue that men are generally reluctant to seek and accept help such as in relation to domestic abuse. What appears to be some of the reasons for this resistance is primarily connected to the perpetrators' understanding of what is commonly known as a problematic definition of masculinity. If challenged, this understanding can lead to either being further abuse towards the victims or resistant to engage in interventions that challenge this concept of masculinity. When perpetrators minimise their abusive behaviours, it can lead to

unwillingness to engage in interventions. What this research meant to achieve was an understanding of some of the factors that may explain the level of engagement with perpetrators programmes that can, ultimately, be associated with successful interventions.

Related to engagement is motivation and readiness to change. Murphy and Meis (2008) argue that individual programmes tailored to the motivation and readiness for change have greater capacity in minimising the probability of reinforcing problematic attitudes and behaviours through negative peer influences. Several other studies (Cannon et al. 2016; Maldonado and Murphy, 2018) have argued that motivation, readiness to change and active involvement in homework completion are strong and principal factors which influence interventions. In their review, Eckhardt et al. (2013) found out that perpetrators' programmes in Europe and that preliminary stages of interventions in which motivational interviewing is prioritised resulted in low attrition levels. The study, therefore, evaluated the extent to which motivational interviewing might have played a role in engaging with the perpetrators' programmes.

The other factor that is related to attrition and engagement in interventions is the nature of contents of the interventions. In this regard, Holdsworth et al. (2014), Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) argue that content of the programmes significantly contributes to the success of the interventions.

There appears to be two contrasting views about the content of the perpetrators' programmes. One school of thought advocates for a much more robust intervention with firm feminist approaches whose chief goal is to ensure that men take accountability for their behaviours (Devaney, 2014). The other, is the invitational approach (Jenkins, 2009) which includes the good life models (Ward et al. 2007) seeks to combine the ethical commitment to good life goals models and change of values. However, I agree with Bowen (2011) and Day et al. (2009) that the often-cited reasons for the high level of attrition associated with perpetrator programmes could equally be linked to the confrontational nature of the Duluth model. As Maiuro and Eberle (2008) argue, there requires to be a focus on tailoring interventions to the needs of the perpetrators, which also addresses gender dimensions of IPV.

The absence of a universally accepted definition has resulted in a lack of agreement regarding the structure, content, and duration of domestic violence interventions. Nevertheless, the primary elements of the programmes revolve around the significant emphasis placed on holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviours, situating domestic violence and abuse within a wider societal milieu, and examining how power and control intricately and systematically contribute to the perpetration of domestic abuse.

Aside from the contents, length of the programmes is also an important consideration. Multiple studies have concluded that the duration of the

perpetrators' programmes varied from eight weeks to more than fifty weeks. The success and effectiveness of a programme seem to have a weak correlation with its type, length, and structure. This is likely due to other variables that have a stronger correlation with recidivism. Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) argue that the high attrition in most evaluation studies suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the overall impact of intervention duration on recidivism. However, it noted that the adoption of specific techniques, such as motivational interviewing, was strongly correlated to a decrease in attrition.

Specific to the components of the perpetrators' programmes have been two published studies. The first highlighted here is an observational study of two (2) community perpetrators programmes by Morrison et al. (2021), which explored the key components of the perpetrators' programmes process with a view to analysing factors that facilitate change. The study concluded that the two processes (facilitator and client) processes were significant to change processes. The facilitator processes include how the trainers manage group dynamics and what the participants learn from the programme. Conversely, client processes include the sense of mutuality and help-seeking support. The study finally recommended further research into how these processes can be linked to effectiveness/outcomes.

Similarly, Stanley et al. (2012) conducted an evaluation of a voluntary perpetrators' programme to explore how men's involvement with the children's social care agencies and fathering roles shaped their motivation to engage with the process of change. The study involved in-depth interviews with men and their partners. The study findings were that men who were then involved with children social services were found to be more likely to attend more sessions with a desire to secure some form of access to children or avoid children being removed from their care. This motivation (extrinsic) appeared to facilitate initial engagement with the interventions. On the other hand, maintain relationships with children could also function as intrinsic motivation when men developed an awareness of the impact of their abusive behaviours on them. Therefore, the motivation to become good fathers encouraged their continued engagement with services.

Furthermore, an essential aspect of the interventions is identifying factors that facilitate the men's process of change. Pandya and Gingerich (2002) conducted a micro ethnographic study on perpetrators of IPV to explore their descriptions of the change process and assess the effectiveness of interventions. They concluded that acquiring new communication skills was identified as a significant catalyst for change, whereas masculine identity was recognised as a major obstacle to the process of change.

While this study offers insights into the factors that facilitate men's transition away from violent conduct, additional research is necessary to gather more information and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the specific elements that contribute to men's shift (Pandya and Gingerich, 2002). This is significant since there is yet insufficient compelling evidence to establish a definitive intervention model that can demonstrate superiority over others. Additional research is essential due to the fact that the majority of perpetrator programmes incorporate a blend of several perspectives, encompassing psychotherapy, power and control, and feminist approaches.

Therefore, according to Scott and Wolfe (2003), the results indicate that there is no significant evidence of programme effectiveness based on the length and mode of interventions. This challenge is also connected to the identification of programme characteristic measures for inclusion in the evaluation. Hence, it is challenging to determine with absolute certainty which intervention model is the most effective for addressing domestic violence. However, results are more encouraging when perpetrator programmes are combined with substance (alcohol misuse) treatments.

The other factor identified as missing in literature is pathways for desistance in intimate partner violence. The question is what are the pathways that men who have come to the attention of services use to navigate the process of change? It must be noted that there is limited research that specifically

highlights this. For example, Buchbinder and Eisikovits (2008), undertook qualitative interviews with batterers in Israel to explore their understanding of the intervention they experienced, their meaning, their relationship towards self, others, and their values. Their findings were that batterers perceived their spouses as dangerous and powerful agents who threatened their sense of identity. They find interventions as a dichotomous tension of choice between retaining or relinquishing control over themselves and what this will entail. Associated with this tension is the process of being anxiously confronted by feelings of shame, loss, and fear.

On their part, Bouchard and Wong (2021) undertook a thematic study based on a sample of 180 perpetrators who had completed IPV interventions to identify factors that facilitate responsiveness to programmes. The study found that bonding/interacting with other participants, safe space to open up and share feelings/experiences, listening to other's stories/feeling of universality, therapeutic alliance, learning tools and strategies, group discussion of course content, observing personal transformation, programme logistics and relevance and applicability of content were important factors.

Gottzén (2019) undertook a qualitative study on forty-four (44) men in Sweden. The men had participated in a voluntary programme for perpetrators of IPV. The study finds that the men generally presented themselves as morally good people who acknowledged their violence and

actively tried to distance themselves from abusive behaviours. This recognition was either, before, during or after the treatment/intervention. Driven by their desire to be good men, the men formulated this narrative as the basis for joining, returning and continuing to engage with treatment.

Related to this is what motivates or triggers perpetrators of IPV to engage in interventions and to continue engaging with them. Against the background of growing evidence of the limitedness of punitive responses to ending family violence, Meyer (2018) conducted a study on eighteen (18) men who had attended a court-mandated intervention to explore factors that motivate them to engage in perpetrator interventions. The study concluded that the concept of fatherhood and the desire to maintain relationships with their children were a strong motivating factor for engagement.

Walker et al. (2015) undertook a study in England to examine (by taking narratives from twenty-two (22) male perpetrators, seven (7) female survivors and nine (9) facilitators), factors that initiate and facilitate desistance from IPV. Narratives were later analysed thematically. The analysis concluded that triggers for change from persistence to desistance of IPV were gradual and cumulative over time and that the triggers for change included negative consequences of violence and negative emotional responses, which they described as catalysts or stimuli of change. According to Walker et al. (2015), the catalysts of change would lead to a point of resolve until the men reached

what was referred to as 'autonomous decision' to change. The point of autonomous resolve is what facilitated and initiated desistance. While this study was revealing, the resultant pathway for change does not focus on other external motivations to the perpetrators, nor does it focus on the content of the programmes and skills of the professionals.

Earlier, Sheehan et al. (2012) undertook a systematic study to explore the concept of turning points in IPV by exploring factors, situations, and attitudes that facilitate perpetrators' decisions to change their abusive behaviour. The analysis revealed that community, group, and individual processes significantly contribute to perpetrators' turning points and behavioural change. Specific turning points include men being able to identify incidents preceding change, being able to take responsibility for past abusive behaviours, learning new skills, and developing relationships within and outside of the BIP. The study recommended further research to identify innovative interventions that can significantly contribute to the efforts.

Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) had also previously undertaken a study whose objective was to identify and describe factors that facilitate change processes in men who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse. An in-depth interview was conducted with nine men who had successfully completed the programmes as well as ten (10) intervention group facilitators. Resultant accounts described a range of individual community, organizational, and

group levels process (balancing support and confrontation by facilitators and group members) processes of change. Programme completers and facilitators gave mostly similar accounts, though differed in their emphasis of criminal justice system sanctions, group resocialization of masculinity, and the participants' own decision to change. Findings demonstrate the importance of obtaining multiple perspectives on change processes and the need to support ecological and systems models of batterer interventions.

Kras and Blasko (2016), on their part, conducted a qualitative study (using in-depth interview guides) which explored pathways to desistance within groups of men who had been convicted of sexual offences. The sample comprised twenty-eight (28) men who had been convicted of offences of a sexual nature. The study concluded that the most consistent theme present in the offense cycle was the internalisation of sexual deviance as a static trait, while desisters (n = 5) considered their fences to be out of the ordinary and often compounded by external and modifiable factors, such as alcohol use. The study did not, notably, discuss what the identity change and work was for the desisters.

Another study by Harris (2016) examined narratives of sixty (60) men who were interviewed following release from incarceration for sexual offences. The study concluded that despite inability to pursue Sampson and Laub's 'informal social controls', Giordano et al 's 'hooks for change' or Maruna's

'Pygmalion effect', they still desisted from offending behaviour based on age, resignation, rote, and resilience as the forms of desistance.

Studies by Haggård et al. (2001) and Walker et al. (2015) found that shocking events functioned as turning points in the process of change. For example, someone experiencing the trauma of being placed in a forensic psychiatric hospital or arrest were associated with strong negative experiences and, as such, functioned as turning points. It has also been established that individuals often weigh the costs of engaging in offending behaviours (being arrested, breakdown of relationships) against the benefits (the need to change behaviours). This cost-benefit analysis was said to significantly contribute to decisions to desist from IPV. Insightful as this research was, the sample of the Haggård et al. (2001) was not specific to intimate partner violent offenders. Rather it was high-risk violent offenders who had desisted from violent crimes for the period lasting longer than 10 years prior to the study.

The studies do not, on one hand, provide answers as to how and what the triggers are, or turning points, in the men's reported changes and how this change is sustained within the context of the domestic violence programme (Haggård et al. 2010). There remain questions relating to implications of change for new relationships and how the change translated into respect partners, and women in general.

From this review, what is less clear is how the men begin to engage with the process of change in abusive behaviours. Adequate information on this is critical, if not imperative, for the design of effective efforts in the fight against domestic violence (Scott and Wolfe, 2003; Gondolf, 1997; Eckhardt et al., 2013; Walker et al. 2015; Feld and Straus 1989; Hester et al. 2006).

In this regard, one of the objectives of my research was to explore the accounts of men who have engaged with the perpetrators programme with a view to providing a framework for understanding the intricate process of change in intimate partner violence and evaluate the applicability of the COM-B model to the subject of intimate partner violence and abuse. To this end, a qualitative study design was adopted with the intention to gain a privileged in-depth access to the men's experience of engaging in the treatment programmes by hearing their own words and their experiences of the programmes. As Dasgupta (2002), the benefit of these individual experiences and accounts is that it helps to contribute towards the development of services that meet their needs. As experts of their own lived experiences (Hague et al. 2004), their voices and words can guide development and formulation of effective policies and practices around the scourge of intimate partner violence.

Existing literature indicates a lack of research and exploration into the topic of domestic violence among male perpetrators. There is a noticeable lack of

comprehensive research on perpetrator's experiences of programmes, indicating that this topic is still relatively unknown and under-researched. The importance of acknowledging perpetrators' experiences in perpetrators' programmes cannot be overstated. By recognising these experiences, interventions can better address the needs of both the victims and the perpetrators (Westmarland and Kelly, 2013). According to Carter (2010), evidence-based research circles tend to dismiss the stories of men who have stopped violence (or continued violence) as anecdotal. In my opinion, these stories have great power and can be highly valuable in providing evidence-based accounts that can greatly inform the practice and design of effective interventions (Carlson and Rose, 2012). Study findings present useful prospects for directly learning from perpetrators themselves and establishing credible mechanisms for meaningfully support them and the victims.

As indicated above, the focus of this study was on the community responses, rather than law enforcement, mental health, and substance misuse services, all of which require separate research. With that in mind, the central purpose of this study was to recount perpetrator's experience of working with perpetrator programmes with a view to expanding the understanding of perpetrators' change trajectory and documenting factors that account for the observed changes. It also sought to identify factors that offer partial explanation for desistance from domestic violence and therefore proxy factors for effectiveness, or lack of it, of domestic violence intervention services.

Implications and Justification for this study

These literature reviews reveal that, as Tolman and Bennett (1990) argue, in all probability, positive results ostensibly found to be associated with a specific intervention are probably a result of numerous systems and factors (internal to the perpetrators – shame, guilt) but also external including arrest, separation and break up of a family). It is also possible that other factors can also contribute to the cessation of intimate partner violence with or without the interventions. These may go alongside interventions by the criminal justice system and child protection agencies, mediation by family members and other naturally occurring maturation processes. Consequently, several scholars have asserted that these factors are important to the change process (Ward et al. 2004, Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006; Holdsworth et al. 2014; Gottzén, 2019; Bouchard and Wong, 2021). The missing link appears to be the extent to which these factors impact on and are impacted by to men's decisions to embark on the pathways to change.

If the perpetrators programmes are adjudged to be effective (however, the quantifiable value), what specific components of the programme is associated with change? It would appear that triggers for changing behaviour around domestic violence can be understood to be internal or external to the perpetrators or more specifically according to the COM-B and BCW is the capability, motivation, and opportunity. To date, no published study explored

changes in abusive relationships using the COM-B model. The purpose of my study is to contribute to initiatives that aim to address this deficiency.

The research holds great significance for practitioners and policy makers, as it provides valuable insights that can inform criminal justice interventions, child protection interventions, and domestic violence treatment programmes. Considering the argument that treatment programmes may have limited impact but can be more effective when combined with other interventions like substance misuse (Murphy and Tring, 2010), it is crucial to thoroughly examine additional factors relevant to treating domestic violence offenders. This information could be crucial for understanding the initiation of desistance (Carlson and Rose, 2012).

The literature uncovers the methodological obstacles and highlights the limited impact of individual programmes, which often fail to justify the significant allocation of resources. Regrettably, the current state of research literature regarding prescriptive definitive interventions with perpetrators of IPV is limited. Notably, there is limited information regarding the specific factors that contribute to behavioural changes in these programmes. A few studies that indicate that addressing the emotional consequences of intimate partner violence on those who commit it could potentially reduce the likelihood of repeat offences. However, it is important to note that findings from single study sites may have limited generalisability (Babcock et al. 2004).

Overall, it seems that there is no statistically significant correlation between interventions and the cessation of abusive behaviours in intimate partner relationships, based on the available data. As a result, the findings are hardly convincing, making it difficult to draw strong conclusions about the effectiveness of interventions (Eckhardt et al. 2013; Smedslund et al. 2011). Arguments have simply heated up since there hasn't been enough study on what motivates domestic abuse perpetrators to change.

It would also appear that few studies have attempted to measure the extent to which skills taught on perpetrators programmes are implemented at practical level. Neither have there been efforts to assess whether or not perpetrators ever recall acquired skills following the conclusion of the programme, sometimes several years in the future. In this regard, Gondolf (2002:113-127) found that during the follow-up period, the

“Large majority of participants reported avoiding re-assault by using techniques learnt on the programme. Half primarily used interruption techniques (e.g., self-talk and ‘time-outs’). Methods used did not vary substantially over time. Findings indicated that programmes succeeded in teaching avoidance skills but were less effective in furthering attitude change.”

Reviewing cases of domestic abuse in the Cumbria area of the UK, Donovan et al. (2010) report that despite an increase in the number of arrests and

criminal prosecutions against perpetrators of IPV, the proportion of successful criminal convictions remain notoriously low. Whilst the high number of high-risk referrals to support agencies such as Safer Families were high, sentencing hardly reflected reality. In addition, the engagement of perpetrators in interventions was marred by recruitment challenges. For instance, although some social workers and the police in Cumbria enthusiastically encouraged perpetrators to sign up on the programmes, partner agencies hardly perceived the process of encouraging perpetrators on the programmes as part of their mandate and responsibility. Donovan et al. (2010) also noted that reluctance by some practitioners to engage men they perceived to be extremely violent.

According to Eckhardt et al. (2013), the central objective of the research was to specifically understand how perpetrators begin to engage in the change process and whether constituent parts of the interventions were correlated to behaviour change. I am of the view that measures of effectiveness should include other outcomes in addition to recidivism. These could include diverse types of perpetrators (such as female perpetrators) and victims (such as male victims) as well as in same-sex relationships)

Although some of the studies reviewed contribute valuable insights into factors that, invariably encourage positive changes, there is need for further research. Research initiatives such as that by Scott and Wolfe (2003) and

Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006), which relied on retrospective and current intervention accounts from men, could also provide valuable insights. It is worth mentioning that most studies have focused on the experiences of men from a very similar group of participants (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006) or where this factor remains unknown/unclear (Scott and Wolfe, 2003).

The other limitation is the limited, or absence of, research into the components of the training programmes that can predominantly account for the establishment of the change process. As some (Jackson et al. 2003; Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Dobash and Dobash, 2000; Cunningham et al. 1998) argue, there is a need to differentially evaluate and include an in-built rating system for determining the influence of specific intervention components for counterbalancing other studies.

This review raises questions about what impact specific components of the training programmes has on participants' attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, how men perceive interventions, including the extent to which the presence of other group members (especially from heterogeneous ethnic composition), may influence men in their change behaviours, style of presentation and impact on willingness/resistance to engage in the change process.

The emphasis of this study was to obtain insight into the experiences of men who attended a particular treatment programme for intimate partner violence

in a particular London Borough with a focus on what they found helpful while working to make changes to their violent behaviour. It was also meant to explore other factors that might have helped them on the pathway in the process of changing their violent behaviour.

Current efforts add to the literature which explores men's change process and trajectory from violent behaviours and what motivating factors contribute towards the change process. However, it remains unknown if men who have engaged in interventions were still using violence. Furthermore, it also remains unclear how relevant the findings are to predicting long-term desistance processes. As Wetherell and Edley (2009), vocabularies of motive necessitate an expose of how men might consciously or unconsciously engage in positive activities that some might argue are self-serving. To effectively engage IPV perpetrators, the development and trajectory of change that underpin success needs to be adequately theorised, analysed, and categorised. Only then we will be in a position to formulate effective interventions.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has reviewed the understanding of domestic abuse, its various manifestations and interpretations and has raised at least four main themes. First, the fact that understanding the engagement process in interventions constitutes a useful premise for understanding outcomes. Secondly, for

perpetrators programmes to be effective, it is important to understand relevant dynamics before and during interventions. This is because specific literature around men's accounts and experiences of domestic abuse interventions is crucial to appreciating interventions and their processes. Thirdly, contents of the programmes and specific interventions are as crucial to their overall success. Fourthly, the pathways for change remain under-researched. The overall conclusion, which is shared by some researchers such as Tolman and Bennett (1990) is that, in all probability, positive results which were, supposedly, attributed to specific intervention were, in fact, the result of numerous systems and factors internal and external to the perpetrators.

Although it has been demonstrated that several factors account for perpetrators' willingness to engage with interventions, there is scope for further exploration and understanding of their experiences. My study seeks to, *inter alia*, contribute to efforts that are aimed at appreciating and understanding experiences of male participants in this perpetrators' programme in this London borough.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter Introduction

This study was based on the constructivist grounded theory, which deviates from the traditional approach of classical grounded theory. This chapter introduces and explains the conceptual framework utilised in my study.

Background to the study

For purposes of my thesis, I explored the experiences of the men in the London Borough's perpetrators' programme. I documented their journey prior to and during the engagement with this particular perpetrators' programme using the constructivist grounded theory - a departure from the classical grounded theory (more on this later). Classical grounded theory (CGT) prescribes that researchers to conduct their research with minimal pre-conceived ideas, opinions, and positions because this causes them to "remain sensitive to the data ... without first having them filtered through and squared with pre-existing hypotheses and biases" (Glaser, 1978:3). Arising from this, Glaser and Holton (2004), CGT researchers ought to defer literature review until after data collection.

This view, advice and recommendations seemed problematic to me because I do agree with Schreiber (2001) about the importance of some prior literature

review. Dunne (2011:115-116) also adds to this argument by suggesting some literature review helps to ensure studies are workable, especially for “PhD students”, know the “substantive areas and boundaries” for study as well as “contextualise the study”. As Clarke (2005:13), researchers cannot be “theoretical virgins”. Strauss and Corbin (2015) contend that conducting a literature review does not impede the development of knowledge or the formulation of theories, despite the presence of experience and expertise. Indeed, it facilitates understanding of the conceptual relationships, which can subsequently be verified using data and contribute to the development of knowledge. Equally, Charmaz (2014) and Fernandez (2019) add to the argument by acknowledging the researcher’s insight from experience and some prior literature review helps them to be critical of not only previous work, but also the findings from their own studies. Realisation of this imperative has the potential to significantly contribute to the theoretical sensitivity of knowledge and emergent conclusions and theory. Consequently, I concur that possessing some background information sensitises the researcher to subtleties of data around the subject of study. The crucial aspect is to possess the ability to effectively utilise this knowledge and literature to make a more comprehensive contribution to the findings.

Some researchers have, therefore, argued that ‘sensitising concepts’ in the initial phases of grounded theory techniques (especially constructivist) can provide guidance on how experiential constituent parts may subsequently fit

in conceptual categories (Seibold 2002; Bowen 2006). Charmaz (2006), Sandelowski, (2000) and Mills et al. (2006) go further and argue that these concepts can help in formulating guidelines around which to organise and understand data/experiences as part of theory building, though it is also important for researchers to not only acknowledge their biases and beliefs, but also strive to keep them separate. Ultimately, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998:25, 279), the goal is that “theorising is the act of constructing . . . an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationships” that is trustworthy.

These constructivist approaches have been used to explore nurses’ attitudes and experiences in long-term health conditions (HIVAIDS in Brazil), poverty alleviation methods in the Caribbean, domestic violence in Tanzania, teachers’ perceptions of mental health difficulties in young people. Farragher and Coogan (2020) have also used constructivist grounded theory to recognise and raise the voices of young people with respect to their experiences with the care system in Ireland.

In undertaking my research, I relied on interpretive constructivist grounded theory procedure as a framework for guiding data collection and analysis. My reliance on the interpretive constructivist grounded theory procedure was informed by my desire to contribute to building consensus around the need for further research on the change process around IPV.

Reviews of domestic violence literature has led to a plethora of conceptual frameworks which have been employed to characterise and design behavioural change interventions. These have focused on cognitive modelling, such as Theory of Planned Behaviour and Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1991), Health Belief Model (Sharma and Romas, 2012) and the Social Practice Theory (Reckwitz, 2002). The most common conceptual framework for exploring behaviour change in IPV is the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). According to Prochaska et al. (2009:59) argues that individuals transition through the “six stages of change”.

It is recognised that in utilising research to evaluate interventions, the overriding argument is that research must answer the following pressing and unanswered questions: (1) Are there any differentiated approaches for interventions that address the most perilous targets for intimate partner violence perpetrators? (2) What are the preconditions and for are the typologies of interventions are best suited for interventions? and (3) Do specific components of specific interventions significantly and distinctively contribute to behaviour change, and if so, to what extent? These questions have formed the bedrock of my study.

The “COM-B model” (incorporating “Capability, Opportunity, and Motivational” behavioral barriers and enablers) and the ‘Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW)’ framework, conveys a “theoretically based approach for

intervention development” advanced by Michie et al. (2011:6). It is an innovative recent tool for behaviour change interventions characterising and design, which has been employed in the public health field. Figure 1 below shows the COM-B framework for understanding behaviour change.

Figure 1: The COM-B System-A Framework for Understanding Behaviour



Source: Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. and West, R. (2011) The behaviour Change Wheel: A New Method for Characterising and Designing Behaviour Change Interventions

Michie et al. (2011:4) argue that the BCW offers an obvious connection to an “overarching model of behaviour change and has been used to evaluate change in tobacco control and other public health programmes.” The approach comprises a behaviour system (in figure 1 above), bordered by interventions and policy categories. The interventions might include perpetrators’ programmes while the policy would refer to the criminal justice systems. A note of caution is that further research is required to explore the extent to which the BCW can lead to the design of more effective behavioural change interventions in fields beyond public health interventions.

The model considers motivation which is the “brain processes that energise and direct behaviour” (Michie et al. 2011:4). According to Michie et al. (2011) motivation therefore covers the basic drives and ‘automatic’ processes as well as choice and intention of behaviours. In the case of domestic violence, this would imply that being violent and the intention and drive for being violent are important mental elements and activities in the brain processes understanding the change process. As Javier and Herron (2018) argue, the narcissistic injuries inflicted earlier in life and have continued throughout a person’s lifespan can provide insight into why some, regardless of gender, have a proclivity for violence in intimate partner relationships.

According to Michie et al. (2011), the next step in the model is to consider additional influential factors which account for the possibility of behaviour target being affected, given adequate motivation to do so. Within the behaviour system, therefore, capability, opportunity and motivation interact to generate behaviour (positive and negative) which in turn influences these components.

Capability is defined as the individual’s psychological and physical capacity (Michie et al. 2011) to engage in the concerned activities, in this case, violence in intimate partner relationships. As argued in chapter 2, criminal sanctions cannot remove perpetrators from the community completely as most perpetrators remain in relationships, while sometimes, victims do not wish

their (ex)-partners to be prosecuted (Respect, 2011). In light of this, perpetrators' programmes aim to assist men take accountability for their abusive behaviour, build awareness and skills in managing non-abusive relationships, self-assessment, and conflict resolution techniques.

The implicit argument in this sense is that perpetrators' programmes offer the possibility of a permanent cessation of abuse through encouraging internal reflection and change in the perpetrators' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours about violence against women (Dobash et al. 2000). Capability, therefore, includes the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills upon which one can base actions of both violence and non-violence.

According to Michie et al. (2014), motivation refers to the brain processes that energise and direct behaviours and conduct, and not just the goals and conscious decision-making processes. It includes habitual processes, emotional responses, including analytical decision-making. In the case of domestic abuse interventions, some (Dunford, 2000) argue that reminding people of the shame associated with domestic abuse can be a powerful factor in promoting change.

According to Michie et al. (2014), opportunity refers to factors external to the individuals that influence, prompt, and cause certain behaviours, usually the target behaviour, to occur. Again, according to Michie et al. (2011) it is

possible for each of the components to mutually influence each other. Opportunity, for instance, can influence motivation as can capability, while enacting behaviour can alter capability, motivation, and opportunity. When applied to the perpetrators programmes and formats, perpetrators are expected to be a part of the target group (opportunity) so that they can cognitively understand (capability) and believe that intimate partner violence is a social construct. It can, therefore, be deduced from this that opportunity can also influence capability. In this regard, change begins with perpetrators acknowledging their behaviours and move on to exploring alternative courses of actions (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Healey et al. 1998). Alternatives include how to manage stress and control anger at a cognitive level (Hamberger and Hastings, 1993; Davis and Taylor, 999).

According to some (Labriola et al. 2008; Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Mullender and Burton, 2001), group processes offer opportunities for perpetrators to deconstruct intimate partner violence. This process has often proved effective in shaping beliefs around intimate partner violence.

Consequently, it is logical to assume that any particular combination of actions could impact at least one of the components of the behaviour system. The social system's cause-effect relationships can be either positively or negatively influenced and can also bring about changes in other components of the system because of a particular intervention (Michie et al. 2011).

Programme staff and policy makers should possess an awareness of the complex nature of the behavioural target and what components of the system to enable the design of effective intervention strategies.

According to Michie et al. (2011), individual, group and environmental perspectives are expected to have similar influence in controlling behaviour. However, the contextual nature of the model suggests that to achieve a required change, it is desirable to identify the intensity and range of interventions to focus on. For example, one could argue that to bring about change in IPV, only one intervention might be sufficient to effect the change such as incarcerations and restriction of opportunities (policy measures, child protection systems), or perpetrators programmes and associated teaching skills in communication and negotiation (capability), perpetrators programmes that include pro-social motivations (motivation). Others might argue that maybe due to the complex nature of human behaviours, it might be preferable to adopt a combination of components. Implicit from this is the possibility of being able to generate other subdivisions of the components that help to consider significant characteristics of the same.

The COM-B model, as argued by Handley et al. (2016), is particularly appealing due to its capacity to systematically incorporate contextual factors. This is because context is key to the design and implementation of effective interventions. Applied to IPV, the opportunity and context include being in

intimate relationships (where one can perpetrate violence), being part of society that encourages male dominance (socialisation) or being part of group-based interventions (where one can learn non-violent ways). It is, therefore, possible to locate the opportunity for development of both positive and negative behaviours in the context. According to Michie et al. (2011), the context of behaviour is an important and practical starting point when designing interventions. The behaviour system also includes the involvement of the automatic processes and helps to widen our knowledge about behaviour beyond the more reflective and systematic cognitive processes.

This framework is relevant to the study of domestic violence for three distinct reasons. The framework identifies interventions that have the potential for further development, providing opportunities for the system to give other possibilities for advancement. Furthermore, it is logically consistent and clearly delineates all the categories and examples that can possess comparable degrees of specificity. Thirdly, and significantly, it is linked to the specific mechanism of behaviour change. As argued above, understanding intimate partner violence within the opportunity component can be done by closely examining relationships, socialisation processes and the necessity and relevance of group-based interventions.

The model recognises the wide-ranging cause-effect of the analytical framework by exploring a few specific issues. One may choose to explore the

internal and external factors necessary to bring about behavioural change. It also involves the identification of policies, such as those related to criminal justice systems and child protection systems, and understanding how these policies contribute to the broader agenda concerning domestic violence. In addition, according to Michie et al. (2011), it is possible to identify motivating factors as the foundation for designing effective interventions by utilising a single unifying theory. Within the context of IPV, reasons for abstaining from it may involve emotions like shame, guilt, and others. However, motivation covers a wide range of aspects, and determining the extent of this range was the foundation of my research.

It would appear from the systematic literature review that this framework is applicable for understanding the change process of domestic violence services and interventions. If we borrow from statistical and experimental science modelling to measure intimate partner abuse as a dependent variable, the independent variables which will be target of interventions will be: the altering the (i) **physical capability** through physical skills development and **psychological capability** through conveyance of knowledge or understanding, training emotional, cognitive and/or behavioural skills (Michie et al. 2011) or other enabling interventions; (ii) **physical and social opportunity which** can be achieved through environmental change or the laws of engagement in society; and (iii) **automotive motivation** (Michie et al. 2011) which can be achieved through “associative learning that elicit

positive/negative feelings and impulses and counter impulses relating to the behaviour target, imitative learning” (West and Michie, 2020:2), habit formation or direct influences on automatic motivational processes and **reflective motivation** can be achieved through “increasing knowledge and understanding and eliciting positive/negative feelings such as plans and evaluations at conscious level” (West and Michie, 2020:2) about the behavioural target. I concur with the findings of West and Michie (2020) that individuals who possess greater capability and opportunity to access resources are more inclined to be motivated to engage in a particular behaviour. The more extensive one's knowledge and skills are in resolving conflict in intimate relationships, the more likely they are to be motivated to avoid violence and promote pro-positive positive behaviours.

Existing literature reviews indicate that while the COM-B model has been applied in public health, there is a scarcity of scholarly research testing its relevance in the context of domestic violence and abuse. This model is well-suited for delving into the experiences of men involved in the perpetrators' programmes in the London Borough.

Chapter Summary

A significant finding from the previous chapter is that, if the effectiveness of the perpetrators' programmes is determined (regardless of the measurable value), it is crucial to determine the degree to which individual components

of the programme can be considered responsible and therefore linked to any observed changes. This chapter has explained the rationale for using the COM-B model for this study. The triggers for changing behaviour regarding domestic violence, which include capability, motivation, and opportunity, can be categorised as either internal or external to perpetrators.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter Introduction

I have anchored this study and thesis on the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), a recent innovation of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). It is argued that theory is grounded in participants and researchers' experiences based on interactions with each other (Charmaz, 2006). I purposely co-constructed the theoretical propositions emergent from the data by testing the applicability of the COM-B conceptual framework.

I could have conducted the study without a conceptual framework. Nevertheless, this would not have facilitated my development of the interview guides to the same degree as I did. Although I acknowledged my personal beliefs and biases, I made a conscious effort to downplay them in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the data, findings, and conclusions. I achieved this by triangulating them with existing literature. This greatly enhanced the richness of the findings, analysis, and conclusions.

As discussed in chapters one and two, there is a limited number of studies which have investigated men's experiences with engaging in interventions targeted at perpetrators of IPV. Similarly, there are few known studies that provide accounts of what specific aspects of their experiences with

perpetrators' programmes they found particularly instrumental in changing their behaviour. There is certainly no published study that has tested the applicability of the COM-B model.

In light of the foregoing, the primary purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse the methodological approach I used to conduct my research. Thus, this chapter describes (a) an overview of the research design; (b) research variables; (c) a setting for data collection; (d) the sampling methods; (e) data collection procedures; (f) research instruments; (g) data analysis; and (h) ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a representation of the main facets of the framework that underpinned the design of the study.

Overview of the Research Design

According to Creswell (2009:3), the choice of the "research paradigm, strategy and methods, are (sic) partly influenced by the researchers' beliefs and assumptions about how best to study the topic" or phenomena. In my case, the dominant positioning and approach was the interpretation of stories of men's experiences of engaging with the perpetrators' programme. I, deliberately, chose this approach because the phenomenon has hardly been addressed. While the paradigmatic choice relies on the quest for "objectivity, generalisability that leads towards unitary truth" (Charmaz 2006:5), attention should be paid to the understanding that studying sensitive

topics, such as this one, cannot be completely value-free and that researchers will, invariably, have an influence on social interactions, which, eventually, constitute findings.

The study was qualitative in design with an (interpretive) constructivist grounded theory approach using in-depth interview guides. According to Teherani et al. (2015:669), qualitative research is the “systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings”, which can include “how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, and how interactions shape relationships”. This involves identifying an appropriate paradigm, to which I now turn.

To fully grasp the theoretical framework that influences the selection of a research design, it is crucial to first define the concept of research paradigm. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the research community recognises a paradigm as a set of commonly held beliefs and assumptions, consisting of four key elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. In essence, selecting a paradigm entails posing four fundamental questions:

- What is reality (ontology),
- How can we know what reality is or acquire knowledge about this reality (epistemology),

- What procedure and tools can we use to obtain or acquire the knowledge (methodology), and,
- What is the ethical manner of acquiring that knowledge (axiology)?

Scott and Usher (2010), Lowe (2006), and Grix (2004) have highlighted ongoing debates within the research community regarding the ways in which individuals perceive and interpret their social surroundings in their day-to-day experiences. Thus, according to Snape and Spencer (2003) and Richards (2003), it is important to consider one's beliefs about the social world, what can be known about it (ontology), how knowledge is acquired (epistemology), and the objectives and aims of the research, including participant characteristics, when choosing a research paradigm.

The third aspect to consider is methodology. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:28), methodology refers to “the well-planned research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in an investigation to find out something.” This requires making assumptions about how to collect information, choosing participants and instruments, and analysing data.

Lastly, axiology deals with ethical considerations and deals with the “right and wrong behaviour relating to the research” process (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017:28). As Biedenbach and Jacobson (2016) and Lowe (2006) argue, axiology addresses the question of teleology (morality), deontology (benefits

to the participants, researchers/scholastic community, or the public at large), morality criterion (moral values to be upheld), and fairness to participants.

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26), a paradigm is, thus:

“The abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world... the lens through which a researcher looks at the world... examines the methodological aspects of their research to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed.”

Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that a paradigm encompasses the framework of scientific investigation along with the associated assumptions for collecting and analysing results. Many researchers have put forth various research paradigms (Teddlie and Tashakkori,2009), with Candy (1989) and Rehman and Alharthi (2016) proposing that these paradigms can generally be categorised as positivist, interpretivist, or critical paradigms.

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p30), a "positivist paradigm" is a research perspective that emphasises the scientific method of investigating facts and measurable entities through experimentation, observation, and logic in order to understand phenomena. This approach is based on deductive reasoning and involves the formulation and testing of hypotheses, providing explanations, and making predictions (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Thus, according to Cohen et al. (2007), the concepts of determinism, empiricism,

parsimony, and generalizability are crucial in understanding causal relationships among factors.

On the other hand, “**Interpretivist paradigm** is employed to understand the subjective world of human experience” (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017:30). The goal is to understand and therefore interpret thoughts and meanings of the context while establishing the viewpoint of subjects (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Hence, according to Mertens (2004, 2014, 2015), the key goal within the Interpretivist paradigm is the social construction of reality.

That theory does not precede research and that knowledge is co-constructed and grounded on data generated by the act of research and enquiry, is the reason interpretive paradigms are consistent with constructivism. Hence, as Charmaz (2014) and Strauss and Corbin (2015), the interpretive paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology.

The implications are that the researchers use their own cognitive processing to formulate meaning of the gathered data. In this regard, interaction with research participants is as important in collecting data as much as it is in making sense of the same. As Punch (2005), argues, the researcher is often likely to construct knowledge based on their subjective experiences of events as they occur in nature. Due to ‘subjective epistemology’ (Kivunja and

Kuyini, 2017), one key assumption is that both the researcher and participants can engage and are engaged in an interactive process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that the researcher can serve as an engaged and reliable participant, adept at precisely analysing data and upholding the integrity of the findings (Charmaz, 2014; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, interpretive/inductive methods are highly suitable for theory building, as suggested by Glaser (1992). Researchers begin by analysing data and then strive to formulate theoretical propositions.

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:35) the “**Critical paradigm** situates its research in social justice issues and seeks to address the political, social and economic issues and how the same underpin oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures”. On their part, Mertens (2015) argues that this paradigm assumes a transactional epistemology, an ontology of historical realism, dialogic methodology, and an axiology that respects cultural norms.

That being the case, the two main research methodologies are quantitative⁸ (experimental designs, quasi/non-experimental designs, descriptive and correlational designs⁹) and qualitative, although a third (mixed methods), is becoming a popular way to promote rigour in data which qualitative or

⁸ Gerdes and Conn (2001:1) “traditional scientific method is ... the legitimate way to conduct scholarly research”. For full explanation of quantitative research methodologies and designs (see Brown and Lord, 1999; Keskinocak and Taylor, 2001; Egan, 2005; Creswell, 2003).

⁹ For full explanation of quantitative research methodologies (see Brown and Lord, 1999; Keskinocak and Taylor, 2001; Egan, 2005; Creswell, 2003) for further discussions on quantitative research designs

quantitative methods on their own cannot achieve. The quantitative methods, with origins in the scientific field, are usually based on statistical data analysis measures. Conversely, qualitative methods depend on the descriptive narratives (Berrios and Lucca, 2006) and are beginning to be recognised as important sources of knowledge (epistemology).

Many theorists of various paradigms (Schriver, 2011; Gall et al. 2003; Cohen, et al. 2007; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008; Creswell, 2007) have argued that certain conditions must be met for research paradigm to qualify as interpretive. According to Creswell (2007:37-39), interpretive research must observe common set of principles, such as:

“**naturalistic inquiry** (social phenomena must be studied within their natural setting), **researchers as instrument** of data collection and offer personal insights but aware of biases and preconceptions, **interpretive analysis** at multiple levels, **documenting the verbal and non-verbal language** of participants, **temporal nature** (making sense of a dynamic social process as it unfolds over time), and **hermeneutic circle** (move forward and backwards to reach theoretical saturation.”

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative methods can be separated into five (5) broad groups: narrative¹⁰, phenomenology¹¹, ethnography¹², grounded

¹⁰ Detailed explanation of Narratives (see Creswell, 2003; Berrios and Lucca 2006)

¹¹ See Budd (2005:45); Kuper (2005:120)

theory, and case study¹³. Ethnographic research, the most popular of qualitative research, is where researchers immerse themselves in the participants' environment to understand cultures.

As previously indicated, the choice of methodology depends on the questions the research aims to answer. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006:59) this helps the researcher to move beyond the dilemma by clarifying the “(i) choice of purposes or objectives, (ii) generation and evaluation of solutions, and (iii) troubleshooting or control situation.” This, in turn, provides a direction of emphasis of the how data is to be collected and analysed. However, my study was designed around the grounded theory approach, specifically CGT.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) is a research approach (Kathy Charmaz is the leading proponent) which is embedded within the family of qualitative research methods and used increasingly extensively for understanding and exploring new social processes. CGT research processes redefine the relationship between the researchers and participants (Ghezeljeh and Emami, 2009). The uniqueness lies in the interactive process between researchers and research participants in the interviews, reflexivity, and analysis to derive at co-constructed knowledge (Charmaz, 2014).

¹² See Rudkin and Deo (2006:21); Ryan and Bernard (2006; Gilmore 2002)

¹³ See Yin (2014)

Charmaz (2003:259) argues that some knowledge (“sensitising concepts”) of literature is necessary to inform the study. This view is also shared by MacIntosh (2003), Gilgun (2020) and Blumer (1994). Constructivist grounded theory is, therefore, both more flexible and adaptable. Unlike classical GT where the researcher can often be detached, CGT requires the researcher to be fully active in generating conclusions and theory, as well as co-construction of knowledge. Charmaz (2014) argues that acknowledging the researcher’s part in co-construction strengthens the quality of theory building and is consistent with interpretive research design. Writing subsequently, Charmaz (2020) argues that the more researchers highlight their own involvement in data collection and analysis, the more credible the results and conclusions are and can be. Singh and Estefan (2018) also agree and recommend the use of CGT in nursing research. For Charmaz, “the pragmatist foundations encourage us to construct an interpretive rendering of the worlds we study rather than an external reporting of events and statements” (Charmaz, 2014:339). It is worth noting that this role can potentially create some tensions which some critics would question the validity and reliability of findings and conclusions.

Data Collection, Management and Analysis in Constructivist Grounded Theory

Epistemologically speaking, knowledge creation for constructivist grounded theory researchers is a function of the interface between them and research

participants. Constructivists contend that, given the multiple realities related to study of a particular phenomenon, researchers are active co-creators (Mills et al. 2006) involved in collection of data, analysis and “interpreting the meanings and findings” (Mills et al. 2006; Crossetti et al. 2016:48).

Therefore, according to Charmaz (2014), CGT conclusions are “narrative reconstructions of experience” (Charmaz 2000:514), but also influenced by researchers’ own perceptions, beliefs, values, ideas, and experiences. However, that CGT researchers are ontologically inseparable from the creation of knowledge, which is often linked to specific times, in specific places and culturally specific contexts (Charmaz, 2006) requires that findings and interpretations are as close to original data as possible.

Nonetheless, Charmaz (2003) acknowledges that the CGT should adhere to the common traditions of the GT framework. It is therefore necessary and crucial that researchers engage in minimal literature review (and only for purposes of sensitising) and to be consistently receptive to emerging data (verbal and non-verbal language, tone of voice). It also calls for constructivists to remain engaged in constant comparison of data to take account of relationships emerging in data. The importance of constant comparison is that it “enables the researcher to identify similarities and differences in the data and informs further data collection.” (Engward, 2013:40; Charmaz, 2014).

Central to CGT is thus the identifying of the sample from whom to collect the data but also guided by the iterative process of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014) to enable the researcher to “strategically decide what or who will provide the most information-rich source of data to meet their analytical needs” (Birks and Mills, 2015:6) and to “increase their analytical possibilities to theoretical sensitivity” (Birks and Mills, 2015:8).

Data used in constructivist theory analysis is primarily gathered from several sources including interviews (such as face-to-face, telephone and/or focus groups), observations, various media forms and researcher “memos” or “theoretical notes” (Charmaz, 2014; Hussein et al. 2020:5). Memos are a systematic approach to capture ideas, implications, connections (Charmaz, 2018). According to Burns et al. 2022, memos are researchers' reflections on relational aspects encountered during contact with research participants and how this influences the co-construction of meanings. Charmaz (2006:9,11) argues that memos should be “flexible, adaptable, and usually written soon after interviews to “conceptualise ideas” and guide further data collection.

It is often the common case that researchers use participants' words and language (in vivo coding) as basis for developing codes (see below). In this process, researchers may have to playback interviews several times, read and re-read the transcribed data and coding responses and sometimes changing the codes. While doing so, researchers also pay attention to tone of voice,

pauses in responses, observations of body language (Charmaz 2008). This serves two purposes; (a) to enable the researcher to remain close to the data collected, and (b) to enable the researcher to carefully explore what theoretical categories or meanings of statements (scenes, accounts, pauses in interviews) refer to (Charmaz, 2006; Aspers and Corte, 2019). This enables the lived experiences of participants to be “fit and relevant” (Charmaz 2006:47; Gardner et al. 2012) to the research findings and conclusions therein.

The other central issue to the process of analysing data is creating a link between the gathered data and their meaning is the process of coding (which has three levels: namely: open/initial, focused/selective, and theoretical coding (Alemu et al. 2015; Charmaz, 2016; Hussein et al. (2020:11).

According to Holloway and Galvin (2017) *open/initial* coding (Charmaz, 216) generates several ideas from chunks of data collected at preliminary stages. The process is usually done by examining data line – by – line and assigning a code of words or short phrases (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) and helps to identify codes that become more prevalent and enable researchers to give life to data. While fluid and adjustable, this intuitive process gives researchers direction of travel in the rest of the research process before any deductions can be made. As a departure from classic GT, Charmaz (2016) has introduced gerunds technique which Saldana (2016) refers to this as process coding.

Lewin et al. 2010) argues that these coding techniques assist in identifying change actions and processes within the data through the passage of time.

According to Santos et al. (2018) and Saldana (2016) the next step is *focused/selective* coding which seeks to identify frequently and conceptually related codes. This process is used to synthesise and explain “larger segments of data” and requires the use of the most “significant or frequent earlier codes to sift through this data” (Charmaz, 2006:57). As Li et al. (2019) argue, selective or focused coding involves categorising initial and emerging categories into core categories. Draucker et al. (2007) argue that this process contributes to theory construction in latter stages. When performing focused coding, it is common for researchers to explore back and forth between interviews, memos, and observed data. Focused codes can then be used as themes or variables of the substantive theoretical propositions.

The coding helps to classify categories and formulate an analytical framework, which in turn helps to link the memos and data. As well as helping to reduce the likelihood of superimposing researchers’ “own preconceived notions on the data” (Charmaz 2006:51), they also help researchers to reflect on experiences, make connections between and among concepts, similarities and points of departure and refine, or change categories.

In CGT, coding occurs simultaneously with data collection. Thus, considerable efforts are made to examining the data, listening to interview responses, and playing back several times where necessary, reading the transcribed data, and coding each response. Attention is also paid to tone of voice, pauses in responses, observations of body language (Charmaz 2008).

The final part of coding is *theoretical* coding, which involves producing formal or substantive theory. According to McCann and Clark (2003:9) “formal theories deal with a conceptual area of enquiry. The key to analysis is the point when no new identifiable variations in categories can be achieved and referred to as *data saturation* (Charmaz, 2014:213). According to Engward (2013) and Charmaz (2016), data saturation is a crucial step in grounded theory as a process by which concepts can be validated and refined. This is a helpful process for ensuring findings are credible, original and can be tested for rigour to strengthen knowledge around theoretical propositions.

The importance of these processes can be found in what Charmaz argues that “categories explicate ideas, events, or processes in the data, generate theoretical propositions according to what is seen, sensed, heard and coded in order to remain open to further analytic possibilities” (2006:82-91) and in achieving ‘theoretical elaboration, saturation and densification of concepts’. This can, therefore, help in establishing uniformities and varying conditions, including influencing future data collection.

The next step is to illustrate the ideas and categories diagrammatically in order to integrate theoretical concepts into comparable and unifying links “at an abstract level” (Charmaz, 2006:115). Davoudi et al. (2016) argues that this comparison helps in exploring similarities and differences, patterns, and relationships, as well as dimensions and properties of categories.

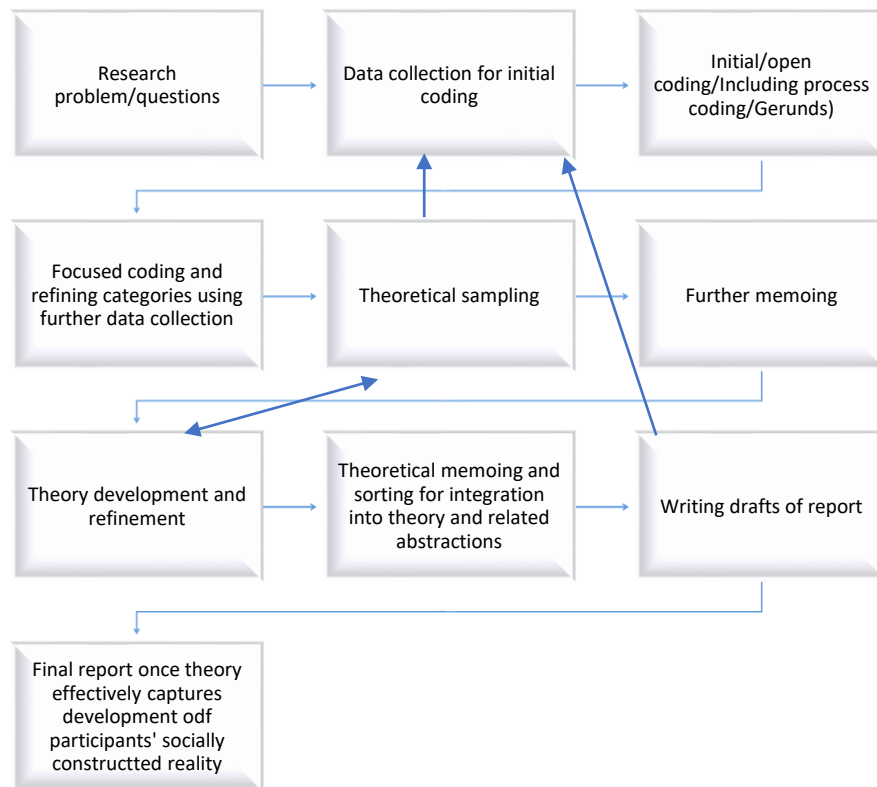
The final step is to diagrammatically formulate a conceptual framework that pieces together ideas to enable theory building to proceed (Bowen, 2006: Charmaz, 2014). Again, as Charmaz (2006) argues, to begin to theorise (using creative writing in present the findings as close to the participants’ expressions), researchers must go beyond the stage of coding to isolate the main categories and/or themes. The main categories and/or themes are thus those that carry “substantive analytic weight” have “theoretical reach, incisiveness and power” (Charmaz, 2006:47) and can be tested for rigour.

The process of data collection, analysis and interpretation is summed up by Chen and Boore (2009:7) who argue that:

“creating and refining the research and data collection questions, data collection and initial coding, initial memos raising codes to tentative categories, further data collection and focused coding, advanced memos refining conceptual categories – adopting certain categories as theoretical concepts, sorting memos, integrating memos and diagramming concepts, and writing the first draft”.

In turn, this can be illustrated by figure 2 below which depicts the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation in CGT.

Figure 2: The Process of Data Analysis in Constructivist Grounded Theory



Modified from Charmaz (2006)

Worth acknowledging is the fact that, in (constructivist) grounded theory, it is possible to have a much less linear process of data collection than this. Suffice to say data collection, management and analysis is procedurally considered step-by-step in constructivist grounded theory.

Rationale for Selecting Qualitative Research Methodology

Although qualitative methods have their own reliability and validity interpretive inference limitations, they, however, offer the most appropriate framework for studying the intricacies of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence. This is because of several reasons. Firstly, the bedrock of interpretive research is the careful choice of respondents who best fit the phenomenon under study. This is referred to as theoretical sampling. For example, Farrell et al. (2019) argue that studying phenomena such as experiences of feminist interventions of which intimate partner violence is part, should best be measured by accounts of those who have benefited from the intervention. This is because the men who have experienced these interventions will likely share the stories that make them distinctively suited to the study. Hence, the samples are likely to be convenient, and possibly, small in size (Glaser and Holton, 2004). The key consideration should be the relevance of the sample, notwithstanding the size, to the study objectives.

Secondly, the researcher's role takes a vital role in interpretive research. As Stanley and Wise (2002) argue, reality is socially experienced and interpreted. Qualitative methods help in uncovering meanings of connected phenomena (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). In some methods, such as constructivist grounded theory, the role of the researcher includes co-construction and interpretation

of phenomena under study. Therefore, in this case, interpretive methods help to interpret the experiences of interventions around IPV.

Thirdly, interpretive analysis is holistic and 'contextual' in that it focuses on "language, signs, and meanings" from the participants' perspective of those involved in the social phenomenon (Creswell, 2003:8; 2007:39). Therefore, the rigour of interpretive research is perceived based on its ability to be systematic and transparent in the process of collecting and analysis of data.

Finally, in interpretive research, data collection and analysis can ensue concurrently and iteratively. It is, for instance, possible to simultaneously conduct an interview, develop codes and analyse the data. Whilst undertaking this, one can adjust the interview guides to reflect particular attention to new information and themes from an interview. This process has benefits of exploring the phenomena from previously less considered facets of the study. One can, therefore, go back and forth during the study.

As Andrade (2009) posits, interpretive research is suitable for exploring the complex, interrelated, and multifaceted social processes related to the data. It can also help to negate the biases and inaccuracies with a view to consolidating the conceptual framework for theory. In addition, it helps in discovering germane issues for follow-up research.

Interpretive research paradigms, however, are not free of challenges. For example, according to Hunt (2009:1284) at least “three main challenges can be inferred regarding interpretive designs”. Firstly, due to intensity of resources required for data collection, there is a tendency to rely and base conclusions on limited scope of data. This can suggest the use of inappropriate assumptions resulting in the vast majority of knowledge and conclusions being drawn by the researcher than what the actual data reveals. Secondly, Hunt (2009) argues that interpretive research also suffers from utilising less famous and tried and tested methodologies. Therefore, researchers may introduce personal biases or preconceptions into conclusions. Third, there remains uncertainty about the conclusions. As well as findings and recommendations sometimes being unable to answer the originally planned questions of the study, the same cannot always be replicated and generalised.

On balance, and notwithstanding these limitations, the implications could not be clearer. For purposes of this study, the interpretivist paradigm seemed appropriate for exploring men’s experiences with engaging in a perpetrators’ programme in the sense that it involved asking questions such as ‘what is it like to have that experience? (Taylor and Bogdan, (1984:8-9), how can I gain knowledge of the experiences and the perceptions of these experiences, what are the “meanings and interpretations” (Furlong, 2013; Carpenter, 2013:11) do men give to their experiences?’

Additionally, as stated by Bryne (2001) and Newington and Metcalfe (2014), some key principles of qualitative research regarding the recruitment and treatment of participants include showing respect towards participants, avoiding any form of exploitation based on their vulnerabilities, striving to minimise risks and maximise benefits for participants, and ensuring that participants derive some form of direct or indirect benefit from the knowledge acquired.

According to Byrne (2001), it is important for research participants to fully comprehend the implications of participating in a specific research study, especially considering the potential privacy concerns associated with qualitative approaches. To accomplish this, it is crucial to ensure that the research process aligns with national and international research ethics guidelines, with participants giving their consent either verbally or in writing. Participants need to have a full understanding of the research aims, expectations, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Additional details should cover the guarantee of privacy, a designated point of contact for any research-related concerns, the use of familiar language, and the absence of coercion or undue inducements.

In line with the study's objective, it was deemed suitable to situate the study within a qualitative research design. The study aimed to contribute to the development of a practical knowledge base (Teherani et al.2015) and a deeper

understanding of how perpetrators perceive, interpret, and engage with the process of change in intimate relationships. Regarding this matter, it is crucial for research initiatives, including my own, to prioritise the improvement of understanding the various contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011); Charmaz, 2014) of violence and abuse from the perspective of the perpetrators. By gaining a deeper understanding of the change process from the perpetrators' perspective, the research and academic community can enhance their effectiveness in developing treatment regimens to combat violence within families, intimate relationships, and other forms of gender-based violence.

Unfortunately, many domestic violence programmes providers in both the public and private organizations have limited protocols that could serve as guidance in the design and provision of services. It is, nevertheless, anticipated that an in-depth analytical framework for understanding IPV will help to locate foci of change that service providers can utilise in the design and evaluation of prevention, intervention, and treatment programmes (Carter et al. 1999; Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999). A thorough analysis of the change process can enhance the quality of intervention programmes and reduce the perpetration of violence.

It would appear that violence is intricately intertwined with our understanding of ecological, contextualized, critical and postmodern feminist framework (Yllö, 1993). Utilising the COM-B model, I have endeavoured to

clarify the process of perpetrating violence and the potential for unlearning it through interventions such as the perpetrators' programmes.

Quantitative approaches such as survey questionnaires could have been used for this study. In a similar manner, an alternative approach could have been to use a pre-test, pre-test and post-test study. Nevertheless, I concur with Van de Mortel (2008) who observes that individuals, during research, have a tendency to portray a positive perception of themselves. It is important to note that false relationships or obscured relationships between variables can arise from this. Although qualitative in-depth interviews may also be susceptible to social desirability effects, these can be minimised by employing additional and meticulous probes. The researcher has the opportunity to thoroughly examine responses and actively contribute to the development of data and its interpretation (Legard et al. 2003). Qualitative research, particularly in-depth interviews (that have both structure and flexibility), allows the researcher to question responses and gather a substantial amount of data. It was crucial to have a chance to interact with the interviewees, asking follow-up questions to clarify their responses and respectfully challenge their positions.

Given the foregoing, the constructivist epistemology theory approach (rather than predominantly phenomenology, ethnography, action research or case study) was found to be a highly effective method for comprehending the

various contexts and interpretations surrounding IPV in intimate partner relationships. The hope is that the findings can help inform the development of interventions that can effectively eliminate or greatly reduce IPV. Thus, to enhance our comprehension of how individuals perceive events in their lives and approach their involvement in interventions, it was crucial to thoroughly examine the experiences of perpetrators. This would contribute to the investigative and explanatory process of desistance from IPV.

Additionally, it was important for me, as Holloway and Galvin (2017) argue, to make a conscious attempt to acknowledge my involvement in the study and to consciously keep in mind that my presence and exchanges with participants' thoughts, opinions, values, and feelings, would inevitably impact findings and eventual study outcomes. This was important because it would inevitably lead to the co-construction of a theoretical proposition that was a balance between participants' stories and my own professional expertise (Gardner et al. 2012; Higginbottom and Lauridsen, 2014).

I am convinced that CGT was the most appropriate study approach for me as a social worker and researcher. Every human is an inimitable being with their own stories, shaped and influenced by how they experience and interpret their surrounding world. Engaging in relationships with others implies interacting with a lens of individuality, which in turn, is important in formulation of theories about "psychosocial processes" (Mediani, 2017:3).

In studying domestic violence, the CGT approach purposes to capture social processes that describes the context of human behaviours (Mediani, 2017). IPV is deeply entrenched in social contexts and is shaped by a multitude of evolving patterns of meaning (Engward, 2013). As a result, my study aimed to generate and contribute to ideas that explain the dynamics of intimate partner relationships and their potential impact on intervention design. The goal was to utilise the COM-B model to investigate how individuals develop an understanding of IPV, their experiences with interventions, and how these interventions can be more beneficial for them and others affected by it.

Through an understanding of the researcher's impact on shaping knowledge about interventions related to IPV, the CGT approach appeared to be the most appropriate choice. It was also fitting because it enables those involved in the interventions to share the genuine experiences of individuals who commit acts of violence and their corresponding experiences. According to Charmaz (2008:133), a deeper understanding of the various perspectives and experiences of our research participants can enhance the design of effective interventions, which is reflected in the methodology of CGT. Higginbottom and Lauridsen (2014) agree that CGT allows researchers to create theoretical frameworks and enhance the advancement of knowledge on a specific topic theme and guide actions.

Application of Constructivist Grounded Theory to Studies

There are a few examples of procedures for use of the constructivist grounded theory approach. Four are highlighted in this study. One of them is the Coogan (2016) who used CGT to explore practitioners' experiences and perceptions of children who were subjected to parental violence and abuse in Ireland. The other is the one used by McKibbin et al (2017) in undertaking a study in Australia to explore sexually harmful behaviour among young people. The third was a study by Economu et al. (2021). The study sought to understand how patients suffering from cancer transition from the belief that they were cancer free to incurable recurrence with advanced disease. In-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen (15) patients who were recruited from a major cancer centre in the USA. Among the key themes that emerged were reluctant acceptance, seeking survival through continuous treatment, and hope in the face of an uncertain future. The conclusion was that the patients reported a state of personal equilibrium encircled by treatment and hope. Bearing this in mind, my research has provided insight into the need for treatment together with the need to clearly understand needs of patients during the transition from survivor without disease to survivor with advanced disease. This is meant to contribute to establishing effective interventions for patients.

The fourth was a study by Mulugeta et al. (2017) on twenty-five (25) black men's views affecting their awareness of risk factors and early detecting services towards cancer, using semi-structured interviews. The study found the men's views towards cancer were linked to socially constructed perspectives, linked with cultural and religious beliefs. The study concluded that public health campaigns based solely on the clinical meaning of cancer are incongruent with black men's understandings of cancer, and therefore ineffective at reducing health inequality.

The specific tools used for all these studies were the interview guides or schedules. Interview guides have multiple advantages. One of them is their adaptability while retaining elements of the structure. In-depth interviews enable the researcher to follow up responses, motives, and feelings of the responses for further investigation. It also enables the researcher to observe the tone of voice, facial expressions, especially in face-to-face interviews. As Bell (1987) and Jamshed (2014) note, interviews are helpful for clarification of information which written responses are unable to. Their interactive nature also accords probing of spontaneous responses not thought about in the original design of the study.

That said, in-depth interviews and face to face interviews are not free of criticisms. One of the criticisms is that in-depth interview approaches take too long to organise. The second is that they can be subjective and might

suffer from social desirability effects and question instability and including possible doubts regarding the authenticity of interview data (Saloniki et al. 2019; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Bearing this in mind, I made sure that the study only included males who had attended a perpetrator's programme.

Interviewing offers an opportunity to develop a relationship based on some level of trust between the researcher and the participants. Skilful use of interviews using a series of questions and probes enables a "depth compelling evocation of an individual's experience" (Seidman, 1998:44) that cannot be established from structured questionnaires regardless of the representativeness of the random sampling method. This necessitated my adoption of the constructivist approach which Crotty (1998) says someone may construct and attach different meanings to the same phenomena as part of building knowledge and search for truth. It is important for researchers to recognise and remember this throughout their interaction with research participants and resultant data. A reflexive and contextual theoretical framework also guided my approach throughout the study process (Gentles et al. 2014). As Engward and Davis (2015), this process helped me to rigorously reflect on my own professional experiences and relate the same to the context of general child protection work and its associated challenges.

Working in frontline child protection work has helped me to understand that the change process of violent behaviour could be more profoundly

understood using qualitative approaches to investigation, which other methods cannot. Qualitative methods enabled me the width and depth necessary to more fully understand the multiple contexts associated with violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1988) and the change process.

I fully agree with Sormark (2020), that many analysts and researchers have used naturalistic and ethnographic approaches and techniques to provide a systematic portrayal and understanding of violence. This approach not only has multiple benefits to both the research communities, but also for participants. For example, it raises the importance of giving voice to participants as a way of creating knowledge around IPV. It also offers the opportunities for the research participants to heal and, more importantly, to the design of effective interventions around the relevant subject of interests. It is for these sets of reasons that qualitative methodological techniques and approaches befittingly served the aims and goals of this study.

If the factors affecting effectiveness of interventions were thoroughly examined, a deeper understanding of the change process would have been achieved, allowing for a more balanced allocation of resources. According to Showkat and Parveen (2017) and Crabtree and DiCiccio (2006), in-depth interviews are a reliable and effective method for initiating the knowledge building process. Dobash and Dobash (1998:56), on their part, argue that “historical and concrete analysis is a necessary aspect of our efforts to explain

and understand recurrent social patterns such as violence.” Therefore, studying violence from a qualitative and context specific perspectives, invariably, broadens the scope of understanding of change in behaviour, conduct, beliefs, and attitudes around violence.

A crucial aspect of the behavioural change process is acknowledging the need for self-reflection in how we present ourselves, our experiences, and the significance we attribute to the research process and the subject of investigation (Berger, 2015; Buetow, 2019; Grove, 2017). Throughout the process, it became clear that reflective analysis through memo-writing and an understanding of how violence is deeply intertwined into the fabric of people became apparent. By adhering to the guiding principles of qualitative research, I made a conscious effort to guard against my own biases in order to maintain the trustworthiness and reliability of the study. I managed this by, in some cases, declaring my own experiences as a social work practitioner and manager. According to Charmaz (2014), recognising our own experiences can enhance the objectivity of our findings and conclusions. I therefore also used triangulation of approaches to data collection and analysis (Merriam and Merriam, 1998). This was significant because as indicated above, it helped me to guard against biases and also enhance credibility of the results.

Programme Setting; Structure and Content

The perpetrators' programme (which was located in the Men's Centre in a north London area) was commissioned by a London Borough's Community Safety Net and run for about 14 years. The purpose was to commission up to twelve (12) places per year on a programme for domestic violence perpetrators to address their violent and abusive behaviours. The commissioning arrangements was in place until December 2018 when the service was discontinued. The Safety Interventions Manager was the lead within the Local Authority's Community Safety for this programme. The central emphasis of the programme was the safety of women and children with a view to decreasing risk perpetrated by men as part of the wider strategy to tackle violence in its many manifestations. The programme accepted self as well as agency referrals.

As part of the monitoring plan, the Men's Centre provided weekly attendance updates to the Safety Interventions Manager. The Centre was not funded to provide court reports for criminal prosecutions. However, under the contractual terms, the centre was expected to feedback to the Local Authority, especially to the allocated social worker where there was on going and active casework. As such, all data in this research was drawn from the records kept by the commissioning service – the London Borough.

According to the case records, the full perpetrator's programme was undertaken over a 36-sessions (roughly once per week) in total. The intervention consisted of the initial assessment and a series of 2-3-hour weekly sessions. The initial assessment meeting comprised one-to-one work and pre-intervention meeting to motivate the prospective participants and lay ground rules for attending the group, and the need for transparency in the group; including the imperative to actively engage in the sessions. The next stage involved thirty-six (36) weekly sessions of 2-3 hours duration. The duration was sufficient for ensuring that there was adequate time for going through the course materials and breaks.

The programme covered three specific areas: (i) violence, (ii) controlling behaviour, and (iii) masculinity (****, 2019). There were two trainers who led sessions with, in some cases, one female and one male. In other cases, both trainers were of the same sex. Course materials usually comprised exercises, handouts, videos, diaries, and access to video materials to help learning and deliver information during the sessions.

According to casefiles, men could self-refer or be referred by a statutory agency (usually the Local Authority) or any other professional. Usually, these men would have had some contact with the Police following an incident of domestic abuse with their partner and also for offences which may not be physical violence but whose ultimate goal is to dominate the victims. These

incidents might have included among others intimidation, coercive control, death threats or threats to harm or maim, harassment, and criminal damages.

The Violence Module focused on discussing the extent and severity of the respective group member's use of abuse and violence in their relationships with their current or partners. The module also sought to challenge elements of denial and minimisation, especially within the contexts of perpetrators either viewing themselves as victims or justifying the abusive acts, attitudes, conducts and beliefs. According to the policy document (*****, 2019), the module covered this by also challenging those that justified abuse by blaming the incident on the (ex) partners, on account of being provoked.

According to Pearson and Ford (2017), the 'Controlling Behaviour' module focused on how power and control are used in relationships. This module helps men to unpick attitudes and conduct (such as financial control, threatening behaviours, in addition to physical violence) that constitute abuse. Men are encouraged to understand how these behaviours constitute abuse and to explore motivations for such with a view to considering alternative acceptable behaviours.

The Masculinity Module was concerned with masculinity. Central to the module was the need to ask questions such as where does the need to control women/partners come from? Key to the module is the identification of how

the beliefs, values and attitudes around violence come from and how to challenge the same. The module further focused on exploring behaviours such as justifications for such beliefs, values and attitudes, processes for blaming the victims. It is anticipated that this process helps to increase awareness of beliefs and hope to change perpetrators' expectations from partners in relationships.

According to Respect (2004), among outcomes sought by attendants of perpetrators' programmes working in groups were:

- A reduction in the risk of offending (in IPV)
- An acceptance that they (men) exercise choice and are accountable for their choices.
- An understanding of the impact on their victims
- A sense of personal responsibility
- A relapse prevention plan

In trying to achieve these outcomes, programmes focused on the violent man taking responsibility for his behaviour, use of confrontation to challenge attitudes/behaviours, and utilisation of a relatively structured format with the here and now as the catalyst. Other methods that were used included the employment of directive approaches by group leaders, the cognitive-behavioural approach and ensuring that participants had a clear and consistent primary goal of ending the violence.

All these instructive approaches had the ultimate objective of making participants understand that:

- Violence is intentional behaviour.
- Violence is designed to maintain power and control.
- While there is blame, there is risk.
- Individual men can change – there is always a choice, and
- Violence is the perpetrators' responsibility.

To qualify for the programme; the victim had to reside in the North London area. In the case of the perpetrators, they could reside elsewhere but qualification for the programme was premised on a working knowledge of the English language, awareness of the requirement to commit to thirty-six (36) weeks of attendance of the programme and assurance that they did not have any work, or other commitments which could prevent them from engaging with programme. It was also expected that the participants did not have active psychosis or concurrent addiction problem without treatment.

The programme was a mix of voluntary (self and agency referrals), although the majority of the men are referred to it by agencies. This contributed to their development of mutual relationships with trainers. Similarly, it is imperative that participants' current or previous partners were kept safe during the time when the men are actively involved with the interventions (Respect, 2004).

One of the key elements of the programme was that, in assessing eligibility, particular attention was given to those deemed suitable for the intervention. Consequently, the programme ensured that targeted men voluntarily agreed to engage. It also ensured that, where necessarily, others like referring social

workers, or their partners would be made aware of any disclosures in the sessions, especially if they raised safety concerns for their partners.

It would appear that the main focus and curriculum content of the programme in the Local Authority was a mixture and features of **psychoeducational and pro-feminist models** (Eckhardt et al. 2013). This model is underpinned by the premise that IPV results from patriarchal ideologies which sanctions, implicitly and explicitly, men using power, coercion, and control over women. As Pence and Paymar (1993), a Power and Control Wheel is used to illustrate how abusive people (usually men) can employ such tactics as intimidation, privilege, isolation, emotional and economic abuse to exert their power, coercion, and control over victims (usually women). According to Mederos (1999) and others an Equality Wheel approach seeks to help men develop qualities, attitudes and values that characterise healthy (especially intimate) relationships.

As Babcock et al. (2004) and Smedslund et al. (2011) argue, the **cognitive-behavioral group treatment model** (premised on social learning perspective) contends that violence occurs because it is functional for the perpetrators and also because of the distorted and deficient cognitive and behavioural qualities. Perpetrators are taught a range of skills such as how to communicate effectively, how to be assertive in non-aggressive manners, and how to manage anger, including how to nurture healthy relationships

(Smedslund et al. 2011). These attributes are often taught through role-play sessions and completing homework with the goal of improving expressive skills and communication with partners in an empathetic manner. Perpetrators are also taught how they identify and manage potentially explosive emotional reactions to what is considered provocative. This process helps in remodelling conduct and behaviours around developing and sustaining healthy intimate relationships.

Research Design: The Case study in Question

As already indicated, the research paradigm is interpretive and qualitative, while the research design is rooted in constructivist grounded theory approach. In line with theoretical approach, qualitative data was analysed by inductive processes and interpreted against the backdrop of the COM-B conceptual framework relating to domestic violence and abuse. My approach to data collection was informed and guided by my knowledge of the difficulties that are associated with engaging with men in child protection and childcare work. The knowledge was, particularly, relevant for men who live in homes and environments where domestic abuse is a feature of relationships. It was also especially useful in the discussion of findings in the context of study of existing knowledge around treatment for intimate partner abuse. The first step was to identify the participants for the study.

Sampling Methods; Access and Recruitment of Interviewees

Participants in this research were men who had undertaken treatment around intimate partner violence offered by the London Borough as part of the coordinated approach to tackling violence in the borough. As such, the sample was drawn from the records held by the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) team, of participants who attended the programme, which was funded by the borough, as part of the domestic violence strategy partnership, in which victims were currently or previously in intimate relationships and/or had children with the perpetrators. I used the purposive sampling approach with a view to maximize the depth and width of findings and knowledge (Merriam and Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002) from the men who had attended the intervention. As Patton (2002) argues, any variations in the patterns emergent from the data are central and valuable in capturing core experiences of the phenomenon.

As such, the study interviewed 11 (out of 50) men who had attended the perpetrator's programme over the last 14 years (2004-2018) in an inner London Borough. The choice of the number of prospective participants took into consideration the competing arguments regarding the ideal number of participants who should take part in a study for it to be scientifically credible.

For qualitative studies, the prevailing guidance for sample size is “saturation or information power” (Malterud et al. 2016:1753; Sim et al. 2012), which suggests that the sample size with sufficient information power depends on (a) the aims and goals of the study, (b) the specificity of the sample, (c) what established theory is used, (d) the quality of dialogue, and (e) the strategy for analysis of the data.

Arising from these, the general guidance is that a sample of anywhere between 10 and 30 participants would suffice (Julious, 2005). Nastasi (2016), argues that “as a rule of thumb, for grounded theory (including its variable approaches) and data collection methods (in-depth interviews), the sample can be anywhere between 10 and 30.” Due to the sensitivity of the subject under discussion, the aim was initially to target fifty (50) men but anywhere above 10 was considered adequate. Part of the reason for targeting this number was that it was likely that some of the participants in the programme might have moved to a new house in the last 14 years since they attended the programme and therefore the actual response rate would likely be significantly lower than the target. A further reason was that some of the participants might be unwilling to engage in the study. In light of this, the goal was therefore to interview as many participants (co-constructors of knowledge – Thompson, 2000) as possible, possibly up to 30.

I started the process of selecting participants based on an “insider’s knowledge” (Herr and Anderson, 2015:39; Redman-MacLaren and Mills, 2015; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) of perpetrators’ programme. Using a gatekeeper’s strategy (Homan, 2001), I recognised from the outset that to physically access the study field, I needed to engage directly with the commissioning programme/service manager as this was the person who would directly be at the forefront of commissioning the perpetrators’ programme in the Borough. The gatekeeper would likely also enable me access to the training providers and therapists who run the programme.

I started, therefore, by contacting the programme managers to introduce my research and purpose and how they could assist me in accessing and recruitment of study participants. My focus was on getting a comprehensive and verifiable list of men who had made contact with (whether on their own or referred by others) the perpetrators’ programme in the London Borough. This approach was initially met with suspicion (Reiner and Newburn, 2008). I took this in stride since work of this nature has confidentiality and sensitivity implications. Nevertheless, upon my assurance confidentiality, the programme manager directed me to individuals I needed to contact (as part of ethical approval for research) within the organisation.

When I contacted and discussed the research ethics issues with the individuals, things started to move quicker than I anticipated. Within just

two weeks of submitting my application, the Local Authority granted me access to the extensive list of men who had been referred to the Men's Centre during the programme. After receiving the necessary ethics permission, the next task involved collecting information about the individuals who participated in the programme. Specifically, I focused on those who had successfully attended all thirty-six (36) scheduled sessions. Personal information collected included names, dates of birth, and contact details like addresses, phone numbers, and emails.

It was not possible to recruit more than fifty (50) men who had attended thirty-six (36) sessions. I therefore decided to target those men who had attended at least half of the scheduled sessions. Armed with the list of the men who had attended the perpetrators programme, and to target fifty (50) men, the single most important criteria for sampling were that only those who had attended at least eighteen (18) of the thirty-six (36) scheduled sessions were captured in the final sample. The other consideration was that the men had to prove that they came into contact with the programme because they had come to the attention of the Police and or also subsequently the Local Authority if (a) they had been reported to have assaulted their partners/ex-partners and/or (b) the partner/ex-partners had children who the men were parents or step-parents of, at the time of coming to the attention of these authorities. Selection of participants did not take account of such factors as

whether they were then in intimate partner relationships. Neither was socio-economic status considered in the selection process.

Once I had randomly selected the fifty (50) men, I then contacted all the research participants via letter initially. The invitation letter is attached in appendix II. I followed up the letter with either phone calls, e-mails and/or home visits. In either of the phone calls or home visits, I started by introducing myself as a researcher but also a social work practitioner and how I obtained their contact details, enquired if they had received my invitation letters. Whether or not they had received my letter, I explained and redescribed the study goals and objectives and requested a more convenient date and time for the interviews. In order to underpin their voluntary participation in interviews, I asked each one of them about their willingness to participate. Regarding those who were unsure, I also asked if they needed more time to think about my request and promised to call later. For those who agreed to be interviewed, I also asked them to choose the venue for the interview, whether in their own homes, in the offices of the Local Authority or in the community. I also offered them the opportunity to have a face-to-face and on rare occasions telephone interviews.

In the process of selecting participants, I was aware throughout that as Scott and Wolfe (2003) and Manohar et al (2018) note, that recruitment of study participants on sensitive topics such as domestic abuse and violence is largely

a function of their willingness to participate against the background of two main factors; (a) many people consider domestic abuse and violence as a private matter, and (b) any work perceived to confront this is openly would often met with denial and minimisation. With this in mind, I was equally aware that as a social work practitioner, this challenge had the potential to act as a hinderance to the men's willingness to participate in the study.

To limit these potential obstacles to the recruitment of research participants, I applied several strategies - a multi-modal approach using both active and passive strategies (Broyles et al. 2011; McCormack, 2014). Firstly, I obtained last known telephone numbers and addresses from records held on the Local Authority's database. Secondly, for those who were actively involved with children services, at the time, I informed the allocated social worker of my intention to contact the men. Thirdly, I drew my experiences of engaging men in childcare and child protection work as a frontline practitioner. This, of course, required me to tactfully handle all sensitivities of the study process. As Nutley et al. (2009) argue, good social work skills are helpful in researching sensitive topics. Fourthly, it was necessary to acknowledge the need to compensate and offer incentives for participants in the study.

Although some (McNeill, 1997) would argue that compensation could be considered coercive, I, nevertheless, offered to compensate the research participants with a voucher as a token to show appreciation of their time and

effort which they committed to participate in the study (Jensen and Laurie, 2016). I verily believe that this compensation did not amount to coercion. In fact, four (4) of the men, declined to participate in the study despite offer of vouchers as token of appreciation. Further, two (2) of the men also initially declined the vouchers but only accepted once I explained that they would otherwise be wasted. I was therefore confident that the participants voluntarily and willingly participated in the study and that this compensation was inconsequential to their choice to do so.

Data collection

Consistent with the grounded theory approach, I used a range of non-probability and non-randomised sampling approaches. I, specifically, used the theoretical sampling (Butler, et al 2018; Mulugeta et al. 2017; Glazer and Straus, 2012) technique in selecting participants who were assumed and believed to have been most able to offer valuable insight into the subject of enquiry around experiences of the perpetrators' programmes.

Many (Noble and Smith, 2015; Porter, 2007; Jones et al. 2013) suggest that qualitative research conclusions can be trusted on condition that they are credible (internal validity), transferable (external validity and generalisability), dependable (reliability) and conformable (corroboration by others). I piloted the study in two phases. The first part involved recruiting

three (3) colleagues (out of five originally selected) to review the interview guides alongside the study aims and give feedback on whether they considered the original questions robust enough to elicit robust responses (form of expert evaluation).

Once the questions were refined, the next stage involved interviewing two (2) participants whose characteristics were relevant to the study based on the information gathered from the pilot with the colleagues. This led to the selection of two (2) participants who had undertaken the full number of sessions, or more than half of the thirty-six (36) sessions provided under the perpetrators' programme. Finally, this process enabled me to refine some of the original study questions.

In addition, I also interviewed two (2) further men who had undertaken some sessions but did not complete all of them. This was undertaken right at the start of the project. Therefore, in total, I spoke to eleven (11) men who had made contact with the perpetrator's programme. Their perceptions and views were extremely useful in the analysis and preparation of this thesis.

I used a semi-structured interview guide to conduct in-depth interviews and data collection for use in examining the diverse contexts and perceptions of experiences (before, during and after) of perpetrators' engagement with the domestic violence intervention. Consequently, using the constructivist

framework (Marshall and Rossman, 1999), I managed to elucidate the multiple ways in which perpetrators of violence perceive, interpret, understand, and communicate the meaning attached to IPV and also their engagement with associated intervention frameworks.

Full interviews, on average, lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The shortest interview was with the men who dropped out of the programme with each lasting about 15 to 20 minutes. Seidman (1998) typically suggests conducting a 90-minute interview to ensure a smooth interviewing process and reduce the risk of fatigue from prolonged interviews. The longest interview lasted 115 minutes, while on average, the interviews lasted about 95 minutes.

Interviews/meetings were not always strictly formal or audio-taped and included building rapport and a trusting relationship. For those who felt uncomfortable to be audio-taped due to discomfort, interviews were not recorded. Nevertheless, all were conducted following similar structure as those which were recorded. In both cases, I also took very detailed notes.

As indicated throughout this thesis, participating in research of a very sensitive topic such as domestic violence, invariably, brought up issues that the participants and significant others would have had to deal with in my absence. In addition to utilising my social work skills in handling complex

social issues, I also provided a number for a counselling service that the participants could contact in my absence for additional support.

Ethical considerations: Procedures of the Interview

As is customary for research of this nature, ethical approval was sought prior to recruitment of participants and data collection from the Royal Holloway University of London, College Research Ethics Committee (see appendix I) as well as from the Local Authority. Acquisition of approvals was important as I was solely responsible and accountable for conducting the study in an ethical manner. It also ensured that participants made an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study. Given the intrusive nature of the study where participants were expected to share deeply personal and often painful and uncomfortable feelings, ensuring their safety and minimising distress, was of paramount consideration (Neuman, 2006; Allen, 2011). In this regard, participants were also accorded the opportunity to be aware of their rights, the format and aims of the study and implications of their participation in the same. Participants were, in addition, provided with contact numbers of agencies that they could contact if they wished to discuss their personal feelings with anyone in my absence.

Providing pertinent pre-interview information ensured that individuals who ultimately decided to take part in the study were well-equipped and willing

to give their consent voluntarily (Allmark, 2002). They were required to sign a consent form as well. In certain instances, verbal consent was considered satisfactory. When necessary, arrangements were made to have an interpreter available. However, it became evident that this was unnecessary or unused. I emphasised to all participants that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interviews, in order to highlight the voluntary nature of their participation.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants were assured that any information included in the report would be presented in a way that would make it extremely difficult to identify them (Jones et al. 2006). This assurance was clearly stated in the consent forms before involving the participants in the study (refer to appendix II).

When collating data, participants' responses have been assigned numerical identifiers rather than being linked to specific names. Furthermore, the data gathered from the study has been securely stored and only I have had exclusive access to it. Nevertheless, I have provided the data to the supervisor while ensuring the anonymity of the participants. The data will be securely disposed of through incineration once the research has been completed.

During interviews, I consistently observed body language to identify any indications of distress. While some argue that this process may undermine the

superiority of data (Morse and Field, 1985), others (Cowles, 1988) suggest that it could enhance its complexity. Aligned with the alternative perspective, I behaved in a manner that recognised the interviewee's emotional condition and made arrangements for potential interruptions or conclusion of the interviews if needed. In order to maintain trust and ensure the accuracy of the data, it was necessary to address their questions as part of the process.

Individual interviews (whether in person or by telephone), were undertaken with the eleven (11) participants who had attended the perpetrators programme during the 14 years period prior to my study. To minimize the risks of distress on the part of the participants, I ensured that interviews were limited to one session per participant, although I also offered to speak to them again if they so wished. Each interview lasted about sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes, except for 2 which lasted about 20 minutes. In addition, I also provided a list of possible referring agencies where participants could access support, if they wished to, in my absence.

Safety for participants and I was ensured by conducting the interviews in venues where the interviewees felt most comfortable but also taking into consideration my own safety. The venues included the participants' own homes, local authority offices, a café and telephone interview. Consequently, interviews were conducted in three (3) homes, six (6) in the London Borough offices where I, incidentally, was employed. Two (2) interviews were

conducted by telephone. I conducted all the interviews. The three (3) interviewees did not wish the interviews audio-recorded but, instead, but allowed me to take extensive notes, which were summarised at the end.

Regarding my personal safety and security, I was conscious of the fact that, a male black researcher and practising social worker would potentially impact on my safety in several ways. I held the view that the threats of physical or verbal abuse would likely arise from how I treated the participants by demonstrating respectful challenge of accounts shared. I did not consider to be at increased risk of physical abuse. Nonetheless, I took as much precautions as I could. In addition, I made sure that my family members always knew where I had gone for research purposes. Although my family know the rough areas where I went for the study, I was careful not to share the personal details such as addresses of the participants.

Before starting each interview, I initially restated and reexplained the aim of the study, shared and explained the information sheet and consent, and the interview procedure, including modalities for storing and securing the information that would be shared. To win their confidence, I showed participants all official ethical approval documents. As Allmark (2002) argues, this enables participants to fully understand the implications of their participation in the study, make informed choices about participation and to

reserve their right to withdraw from/end the interview at any time and helps them to have a sense of how results of the study would be handled.

Once the participants had fully understood the information sheet, they confirmed their intention to participate in the study by signing the consent form (see appendix II). Some participants, however, did not sign the consent but gave verbal agreement. This was especially the case for the two (2) telephone interviews, and one face-to-face interview. In addition, I kept emphasising at the beginning of each interview that their participation was voluntary and without coercion. I also told them that, to signify my appreciation for their time and commitment to the interview, each would receive a token voucher worth £25 and redeemable from Amazon.

To ascertain the validity and depth of the interview guide, I sent it (the interview guide) to five (5) social work colleagues for peer review. In addition, I also used the first two (2) interviews as the second pilot with a view to ensuring that all conceivable research scenarios were covered in subsequent interviews.

Again, and as stated already, I was fully aware of the critical need to ensure the anonymity of and confidentiality for participants. Consequently, I made sure that, where accrued information was going to be shared with others, it would be almost impossible to identify its source (Jones et al. 2006) by using

pseudonyms or assigned a numerical value. I further explained that accrued data and information would be safely secured and stored and only my supervisor and I would have direct access to the same. In addition, I assured them that once the research was completed, the data would be destroyed. Regarding verbatim quotes, it was agreed that I would use pseudonym attribution or coded numbers assigned to each participant.

Given the fact that all participants spoke a proficient level of English and that the perpetrators' programme was delivered in English, there was no need for an interpreter. However, in certain cases, I occasionally had to adapt some of the questions to the men's level of technical comprehension of the English language as a way of enabling them to fully participate in the study.

Before concluding each session, I offered the respondents the opportunity to ask any questions they had and also to let me know their impressions of the interview. In addition, I provided contact numbers for Respect just in case anyone of them saw the need for follow up support. This was in addition to my encouragement of all respondents to feel free to share with their partners and/or immediate family (Disch, 2001) members their experiences in cases where they found them too stressful to bear. In some cases, this meant proactively alerting social workers and referral agencies to make arrangements (such as counselling and emotional support) for respondents who might need them. At the end of each interview, I always thanked all

respondents for willingly committing their precious time to the interview and for sharing with me their invaluable stories and experiences.

I was aware about the imperative for me as a qualitative researcher to be alert to the perspectives (such as feminism, ethnicity) that I brought to the research process of sensitive topics such as researching on domestic abuse, which may impact upon, the research process (Mason, 2002). As such, my own standpoint and I made effort to refer to my experience as a frontline manager of social workers, my ethnicity, and gender. As Bogolub (2010) argues, the guiding principles were among others, beneficence empowerment of respondents. The importance of this was underscored by the potential of reliving and recounting past personal painful experiences, that would, however, contribute to the knowledge about ways in which intimate partner violence might be addressed.

Therefore, in administering research instruments, I always ensured that I remained alert to sensitivities of participants. I ensured that the interviews ended on a positive note. This was extremely important given the sensitive nature of the study. Throughout the process, I ensured all participants developed a deep appreciation and understanding of the immense value of their contributions, particularly the profound impact they could have on other individuals facing similar situations in the future.

The study was conducted with utmost transparency and participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's implications. Participants willingly chose to participate after being fully informed. This aligns with Christians (2005) who argues that informed consent is incompatible with the utilisation of deception in research. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, informed consent was thoroughly explained and agreed upon throughout the process of data collection, especially interviews.

It is worth mentioning that reaching out to potential participants often involved multiple telephone calls or in-person meetings before the interviews took place. This was primarily done to establish a suitable time and location considering the participants' hectic schedules. It was a thoughtful approach that took into account the participants' availability, without resorting to coercion or deception. One potential participant decided not to participate in part in the study, even though they had initially agreed to do so. Two individuals outrightly declined to participate in the interview, while another individual only engaged in the interview partially.

Procedures for Data Analysis

My research was mainly motivated by a conceptual framework based on practice, experience, and literature review. The study aimed to utilise the COM-B conceptual framework to delve into the participants' experiences of

the perpetrators' programme. Given the lack of research on men's experiences of interventions, it seemed fitting to conduct a thematic analysis of the data. The use of thematic analysis allowed for the identification of key themes and sub-themes, uncovering their underlying meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and providing interpretative importance. As mentioned earlier, it is crucial to recognise the significance of systematically examining and organising the transcribed interviews, handwritten notes, and memos while still preserving the essential qualities of flexibility. Considering the information presented, my research consisted of three primary phases.

Firstly, I took extensive notes of the interviews and jointly summarised notes with the participants. In the process of summarising notes, respondents were allowed the opportunity to clarify their responses.

I, further, took time to reflect on the interviews and observations of the tone, body language and overall mood of the interviewee as a way of getting a richer appreciation of understanding of their stories and experiences than I had gotten during interviews (see memos in appendices). In some of the transcripts, for example, interviewees could refer to 'you' repressing 'I' and where appropriate I put these in brackets, the process which helped me to improve readability of transcribed materials (Temple and Young, 2004). In other cases, I looked for moments of pauses (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) to notice shift in mood, reflection, and recollections of thoughts. Granted, this

was labour-intensive, but was absolutely necessary as a way of ensuring that words and phrases were classified into themes that would enable accurate interpretation of research questions.

As indicated above, the study adopted the Grounded Theory approach for purposes of data analysis. According to MacDonald (2001) Grounded Theory, as characterised by its tangible and structured procedures, is a good fit for the pragmatic approach that has been used extensively in nursing and social work. Its desirability rests in the fact that it offers a pragmatic and flexible method for making concrete and considerate interpretation of complex social phenomena (Charmaz, 2006), including a strong intellectual validation in theoretical analysis (Goulding, 1998).

In the case of research that is targeted at developing theories, employing this approach enables the researcher to conceptualise data rigorously and continuously (Charmaz, 2009). Based on this understanding, I managed to explore interactions and processes between and among my targeted population with a view to conceptualising and developing a model of phenomena about interventions around domestic violence and abuse.

Secondly, I adopted the approach used by Strauss and Corbin (2015) and Saunders et al. (2012) who argue that grounded theory approach has at least four data analysis stages; coding, concepts, categorising, theorising. In the

coding phase, I generated initial codes for the investigation of common concepts and elements of the salient points of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In doing this, I pre-occupied myself with asking questions such as what does this phrase mean or represent? Regarding concepts (axial coding according to Straus and Corbin 1990), codes of similar content were collected and grouped to identify and describe context, relatedness of words or phrases. In terms of categories, I began by forming and generating broad groups of similar concepts as a basis for arriving at meaning of the accounts and stories. Consequently, theoretical propositions are an assemblage of generated explanations that help in describing the subject of the research (hypothesis).

With this framework in mind, I reviewed the notes taken during the interviews and memos, including the audio tapes that I had transcribed. In doing this, I focused on participants experiences of engaging with the perpetrator's programme and the change trajectory. I also explored what inspired them to change their previous violent and abusive behaviours and whether they could attribute the change to participation on the programme.

When evaluating data, I meticulously sifted through the information to separate what was relevant from what was irrelevant or extraneous. I also cross-referenced data with the codes, memos and reflections from interviews. The process was enhanced by the participants' words and phrases, aiming to

enhance understanding of the subtleties and theoretical sensitivities (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; 2008) therein.

A small amount of descriptive data was also analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25. Key data included that on the number of sessions attended, age and other basic information.

As mentioned earlier, and in alignment with Charmaz (2006), CGT is a dynamic process that involves simultaneous, iterative, and comprehensive gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data. In this regard, using the two phases of coding of the raw data, I broke down the data into discrete sections, comprising singular or groups of expressions and phrases in the data.

I stored the transcribed accounts alongside the interview guides in NVivo to conveniently access all the data in one place. One advantage of storing the collected information in this way is the ability to easily refer to, compare, and contrast questions with the narrative responses. It also assisted me in formulating and revising categories to develop an analytical framework.

I also utilised NVivo to create nodes for coding data by identifying relevant concepts and topics within the report text. Once all this was completed, terms related to learning new skills, developing or being (awareness, love, kindness, compassion, accountability) were coded. After careful analysis, I was able to

link the codes to different categories of capability, opportunity, and motivation, along with any other relevant themes that emerged from the data.

As Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue, in processing data, it (data) should be divided into units of analysis, which should then be classified according to emerging themes as a way of understanding the relationship between and among categories and phenomena (open coding). Based on this approach, I endeavoured to understand what they did differently such as what they did differently as a consequence of their participation in the perpetrator's programme. I also endeavoured to understand what they could remember from the programme that have affected their way they relate to their partners. By constantly comparing new with old data, I noted differences and similarities which, in some cases, led to developing new concepts or revising old ones. The process was complemented by a close examination of what participants alluded to as experiencing, doing, or feeling.

This was easy to achieve because, as soon as I had finished collecting data, I transcribed it and started coding. As Charmaz (2006) argues, this examination of the transcripts of the interviews prompted me to begin the process of "conceptualisation of ideas" (Charmaz, 2006:11). The schema of a coded interview transcript is attached in Appendix V. The open/initial coding supported my data analysis starting from the bottom up, of the accounts of the research participants. It also helped me, as Charmaz (2006)

argues, to reduce the possibilities of my own prejudices, prior to the study, to significantly crowding and undermining the credibility of the findings.

Participants' own expressions (in vivo coding) regarding who initially had a discussion with them about the perpetrators' programme were designated as codes or categories. This designation was done in order to connote the logic of, for instance, the referral process for engaging in the perpetrators' programme. This had the benefit of not only underpinning the credibility of participants' accounts, but also understanding what this meant within the process of engagement with the programme. In addition to providing an understanding of the dynamics around the referral process to the perpetrators' programmes, it also formed the basis for preservation of interview outputs and appreciating men's stories, words, expressions, and actions. For example, the mechanism for referral to the perpetrators' programmes might have resulted from the initiation of child protection procedures with implications for continued contact with affected children or men remaining in relationships with their partners. This process has significant implications on motivation for change, as will be discussed later.

From the beginning of the study, it was apparent that neglecting the significance of the engaging process with the perpetrators' programme could lead to a greater chance of misrepresenting data and the perspectives of the participants (Charmaz, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the codes developed in

the initial phase had consequences for the following codes. For instance, a few of the individuals mentioned that they was forced to participate in the perpetrators' programme without any alternative options. This, on its own, had implications for categories.

I utilised the focused coding phase, which according to Charmaz (2006:57) aims to “synthesise and explain larger segments of data and required using the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sift through this data.” This was accomplished by diligently reviewing interview transcripts and memos to analyse and understand men's experiences, actions, tone of voice, body language, and the overall context of the situation. For example, regarding the codes ‘skills, awareness’, I looked at all data sources (interview transcripts, memos) to check how each participant/man shared about what they learned from the programme. I also compared what they disclosed about the experiential learning (or what they felt they had become aware of). This process assisted me to enhance the code of ‘skills or ‘new skills, awareness’. I was led to look at the relationship between ‘new skills’ and ‘learning’ and men’s programmes, and ways in which they benefited from the same. These codes were used as themes or variables, for making sense out of what participants indicated or shared in the interviews.

The necessity for my remaining open to the possibilities of categories developed earlier in the study changing was consistent with Charmaz’s

argument that this would assist to perform “robust analytical understanding” (Charmaz, 2006:91; Birks and Mills, 2015) of the concept of IPV. Earlier in the analysis, for example, I had developed the category/code ‘training’ as being linked to ‘being in group’. This was a recognition of the understanding that group training fosters the development of cognitive skills.

I found myself constantly revisiting the original transcripts, carefully analysing the men's expressions, as well as reviewing the memos and reflections throughout the iterative comparison of stages. This assisted me in identifying which questions to delve into in the future. For example, I initially did not explore the issues of compassion and kindness within the realm of interventions. As the discussion delved deeper, it became clear to me how important it is to differentiate between empathy, compassion, and kindness. This assisted me in initiating the formation of emerging themes that necessitated distinct sets of questions. I came to realise, just as Holton (2007) and Charmaz (2006) suggest, that the new information was shedding light on the similarities and differences between empathy, compassion, and kindness. Ultimately, I began to customise my questions to collect more data and also reach “theoretical elaboration, saturation and densification of concepts” (McCann and Clark, 2003:9; Charmaz 2006; Santos et al. 2018; Engward, 2013). Upon my analysis of data, it became apparent that men were eager to talk about and share the benefits of learning new skills, taking accountability for their behaviours, and applying the skills they learned from the intervention.

Through further data analyses and comparisons, additional information was discovered, which subsequently prompted the revision of earlier categories. It became apparent that acknowledging and taking responsibility for their actions was closely linked to minimisation, denial, blame attribution (refer to memo in appendix), and sometimes, provided a partial explanation for either commitment to change or attrition. Nevertheless, the coding process allowed me to analyse data from various perspectives. For instance, my personal assumptions about accountability gained a deeper significance, prompting me to adopt alternative perspectives in order to fully understand the concept.

Through a thorough analysis of interview memos and reflections on experiences with my contacts, I was able to make connections between concepts, identify similarities and differences, and establish categories, occasionally refining or changing them. This process allowed me to generate theoretical propositions and outlines for my study. I concur with Charmaz's perspective (2006:82) that this process has enabled me to explore and discover new ideas based on the "seen, sensed, heard" and coded at different stages.

Consistent with the arguments by Charmaz (2006), Foley and Timonen (2015), Corbin and Straus (2008), I performed theoretical sampling to include the emerging concepts that would form part of the substantive theory. This helped in revising the interview questions with a view to achieving greater understanding and testing of the analytic categories. For instance, it helped

me to ask the men to elaborate what they meant by empathy, compassion, and loving kindness within the context of IPV.

The next step involved diagrammatically illustrating ideas and categories in order to integrate theoretical concepts into comparable categories. This helped me to create unifying “links at an abstract level” (Charmaz, 2006:115).

In the final stage, I attempted, in tandem with Bowen (2003, 2006) and Charmaz (2006), to formulate a conceptual framework by linking concepts as a way of achieving theorisation, incision and reach. This helped me to tentatively start making substantive propositions about the relationships between the emergent core categories (*active positive expressions of empathy*) and about the extent to which contextual variations might shape participants’ lived experiences. In this phase, I also examined whether there were enough themes to be supported by data and how they related to the main themes. This also involved reworking the themes. In addition, this phase involved critical definitions of themes by way of examining patterns to determine extracts that accurately described meanings and interpretations.

The process of arranging the data in this manner allowed me to check responses against definitions that respondents provided. It also allowed me to corroborate earlier codes and to amend some, as well as to give additional meaning to new data. The process further helped in exploring other themes.

Later, I used NVivo to interrogate the key expressions and words based on the accounts of participants. This process also allowed me to sift through data that was coded within nodes. For example, it was established that key words and expressions such as shame, guilt, embarrassment, relationship dissolution, marriage breakdown, and not being able to see children, all fell under **motivation**, while terms such as skills, awareness, learning were grouped in **capability**. Conversely terms such as group, beliefs and values challenged all fell under **opportunity**.

Each interrogated expression revealed the frequency with which it had been reported in a particular transcript or multiple transcripts. This process enabled me to either use the frequencies or separate each transcript for a closer examination of the text as well as used as quotes in this report.

This information was extremely useful in exploring in detail, for example, how many times each participant referred to the theme, how many participants referred to that particular theme and also in linking the same to the memos around body language and emotional state. I could also visually present this data and check it against codes to ensure analytical accuracy.

As has been emphasised, ensuring credibility and validity of data in qualitative studies is one of the key primary concerns. Therefore, in addition to summarising the interview results, I triangulated data with other experts

working in perpetrators' programmes. I also provided a thorough representation of data collection and analysis processes. I made sure to systematically organise and check conclusions and emerging themes against my reflective diary. It was quite enlightening to realise the impact I had on the study, participants, and even myself. The study report includes direct quotes from participants' responses to enhance the credibility and relevance of the results. This approach guarantees a seamless harmony between my interpretations and the narratives and experiences of the respondents.

Exploring delicate subjects like domestic violence requires a deep understanding and intricate approach, as it entails delving into distressing personal experiences of potential research participants. The process, inevitably, is likely to have an emotional impact on the researcher. Considering this, I was fully cognizant of the potential difficulties that could arise when attempting to recruit participants for studies on profoundly personal and sensitive topics. I was already aware of this, as Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) had previously highlighted the challenge of recruiting and sampling "hard to reach" groups. And so it proved.

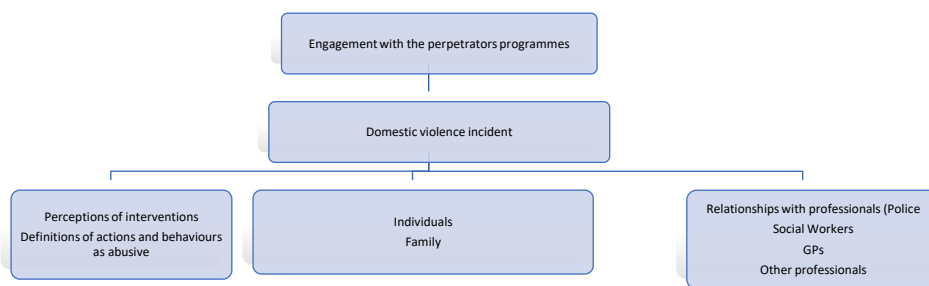
Thematic Analysis from Final Coding

As such the key themes from the final analytical process suggests that the key themes were: a) referral process and the role of children services social workers, as well as the criminal justice systems, b) new skills, awareness of

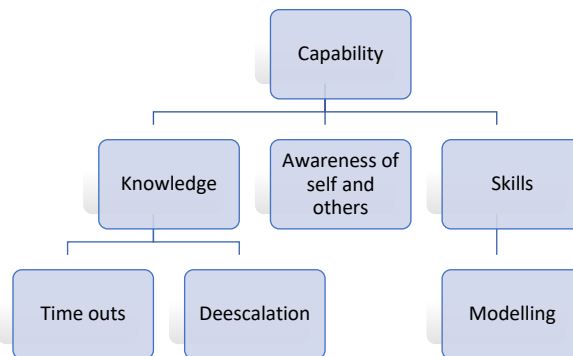
intimate partner violence and effects, c) the role of group work and group processes, d) motivations for engagement in the process (internal), and e) external factors that may promote lasting motivations for change. The figures below show the final coding of the thematic analysis.

Figure 3: Elements of Coding: Categories, Themes and Sub-Themes

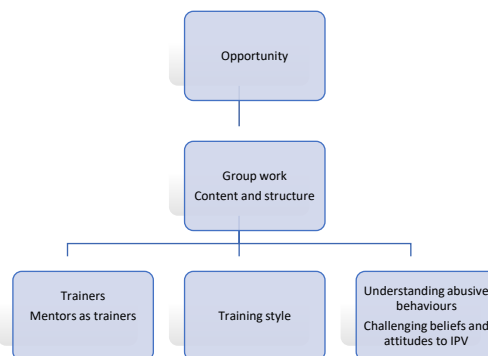
a) Engagement with the perpetrators' programmes; themes and subthemes



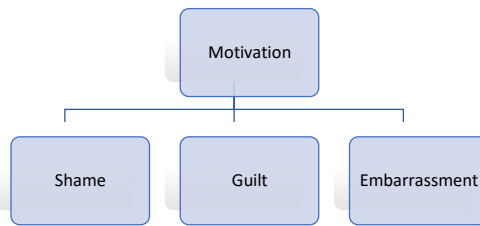
b) Capability; themes and subthemes



c) Opportunity; themes and subthemes



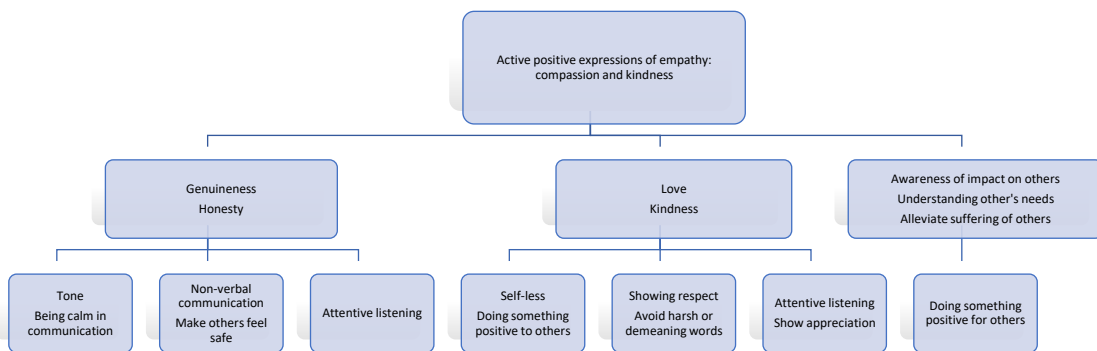
d) Motivation: Themes



e) Accountability and responsibility



f) Active positive expressions of empathy: Compassion and kindness



g) Discharge from perpetrators programmes



The schematic above demonstrates the analytical tools and strategies employed for data analysis in the final phase. This enabled me to develop a coherent understanding of the lived experiences of the men who engaged in the perpetrators programmes in doing so underpinning my theoretical framework that I hope contributes to the development of knowledge in interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the research paradigms, research methodologies, research strategies, and research design, study procedures, recruitment of participants, data collection tools, analysis methods and how to ensure that the findings meet the validity and reliability criteria. The chapter provided a rationale for the interpretive constructive grounded theory approach. The chapter described the stages of the research design for the study and context of the study. It also addressed how data was collected and ethical procedures adopted to minimise the physical and emotional risks to the participants and related significant others.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the study. The chapter is thus divided into two (2) main parts; a) characteristics of the men who had contact with the men's centre's perpetrators' programme, and (b) accounts of the men's experiences of the perpetrators' programme. Findings were derived from the administration of the key questions which interrogated: (a) What is the level of engagement with the perpetrators' programme, (b) what are the characteristics of the intervention (programme context) that are associated with changing attitudes towards violence? c) What enable triggers/turning points to become salient and initiate change process? d) What are the motivations that trigger change in relation to intimate partner violence? Do factors triggering change remain constant over short (temporary) or long (sustained) term change? (e) Is there a pathway for cessation of domestic violence? and f) What are the implications for social work practice and therefore social policy?

Referral and Engagement with the Perpetrators' Programme

Understanding men's experiences of the initial engagement with the interventions was crucial to the research. The process of referral and engagement with the perpetrators programme was highlighted as

constituting of several events and stages. The process started with an event (maybe more within the private sphere between the men and their partners) and 'came out' when there was a discussion either with other friends or family, but almost always accompanied by the Police attending the address to an incident of domestic violence and abuse. Discussions resulted in perpetrators realising that their behaviours had been violent. The realisation came after being told by partners, the police, friends, or family members that their behaviours had been violent. In certain cases, this caused men to have negative feelings not only towards partners but also towards proposed interventions. Nevertheless, upon self-introspection, some men began to accept the accurateness of the assessment of their behaviours. It also dawned on some men that wife/or partner battering, is not a manly virtue and runs in the face of decent and socially acceptable norms and deviance from the masculinity. Invariably, the realisation from the sets of events constitutes the turning points that convey the men on the trajectory towards change.

A total of 201 referrals to the perpetrators' programme, run by the London Borough, were made through the coordinated response pathway between 2004 and 2018. This indicates that the annual average for referrals was a little less than 17. The demographic data (age and ethnicity) of the males who interacted with the perpetrators' programme between 2004 and 2018 is displayed in Appendix V. With a mean of 8.15 sessions and a standard deviation of 15.49 sessions, the appendix also provides descriptive statistics

for the total number of sessions attended by all the men (population) who had contacted the perpetrators' programme, from which the sample of participants was selected. Out of all the referrals to the service, ninety-five (95) men attended at least one session; the purpose of the first session was to discuss the parameters of the programme and establish the eligibility of participants. This indicates a 47.3% return rate of all referrals to the programme who attended the initial assessment.

In order to strengthen the validity of the results, efforts were made to initially only include men who had attended at least half of the scheduled number of sessions (18 and above). The secondary objective to this was also to explore reasons behind attending fewer than the designated number of sessions.

Appendix V further shows the number of participants who had attended at least eight (8) sessions. A total of thirty-nine (39) men attended at least half of the prescribed number of sessions. This represents a take-up rate of 19% of the total number of referrals to the perpetrators' programme over this period. Appendix V shows the distribution of the total number of sessions attended showing that the total number of perpetrators who attended all sessions was fourteen (14) out of the total number of referrals (201) during this period. This represents a return of 6.9% of the total number of men who came into contact with the Perpetrators Programme.

Further, of the fourteen (14) who attended all the sessions, twelve (12) or 5.97% of the original number of 201 or 85% of those who attended thirty-six (36) sessions attended more than thirty-six (36). I was particularly interested in and curious about those men that attended more than the scheduled 36 sessions, which was beyond the requirements of the programme.

Table VI.I in Appendix VI shows that the proportion of the research participants, based on their ethnicity, was roughly representative of and similar to the number of all the men who had made contact with the programme. For example, men who described themselves as of White British heritage were roughly 31-33% for both the study sample and population of the total number of men who made contact with the programme.

Of the eleven (11) men who were interviewed, eight stated they were directly referred to the perpetrator's programme by social workers, while three stated that they were self-referrals who had decided to participate in the programme after having spoken to either a professional, in some capacity, or a family member. In all cases, however, the decision to participate in the perpetrators' programme was made following a domestic incident between the men and their current or previous partners to which the Police had been called.

As some of the excerpts below indicate, men were mostly referred to the programme by a child and family social worker who were working with their

children at the time of the referral. Four participants confirmed this as demonstrated in the quotes below.

“I came into contact with the programme via the social worker. He told me about the programme. Mind you, I had separated from my partner, but the social worker told me that in order to continue having contact with my children, I would need to engage in the programme. I feel like I was forced to attend because I wouldn't have contact with my children, otherwise, but it was very beneficial” (Participant 4).

“Me and my missus had had an argument and the social worker said that we needed some mediation and also because I had anger issues. So, the social worker said that I could attend this programme. At the time, I was drinking a lot and did not care much. However, my daughter would have been taken into care and my sister told me that this would not be allowed in our family, and I needed to step up. I couldn't bear the thought that my daughter would end up in foster care. My sister was also encouraging to me to attend the programme. My ex was also pushing that it was important that my daughter was not taken into care” (Participant 1).

“The social worker told me about the programme, and I felt this would be good programme for me. I had a good experience” (Participant 5)

"I was introduced by the social worker at the time. After speaking to the social worker, I was like...I really want to see my kids. The social worker told me about the programme. I told her that I was interested as I wanted to be a better person and be a parent to my children. I was motivated to be a better person and better dad for my children. I wanted to be a responsible for my behaviour... a good role model for my children." (Participant 7)

The participant who initially described himself as self-referrer said:

"I came into contact with the programme myself. I cannot remember the first person who mentioned it to me, but I did my research and found this programme and decided to contact them. It felt like the right programme for me. My family was breaking down and I told myself that I needed to do something about it" (Participant 9).

The quote below shows that although the social worker was not directly involved in the referral process, it is evident that a discussion had been previously held with the social worker.

"I made contact myself after my wife left. I didn't think she'd follow through. When she left, I told myself I should sort myself out. But this was after (remembering) having remembered what I had spoken to a social worker before about the programme" (Participant 10)

It is evident from the foregoing quotations that the men's initial contacts with the social work and other professionals played a crucial role in their decisions to engage with the interventions. Most of the men further reported that, despite their initial annoyance with their then partners for contacting the police, and thereby, bringing their disagreements into the public domain, they were eventually, however, agreeable to the appropriateness of participation in some form of treatment. Incidentally, some men had mixed feelings about the interventions on account of cultural, religious, and other considerations. Below are some of the submission extracts:

"We are supposed to sort out our problems. She called the Police on me and then the Police and the social worker said I need help. Is it like soe kind of illness to get help? No. So, I didnt believe that I needed therapy" (Participant 4)

"I felt that this is all part of the scam to get women to not listen to their partners. This is against our culture, not like the White women. I wasn't interested in the programme" (Participant 7)

"I felt that they are taking my control over my family. I felt like the whole process was destroying the family and not helping us" (Participant 11)

Some participants, however, were enthusiastic about the programme and reported that their initial contacts with professionals, such as the Police,

General Practitioners and social workers, were crucial to their decision to access interventions and treatments. The extracts below demonstrate this:

“My Social Worker explained to me what the programme was like. She encouraged me to attend. If she hadn’t, I probably wouldn’t have attended. She helped to look at why I needed to attend, like what it means to be a good parent” (Participant 8).

The others stated as the extracts below show.

“The Police officer was brilliant. He explained and told me about this programme I could attend to sort myself out. He was polite. He didn’t act like what I know about Police ... aggressive, tough, stuff like that. He sat me down and told me about the programme “(Participant 4).

“I knew what I did was wrong. I didn’t know who to talk to. I called my doctor (GP), and he told me about the programme. I trusted my GP and so said I would try it” (Participant 3)

“The social worker told me that it was in my best interest to attend. Not just because so I can see my children, but that I can learn a lot from the programme” (Participant 1)

“She (social worker) told me about the programme. She did not come across as blaming. She was helpful. Although I initially thought she would side with my wife, she was actually on the side of the children. I liked that. I began to trust what she said. I thought I should trust what she said and asked me to do. I agreed to give it (the programme) a try” (Participant 10).

“I was told about the programme. But I wasn’t really sure what to expect” (Participant 7)

“I didn’t know why I was there. I didn’t want to be there...at the start” (Participant 4)

The foregoing extracts aptly attest to the fact that enlisting support and advisory services of others such as professionals, close friends and family is crucial to setting men who have abused partners on the pathway to engagement in the interventions and behavioural reform.

When asked about their experience on the perpetrators’ programme, all those who completed the programme reported that this was a positive and especially useful experience and intervention. Incidentally, even (more than half of) those who did not complete the programme also reported that they had a cathartic experience on it and was beneficial. The comments below confirm this:

“It was a good experience being involved in the programme. I learnt a lot of skills that I have continued to use to this day” (Participant 4).

“It helped me to let off my frustrations. It helped me to re-evaluate my thinking. It was like, why do I get so angry. What makes me so angry. The programme helped me to process all these things. I lost my parents and turned to drinking a lot at the time. The programme helped me to realise that I had not grieved properly, and my anger and frustration was in relation to loss of my parents, and it was the time I left my area where I grew up in South London about the age of 11. Losing my parents made me easily irritable in my relationship and therefore really difficult to be around my missus at the time. The trauma and also grew up with racism and witnessed domestic abuse with my parents. All these things were very traumatic for me, and the group helped me to process them and think about how I can be more responsible for my actions. So, the programme helped me to think through clearly, like why am I angry and what makes me angry. It was like group therapy to talk about my experiences. The main thing I learnt from the programme is taking responsibility for your actions (Participant 1).

Asked to reflect on what their most important take-away lesson was from the positive experience of the interventions, most of the men alluded to the knowledge they had acquired regarding the need to take responsibility for their behaviours and actions. In this regard, one participant categorically stated that:

“You have to deal with all those things that make you angry and then take responsibility for your actions. You have to confront the devil in you first” (Participant 1).

Of those who dropped out, it appeared that one of the reasons for dropping out was their perception that the programme took a confrontational nature. It also appeared that, apart from their negative perception of the programme, some men refused to participate on account of their unwillingness to take responsibility or to be held to account for their actions and behaviours. This was confirmed by both completers and those who dropped out as the following two quotations demonstrate:

“Mate, I could not bear to be told that it (the fight) was all my fault. The trainer didn’t wanna hear what she (ex-partner) did to escalate the situation. Why was it only my responsibility to control what I could do, but not hers to control what she did and said. I had enough of taking the blame and stopped at about 17 weeks. It was pointless” (Participant 10).

“The guy knew nothing about my partner. He was out of order to criticise me all the time” (Participant 11).

One participant, a completer, confirmed that when men were challenged about their behaviours and not taking responsibility for their behaviours, some of them dropped out. He specifically said:

“When the trainer challenged them on this, some missed sessions and other dropped out. So out of the 8 members of the group, we would sometimes be only 2 and I remember a session when it was only myself that attended. The others did not attend because they were upset about being challenged about mental torture to their wives in the previous week” (Participant 4)

Another stated:

“The trainer was very direct, and I did not like anyone telling me off. He didn’t give me a chance to explain what my partner did at the time” (Participant 4).

The other participant noted quoted above said that:

“I told myself, I am not sitting in that room to be criticised by someone who knows nothing about my life, me and my (then) partner. I gave up” (Participant 4).

The foregoing quotations show the extent of the perceptions of IPV by the perpetrators and what role others play in setting them on the trajectory to engagement. The combination of individual factors, those of the professionals were crucial factors on the trajectory towards change.

Characteristics of the intervention (programme content) that are associated with changing attitudes towards violence.

The study further revealed that some participants became involved with interventions almost at the crisis point with the result that their understanding of the meaning of IPV is often confused and their outlook characterised by denial. Invariably, this caused them to be reticent with respect to opening up about, let alone, describing their actions and behaviours as violent and abusive.

Despite this, the responses of the participants were, in keeping with the COM-B conceptual model, grouped into three categories: capability, opportunity and motivation. The model greatly assisted and shaped the understanding of the men's experience of the perpetrators programme in the London Borough...

Capability

Knowledge, Skills, Self-Awareness

Based on the premise that people should be equipped with knowledge, requisite skills for negotiating and managing changes in abusive behaviours, have a new and clear understanding and awareness of problems in relationships and learning new self-help and self-management approaches, participants reported that belonging to the group enabled them to develop the

emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioural knowledge, skills and values that promote non-violent behaviour. Consequently, the study specifically looked at questions such as what is the men's understanding of abusive behaviours, why do people behave the way they do, what are the patterns of unhealthy beliefs around relationships, what are the effects of abuse on themselves and others and what do they learn in order to not engage in abusive behaviours that can directly be attributed to being on the programme?

Therefore, **knowledge, skills, self-awareness, thinking** were the organising themes for analysis around the men's experiences of the perpetrators' programme, according to the findings. The men thus attributed this directly to being on the perpetrators' programme.

All the participants (n=11) reported that prior to attending the perpetrators programme, they assumed that intimate partner violence and abuse were only physical such as hitting, kicking, or pulling parts of another person's body. In this study, the majority (9/11) of the participants revealed that the programme enabled them to acquire new knowledge which had contributed to the expansion of their knowledge and definition of violence and abuse. They further reported that the newly acquired knowledge helped them to develop non-violent skills in resolving conflicts within intimate partner relationships. In this regard, one participant said:

“I used to think that abuse is only when you hit someone. The course helped me to understand that threatening someone like threatening to send them back to their family was abuse. Like saying you are lucky to have married me and that I can divorce you and no one else will marry you. All that kind of talk is abuse. We learnt this in the training”. (Participant 6)

Another added that:

“You can abuse others in different ways, not just hitting” (Participant 4)

Yet another participant said:

*“Calling her names, like she is a fat **** is all abuse. Yes, she had put on a bit of weight, but that was because she had had children. Instead of supporting her, I was calling her names. The training helped me to see that as abuse”. (Participant 5)*

The majority of participants were unequivocal in their commendation about the impact of the skills they had learnt from the programme and particularly, the opportunity it had given them for embarking on the behavioural change process around intimate partner violent and abusive behaviours.

Related to this, is that most also noted that participation in the programme predisposed them to freely sharing their own stories with other men. Some

added that the programme had helped them to redefine masculinity and that engagement in a group setting played a pivotal role in, not only lessening their sense of shame and anxiety, but also, in helping them to take responsibility for their actions, including importantly, expanding their awareness of violent and abusive behaviours and the impact of the same on other persons and themselves. In this regard, one of the participants said that:

“I was not ashamed or anxious to talk about my experiences in the group. It... helped all of us men to get suggestions and strategies about how to behave differently with our partners”. (Participant 7).

And another said:

“I learnt skills in controlling my actions or reactions”.

There was a general consensus among participants that being able to share their stories and experiences and listening to those of others, including reading their own, enabled them to appreciate the programme. Indeed, the programme structure and modules assisted them in understanding what they did well, what they did not do well, and to acquire new ideas regarding how to behave in a positive manner towards partners. One participant, in fact, said:

“It helped me to learn from what the other guys did, the way they said in front of others.... especially those that managed to not abuse their partners. It was inspiring” (Participant 5)

Another added:

“I learnt new ideas of how to act.... not to take out my frustrations even if I am cross” (Participant 2)

Yet another added:

“I wasn’t too keen to share my diary, but when I did in front of others and the feedback they gave you, helped if you think you are doing ok...you’re on the right...” (Participant 6)

Normative Re-education; Changing Towards Non-Violent Beliefs and Patterns, Attitudes and Thinking

Attitudes, beliefs, values and thinking were the organising theme around understanding change by both by participants and me as a researcher. According to McLean (2003), attitudes (includes emotions/affect, thoughts, and behaviour), value (what men perceive as important such as the need to be in control or dominate others), beliefs (what is acceptable or accepted) and these can shape behaviour with respect to others.

Bearing this in mind, several men discussed how the training helped them to review and change their beliefs, attitudes, and values towards violence and abuse towards partners. In this regard, the quotes below demonstrate this:

"We learned that a relationship can be violent even where there is no physical injury" (Participant 4)

"Men should not expected to be aggressive and it is not natural"(Participant 5)

"You do not have to hit someone to be accepted as a man and it is not important to always be right or in control, especially of others" (Participant 6)

A number of participants reported and explained how they were motivated to change their abusive behaviours, through hearing and listening to how the other men in the group negotiated similar situations prior to and after the interventions. They added that their group participation helped them in acquiring some skills such as how to resolve conflict in partner relationships. It, further, helped them to open up and feel a sense of belonging.

According to this narrative, participants who had attended the programme longer found themselves playing the mentor roles. Their mentoring was especially useful by their having experienced and been confronted with similar situations as those they were then mentoring. Participants revealed

that among the most crucial aspects of the change processes within the group context was what one would describe as a process 'normative re-educative'¹⁴ or 'resocialization' into a new manhood and masculinity. Participation in a group enables a man to explore how to adopt new language that communicates a level of respectful attitudes and behaviours towards others, partners, children, and other significant people closest to them. The importance of this to the change process cannot be underestimated.

Fully convinced of this, three participants commented the following:

"Being a part of the group is powerful. When men challenge each other. I remember when I challenged these guys who had ideas about how to relate to women and brought in religion. We challenged each other. Some of the men had sexist beliefs. We challenged each other" (Participant 1)"

"The training helped us to learn that some faiths encourage women to be submissive and this encourages abuse. These types of beliefs were challenged in the training" (Participant 5).

"Some of the men's attitudes were off the mark. They were helped to understand that these beliefs were wrong. It helped them being in the programme". (Participant 11).

¹⁴ Refer to Nickols (2016) Four Change Management Strategies

The foregoing confirms the findings in other studies (see discussion) about the importance of peer learning to reshaping culture and practices and attitudes and how the same can be challenged by other group members.

Identifying and Controlling Emotions

This thematic issue distinctly emerged from the data and was highlighted by almost all men. The theme is about how the men, through the programme, learnt to be in tune with their feelings and emotions (such as feeling frustrated and angry) and, consequently, how to control the same when provoked. Programme participants were unequivocal regarding the positive influence that the new skills, as well as exercises and role-plays had on the change processes and trajectories. The new skills involved consciously learning and making use of these skills regarding how to calm down by taking time out, being aware of how they felt in situ and reflecting on the behavioural templates such as positive self-talk.

The programme exercises and activities included compiling journals of behaviours, penning letters of accountability. The letters contained personal conduct and behaviours specific to IPV, the effects of IPV on others and their plans to make amends for their behaviours). In most cases, it also involved reading these journals aloud in a group and later preparing for the next sessions by undertaking additional reading of literature around domestic

violence and abuse. Participants lauded their experiences of literature, journals/diaries, and skills such as time-outs and positive self-talk as instrumental for their increased awareness of IPV which, in turn, encouraged them to be committed to the process of change.

Two of the quotes below show this:

"You start keeping your journals. . . which was a very hard thing to write and then you realise they (my behaviour), were really bad. You can learn to walk away. Calm down. You have to read this in the group. A lot of people came and admitted to what they did and told the truth about their behaviour from their journals. You cannot protect yourself in the programme."

(Participant 2).

"We learnt skills like time-out, and this helped me to control my emotions".

(Participant 9)

When asked how they managed situations now in which they felt angry or upset or when frustrated about something, at least four of the participants talked explicitly about the associated benefits of taking 'timeouts'. In this regard, two said the following:

"Walking away. Time out helps to calm things down". (Participant 1).

“Walking away from the argument helps to control my anger. It does not mean that I am weak”. (Participant 6).

According to many participants, time out, positive self-talk, reflection enabled behaviour modification in the sense that they allowed the prospect for cognisant behaviour change. They added that the ability to rely on other specific techniques help the men to incrementally begin to feel successful in controlling their behaviour which, in turn, spurred the motivation to change. Most, further, reported that they re-looked back at how they effectively became confident and assured of themselves regarding the positive changes they are making. This realisation and the subsequent pride that is associated with avoiding abusive behaviours are the opposite of feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment and often subsequently associated violent behaviours.

Broadened Understanding of Domestic Violence and Abuse

A small number of participants spoke explicitly about the influence of the stories within the training programmes which they could specifically describe as important in changing their behaviours. Almost all the men agreed that the training caused a shift at a number of levels, e.g., their thinking, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours. These levels could be characterised as being at cognitive, emotive, and behavioural levels. While some men chose to attend the programme primarily because they were worried about losing families

and children, once in it, they realised the actual constituent parts of behaviours which could be characterised as violence and abusive. This, in turn, motivated them to change through a cumulative process.

It was remarkable and fascinating that participants actually reported that they had become more aware of how violent and abusive their previous behaviours had been and that they were now ready to change consequent to being on the programme and sticking with it. They further reported that the change has also helped them to challenge their deep-rooted values and beliefs as the extracts below show:

“I once said in the group that I had checked on her mobile phone as I was suspicious and other men said that it was abusive behaviour. The group helped me to learn about different types of abuse”. (Participant 7).

Another also reported:

“This guy in the group said that he had told his wife, he would send her back to Bangladesh and other men said that was blackmail, controlling and a type of abuse. He was shocked to hear this initially. But after a few sessions, he started to appreciate what the other men said and was writing this in his diary”. (Participant 9).

These statements suggest that the participants had developed a broader awareness about what behaviours constitute domestic violence and abuse.

Past Trauma, Culture; Impact on Abusive Behaviours

The other theme emerging from data analysis was that the participants, through the programme, were assisted to understand how their past experiences, such as trauma, were linked to their aggressive behaviours. Engaging in group sessions and training, according to many participants, were helpful in making connections between their abusive behaviours and their past experiences, especially during childhood. They, specifically, spoke about such events as experiences of childhood trauma (experience of parental conflict, neglect), beliefs related to sexism, chauvinism and how these related to culture (including religion) on how women should be viewed and treated in society. This realisation also helped them to advance a broadened appreciation and knowledge of the embodiments of the diverse types of abusive behaviours. This helped perpetrators to become remorseful and to recognise the need for being held accountable for their behaviours. Below are some of the personal accounts that demonstrate this:

“It is important to understand what makes you angry. In my case, I experienced a lot of trauma and also lost my dad. This also led me to drinking heavily at the time. So, to be able to understand what my issues I had in the past that had not been addressed, helped me to understand why I behaved the

way I did. The group helped me to make the connection to my experience of trauma and how this connected to drinking and in turn to my behaviour. This helped me to be aware of my behaviours and how this affects my missus and my daughter. When the men became aware of how their behaviour impacted on others, it helped them to begin the process of doing things differently and making change". (Participant 1)

Another added:

"It made me realise and brought something to your (my) attention that you (was) never had brought to your (my) attention before. And it made me look back and made me realise that my behaviour in the past was not right. So, then you (I) would listen more because all this made sense. You cannot hide in the programme." (Participant 2).

Yet another added:

"When we shared some stories, others and the trainers would say the behaviour was abusive, even though this was verbal or putting others down. The men then realised what abusive behaviours were like and this helped them to look at themselves and recognise different types of abuse". (Participant 5)

A further one stated:

“I witnessed a lot of abuse as a child. I could at times witness my dad hitting my mom black and blue. The group helped me to realise that this could be the reason and it’s connected to how I behave as a person now. In some respect, I mirror my dad”. (Participant 6)

These comments confirm that the men were able to realise and link violence and abusive behaviours to their past childhood experiences. This, in turn, helped them to introspectively interrogate their behaviours with a view to making substantive changes in managing intimate partner relationships.

Some of the men spoke about how their attendance of treatment sessions was therapeutic to them with respect to their past experiences of trauma. Below is a sample of verbatim of the foregoing.

“It was like therapy for me (being in groups)...for my past.”(Participant 9)

“Be able to understand what my issues I had in the past that had not been addressed, helped me to understand why I behaved the way I did. The group helped me to make the connection to my experience of trauma.” (Participant 1)

Communication and Deescalating Skills and Techniques

Asked to recollect some of the specific skills they learnt from the programme, some men pointed to the new knowledge regarding how to count down when

they sensed they were being 'backed' in the corner or provoked. This, they, added was in addition to other types of skills, such as communication skills and deescalating techniques.

The ability to communicate well, particularly when engaged in a conflict situation, is a necessary skill for life and pre-empting perilous situations. Among the new skills the men learnt included, inter alia, disagreeing without being abusive or violent and not construing conceding and compromising as demonstrations of weakness. They noted that these attributes should be the true definitive qualities of a *real* man. Consequent to the training, they reported that they felt free and comfortable to talk and communicate with their partners in ways that were dramatically different to the way they did previously. As such, included in their new ways were the language the men adopt that demonstrates a measure of respect for others and particularly their wives and partners.

Five of the participants reported that they found it easier to express their emotions by letting their partners or others know when they were showing signs of anger or finding it hard to cope.

"I learnt how to communicate better and talk a lot more with my partner and talk about feelings. I learnt that I can say to my partner I am feeling stressed so I can go out for a walk and come back to talk about something again later if we disagreed" (Participant 4).

"In the course, they encouraged us to talk to our partners in a good way. Being patient with them and also to agree to disagree. I tried that at home with my partner and it was good. After a disagreement, we talked over the issue, and this felt good for both her and me. My partner found this strange, but it was good" (Participant 10).

Four participants underscored the importance of communication in relationships. They spoke about listening to, and valuing, other's opinions more, particularly the opinions of their partner. Some of the men said:

"One key thing that I picked up ... was that I can actually just listen more, say very little sometimes, not always get my way." (Participant 4)

"Even if you don't agree with someone, just listen to what they say first and offer your options why you disagree." (Participant 8).

Interestingly, not all the men were agreeable to this. Seven men, for instance, reported that communicating feelings was not easy. This was because men are culturally and socially brought up in ways that do not encourage them to express emotions in the fear that this could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. In this regard, one of the participants said that:

“Men are not allowed to show emotions and shouldn't pushed to the limits. The training challenged that saying that you should communicate feelings” (Participant 7).

The other skill that was taught was de-escalation which included techniques such as self-talk and count down. Some of the participants spoke about counting down in 3s from 30 as a form of time-out and being able to know and become aware when one was feeling upset and angry and about to react to what they may consider as 'provocative'. Two participants reported that:

“The time it takes you count down from 30 in 3s..you won't go far. You calm down” (Participant 11)

“You will calm down if you count backwards” (Participant 10)

This foregoing shows that if the men took on board and practised these techniques, they would initiate positive ways to steer themselves from violent behaviours that they might have engaged in previously in their relationships.

Part of the homework exercises included keeping diaries of their previous behaviours and comparing them to their present behaviours. Participants were, in addition, asked to read the journals out loud in the sessions.

As the following excerpts demonstrate, they kept the diaries.

'We learnt skills in how to control ourselves. We also kept records (diaries/journals) of how we did things in the past'. (Participant 4)

"Controlling my actions. This was one of the key messages". (Participant 1)

"I have to control how I react when someone upsets me. I cannot control why the other person upsets me, but I can control how I react". (Participant 7)

Benefits of Engaging in Perpetrators Programmes to Others

During the discussions of psychological capability, the participants acknowledged the importance, to the change process, of possessing knowledge about how they behaved towards their partners consequent to their attending the interventions. In this regard, they reported how the training had caused them notice positive changes in their behaviours and how the same were benefiting themselves, their partners, loved ones, children, and friends. This knowledge and awareness were imperative motivating influences towards change.

One of the most highlighted aspects of awareness around IPV was what participants considered to be their expanded understanding of how violence and abuse impacted other people, such as their ex/partners and children. Remarkably, for some respondents, understanding how abuse affected others

was, at times, overwhelming for them. This considerably contributed to their decisions to change. Two of the participants categorically reported that:

“It helped me to understand different types of what is considered abuse. Some of the things I did in the past, I did not think they were abuse.” (Participant 5)

*“It was scary for me to think of what I did. It was not just shame or s***t like that. I was a monster. And to think of myself like that was scary” (Participant 11)*

The foregoing narrative of participants’ experiences with the training programme adequately demonstrates how it (the programme) contributed to imparting knowledge of domestic violence and abuse, including appreciation of concepts and dynamics related to power and control. It further imbued participants with useful skills for changing their previously violent and abusive behaviours. Whether or not they have implemented these skills in practice is discussed further elsewhere.

Additional accounts by the participants regarding their post training experiences were revealingly exhilarating. Two of them reported as below:

“I came back and told the trainer that I had made my missus a cup of tea the previous week. When you have the understanding that you see the point in being kind to your missus” (Participant 1).

"I felt good when I did not react as I did previously". (Participant 4)

Below are some examples of how some participants nostalgically revealed the other psychological skills that were equally important for being able to develop positive relationships with partners.

"We kept diaries and how we acted in the past. Once you start recording new events in your life. The trainer would ask you to write how you reacted to certain behaviours. Now, at times, he would directly challenge my reactions, and those of the others too by saying that is still abusive behaviour. He would say things like that is denial. When you have attended a few sessions, you start making sense of what the trainer said. That is why I said he was harsh, but fair and challenging but in a positive way. You begin to recognise that your own behaviour was not right and that is the point you realise, and you start to take responsibility for your actions" (Participant 2)

"At first, I was like this is not going to happen to me. But then one guy said that he tried counting down from 30 in 3s to get to 0. This was really hard thing to do, that by the time you get to 3 numbers only, you will have calmed down. He was a hero. We all applauded him. I tried it myself once. I was left frustrated that I said to myself 'f.....k it" (Participant 10)

This count down helped them to become more aware of their feelings. It also helped to diffuse situations that would, previously, probably have resulted in

verbal and physical altercations previously. One participant, for instance, recounted how counting down helped him in preclusion of anger by saying:

“I became aware of my feelings of anger if I am counting down and counting down is really hard, so after a few attempts, you will have calmed down”.

(Participant 1)

Learning from Examples of Trainers and Mentors

The training was arranged and scheduled in a manner that it allowed participants with experience to mentor others; especially those who joined the training later.

In this regard, it was, therefore, understood that some participants found it particularly useful to learn from others who had attended the programme.

One, for instance, reported that:

“It was nice to learn from others that had changed. That was inspiring. You learn a lot from them.” (Participant 9)

The other feature of the programme was what participants referred to as mental stamina with respect to what was termed as ‘knocked back’ by the trainer. This involves the belief by the trainee that they had taken small steps and had managed to grasp what was taught when, in fact, the trainer believed

that the participants had not. This could either make some continue to attend, or force others to drop out of the programme. This was attested to by two participants who said:

'When you've got the same response and lack of recognition for the efforts you are making of it was a bit frustrating ((Participant 1)

"You couldn't convince the trainer that you'd changed. He challenged you but, in the end, you look back and realise it was necessary feedback".

(Participant 4)

Taking Responsibility and Accountability for Violent and Abusive behaviours

One of the key outcomes of the programme was the imperative for participants to be accountable for and to take responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviours. Significantly common to all the responses was the re-evaluation of behaviours with a view to preventing themselves from being impulsively reactive in situations in which they felt provoked to being able to hold and control themselves as a way of steering away from violence and abuse and making rational choices. This process incredibly helped them to appreciate and understand how to rationally and responsibly face consequences of their choice of behaviours. As such, they learnt they needed

to not only be capable of but also accountable for the choices they men and inevitably changing their behaviours.

When asked to reflect on the key messages from the programme which triggered the change, some of the participants pointed to the importance of taking responsibility and accountability for their actions, as shown below.

Seven of the nine service users discussed in detail how their attendance of the programme had enabled them to reflect on, and re-evaluate, their past behaviour and acknowledging that they were violent and abusive. They further acknowledged the fact that, in the past, they tended to blame others for their behaviours in the mistaken belief that they had been provoked and, therefore, were justified in their actions. It, indeed, dawned upon them that, despite feelings and perceptions of people around them, they were, invariably and ultimately, accountable for their actions. Below are some of the narratives regarding this realisation. One participant said the following:

“When some of the guys said what they used to do, I realised that was the same as me before. Then you ask yourself will I get there to that point. Then you look back and realise you did it...That was good.” (Participant 6).

And the other also said:

“At the start, most men are defensive and really not wanting to be there. But.... after learning more.... They say it’s my fault that I behaved badly.”(Participant 5)

Yet another reported:

“I realised I shouldn’t blame anyone...not my ex, not on beer...but on myself.” Participant 10

Listening to participants’ reflections on the programme, I became aware of the great extent to which they benefitted from each other’s stories and experiences and how these helped the men to take responsibility for their actions. The verbatim quotation by one participant below attest to this programme output:

“You learn from the others...the people (mentors). You listen to how they say things, you see them, you see how they done it and you learn.... how they did it”. (Participant 4)

The other stated:

“I learnt the importance of taking responsibility for my actions from the programme. That no matter what others do or say. Taking responsibility for your behaviour. The trainer sometimes gave negative comments to some

positive things. He often alluded to blaming for everything positive you did. This was a learning curve; you cannot protect yourself in the programme. Some people do not have agreements. Taking responsibility is not something anyone can do for you, but you yourself". (Participant 2)

Another participant said that:

"The main thing I learnt from the programme is taking responsibility for your actions. You have to deal with all those things that make you angry and then take responsibility for your actions. You have to confront the devil I you first." (Participant 1)

Another participant said:

"Hearing stories from other men inspired others to acquire some tips of how to take control of our actions. It helped me to move from being defensive to actually, what can I learn from others about how I relate to my wife". (Participant 8).

When asked to evaluate the trainers, many credited them for the instructive content, retention, and attrition during the programme duration. The contrasting accounts below demonstrate this point:

“Although he is very tough and did not want to entertain positives strides I had made in my relationship with my wife, he helped me to take responsibility for my actions. This is important because we cannot control how a person behaves, but we can control how we react to what we may perceive as provocation”. I give him a lot of credit for that, and this has stuck with me to this day” ((Participant 4).

“It’s hard to be put down by someone who doesn’t know me and my partner sometimes in front of so many people”. (Participant 11).

Another participant added that,

“The trainer was very persistent in what he expected from us – to learn to be accountable for our behaviours. Some people did try to justify their acts of violence based on religion beliefs. However, the facilitator, although listened to him, which I personally found boring, knocked this view on the head and challenged it forcefully. It helped the other members of the group to either drop out or accept to take some responsibility for their actions. I remember some people did not want to hear this and as such left the group or missed some sessions. But we appreciated that he helped us to take responsibility for our actions”. (Participant 1).

Reasons for Retention or Drop Out from Training

When asked to give reasons why they stayed on the programme despite the knockdowns, a number said they appreciated the opportunity to acquire new ways and skills for changing their behaviours. Others reported that they were inspired by those that had successfully completed the programme and learnt skills in managing relationships in positive manner.

Others said that they were worried about the negative consequences of not attending and the fear of losing relationships, including loss of contact with their families, especially children as the excerpts below show.

"I didn't want to do all that I could to ensure my daughter remained with the family". (Participant 1)

Another one added:

"It was important to understand my behaviour so I can be a good parent to my children". (Participant 2)

"I figured I could learn something positive from the other guys which would help me. I still loved my wife and wanted to know how to behave. I did not want to lose my family". (Participant 7)

Apart from sharing their stories and reflecting on their behaviours and new actions they had resolved to take, participants also developed useful tips on how to manage their own behaviours and take responsibility for future actions.

One participant said:

“This guy came in and said after his partner did something to him, he counted downwards from 30 in 3s to 0. You know that is difficult. By the time he did this, you will have thought about how to act in a different manner and not in any abusive way. That was a good tip and everyone in the group applauded the guy, because it’s really hard to count from 30 to 0 in 3s”. But what this does, is give you enough time to think about how you can act not in an abusive way. That means you are taking responsibility for your actions”. (Participant 2)

These techniques were useful in helping the men to improve their ability to manage differences.

Personal Resolve to Change in Early Stages of Interventions

This theme strongly and recurrently emerged in most interviews by respondents. Many highlighted that, in addition to the advice and encouragement by others, the task of personal behavioural change was, given

the circumstances, a purely personal responsibility. Achievement of this requires self-introspection, dialogue, and conviction. This requirement was, fortunately, grasped by and present in both programme completers and non-completers. In retrospect, this had been made possible by the prior resolve by participants to engage in the programme. However, in other cases, this point of personal resolve was arrived at some point during or after the sessions.

The four participants spoke specifically about this point.

“I made up my mind that I needed to change my behaviour, and this was before I went to the programme” (Participant 10)

Another added:

“After hearing how other men talked about how they put into practice the skills they learnt, it helped me to think, ‘yes I could do this, or I could do that myself the next time I am in a similar situation’. (Participant 7)

Yet another adding:

“When I started, there were other men who had attended many sessions before I did. So, they listened to us the newer ones and they also challenged us when we tried to make excuses. They told us that they were exactly like that when they themselves started but had learnt different things and they learnt to do

things differently now. So, it made me curious to know how come this had changed". (Participant 11)

*"I told myself that I needed to do something to change my behaviour"
(Participant 8)*

"After I finished the training, I realised that the training was good, and I needed to change my behaviour" (Participant 3)

Sharing Accounts as a skill

Some participants also recounted how hearing other participants' accounts and experiences positively impacted them and how the same were instrumental in the change process.

Other participants stated that sharing their own and hearing others' accounts enabled them to learn from each other and to get feedback from each other regarding how well or unwell each had managed a particular scenario. This process often culminated in sharing ideas for what to do if faced with similar situations in the future; and especially in resolving conflicts with previous or current partners and/or others.

The extent to which this process benefited participants is evident as demonstrated by the following excerpts.

“You learn from other people in the group. When you hear how they say things That was inspiring for me, that I wanted to come back and learn more.” (Participant 2)

“I was reluctant to open up initially. But when you hear from the other guys who had been at the programme a long time, it was inspiring. They were letting their frustrations in the meeting. I was like that myself. As the days went by, it was just like, I just need to stop being self-conscious and explore my feelings in the group.” (Participant 1)

These accounts clearly demonstrate that the men had learnt a lot about themselves through being made aware of their violent and abusive behaviours and the need to take responsibility for their actions. This recognition for the need to engage with personal feelings and consequences constitutes an ongoing process which involves learning new skills, constantly applying them and challenging their long-held beliefs and stereotypes.

Invariably, this enables the men to develop their capability as this increases their understanding of what constitute intimate partner violence and abuse and thus equipped with skills (cognitive, emotive) to manage relationships better. The next section deals with responses in respect of opportunity according to the COM-B model.

Opportunity

It became evident that the combination of physical and social opportunity was significant in determining the likelihood of behavioural change as a result of engaging in the programme. At a practical level, the combination of attendance of group sessions and completion of homework (diaries) containing the men's lives and experiences were also powerful triggers for change. The key organising theme around this were stigma associated with attending a group for men who had acted violently and abusively in their relationships and associated costs and benefits of attending the group, normalising discussions around violence and abuse in such settings and re-socialising views around intimate partner violence and abuse.

It was therefore important that the group offered a relaxed atmosphere which would, in turn, enable participants to feel encouraged to share their stories. The conducive atmosphere would also facilitate participants who needed support to feel vulnerable enough to both seek and receive this support.

Group Processes Vs Personal Traits

Nearly all participants stated that they initially felt extremely uncomfortable to share their stories in the groups. As these statements below show, engaging in the sessions was a process that was not always smooth.

"I am usually a very private person. So, it was really hard to talk about my life in a group, initially". (Participant 1)

"I was worried at the start about what others thought of me, that I am a wife beater, an abuser. It changed very quickly". (Participant 2)

"I was really anxious when we started". (Participant 5)

Another participant who did not complete the programme also similar sentiments.

"Being part of the group shows that everyone was a wife abuser. That was difficult to accept, as I do not consider myself an abuser." (Participant 4)

Despite some reservations by some participants, it, however, turned out that the mere attendance and belonging to the group and programme significantly contributed to changing the cultural framework around how women should be treated. The quotes below demonstrate this.

"After the initial meeting, most people started to relax as they were all in the meeting because of abuse towards their missus. They shared something in common". (Participant 1)

“When I started, I felt my situation was not as bad as others. But when you share your behaviours, some people would challenge you and help you see that your behaviour was also abusive. You then realise that there are many types of abuse. You have something in common with the other men”. (Participant 2)

“I know what I did was wrong. I made a decision that I needed help” (Participant 3)

“The group helped me, but I needed to take it upon me” (Participant 8)

These extracts suggests that treatment (group processes) and individual factors were important in encouraging the men to remain on the programme.

Challenging Beliefs, Values and Denial around Intimate Partner Violence

Participants reported that their attendance on the men’s programme offered them a neutral setting and an opportunity to engage in open dialogue and articulate their beliefs and values. It also allowed them to introspect on their behaviours without the apprehension of facing criticism.

The men, especially those who had completed the programme, deeply commended the programme for changed values and beliefs as well as imbuing them with useful skills for communicating and relating to their

partners. In retrospect, this was a direct result of the men's willingness to access the programme and also the eagerness to listen to and accept advice. It was equally a result of the readiness by participants to genuinely seek support when they experienced setbacks along the way.

A number of participants felt that, while the programme was useful in helping participants to be supported, at the same time, it helped others to be confronted with respect to their beliefs. This is demonstrated by the excerpts below. One participant said:

"I felt comfortable to share my experiences with others, even though initially, I felt really uncomfortable. The trainer and the other members of the programme helped me to talk about my experiences. It was a good support for me, a place where I would come back with all my issues and they would help me.... You are going through things you have never done before.... feeling ashamed of what I had done to my missus and my family" (Participant 7)

Another said:

"I challenged a few guys who seems to have really strong views about their behaviours. The trainer was also very confrontational". (Participant 9)

"I think that some of the people talked about religion and how they are taught to treat women, which is fine. Maybe I was not very patient with them because I was not really brought up as Christian. But as I grew older, I

realised that these things, religion, trauma affect how we behave, and part of the therapy should include talking about these things.” (Participant 1)

“If someone was in denial – I remember one time when this guy was all upset about his missus because he did not trust her and was following her to the shops and school runs. He initially did not believe that he was stalking his wife. But when he related his experiences in the group, we challenged him”(Participant 5)

Other participants said that there was a carefully but, somehow, tensioned balance between empathy and support processes. This meant the need, on the trainer’s part, to encourage the men to take accountability for abusive behaviours through some level of confrontation whilst also being sensitive to their feelings within a group setting and exposure to others. In response to this, one participant said:

“The confrontation helped to challenge you and although may seem uncomfortable initially, you reflect on it and see the positives”. (Participant 2)

“We were able to learn from each other. Like some of the men had some beliefs from their cultures and religions. This was challenged in the group”. (Participant 1)

Another said:

“I just felt like I needed to speak to someone different just to get their opinions on what had happened”. (Participant 9)

In terms of the training programme outcomes, the most interesting and running key message among the participants was the need for participants to take responsibility for their behaviours. In the study, participants unanimously and readily recall and identify taking accountability and responsibility for their violent behaviours and actions as the key message. The extracts below demonstrate this.

“I learnt the importance of taking responsibility for my actions from the programme. That no matter what others do or say. Taking responsibility for your behaviour is important. The trainer sometimes gave negative comments to some positive things. He often alluded to blaming for everything positive you did. This was a learning curve; you cannot protect yourself in the programme. Some people do not have agreements. Taking responsibility is not something anyone can do for you, but you yourself”. (Participant 4)

Another added:

“We cannot control what others do, but we can control what we can do ourselves. That was the key message” (Participant 7)

Yet another said:

“You can’t use your culture and beliefs to justify abuse. This was a clear message in the training. The things people value the most were challenged in the group, but in a good way that the men felt comfortable to deal with.”
(Participant 6).

Empathetic vs Apathetic Environment; The Role of Other Men and Mentors

The empathetic environment within which the training took place issued two key dividends. Firstly, it creates a non-judgmental atmosphere which accorded participants respect and dignity, with the result that they let down their guards and genuinely discussed their behaviours. Secondly, the confrontational nature of the programme, paradoxically, positively helped men to introspectively reflect on their lives and to begin to take personal responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviours. These two factors further helped participants in beginning to empathetically appreciate and understand the debilitating impact of their behaviours on their previous, current partners, children and affected others.

All the study participants communicated with a high degree of enthusiasm regarding the influence of other group members on their journey towards change. They described the group as a supportive medium for accessing knowledge and skills from trainers and mentors, as well as from the other participants. The training was particularly important for developing trusting

relationships. In particular, group work was very helpful to the men with respect to sharing some intimate details about their behaviours with the opposite sex. Group work, in fact, provided an enabling opportunity which allowed challenging of behaviours while at the same time providing support. The supportive environment permitted the development of interpersonal trust and confidence which, in turn, facilitated unrestricted sharing of information regarding the extent to which each one was either succeeding or not in changing their behaviours. The men's accounts said that:

"It was good to have other men speak about their experiences. They acted like mentors for the newer ones". (Participant 5)

"The trainers were challenging but this was in a positive way" (Participant 2)

"I found it annoying the way the trainer put me down" (Participant 11)

Another said:

"It was like somewhere I could talk about my problems, frustrations, and all the guys were there to help you." (Participant 3)

While yet another said:

“Especially during when you are down...you’ve just had some big argument with your partner. ... You could ask the group; how can I do things differently and do the right thing? Others will offer good suggestions. Knowing that others can help you and the trainer also was a big thing for me”.

(Participant 4)

It was interesting to note, however, that those who had chosen not to complete the programme often portrayed themselves in good light compared to some of the men who attended the group. These quotes below demonstrate this:

“There was no point in attending the meeting, if whenever I share something that I considered positive, the trainer just knocked it back”. (Participant 11)

“There were real women abusers in that group. That was not the case with me” (Participant 7)

“They put the blame on me and yet it was my wife who had threatened me with a knife. Even though I only pushed her, but she had a knife in her hand. But when I said this in the group, the trainer still did not want to hear this”.

(Participant 3)

Some participants reported that being in a group session felt like therapy. The process of sharing experiences was therapeutic and accorded them the

opportunity to link their behaviours to the past. This is demonstrated in the quote below.

“It felt like group therapy. To be in touch with myself as to why I was feeling as angry as I did. This was like the first time I had grieved properly and connected my feelings to why my relationship with my missus did not last”.

(Participant 1)

The majority of participants reported that, in delivering lessons, trainers tactfully balanced support and confrontation. According to them, this was because of the need to encourage accountability while, at the same time, challenging violent and abusive attitudes among participants within groups.

In this regard, three men talked about how they were encouraged to promote openness and accountability within the group by employing the skills gained from trainers and mentors. They also openly narrated how they shared their own stories and experiences with respect to violent and abusive behaviours.

One of them, specifically, said:

“The men had spoken about how they had previously been controlling and psychologically abusive to their partners and how some of the mentors made them realise that they could change, and this was helpful for the men”

(Participant 4)

Those who had dropped out of the programme were less positive with equal level of enthusiasm and thus not complimentary about it. This is evident from the extracts below.

One participant said:

'If you will be challenged for whatever progress you are making, there is no point in keeping going back to the training. That was why I left the programme. (Participant 10)

The other said:

"The trainers knew little about me and when they were rude to me, I stopped attending". (Participant 4)

The foregoing demonstrates that taking responsibility for their actions and incorporating them into the plan and constructing habits acted as reminders that they would seldom forget as a guide for positive actions. These sets of habits became predictable, and they learnt to act in a new way with minimal mental effort.

Shared Experiences: Recording and Sharing Feelings in the Group

Aside from fulfilling requirements for participation in a group, participants said that they were also motivated by the fact that all the men had something

in common to share. It would also appear that some were also attracted to the programme on account of their consciously being aware that, to a lesser or greater extent, they had been abusive to their partners. While the nuances of their stories might have been slightly different, it was recognised that they had one thing in common; they were violent and/or abusive in their relationships. Fortunately, these uncomfortable and guilty inner feelings were attenuated by listening to each other's stories and experiences in groups. As the men shared their stories and experiences, there was, in the main, a general feeling of diminished sense of isolation, shame, fear and anxiety. Through the process, the men came to realise that they were not alone in their individual experiences.

The study revealed that most violent and abusive behaviours had socio-cultural and religious foundational bases. Nevertheless, ultimately, the crave for power and control appears to be the prime motive for their behaviours. In discussing the same, some participants stated the following:

“When the guys started sharing their experiences, I felt that I could relate to some of them. Some of the guys would talk about religion and what is expected from their point of view in their religions, when the trainer commented on how that was forms of abuse, everyone came to realisation that everyone in the group had been involved in abusive behaviours. Whether this behaviour was physically, sexually, emotional abuse, it was all abuse”.

Participant 1)

“There’s a common... experience....who judges what is a big or small abuse.... that’s what one guy told this guy. And then one said abuse is abuse, and when you look around, all the men had abused their partners one way or the other. That’s what you all have in common.” Participant 4).

“The mentor reminded the fellas that everyone was on the programme because of abuse...that was what everyone had in common.” (Participant 5).

Another said:

“All the men experienced the same. Some of them initially thought.... even said...they were victims (victims) but as they related their experiences and how the trainer challenged them, they realised that they all had....one thing in common, that their behaviour was abusive”. (Participant 6).

In commenting about their yearning for behavioural change, almost every participant passionately spoke specifically about wanting to be a different people with different behaviours relative to the past. The comments below demonstrate this.

“I wanted to use this time on the programme... to be a different person for the sake of my children. I wanted the children to be happier and did not want to keep fighting with my wife.” (Participant 5)

"I wanted a different path for my children, not the same as it happened to me".

(Participant 6)

"I wanted to continue to see my children". (Participant 2)

Participants, on the other hand, also stated that the mere possession of a prototype (e.g., materials like journals and behaviour plans) of future behaviours was intrinsically linked to the experiences. This prototype formed a reference point for future management of emotionally charged situations. It also enabled participants to take note of the benefits of attending the programme and how these benefits contributed in, ultimately, improving their relationships with intimate partners. In elaborating this, some made the following submissions:

"You could see some people change their attitudes in the next sessions. They had very strong views initially but after a few sessions, they shared different things in the sessions. This showed the change, and it showed that the men were impacted in a positive way". (Participant 7)

Another said:

"If something goes wrong or they were somehow unsure of something there's always someone to ask or talk to in a group setting including the trainer".

(Participant 6)

And yet another participant said:

“It helped us learn from others about how they deal with their own problems”

(Participant 2)

These foregoing clearly demonstrate the extent to which group learning played a significant role in making participants embark on a behavioural change and reform path. Discussion of their experiences, values, beliefs and challenges in groups effectively removed a degree of stigma and shame.

The other lesson is that the fact that the men could still remember their experiences and opportunities to be in a group, sometimes, after more than 10 years, only goes to demonstrate the indelible impact that the programme had on them. This was evident in the quotations below where some stated:

“That was a long time ago, but it feels like yesterday. Just taking responsibility for your actions”. (Participant 1)

“We can only take care of our behaviours. This was like 10 years ago and I can still remember this now”. (Participant 2)

Facilitation Skills: The role of Trainers in Groupwork

It was evident during the study that trainers had a hugely significant impact on attrition rates as they were the principal connectors between the programme and the group participants. Bearing this in mind, some participants highlighted the role of the trainers in the sessions as demonstrated in the quote below.

“The trainer was also there to offer support, and this was crucial to either staying motivated to attend or leave”. (Participant 4)

“The trainer is tough; you cannot just escape from the responsibility of your actions. He was very clever and understands what you are trying to do, what you can do when you get angry, what you intend to do when you finish the programme. The trainer was good”. (Participant 2)

Most participants respected and appreciated the trainers and amicably connected with the trainers. They, specifically, largely, and highly spoke positively about the trainer’s skills and genuine care for them. According to them, the trainers’ caring and positive approach to the training was one of the factors that immensely contributed to their interest in the programme. In this regard, a number of them made the following submissions:

“He makes you learn, but he was firm/tough”. (Participant 2)

Another participant agreed about personal skills and attitudes of the trainers and how they used these to deliver good service to participants in the groups:

“He was kind to everybody. He let people talk.... their.... situations and challenged them appropriately. He’s very persistent, and he expects you to learn new ways to communicate and new ways to behave with the partners”
(Participant 1).

“It helped that everyone had to share....and the trainer and all the men give feedback.” (Participant 2)

“It becomes part of everyone to discuss their experiences so that these can be discussed and challenged. The atmosphere becomes more relaxed after hearing stories from others”. (Participant 5)

Participants’ Evaluation of the Perpetrators’ Programme

In order to derive a comprehensive and factual sense of the impact of the programme on participants, I requested each one to reflect on it in both negative and positive terms. Below are some of the reflections.

One participant said:

"I dropped out partly because some of the men on the programme were very old and nothing close to me in age. They seemed to have engaged in far serious incidents than me". (Participant 11)

While the other added:

"So, the Social Worker pushed and pushed... she put pressure on me to go.... So then... I contacted them but I didn't feel like I needed to". (Participant 6)

And yet the others said:

"I felt uncomfortable to share my life story in the group. That's not how I was brought up to be. You don't discuss personal stuff in the meeting like that. Besides, I did not want to talk about my life in public" (Participant 4)

"If it was not for the social worker, I probably wouldn't have gone...simple as..." (Participant 11)

"I would not have gone if it wasn't for the social worker. I went but I really didn't want to end my marriage. So, I went" (Participant 9)

And yet another added that:

“It opened my eyes to what people put others through. It was chilling accounts and it made me very upset to hear some of the stories” (Participant 7)

Three men spoke specifically about what they found least useful in the programme. Specifically, they spoke about how their acts of kindness were sometimes dismissed in the sessions. The accounts below demonstrate their experiences.

“I remember once I came to the session and... I told the group that I had made my partner a cup of tea. The trainer didn't really acknowledge this. He just wanted to talk about me admitting my mistakes as the reason for being on the programme. It would have been nice to acknowledge this.” (Participant 2)

“The trainer didn't want people to talk about the nice things we did for our partners”. (Participant 8)

“It was like he didn't want to hear some good things we did for loved ones. Just wanted us to admit our abuse.” (Participant 11).

These accounts have significant implications for future studies in the sense that they speak to the need to strike a balance between accountability and ensuring pro-social attitudes and behaviours as discussed further below.

Lagged Realisation of Benefits of the Programme to the Participants

Some participants reported that it took a fairly long time before they began to realise and enjoy the benefits of the programme. Two participants elaborated this as below.

One participant said:

“Initially it was very uncomfortable, but only after a few sessions do they realise that this was beneficial.... I am usually a very private person. So, it was really hard to talk about my life in a group, initially. However, as weeks went by, it became much more comfortable. It was like attending AA meetings. As I said I felt like it was group therapy”. (Participant 1)

Elaborating further, another participant commented:

“That environment really encouraged me to be who I was and think about what I can do to change. It was non-judgmental so that everyone could share their stories and not be guarded. As you went along, you realise that you learn from the feedback from the others and take control of your behaviours and how they affect other people”. (Participant 6)

The foregoing demonstrate that it sometimes takes time before beneficiaries of an intervention realise the benefits of the same. This realisation may happen during and sometimes after the interventions.

Benefits of Engaging in Pro-Positive Behaviours

According to many participants, the impetus to change arose from an epiphany and awareness that they no longer wanted to be associated with violence and abuse. In effect, this was a timely realisation that their violence and abuse had turned them into some kind of 'monster' who were perceived as inimical to society. In this regarding, some made the following accounts:

"I am not like that person, like some monster. I didn't want to be that person"

(Participant 2)

"It was like one day I looked in the mirror and I saw me like my dad. I hated him and what he did to my mom and the life that we lived after she left him. It brings me anger. I did not like it and I told myself that I have got to change myself and my children's. life". (Participant 8)

"The trainer made you learn by helping you to recount the things in your life that upset you the most. It was things such as the memories of your relationships with the parents, what your ideas of men-women relationships and all that". (Participant 4)

“It was like reliving my past and how this affected how I behave. But I did not like being in the group with men who I considered had done far worse things than me”. (Participant 11)

“The trainer was nice to everyone. He respected everyone...when he challenged, he didn't make us feel awful or this small. You kind of knew where you were anyway by the time you got to 3...number 3 meeting.” (Participant 7)

The empathetic and caring nature of trainers kept being referred to by the majority of participants as is evident from the following accounts:

“He was very persistent, and he expected you to learn and take responsibility for your actions. The trainer made sure that you learned why you behaved the way you and how you could do things differently. We had some guys who sometimes felt it was the fault of their partners or was the fault of the system in the UK, especially for those that came from other countries. The trainer challenged them to take responsibility. I had a lot of respect for him. It felt awkward sometimes especially if this was about you personally”. (Participant 8)

“There was no hiding place for the guys in the group. I mean it was awkward sometimes to share the experiences, but everyone knew what the group was all

about. The trainer was very good at doing what he did which was for everyone to learn from each other". (Participant 6)

It was important to do good things for others, even when you do not expect anything back in return.

Negative Impact of Violent and Abusive Behaviours on Family and Relationships

One determinant theme around negative consequences was punishment for negative behaviours. Regarding reflective motivation, participants shared that, if and when they believed their new non-violent ways of behaviour were beneficial, they would readily be more likely to access interventions and renew their knowledge (mental outlook) about relationships was like a new pathway created in their brains.

Brain scientists acknowledge that when this process is reiteratively repeated in the brain, it can become part of the *new person*. It is, however, important to recognise the fact that this process is intermediated by psychological capability (new skills) to know why one is behaving the way they are (self-awareness).

Participants largely framed and interpreted abusive and violent behaviours this as having negative impacts on others, such as intimate partners, family,

friends, and others. Some participants added that motivation to change should also involve the need to avoid compromising situations with the potential to precipitate violent and abusive behaviour and, consequently, coming into conflict with the law or facing the prospect of separation from the family, involvement with the Police and other criminal prosecutions.

The quotes below illustrate these points:

"My wife left, and I had no way of contacting her and our son. It was terrible.

"(Participant 2)

"I couldn't bear the thought that my daughter would end up in foster care. My sister was also encouraging to me to attend the programme. My ex was also pushing that it was important that my daughter was not taken into care".

(Participant 1)

'You know if you behave like that again, you lose your family. Therefore, taking responsibility for your behaviours ensures that your actions do not affect the family.' (Participant 5)

"I couldn't bear the thought that my daughter would end up in foster care. My sister was also encouraging to me to attend the programme. My ex was also pushing that it was important that my daughter was not taken into care".

(Participant 1)

"I did not want my family to be broken up". (Participant 3)

Another added:

*"I did not want to behave like that again in case I got arrested again"
(Participant 11)*

Negative Consequences of abusive and violent behaviours on themselves

During the sessions, participants also reported how feeling embarrassed, ashamed, and guilty with respect to their past violent and abusive behaviours. In sharing how deeply they were negatively affected by these feelings; they demonstrated this by the excerpts of the accounts below.

"After reading from my diary about how I behaved to my wife. I felt really guilty, ashamed of my behaviour" (Participant 2).

"I was upset to know how I had behaved with my partner. I was ashamed of my behaviour. I was determined to change that". (Participant 5)

"After hearing about what happens to children who have seen violence and that was my life, I felt embarrassed about my behaviour. I did not want my daughter to go through the same as I did myself". (Participant 1)

Negative Consequences of facing the Criminal Justice System, Police and the Child Protection Services

It became evident from the study that attendance of the programme significantly motivated men to remorsefully reflect on their previous violent and abusive behaviours and to, eventually, start behaving responsibly and caringly towards their partners. It also imbued them with the implications of their violent and abusive behaviours, especially on children and partners.

The following excerpts from four participants reveal some of the negative consequences of their behaviours, which acted as triggers for change. These included, inter alia, fear of arrest, imprisonment, loss of family connections.

“I had never been involved with the Police before in my life and so I wanted to learn how to control my feelings, so I did not have to have anything to do with the Police ever again”. (Participant 5)

“I did not want to lose my daughter and did not want my daughter to end up in care”. (Participant 1)

The Benefits of attending the Perpetrators' Programmes to the Men Themselves

Participants reported what motivated them to engage in the change process was the fact that their assessments of benefits outweighed the benefits of not engaging. In explaining this, one of the participants said that:

"There was no point in doing the programme any way as I was no longer with my partner. I did not believe it would help me in any way". (Participant 11)

Participants spoke highly about the skills that the programme had imbued them with among which was the spirit of self-help and how to manage impulses, reflex responses, and habits. Interestingly, not everyone perceived the programme as catalytic to behavioural change. One participant poignantly said that:

'You feel like if you're getting something out of it then it's that positive...reinforcement and for you. . . you want to do it again and again. You also see that it is good for your family" (Participant 5)

The spirit of self-help approaches can precipitate strong personal motivational resolve to avoid negative and compromising behaviours. Quite often, this has a lot to do with mental predisposition with respect to desired actions. This process, if effectively accomplished, has the effect of turning self-help into a

part of the DNA of key decision-making process. Some participants reported that among the factors that were associated with the change process, were motivations (reflective and automatic) and reflective brain processes including desires, impulses, and inhibitions.

Part of the strategic aims of the intervention was to elicit positive (or negative) feelings about behavioural change. This aim was, to an exceptionally considerable extent, achieved as is evident from the accounts of at least one participant who stated that:

“The programme helped me to not act on impulse such as when upset about what another person does or says, but to think. It helped me to count down and this gave me time to not act immediately but look at different ways to behave” (Participant 6).

Another said:

“It is like self-help. It helped me to not make quick decisions or lash out. I should think first before acting”. (Participant 4)

Awareness of triggers for and consequences of violence and abusive actions on others

It emerged from the study that awareness of triggers and consequences of actions on others was one of the organising themes consistent both for capability and motivations. In fact, some participants openly admitted that the training they had undergone assisted them in having a broadened understanding of the impact of their violent and abusive behaviours on others including their children and their partners. In turn this helped to motivate them to work towards changing their behaviours.

As the two participants indicated below:

“I think you’ve got to have the understanding how bad it is for others to behave that way and the belief that it is doing some good...by stopping that kind of behaviour, otherwise, you can’t really see the point in doing it.”
(Participant 4)

“The trauma and also grew up with racism and witnessed domestic abuse with my parents. All these things were very traumatic for me, and the group helped me to process them and think about how I can be more responsible for my actions”. (Participant 1)

All participants reported that they found it important and helpful to formulate plans and strategies well in advance, for how they would deal with their partners. These plans included remembering to count down when provoked. One participant explained that:

'It's really important to have a plan of the next time I feel upset and angry that I have a plan of what to do, such as remembering to count down in 3s from 30" (Participant 4)

Some of the participants were able to recount their experiences with the programme and how it emotionally affected them. They, further, said that despite their ambivalence about sharing their personal accounts, once they had overcome it, they felt ready and willing to share their accounts in the group. In this regard, a number of participants said that:

"When the trainer challenged me about my behaviour, I reflected on this and felt guilt, anger, and shame for my behaviours. I was embarrassed by their behaviour. Sharing my problems with others also helped me to do something about my behaviour. It was not right to behave the way I did" (Participant 6)

And another said that:

"I was upset with myself and how I had treated my missus. The fact that I could not hide my behaviour. If you don't let off your frustration in the

group, you cannot be motivated to do something to change it. In some ways you also become accountable for your behaviour by feeling a sense of shame. This in turn helps you to want to do something about your behaviour. That was quite difficult but was very necessary" (Participant 8)

These and other personal accounts by participants succinctly depict and describe in graphic detail the fundamental and 'knee-jerking' factors that motivated their decisions to participate in the programme. Like has been noted elsewhere, these included fear of 'damage' to reputation, loss of family members and fear of the involvement with the criminal justice system.

Personal Resolve to Change in Latter Stages of the Programme

One of the most significant outcomes of the study was the indelible and unambiguous impact the programme had on participants. It helped them to self-introspect and critically look at their previous violent and abusive behaviours from not only the perspective of their conscience but also from the perspectives of their partners. Through self-introspection, it dawned on them that they were each personally responsible for their actions together with the troubling consequences the same had for their partners. Invariably, this epiphanic realisation in the latter stages of the intervention caused them to resolutely resolve to participate in the programme. One said that:

"It took a long time. I didn't feel I needed to, but after a while, I realised that I needed this" (Participant 5).

When asked why some men completed all the scheduled number of programme sessions while others dropped out, a number of respondents said it all boiled down to the personal resolve to learn skills of how to stop being violent and abusive towards partners and this came later in the process. In this regard, some participants explained their decisions as quoted below.

"I had decided that I needed to change and.... therefore was looking at what could help me to change this. I was pleased about the programme and that it did not matter whether or not I continued with my partner. What was important was my own determination to change." (Participant 8)

"I needed to be a different person" (Participant 6)

This realisation for some men happened in the latter stages of the programme.

Understanding Emotional and Psychological Abuse as Constituting Domestic Violence and Abuse

When asked why the participants felt that emotional and psychological abuse was more difficult to change than physical abuse, four (4) participants spoke about how this was more difficult to change from their perspective.

As some quotes demonstrate:

“As boys in Africa, we are told that your wife should not challenge your rules and decisions. That is not the case with wives here. There was a part of me that felt my wife was being too Westernised and sometimes picking arguments and always questioning me. So, you may not injury (injure) your wife, otherwise the Police will arrest you, but you can hurt them in the head. It was good that the programme talked about this”. (Participant 4)

Another said:

“Some of the guys would talk about things they had done which would not result in the Police being called. Like one guy said, I told my wife, I would send her back to her family. He hadn’t realised that this was abuse. The other guys challenged him. But we realised that this was much more difficult for the guys to deal with. It is easy when the Police are called after a physical situation, but controlling and threatening messages are much more difficult for the Police to deal with”. (Participant 5).

“You realise that women are viewed in certain ways in some religions and some of the guys spoke about this in the programme. I initially felt that this should not have been, but eventually, you realise that this was the group to speak about them” (Participant 1)

“Men are the head of the family in the relationships. Women should be listening to the men.” (Participant 7)

Motivation and Triggers/Turning Points for Change

The running operational themes around motivation for engaging in perpetrators programmes included embarrassment (guilt and shame), beliefs about whether their behaviours were abusive or not and to what extent, impact (reward for positive behaviour and fear of punishment) of their behaviours on others and themselves.

Participants reported what is both reflective and automatic motivation and how these played a role in determining the probability of engaging in positive behaviours in their current and future relationships.

When asked what the decisive or turning point was when they resolved to change their behaviours (turning points) with respect to the use of violence in intimate relationships, at least 4 participants stated that there was no specific point but a combination of several events. For, instance, one stated that:

“I would not say that it was one specific thing. I think the fact that the Police were called was embarrassing enough. Then the partner and my son left. I felt empty and it was then I realised that I needed to do something. To be

honest, those turn of events, my partner leaving and taking my son was enough to give me a wake-up call". (Participant 4)

Similarly, the other said:

"To lose your family...your wife, your precious daughter. That hit hard on me. I couldn't bear the thought that my daughter would end up in foster care. My sister was also encouraging to me to attend the programme. My ex was also pushing that it was important that my daughter was not taken into care". (Participant 1)

"I loved my boys and did not want them to be hurt in any way and taken by the social worker". (Participant 10)

"She said that she would not be with me anymore. It was hard to take that". (Participant 11)

"It is not their business to tell me how to relate to my wife. That's what we knew in my native country. But when I realised that this was not the same in the UK and that my children could be removed from us, it was a wake-up call". (Participant 7)

"They told me that if I did not attend the programme, the social worker might take my children. That changed me". (Participant 5)

“The Police arrested me. Then, my wife left me. Then the social worker wanted to remove my children”. (Participant 3).

Participants also spoke about other factors that influenced their decisions to participate in the programme and to stop engaging in violent and abusive behaviours. Some were categorical in stating that, had the criminal justice system not intervened, there was not going to be any fear of detachment from their families including threats to lose their wives and children. Therefore, the presence of these and the child protection systems (negative consequences) where important triggers for change was motivating factors in their trajectory toward change.

The men were, incidentally, afraid of being arrested and prosecuted. In assuaging their fears, the programme helped them to appreciate and understand the full consequences of being arrested and prosecuted for partner abuse and violence. They were also made to understand that, in the event of their failure to stop violence and abuse towards their partners, the child protection and criminal justice system this would deprive them access to their children.

One participant recounted how he came into contact with the criminal justice system for the first time and how he, desperately, wanted to change his

behaviour as a way avoiding being found in a similar situation. This is demonstrated in some of the quotes below.

"I did not want to be arrested and sent to jail. The programme helped me to recognize and deal with my issues..... I was scared that I would lose my wife and my family, if I went to jail." (Participant 4).

"I was not prepared to go to prison and really wanted to take control of my behaviour" (Participant 2)

"I did not want my daughter to be in foster care". (Participant 1)

And another said:

"My family was breaking up. I would be arrested again". (Participant 5)

Different Ways of Understanding Taking Responsibility and Accountability for Abusive Behaviours

All study participants admitted having been in denial with respect to their violent and abusive behaviours before attending the group. The denial comprised blaming victims and minimising the extent and impact of their behaviours. They reported that this was especially the case in the initial stages of the engagement with the services. Consequently, upon engagement

with the programmes, they realised how meaningful and immensely this contributed to their development of accountability and responsibility as well as guilt and shame for past behaviours. The statements beneath show what the participants learnt from the programme and how the same had predisposed their ability and capability for assuming accountability for their past (sometimes on going) abusive behaviours.

“The main thing I learnt from the programme is taking responsibility for your actions. You have to deal with all those things that make you angry and then take responsibility for your actions. You have to confront the devil I you first”. (Participant 1)

“The main thing I learnt from the programme is about being malicious. I learnt that if you respond maliciously, that is bad.... take responsibility, admit the problems, not do things maliciously.” (Participant 8)

One of the components of taking responsibility, as reported by some men, involved apologising for their behaviours and adopting non-abusive strategies, as well as showing commitment to the programme and interventions. The quotes below demonstrate this:

“I apologised to my wife for being such a c....t” (Participant 8)

“I tried to apply what I learnt like walking away. I have started doing that” (Participant 2)

"I had to show that I wanted to change by attending the programme"
(Participant 7).

Two non-completers added the following:

"Although I did not finish the programme, I took responsibility by walking away from my missus because I know what I did was wrong" (Participant 5)

"I wanted to prove that I was a changed man by not doing anything like that again" (Participant 6).

The other way of taking responsibility was how the participants perceived the act of accessing support from the perpetrator programmes as sufficient indicator of taking responsibility, as indicated in the quotes below:

"I feel that me agreeing to go to the group means that I am responsible. I don't necessarily need to say (admit to taking responsibility in front of the trainers and others) in the session" (Participant 2)

"No one who is not accepting responsibility would attend a programme and I did not need to admit to the therapist" (Participant 7).

The accounts above show that the men took responsibility and were accountable for their decisions by developing and taking perspective (empathy), taking time-out strategies and ending relationships with the victims. In other cases, men felt that the mere act of accessing the groups was in itself and taking responsibility.

Further Incidents of Domestic Violence and Abuse

The issue of whether or not the men had engaged in further incidents of domestic violence and abuse was not originally included as part of the study. However, preliminary analysis of the data necessitated inclusion of this aspect in subsequent interviews with participants.

Participants were asked to indicate whether or not there had been any further incidents of domestic violence and abuse in their relationships, during and since they attended the perpetrators programme.

Nearly all the men denied that they had engaged in further incidents as the quotes below demonstrate.

“This was the only time that I came into contact with the Police. It has never happened again, and I would not want it to happen again”. (Participant 4)

"It has never happened again. Besides I am not with her anymore. I have not really had any long-term relationships since as my focus is on my daughter. We speak to each other with my ex but no, I have not had the Police called on me with anyone since". (Participant 1)

After being probed further, one completer and two non-completers of the programme, however, admitted that there had been further incidents. They gave the following accounts to confirm this.

"Yes. I am with a new partner. But it was not me that hit her. She hit me and claimed I did to the Police". (Participant 5)

"I only pushed her. She was threatening me with a knife" (Participant 9)

"I called her names, and she called the Police on me. She said that I called her nasty names". (Participant 7)

Four of programme completers reported that there had been situations in which either themselves or their partners had reported further incidents of domestic violence and abuse to the Police. Some participants gave the following examples:

"My ex called the Police on me, yeah. She claimed I was stalking her, but I was not." (Participant 9).

"I am with my current partner. I know the Police have been called on 2 occasions, but it wasn't exactly like that. It was just a heated argument, like every couple does". Participant 8)

The accounts above show that the men were trying to portray themselves in non-abusive manner. They were thus minimising the extent of their abuse.

Application of Learning to Relationships: What Desistance Involves

An additional theme emerged following the pilot which the study sought to explore further. This was around ascertaining the extent to which the men demonstrated how they had made changes to their lives. This was particularly with respect to values, beliefs, and attitudes around intimate partner violence and abuse.

For those that had perpetrated further incidents, especially when they felt provoked, the study sought to explore how they dealt with the situation. The following four (4) narratives reveal their responses:

"I was involved in an incident with my missus. I remember using the count down. I walked away soon after until I calmed down. I know that I would have previously said bad things". (Participant 1)

“I counted quickly down and before long the situation de-escalated”.

(Participant 4)

“I stopped calling her names. This is what we learnt from the programme”.

(Participant 6)

“Just trying to stop and think before saying or doing something. That has helped me to calm down. When I started to notice how my body was acting...like sweating, I reminded myself to walk away to calm down.”

(Participant 8).

It was, of course, not possible to corroborate these sentiments with their partners (both current and previous), as they were not included in the sample.

Future Perpetrators’ Programmes

Participants were specifically asked to look back on the training and explore what other areas of similar future programmes should focus on to optimise benefits to the perpetrators. They were also asked to indicate which areas the previous programme omitted or should have focused on.

The key elements of *active positive expressions of empathy* or compassion and kindness emerged from the data, and were later arranged in several categories, each comprising several distinct themes and subthemes. Themes

and sub-themes regarding connections between and among key categories and interventions in intimate partner violence processes were abstracted within an experiential model of compassionate and kind behaviours. The participants said that they would have liked to hear more about how to 'love' others. In reference to this, six participants said the following in participants said the following:

"I think the world needs more love and people should be taught to love one another. It is possible to see people in different light. I look back on my actions and how this affected my daughter and my missus then, I feel ashamed of my behaviour then... We should always think about how others feel when we act the way we do". (Participant 1)

"I think the focus was on the individual rather than the impact on the victims (survivors)". (Participant 2)

"I think we should talk about how to care for others more" (Participant 6)

"You should be able to do something for someone without expecting them to do something in return. Like you can make someone a cup of tea without expecting them to always follow what you want. If you did this to a stranger, it will make them happy, right? That is kindness...and that is love". (Participant 8).

“It is important to care for others. Not just blaming the men. What can we do to be kind to others is what we should also look at”. (Participant 5).

“When you do something to another person that makes them happy, and you won’t get anything back. That is like when you give money to a stranger because they look hungry, and you don’t expect it back in anyway. That is compassion and that is love. I think the training should talk about those kinds of things in relationships”. (Participant 10)

It would appear that these accounts and stories seek to extend the meaning of empathy to include actions or behaviours that benefit others. Meaningful empathy is not only about avoidance of doing bad because human beings believe it is inimical and anti-social behaviour, but also about understanding that it negatively impacts on lives of other people. It was understood that, for one to arrive at this conclusion and understand this connection, one has to have a deep sense of remorse, shame, embarrassment and guilt. However, this requires more.

The core variable of active positive expressions of empathy was the genuine willingness to respond in a positive manner to the suffering of other persons. Explicit in the foregoing quotations is the understanding that efforts to alleviate the suffering of other persons should go hand-in-hand with understanding, empathetic actions and compassionate and kind behaviours. In this regard, a number of participants noted that compassion should be

predicated on partners having a personality that, despite the other persons' actions, one does not need to be violent or abusive and that such concepts as one deserving abuse should not be entertained. It should also be predicated on genuine love, care, tolerance, kindness and acceptance of partners as equals who deserve humane treatment.

In elaborating this, some participants commented as below.

"I do not have to be physically or emotionally abusive to my partner even if she has done something that irritates me (Participant 6).

"No one deserves to be hit by anyone. Hitting another person is not kindness" (Participant 10)

"I can do something positive to my partner without expecting anything back. I do not have to force myself on her...you know, force her to have sex with me when she does not feel like it. It is important to care for others, without expecting anything back in return. That is genuine love, that is caring" (Participant 9).

"It is about accepting and allowing other people to be at their worst without you reacting to that" (Participant 7).

Participants also spoke about the engendered nature of *active positive expressions of empathy* in relational environments, such as the family or family units or intimate partner relationships, which they stated were basic contexts and contents of compassionate encounters. Changing into prosocial behaviours, therefore, demands that perpetrators of violent and abusive behaviours and actions should not only simply acknowledge and understand the suffering and needs of victims but also, and importantly, vicariously experience the suffering of their victims and attempt to relieve the victim of the suffering. The category of relational environment comprised two interrelated themes. Firstly, awareness of the victims and how they perceived or perceived as partners. Secondly, how the men may actively engage in performing caring acts towards their partners or victims. In appreciating this, a number of participants made the following comments and observations.

One respondent said:

"I think that their partners should be able to know and feel other people's compassion. People can know when one is being kind and they do not have to see anything. The programme should teach that." (Participant 10)

Another said:

"Others can tell by the way they talk to partners that they are kind", (Participant 5).

Participants also about the need for the men to think about how they could utilise the skills they learnt from the programme. This emerged as a discrete category and an all-encompassing principle of care which reinforced the three core categories of compassionate caregiving, which included looking for understanding of the victims, positive communication and attending to the needs of others.

According to participants, enactment, and utilisation of learnt skills should include knowing what another person is going through, prioritizing the needs of the other persons, and wishing the best for the other persons, including intimate partners.

In elaborating this point, some participants made the following comments:

“Caring for others involves being aware of what others feel and finding ways to alleviate their suffering” (Participant 8).

“Think back on what others may be going through and see what you can do to help them” (Participant 9).

“Caring towards others is about meeting other people’s needs and not just insisting on your needs” (Participant 2)

“It is about meaning well with the others, not just you. You feel that another person should be happy as well. I think the programme should do that in the future” (Participant 10).

The other distinct theme that the participants mentioned for future programmes was the need to understand what other people feel, need and how they should be treated.

These quotes below show demonstrate the participants views regarding this.

“Men should be encouraged to reflect on I would like to be treated as a human being with needs and feelings as well” (Participant 8).

“They have to help the men to understand other people’s needs, to be listened to, their voices to be heard” (Participant 10).

The thematic category of communication was considered in the initial analysis but came up again within the context of suggested future interventions. Within the context of *active positive expressions of empathy*, participants spoke specifically about how men should be encouraged to not only communicate with their partners but also the manner in which they relate to them in a in non-verbal manner.

Three participants elaborated this point as below.

“People need to be reminded that others can hear it in a voice and see it in the tone of voice if someone is being kind. It can show if someone cares.”

(Participant 8)

“Your body can tell many things. How they make eye contact. The eyes can tell when one is angry, genuine, or happy”. (Participant 9)

“To be caring or compassionate is feeling with, and for you and act like that”.

(Participant 10)

“It is also by the way that one touches another person...and how they listening to another person (Participant 8).

“Being there in person and in mind and not thinking of other things”

(Participant 8).

The participants also spoke specifically extensively about the importance of men being taught to perform acts that meet the needs of other persons. For example, the quotes below show the importance of this.

“The trainer might have dismissed acts of kindness such as making someone a cup of tea” (Participant 8).

“You cannot numb someone with the bald truth such as putting on weight. You can find different ways to transmit the same message”. (Participant 9).

“Being compassionate is actions (Participant 10)

The other unique category that was discussed was the need for men to ascertain and report how their partners felt about their behaviours following the training. They were also asked to report how they felt and related to their partners and close family members. Below are submissions by two participants which emphasise the importance of post-training tracking on behavioural change.

“It would be better if the men related how their changed behaviours affected their spouses within the group and diaries. They mainly reported how they had changed, but no mention of how this affected their families. I think this will be helpful” (Participant 8).

“We could hear from their partners. Like if someone made their partner a cup of tea. How did that make the partners feel? Maybe they can share those in the group”. (Participant 10).

Discharge from the Men's Programme

Among the key elements that the study sought to explore was discharge mechanism from the perpetrators programme. At least fourteen (14) participants attended more than the scheduled 36 sessions. It was impossible to corroborate the reasons for some men attending more sessions than scheduled due to the fact that trainers of the programme (who run the programme and not one that took part in this study) were not included in the research, although unsuccessful attempts were made to speak to the trainers.

Participants, however, stated that those that attended more sessions than others did so because of the perceived benefits from attending more sessions than planned. The following quotes speak to how some participants felt about the programme.

"It felt like group therapy. To be in touch with myself as to why I was feeling as angry as I did. This was like the first time I had grieved properly and connected my feelings to why my relationship with my missus did not last".
(Participant 1)

"I really wanted to learn as much from the programme as possible and also really wanted to have contact with my children". (Participant 4)

"It was good, and I wanted to learn more" (Participant 2)

However, when pressed on why they attended more sessions than planned, two participants said, that this was because the trainer thought that they had not yet demonstrated sufficient change in their behaviours, attitudes, and actions. They specifically said the following:

“The trainer said that I was not ready to be discharged because of what I said in the group”. (Participant 5).

Another said:

“The trainer said that I should stay on the programme because I did not accept that it was my fault that there had been arguments with my wife”. (Participant 9)

One participant, however, attributed his extended stay on the programme to the nature of the environment in which he was raised. He justified his previous behaviour and (presumably resistance to take accountability) by saying:

“Maybe yeah. I was brought up in Africa where we believed that women have to live by their husbands’ rules, and I challenged that a bit in the sessions (in response to the question; “does that mean you need that much time on the programme to get to that stage”). (Participant 4)

It also happened that some trainers might have felt that some of the participants were ready to be discharged from the programme before completing the scheduled 36 sessions. A number of participants attested to this as follows:

“The trainer said I was ready to be discharged. So, I was discharged”.

(Participant 4)

“The trainer said it was not necessary for me to continue the programme, so told me I was good to go”. *(Participant 8)*

However, these accounts should be interpreted cautiously on account of the fact that there was no corroborating evidence to this finding in this study. It nonetheless is a possibility that the accounts shared were accurate.

Regarding the timing of discharge, one trainer from a completely separate perpetrators programme (a mixture of court-mandated and referrals from other professionals) stated that the decision to discharge the men from the programme was based on completing the 36 sessions regardless of what the men had learnt from the programme. Although there exists follow up support, when the men came to the end of the programme, they were discharged, regardless of whether or not they had demonstrated to have taken accountability or responsibility for their behaviours. They might be

recommended to access additional support from their general practitioner and in some cases probation services.

Review of case records, unfortunately, suggests that some level of emotional and psychological abuse had, in some cases, continued even after training. This was confirmed by some participants who gave the following stories.

“I have said some bad things that upset my wife. On one occasion she called the Police, but they could not arrest me because I had only said some not very nice things” (Participant 7)

“It was not like I was hitting her. But I said things that upset her. I commented on her weight as a way to get to her”. (Participant 6)

“She knows that I could send her back home if I wanted.” (Participant 9)

It is evident that while physical violence may cease, other forms of domestic abuse and violence may persist, and this has significant implications regarding desistance and persistence.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has narrated the key findings of the study. It has systematically revealed men’s experience with the perpetrators' programme, from their

perspective. Responses have been organised around the key themes of capability, opportunity, and motivation. These themes include learning, opportunity to belong to a group where perpetrators are taught to learn positive behaviours around IPV and motivation to engage in positive behaviours around intimate partner abuse. It is evident that some of the findings run through all three themes. This is the case because of the need to highlight how those findings fitted into the organising (COM-B) framework.

Among motivations for learning new skills, attitudes and beliefs about their behaviour were fear, shame, and guilt, including fear of being labelled as violent and abusive. Equally important was the fear of being abandoned by family members and losing contact with their children. The men described in graphic detail the distress which arise from these discomforts. The training in some ways evoked participants' feelings of embarrassment, shame, and remorse in the sense that it created the environment for self-introspection. Participants were, however, happy that, ultimately, they understood how the negative impact their behaviours had on their partners and themselves.

The men's positive assessment is an indication of the extent to which the programme managed to achieve its objective. The following chapter builds-upon these conclusions by presenting the interpretive and theoretical propositions.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS

Chapter Introduction

The study was designed to use the COM-B model to explore the men's experiences of the perpetrators' programme, particularly, focusing on dynamics, processes, and trajectory of change in intimate partner violence from their subjective viewpoints. Furthermore, the purpose was to explore the knowledge gained from the interventions and their application, particularly in relation to the process of desistance from intimate partner violence and abuse. In tandem with these overarching objectives, I have presented five (5) core findings, namely; (a) perpetrators of IPV are extremely difficult to work with, as is evident by the high attrition levels in interventions themselves and also in follow up studies such as mine, (b) the stories of the men highlighting key points in their pathways towards change, starting with the incidents, the emergence and significance of external factors such as community forces such as the Police, child protection services, family and friends and several other actors who direct the men towards interventions, with men who start to become aware of their abusive behaviours and learning different ways of behaviour, taking responsibility for their behaviours, and then motivated to change, (c) motivation to change such as personal resolution, threats of negative consequences of their behaviours - internal factors, eventual perception of the positive benefits of their changed

behaviours to themselves and others (d) experiencing set-backs and overcoming these to fully benefit from the intervention and the concept of masculinity challenged in the group settings, and (e) in order for behavioral change to be lasting and meaningful, there is a need for intervention that is outward-looking in addition to inward. The findings recognise the role of *active positive expressions of empathy*, which includes compassion and kindness.

Given this background, this section seeks to discuss and analyse the findings of the study within a theoretical framework. Firstly, I focus on how participants came into contact with the perpetrators programme. Secondly, I review and discuss the key questions that the study sought to answer. And lastly, map these on to the COM-B framework and discuss the applicability of the model to understanding change in intimate partner violence. But before then, perhaps it is best to comment on the general findings first.

Demographics of the population and sample

The test statistics show that age and ethnicity variables were not associated with the number of sessions attended. In fact, the statistics show that age and ethnicity of the men were not determinants of engagement with the programmes, as the figures were similar for both the population and sample (roughly about 31-33% for both) and representative of the local area based on

census statistics. However, nearly all of the men had either children of their own or were in relationships where they were stepparents (Stanley et al 2011). Nevertheless, this study does not thoroughly explore this finding because it was not factored into the original research design.

Generally speaking, it would appear that the homogeneity of participants was, as Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) also noted, not a strong predictor of the men's experience of the perpetrators' programme in this study. It appears that the men's accounts of their experiences, including learning skills, communication, motivations, group therapy were not a function of their ethnicity or age but, rather, functions of other factors. During the research, the men, regardless of age and ethnicity, reported that they had learnt skills (cognitive capacity) by virtue of being on a programme (opportunity) which had set them on the path of the change process.

Question 1: How do perpetrators describe their experiences of engaging with the perpetrators programme?

Referrals to and attrition from the Perpetrators Programme

One of the key findings of the study is that quite a considerable proportion of the men did not successfully complete the training programme, meaning they did not attend all 36 weeks of sessions. Existing evidence indicates a significant occurrence of attrition in behaviour modification initiatives, with

up to 50% of participants failing to complete the programmes (Donovan et al, 2010). The results of my investigation provide evidence that supports this idea. In my experience, I have observed that the majority of the men who engaged with the perpetrators' programme in this London Borough did not fully adhere to the recommended support interventions. Consequently, they withdrew from the programme before completing the prescribed 36 weeks of interventions.

In the London Borough, for example, out of the 201 referrals made to the perpetrators' programme during the 14-year duration, only 47% attended at least one session. Out of these, only thirty-nine (39) completed at least half the total number of sessions with only 14 individuals having completed all the 36 sessions. Research has focused on three key factors that can predict the likelihood of repeated incidents of intimate partner violence (recidivism), as well as the likelihood of attrition from interventions and programmes (Daly and Pelowski, 2000; Jewell and Wormith, 2010). The three variables are demographic variables (Golu 2013; Capaldi et al. 2012), violence related factors (Bowen and Gilchrist, 2006; Carney et al. 2007), and intrapersonal characteristics (Capaldi et al. 2012; Daly and Pelowski, 2000). Suffice to say that high attrition in perpetrators programmes remains a significant intervention dilemma and has potentially significant implications for the fight against intimate partner violence and abuse. Furthermore, the high attrition rates provide evidence supporting the claim made by McMurrin and

Theodosi (2007) that individuals who commence but drop out of rehabilitation programmes are more likely to engage in further perpetration of intimate partner violence.

There are multiple dimensions of, and plausible explanations for, high attrition rates. Four recurring themes emerged from the findings about engagement with the perpetrator's programme, which have been corroborated by other studies and research. The first observation is that men who had a strong aversion or disgust towards the idea of being involved in the criminal justice system were more inclined to terminate their current relationships and pursue new ones. However, they were still likely to continue engaging in abusive behaviours or attitudes. Alternatively, they may choose to engage in perpetrators' programmes and be motivated to change their behaviours in order to avoid the criminal justice systems.

The second finding indicates that men who had a strong emotional attachment to and investment in their children/partners were more inclined to participate in the interventions and successfully complete the programme. Conversely those with minimal emotional investments in these relationships were less likely to engage, particularly if they did not prioritise the desire to not permanently terminate the relationships and maintain some level of contact with their children. It is most likely that this later group would not be motivated to complete the programme.

Thirdly, the men who acknowledged and took partial or entire responsibility for their abusive behaviours, despite experiencing 'knock backs' such as shame and embarrassment, were more inclined to successfully complete the programmes and express the beneficial impact of the same on themselves and their victims. Incidentally, the converse could also be true. These findings not only underscore the importance of mechanisms and processes for directing the perpetrators to support services but also the importance of personal resolve to engage in restitutive interventions. It also highlighted the different ways of understanding taking responsibility and accountability which may be different for professionals as measured against the perpetrators. For some, taking responsibility and accountability may be sufficiently demonstrated by accessing the support while others may view this differently. Some of the perpetrators may hold the view that their participation on the programme was sufficient to account for accountability and responsibility, while the expectations from professionals might be different. This may also account for high level of frustration and hence attrition from the programme. However, this needs further exploration.

Lastly, the study unambiguously demonstrated that it requires personal resolve to overcome feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt in order to demonstrate commitment to participating in any restitutive programme like this one. Campbell et al. (2010) assert that feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt related to violent and abusive behaviour can serve as both a

motivator for accessing and a hindrance to accessing interventions. When certain individuals experience shame for being publicly recognised as perpetrators of violent and abusive behaviours, they may feel obligated to seek intervention in order to demonstrate their strong aversion towards such behaviours. The factor was found in both individuals who completed the programme and those who did not complete it. The implication of this finding is that motivational strategies, as concluded by Lee et al. (2014) and Miller and Rollnick (2002), can be helpful in achieving self-determined goals. This is particularly effective when participants recognise the benefits of change and are committed to actively participating in the process of change. Nevertheless, it can be contended that the effectiveness of motivational interviewing may be enhanced when accompanied by individual determination to engage in and change behaviours. Through the use of motivational interviewing, individuals may be able to overcome feelings of shame and humiliation to seek intervention.

The unwillingness of the men to complete the treatment can pose momentous and obvious concerns, including increased risk for recidivism (McMurrin and Theodosi, 2007). Research shows that intervention drop-outs were at considerably high a risk of re-offending and attrition from all programmes, and especially forecasted recidivism (Gondolf, 2007; Babcock and Steiner, 1999; Murphy et al. 1998). It has also been established from other research that men who fail to attend all the treatment sessions are at an increased risk of

engaging in violent and abusive relationships, whether in their current relationship or in future ones.

It is paradoxical that the most likely beneficiaries of the programme participants tend to be the least to fully utilise and embrace it. I agree with the proposition that the programme attrition can be achieved, and service users retained by way of ensuring awareness of, and attention to, key attrition predictive factors, including adherence to considerations that encourage responsiveness. Key predictors include employment, age, income, education, marital status, race, referral source, previous domestic violence offenses, criminal history, and alcohol and drug use (Jewell and Wormith, 2010). Bearing this in mind, it seems that motivational interviewing is one of the most influential factors in predicting engagement with interventions. This is significant because the factors that forecast the likelihood of individuals dropping out of interventions related to intimate partner violence (IPV) seem to be comparable, if not identical, to those that forecast the likelihood of individuals recidivating.

What is unclear from the findings is why some men attended only some of the sessions. One can only surmise, on one hand, that some stopped possibly because they were discharged from the service and others dropped out of their own volition based on an entire range of reasons. This challenge was all the more intractable due to the lack of corroborating evidence from the

programme trainers/facilitators. That said, it is entirely possible that those that attended fewer sessions than the designated fully benefitted and were set on the trajectory towards change.

The role of Motivational Interviewing

Research findings from this study confirmed the underlying perception that the Police, criminal justice officers, social workers, and other professionals, as well as family and friends, were instrumental in encouraging the men to establish contact with the perpetrators' programmes. What this finding implies is the requisite role that professionals, such as the Police, social workers, and the like, should play in positively psyching perpetrators of partner violence and abuse for their eventual participation in restitutive programmes such as the perpetrators' programmes. Adequate psyching via, for example, motivational interviewing and inspirational speeches, helps perpetrators in gaining an understanding and appreciation of themselves and in developing empathy for victims and survivors of their violence and abuse. It also positively predisposes them to challenging their behaviours. What is apparent from the study findings is the limited preparatory work completed by professionals with the men to prepare them for the programme. This was evident in statements to the effect that they did not really know much about what the programme was all about. Charmaz (2006) has argued that if the experiences of the participants in an intervention overlook how they came

into contact with the interventions, it would misrepresent data. What this implies therefore is the need to understand the experiences of working with perpetrators and paying attention to adequate preparatory work to enable them to engage in interventions. Sadly, this seems inconsistent in practice. These may be some reasons for perpetrators half-heartedly or not engaging fully in the programme.

Self-referrers who required minimal encouragement (highly motivated) were also most likely to complete the programme based on what appears to be their resolve and motivation to stop and desist from engaging in abusive behaviours in the future. It was also likely that self-referrers were driven by the ardent desire to evoke their intrinsic need to change. However, the motivation to engage in interventions seems to fluctuate over time and circumstances and characteristics of the perpetrators involved. This connection is also linked to stages of change which the transtheoretical framework so eloquently proposes.

Although Stewart et al. (2014), Crane and Eckhardt (2013), Levesque et al. (2012), Miller and Rollnick (2002), Musser et al. (2009) argue that it is completely impossible to make a causal relationship between motivational interviewing and the improvement in perpetrators' programme completion, Taft et al. (2003) contends that what seems to be most important in the stages of change is the trajectory of perpetrators' use of violence in intimate partner

relationships and what preparatory work done to motivate them for the same. As such, Taft et al. (2003) conclude that although there are many mitigating factors, motivational interviewing is significantly correlated with improved programme participation and reduced recidivism. Additional research in the field of healthcare (Lawrence et al. 2017) have also supported the proposition that motivational interviewing is among the best gateways to behavioural change in hard-to-reach populations, such as those mental health difficulties.

The study conducted by Brownlee and Chlebovec (2004) found that heterogeneity among group members and the level of treatment intensity impacted attrition rates. The findings strongly supported the idea that adapting treatment intensity based on the characteristics of specific offenders is beneficial. This conclusion supports the belief that when professionals who interact with perpetrators, such as those in the child protection system or trainers in perpetrator programmes, use motivational methods for interviews, it enhances the perpetrators' motivation to change.

Soleymani et al. (2018) conducted a study on motivational interviewing for enhancing engagement in IPV. The findings established that service user engagement is an important component in the success of IPV treatment outcomes. They argued that service users who fully engaged were likelier to report a relatively greater degree of satisfaction with interventions than those who did not. Equally important is the fact that enhanced engagement is

strongly and positively correlated to regular attendance, homework compliance, and treatment outcomes such as recidivism. Musser et al. (2009), Murphy and Maiuro (2008), Babcock, et al. (2016), Santirso et al. (2020) also contributed to the debate by asserting that motivational interviewing helps men in the process of identifying the need for a desired outcome.

In my experience of engaging perpetrators of IPV, I have come to realise that, by prompting them to examine their values, aspirations, and objectives for their relationships and their children, men are able to comprehend how violence contradicts their ideals and principles. This self-reflection not only transforms their personal outlook but also influences their conduct in a morally upright manner. For example, in one case, I simply asked the man, in 4- or 5-years' time when your daughter is about 20 and she comes home and says to you, 'my partner has hit me, how would you feel?'. The man immediately broke down in tears. After he recomposed himself, I asked him why this was the case and he simply said, 'I hear you and that is exactly, how my partner's family would feel. Really upsetting. I would not want my daughter to go through things like this. Please help me so I can get better'.

This is just one of many examples which illustrate that this approach can be foster a more collaborative and respectful, rather than approaches that 'force' the men to change their behaviours through shame as some interventions can appear to. This tact requires the exploration and strengthening of men's own

values and motivations for change and the need to help them to notice the contradictions between what they would like to be and how violence and abuse run counter to this. Equally important is the need to help perpetrators to develop and sustain empathic capacity and altruistic feelings among perpetrators of intimate partner violence and abuse. Motivation work is also an essential element for the preparation and management of successful perpetrator referrals to perpetrators' and other restitutive programmes.

Question 2: What are the characteristics of the intervention (programme content) that are associated with changing attitudes towards violence?

According to accounts by the men who participated in the programme in the London Borough, the key themes of what the participants could recount of what they learnt from the programme can be understood within the contexts of capacity, opportunity, and motivation (COM-B model). The men reported that the training fundamentally caused a shift in their thinking, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours. According to them, the change was perceived to be at cognitive, emotive, and behavioural levels which is consistent with the COM-B model.

Among the element of capability were the acquisition of new skills (knowledge, awareness) about intimate partner violence and abuse and their many components and variants. Incidentally, I found that participants

entered and engaged with the interventions with a narrow understanding of domestic violence and abuse, and often in denial of responsibility and culpability for the same. Thus, engagement with the programme helped them to gain insights into different ways that they had been abusive actions they had inflicted on their intimate partners. They passionately, post interventions, spoke in detail about their increased and widened knowledge about domestic abuse and abuse and their debilitating and deleterious impacts on others. In the end, this immensely motivated and incentivised them to take responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviours. This knowledge, in turn, further motivated them change. Participants were also unequivocal about how the new skills positively impacted and influenced their engagement with the process of change around IPV. The new knowledge included an expanded awareness of what constitutes violence and abuse and their impacts of abusive behaviours on others. Furthermore, the participants reported acquiring novel abilities such as utilising time outs (Wistow et al. 2017) and practicing self-awareness, including how to contain emotions when provoked or feeling angry. They also learnt the skills such as keeping diaries (accounts) of their behaviours and read out in and compared in group sessions. The participants reported that they were, further, encouraged to contrast their previous behaviours with the way they behaved during the time they remained on the programme and beyond.

Most of the participants spoke about the benefits of timeouts, particularly emphasising the effectiveness of counting down in intervals of three from a starting point of thirty. According to them, the practice of time out allowed them to introspect on their actions and develop the ability to contemplate and assess situations before reacting aggressively. Several studies suggest that this change in behaviour provides an opportunity for individuals to develop conscientiousness, which in turn enhances their ability to resolve conflicts and communicate effectively in unfamiliar situations (Robertson and Murachver, 2009; Gordis et al. 2005; Babcock et al. 2004; Eckhardt et al. 2013). Additional research conducted by Brownlee and Chlebovec (2014) suggests that the development of skills plays a crucial role in enhancing the ability to address and resolve conflicts within intimate relationships.

Related to acquired skills for managing their behaviours, participants reported that they had gained an understanding (acquiring knowledge) of a range of what comprises violent and abusive behaviours. This included becoming aware of, for example, stalking as part of abusive behaviours. These act as some kind of epiphany which when accumulated can compel the men to engage in the change process. Such epiphanic realisations accumulate and begin to compel the men to engage in the change process. This typically occurs at individual level but can also be initiated by the involvement and influence of other men, the trainers, and other professionals.

As stated by some comments, the programme taught participants that violence and abuse were not acceptable ways to resolve conflicts and that neither were there any excuses for lack of self-restraint. They were also made to understand that relationships can be violent and abusive even in the absence of physical harm and injuries. This was also accomplished by helping the men understand how their attitudes, values and beliefs around relationships were formulated (McLaren, 2010). In the end, the training helped the men to understand the three related aspects: (i) causes of violence (sometimes poor social skills, childhood trauma), (ii) responsibility/blameworthiness for abusive behaviour, and (iii) there were no circumstances under which violence in intimate partner relationships were acceptable. As Morrison et al. (2018) argue, this learning process forms critical steps in perpetrators taking responsibility for their actions and hopefully on the trajectory towards change.

When combined, these three elements help men to shape their behaviours with respect to the others, and also change their values about what is important (such as the imperative to relinquish control of others), and to act in ways that are acceptable in society. Thus, the perpetrators' cognitive capacity for empathy demonstrates the intellectual capacity to understand abusive and violent behaviours and their debilitating effects on victims/survivors and themselves has been demonstrably enhanced, according to the men's accounts in the study. This is confirmed by statements such as "helped

me to understand how my behaviour was related to my experience of abuse as a child”, “stalking is a form of abuse”. These demonstrate the educational influence and beneficial effects highlights the shortcomings in their prior understanding of behaviours. Some men also made statements demonstrating affective empathy like “children being affected by their behaviours”.

According to McLean (2003) and Jhangiani and Tarry (2014, attitudes (how we feel and think) are subject to change, beliefs can change over time, while values are lasting yet important to self-image and more resistant to change. The target of successful interventions is to shift from ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault’s notion) (see Zakar et al. 2013) where women are subjected to abuse, sometimes in the form of coercive control and violent punishment, to transformative life experiences and changed values, beliefs, and attitudes around violence in men who have used violence.

The findings confirm that the cognitive and affective capacity for empathy has also been enhanced through the findings because of the opportunity to belong to a group whose purpose was to unpick values, beliefs and attitudes around domestic violence and abuse. These findings are also corroborated by Easton et al. (2018) and McGinn et al. (2020). As Giordano et al. (2002) and Farrall (2022) argue, perpetrators committed to change need to be honest, aware of and willing to acknowledge that change is not just desirable but also needed

around values, beliefs, and attitudes. In addition, there also the need for acquaintance with the necessary opportunity to change, and the perceptions which this change offers as a feasible way out, including acting upon the probability that old behaviours will cease to be seen as desirable, relevant, or important. As such, the participants spoke about benefits of belonging to a group and safe environment, which was therapeutic for them. According to Sonkin and Dutton (2003) and Hancock and Siu (2009), a safe therapeutic approach and strategies help men to clearly acknowledge and experiencing an intense sense and desire to change their behaviours. This was confirmed by some participants who stated that the therapeutic approaches and strategies helped enable them to perceive the benefits of changing behaviours.

Desistance from offending behaviours, such as domestic violence and abuse, may also be understood and linked to the dynamics of interpersonal interactions with significant individuals (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2004). Given this understanding, one could contend that the pathways to meaningful desistance includes the capacity for perpetrators to form and maintain relationships devoid of violence and abuse, as well as repair damaged relationships with their families, while having their values and beliefs, in this regard, challenged in a safe environment.

Evidently, the role of the trainers and other group members were crucial in participants either remaining on the programme or not. It was further learnt

that, in the process of denial and minimisation, some participants, sometimes, attempted to justify and rationalise their acts of violence and abuse on the bases of their religious beliefs. However, these ideas and others were effectively questioned by other individuals who participated in the project through group sessions. Trainers had to competently navigate group discussions in order to challenge deep rooted religious and other beliefs that contribute to violent and abusive behaviours. The trainers/facilitators had to do so in a manner that respected the sensitive reactions of individuals whose beliefs were being challenged, without further alienating them. This lends support and corroboration of the research conducted by Dillon et al. (2020) and Holtrop et al. (2017), which assert that establishing strong connections with facilitators/trainers and peers is crucial for facilitating change in a safe environment when one's values are questioned.

What was also noticeable from the findings is the collegial atmosphere which facilitated the men to engage in open and respectful discussions about their stories and experiences. This environment also allowed them to delve into the potential for changing attitudes and behaviours related to intimate partner violence and abuse. The importance of respectful communication was highlighted especially as it applied to what Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) refer to as resocialization. The men also spoke positively about the video scenarios especially around the impact of abuse on others. This finding was also consistent with a study by Tarzia et al. (2020) that videos are immensely

helpful in helping participants to understand the impact of abuse on others and this factor in itself is equally critical in setting the men on the pathway towards change.

A number of participants reported that the training had enabled them to comprehend how the criminal justice system intervenes in issues that they had previously seen as private affairs or had been conditioned to regard as such. Further, they were also helped to understand the link between their past experiences (such as trauma, ACEs) and how the same related to and explained their current behaviours. As Walker et al. (2015) confirm in their study, merely recognizing past abusive behaviour could sometimes be, on their own, a strong motivating factor to becoming more actively engaged in the interventions.

In addition, participants stated that their new knowledge and increased awareness of domestic violence and abuse and their implications significantly contributed to their capacity to make meaningful life choices. They also added the value of learning from other people whose socially acceptable behaviours they wanted to emulate. These findings lend to support to the literature around the negative consequences (motives) and how these impact on decisions to change behaviours, attitudes, and actions around IPV.

Granted, the impact of the group processes on the men was noticeably different for some completers and some non-completers. Some of the completers passionately spoke about the benefits and drawbacks of being part of the group. Interestingly, they used slightly different terminologies such as the programme being 'direct' or confrontational. Conversely, the majority of non-completers reported that they felt anxious and apprehensive about discussing their behaviours in the group with some characterising the style of the programme as being confrontational. They claimed that the confrontational nature of the programme was among the factors for dropping out of it. These findings shows that men's individual experiences of the interventions could be perceived as confrontational or respectful depending on how the men themselves view it and it is related to their perceptions and ideations about the role of the state in definition of masculine identity and intimate relationships. Feelings of anxiety and apprehension about being in the group were shared by some completers too. However, they reported that once some had overcome the draw backs, they were motivated to remain on the programme. The primary factor for this interpretation of the programme approach and whether or not to drop out appears to be personal resolve by the perpetrators themselves. What is unclear, though, was what induced them in to overcoming their anxieties, although some spoke about a personal resolve to engage in the programme regardless. On the other hand, others did not overcome their fears and anxiety, and this led them to dropping out.

Some participants described the style of the programme as a combination of support and confrontation. Some of the men who left the programme early attributed their decision to drop out due to its confrontational nature. However, the men who remained on the programme were cognizant of the confrontational nature of the programme. Nevertheless, they recognised that this environment facilitated the cultivation of trust and the ability to handle the appropriately needed confrontational style, especially due to the accessibility of supportive resources. Furthermore, it facilitated their firm dedication to cease their violent and abusive behaviours. These findings align with earlier studies that demonstrates how the programme's approach affects attrition and recidivism rates (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006). This highlights the importance of building trusting relationships in which individuals can feel at ease to disclose their experiences and be supported towards change.

What cannot be underestimated is the role of the trainers. Several studies have shown that role of the trainers and any professional have an influence on participants. According to Gerdes and Segal (2011) and Sue et al. (2009), therapeutic alliances that involve empathetic professionals tend to result in better outcomes for men. The perception of lack of empathy from trainers can also a factor in decisions to remain on or drop out from the programme. For example, two participants from the study mentioned that their experiences were dismissed when they made their partners a cup of tea, which highlights

the importance of professionals validating men's experiences rather than solely focusing on taking responsibility as the main goal of any intervention with service users. In their views, this demonstrated a lack of empathy and invariably some of the reasons some men might drop out.

According to Walker et al. (2015), the balance or tension between empathy and accountability is a powerful factor in enhancing openness and willingness to take responsibility for abusive behaviours. It, simultaneously, facilitates the sense of commonality while, at the same time, diminishing a sense of isolation. This can influence the decision to remain on or drop out of the programme.

In addition, participants intimated that the mere act of publicly admitting the existence of challenges in their behaviours and demonstrating a desire to change the same were some motivating factors which caused them to embark on process of change. They, further, said that listening to their consciences, diaries and related them to others, caused them to critique their behaviours with a view to changing them. My sense of this is that it is entirely plausible that the concept of taking responsibility may be different between professionals and service users and also has explanations that may vary from culture to culture. However, this needs further exploration.

The third component of the COM-B model is motivation. Most completers reported that their awareness and reminders of how their behaviours impacted on them, and others acted as motivations for change. They described their sense of guilt, shame, fear of breakdown of intimate relationships, fear of the criminal justice system, potential restrictions on contact with their children as among the motives for initiating to engage in the change processes.

These feelings are consistent with research findings which have demonstrated that negative consequences of behaviours are a motivating factor in changing violent and abusive behaviours. Walker et al. (2015), Murphy et al. (1998), Haggård et al. (2001) and Maruna (2001), for instance, all argue that, among catalysts for change in domestic violence and abuse include the awareness and realisation of their negative consequences and also how the same emotionally impacts themselves before, during and after the violent incident. Implicit in this is how violent and abusive behaviours have a negative impact on perpetrators themselves. Supporting this claim, Walker et al. (2015) find that the transitions towards change can sometimes involve persisters and desisters of domestic abuse experiencing negative consequences of their actions (domestic abuse) such as losing families, being arrested as well as the emotional responses (guilt, shame, fear, and embarrassment). When these triggers accumulate, they can set perpetrators on the path of reform and change their behaviours. Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) share the view

that fear of marital/relationship dissolution including restrictions on contact with partners and children can act as a trigger for a shift towards non-abusive behaviours among perpetrators.

The other key theme which emerged from the findings was that of accountability and ownership of responsibility for violent and abusive behaviours. Incidentally, this theme consistently ran through the men's accounts, regardless of whether or not they completed the programme. The men reported that, right from the outset, it was expected of them to assume full responsibility and accountability for abusive behaviours, actions, beliefs, and attitudes within intimate relationships. A further element that they learnt was that, when support and confrontation are carefully harmonised and balanced, this can lead to positive and long-lasting behavioural changes. Incidentally, some of the men, especially non-completers usually perceived the intervention to be confrontational and as such not taking responsibility for their behaviours.

Most of the men reported to have significantly increased their scope and depth of understanding of their abusive behaviours towards their partners. Consequently, they took responsibility for their past behaviours and motivated themselves or were motivated to develop and implement healthier strategies for managing their relationships. This demonstrates that the

training they had received was effective in increasing their capacity for accountability.

The participants, who interestingly consisted of only the three individuals who completed the programme, also discussed acts of love that they said could be incorporated into future perpetrators' programmes. This resonates with the arguments made by Aksan and Kochanska (2005), Goodrum et al (2001), and Hamberger et al. (1990), which posit that experiencing guilt might serve as motivators for individuals to be concerned about others. This finding is interesting and intriguing as it feeds into the ongoing debate over attrition and the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of interventions such as perpetrator programmes.

Question 3: What motivate and trigger change in relation to intimate partner violence? Do factors triggering change remain constant over short (temporary) or long (sustained) term change?

It is evident from findings that the majority of participants were aware of and spoke about the triggers/turning points for change in violent and abusive behaviours at different stages. Triggers and turning points often involved an arrest or the involvement of the police, as well as contact with child protection services. These events lead to an awareness of the harmful behaviours and beliefs and their impact on both the victims and the individuals involved. The triggers encompassed the partner's choice to either terminate the

relationship or seek support from law enforcement authorities such as the Police. In addition, they also emphasised the importance of men being aware of whether a behaviour constituted violence or abuse, as well as the advantages of practicing non-abusive behaviours. The predominant question revolved around whether acquiring new abilities solely through engaging in the programme was sufficient and whether men possessed the appropriate motivations for enrolling in domestic violence intervention programmes.

In the interviews, some participants highlighted and confirmed the negative impact of their abusive behaviours on their children and spouses (including wives and partners), which served as a turning point. This could have been prompted by their partner seeking support or challenging them about their behaviour, their own self-realisation, others requesting help from friends and experts, or this issue being addressed during interventions and other interactions with people. They asserted that this awareness significantly influenced their decisions to modify their behaviours. Some of the participants repeatedly mentioned that the fear of getting entangled with the criminal justice system and the potential end of their intimate partner relationships served as regular reminders for them to change their behaviours. Many individuals expressed that the state's interference in what they previously considered to be their personal affairs served as a significant awakening. This conclusion is substantiated by a study conducted by Walker et al. (2015).

The majority of programme completers expressed that they were reminded and prompted to reflect on these issues and events during the training, which facilitated a change in fundamental value systems, attitudes, and beliefs regarding women as they actively participated in discussions about their own values. Men began to recognise the necessity of changing their ideas and attitudes towards women in order to cultivate a sense of personal growth and become exemplary individuals, both as partners, parents, and role models for their children. Hence, it seems that there are certain aspects of pro-social motives that drive the change of behaviours.

Additional noteworthy themes that emerged from the research about triggers for change included feelings of embarrassment (including shame and guilt), personal attitudes about actions, and the potential consequences for both the perpetrators themselves and others, including the dread of being arrested by the Police. This categorization is consistent with the findings of Walker et al. (2015), whose research concluded that the negative consequences of violence and negative emotional responses are among the catalysts for change in the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

According to one participant's account, individuals became aware that negative consequences resulting from their behaviours, such as the possibility of termination of relationships, removal of their children from their care, and the fear of criminal prosecution, were some of the powerful triggers that

'forced' and acted as strong incentives that compelled them to change their behaviour. These events were intimately connected to the initial thread of the pathways from the events leading up to the engagement with the men's programme and continue to have an impact up to the present.

The findings are consistent with findings by Laub and Sampson (2001) who concluded that entering relationships such marriage, collapse of peer groups, and community-level changes can also create new situations that can induce desistance from violent behaviours. Similarly, Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) also argued that the sheer fear of the consequence of temporary or permanent collapse of relationships (including restrictions on contact with children) could also facilitate a shift towards non-abusive behaviours. As indicated elsewhere in this report, men who are least likely to be bothered by the negative ramifications of their violent behaviours (such as termination of relationships and restrictions on contact with family members), or those who fail to take accountability for their behaviours, are unlikely to demonstrate commitment to interventions nor would they be highly motivated to change their behaviours.

The other significant element that emerged from the study was that negative consequences such as threat of custodial sentences and restrictions on contact with families would only be meaningful triggers and catalysts for change if combined with other factors such as remorse, shame, empathy, and personal

resolve. The presence or absence of a combination of these factors has two main implications: firstly, it determines whether or not the men engage with and complete the interventions, and secondly, it offers us valuable insight into why attrition rates in behaviour change programmes persist at high levels.

Out of the research participants, three men who completed the programme claimed to have been free of violence in their subsequent relationships. However, the remaining three men, which accounts for slightly under 30% of the participants, continued to engage in abusive behaviours to varying degrees. Incidentally, this finding is consistent with the study conducted by Whitaker et al. (2010), which revealed that intimate partner violence (IPV) seldom occurs in consecutive relationships. In fact, up to 70% of men have successfully maintained a relationship free from violence with new partners. There are two potential caveats to consider. Firstly, it may be difficult to accurately determine the degree of persistence and desistance without official records and follow-up. Secondly, without follow-up accounts, it remains uncertain how desistance and persistence are defined for different individuals. Additional investigation is necessary to address these gaps.

It is worth noting that the apparent threat of the dissolution of relationships and losing children to the child protection system were genuine triggers and motivations for engaging with the service. This highlighted the realisation by the men that they needed to change their abusive behaviours in order to

minimise the risks of either losing contact with their children, permanently ending relationships or further arrests. Contrary to this finding, both case records and my personal experience present an opposing argument.

Despite not fully acknowledging his abusive behaviours, one participant shared their experience of encountering the criminal court system for the first time due to their behaviour against their partner. He stated that attendance on the men's programme has led him to decide against continuing his use of violence and abuse, since he fears it may result in prosecution and imprisonment. These factors were present during the interventions and have continued to serve as constant reminders in the long-term.

The findings also highlight the different ways in which shame was either displaced or acknowledged and dealt with by the men. According to Morrison et al. (2018) individuals who either continued or stopped engaging in violent behaviours can attribute their actions to others (such as trainers, victims, or childcare professionals) or take responsibility for their actions and experience remorse and thus ceased abusive behaviours.

These findings highlight the challenges associated with sustained and genuine, and motivation for, change in behaviours appears to be problematic. The conclusion is that, in the initial stage the dread of negative consequences might be sufficient motivation for perpetrators to change their behaviours.

However, in the long-term, it is imperative that motivation is equally rooted in intrinsic values and hopes. This motivation should encompass empathy, kindness and compassion as these qualities that are more likely to have long-lasting effect on changing abusive behaviours. Therefore, it can be deduced from this that the existing intervention framework is successful in enhancing the cognitive ability of perpetrators to take responsibility and be accountable for abusive relationships. The consistency of this phenomenon over time requires additional investigation.

While acknowledging that the men demonstrated the capacity to express empathy, it is concerning to note the men's limited ability to effectively link interventions to the need alleviate the suffering and distress of victims. This limitation may be attributed to a lack of emphasis on intervention strategies within the treatment, as well as the constraints imposed by the study and interview guide. Hence, it is challenging to definitively distinguish and ascertain the reasons why a small number of participants failed to establish a correlation between seeking support and displaying empathy towards others, not to mention their lack of understanding regarding the significance of this attribute in fostering human relationships and interconnectedness.

Nonetheless, the training proved instrumental and helpful in ensuring that attendees came to grips with understanding the impact of their behaviours on themselves and others and also in constantly reminding them of the negative

consequences which would befall them in the event that they persisted in their violent and abusive behaviours.

Therefore, the foregoing findings suggest that the triggers and turning points for change are both internal (such as personal resolve, embarrassment, guilt, inward-oriented empathy) and external (threat of criminal sanctions, relationships breaking down, and other oriented empathy). It is possible that either or both internal and external factors can be triggers for change.

Application of Learning to Managing Relationships

The concept of desistance was partially discussed around discharge from the programme used as a proxy for successful interventions and strategies the men employed to demonstrate how beneficial the intervention was to them and their families. The process of discharge from the perpetrators programmes continues to occupy researchers. In this study, the findings reveal some interesting discussion points. It is notable three (3) men who took part in the study attended more than the thirty-six (36) designated. When asked about the reasons for attending more than the required number of sessions, some attributed this to the sense of belonging and therapeutic nature of the interventions that they found helpful. This is also contrasted by the two (2) who did not complete the required sessions who stated that they dropped out because of the confrontational nature of the intervention. These

findings seem to validate the arguments by Hearn (1998) and Dobash et al. (2000) that men are often ambivalent about their engagement in interventions seeking to address violent and abusive behaviours. They may build credibility in certain instances when they perceive themselves as victims or survivors rather than perpetrators. Occasionally, they may provide descriptive narrative reports that may or may not be accurate. Additionally, they may offer a reconstruction of violence, reproducing silences, repudiating, excusing their behaviours. Infrequently do these individuals admit to their violent and abusive behaviours. What some men perceived as confrontational can be attributed to their perception of an oppressive authoritarian system that undermines their masculine identity and limits their abilities. However, it should be noted that interventions and trainers may exhibit respect and adopt an approach that encourages collaboration. In certain instances, individuals may externalise their abusive behaviours and attribute them to factors beyond their control, such as substance abuse, financial difficulties or unemployment.

In trying to understand men's experience of using skills learned from the interventions, it was revealing to note that some men self-discharged while others attended more than the scheduled number of sessions. This could be due to the fact that some men had attended fewer than the 36 designated number of sessions and taken full responsibility for their actions and therefore eligible to be discharged or dropped out themselves. On the other hand, those that attended more than the designated thirty-six (36) sessions did in

fact find the interventions therapeutic. Regardless, these intriguing findings warrant additional investigation as there may exist disparities in the understanding of taking responsibility across experts and perpetrators. Furthermore, variances in the notions of responsibility and accountability may change among cultures.

Another interesting feature was the use of ritualistic language around empathy by some men to which, perhaps, they did not attach any significant meaning. It further emerged that a number of men could and did accept some responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviours while simultaneously retaining contradictory beliefs, values and attitudes to domestic violence and abuse. This was exemplified by both the refusal to acknowledge any instances of domestic violence and abuse, as well as the act of downplaying their significance. This was evident in some of the comments made that they could count down or walk away. However, what was unclear was how this time out or count down and not getting their way impacted on power dynamics, the concept of masculinity or how difficult decisions were subsequently resolved. This is the case because walking away from a difficult situation hardly suggests the issue being resolved. Furthermore, it remains ambiguous how the partners perceived the act of disengaging from a situation and its implications for problem-solving, as well as whether this behaviour could have been threatening for the victims (those who suffer the

worst from the situation). Granted, this finding validates the presence of cognitive empathy and has implications for the debate around empathy.

It appears that empathy serves as the transition between negative repercussions of intimate partner violence and positive effects arising from not engaging in these negative types of behaviours. Within the context of this research, this transition is designated as *active positive expressions of empathy*. This lends to Dahlberg (2013) designation of this as action-oriented empathy. The importance of action-oriented or active positive expression of empathy is shared by Batson, et al. (1997) who argue that cognitive and affective empathy may, but not always, lead to a desire to relieve others' distress as it goes beyond the self-centred egoism (Batson, et al, 2003). It is altruistic in nature. It is important, therefore, to understand that, in order for empathy to be meaningful to others beyond the self-centred egoism, or build social and human capital, it has to be accompanied by positive expressions such as kindness and compassion.

It is notable that Walker et al. (2015) Walker et al. (2015:2738) highlighted the significant finding that the process of stopping intimate partner violence (IPV) comprises a crucial link between persistence and desistance. This connection is characterised by the occurrence of "catalysts for change". They contend that achieving autonomous resolve may occur when individuals' values and belief systems undergo a change, which is the critical juncture for potential

desistance. They additionally contend that the catalysts for change were linked to shifts in attitudes and beliefs (Walker et al. 2015:2739). When the men recognised that attitudes and behaviours related to IPV constituted criminal acts (offending), this realisation motivated them to initiate changes. Hence, the triggers and transitions indicate that the initiation of desistance involves a correlation between "life-course events and individuals' choices, motivations, values, and beliefs and consequences" (Walker et al. 2015:2743).

Owers (2011) noted that the desistance agenda, as discussed in the review of criminal behaviour and desistance, involves the need for community level interventions to support prison-based interventions as part of the broader desistance agenda. The analysis emphasised the crucial role of families, communities, civil society institutions, and the nation-state in actively and efficiently engaging in the processes of supporting interventions. The expansion of what is commonly known as the "the desistance agenda" or "the desistance paradigm" (McNeill, 2012:41) aims to focus on the individuals' evolving abilities to behave differently when confronted with challenges.

During rehabilitation, individuals are expected to demonstrate the ability and capacity as well as willingness (through training and other methods) to be motivated in pursuing a pathway that aims to not only end abusive behaviours, but also, importantly, repair damaged relationships with their

families and communities. Additionally, perpetrators are encouraged to develop positive behaviours (such as kindness and compassionate empathy).

This is important because although the current framework may help in stopping perpetrators from engaging in physical abuse, other forms of abuse such as emotional abuse, persist. Kelly and Westmarland (2015) also acknowledge that it is significant to acknowledge that emotional abuse is challenging to detect as it does not 'leave any visible physical evidence on the victims or survivors. Shaw (2005) states that violent and abusive men can manipulate victims into remaining silent by employing a strategy that is also widely observed in child-parent interactions. This characteristic of abuse makes it particularly resistant to treatment. Indeed, certain case records indicate that instances of emotional and psychological abuse persisted, and in some instances, persisted despite being confronted during the sessions.

Men who have been conditioned to believe that they have the inherent entitlement to dominate women, occasionally resorting to coercion, often exert interpersonal power and perceive it as a rational element of patriarchy. consequently, it is reasonable to concur with Westmarland (2010) research, which suggests that domestic violence intervention programmes have effects that go beyond simply stopping physical violence. Qualitative research is crucial for comprehensively understanding and appreciating these effects, particularly in relation to tackling the issue of emotional abuse.

Hence, it is unsurprising that certain scholars (Smith, 2017) contend that emotional and psychological abuse is notably more resistant to change compared to physical abuse. Consequently, interventions aimed at facilitating men's engagement in seeking help for domestic violence should be accompanied with compassionate care and support for individuals affected by abuse, such as victims and survivors. There is a growing body of evidence-based research on the various aspects and areas of compassion-based interventions for domestic violence that should be promoted. This study, along with other similar research, has begun to tackle the existing theoretical gap and presents a noteworthy conceptual challenge.

Question 4: What are the pathways to cessation of Intimate Partner violence?

It is evident that research evidence is beginning to emerge around the triggers for, and process of and pathways to, desistance from intimate partner abuse-related crimes. Nevertheless, I concur with Walker et al. 2015 who assert that the transition from persistence to desistance of intimate partner violence is not a simple or direct process, and it varies significantly for individuals. The process is intricate and ever-changing, characterised by its intrinsic individuality and subjectivity. It can also be further complicated by factors such as identity and diversity (Weaver and McNeill, 2010).

However, as Walker et al. 2015 argue, a central part of the course of desistance is the bridge (experiencing catalysts for change) between persistence and desistance. While triggers and transitions for change are an organised and accumulation of consequences of violence, there comes a point, in some cases, when one resolves to modify their behaviours with new formulations of pro-social behaviour requiring building and buttressing in the psyche. Some of these include intense feelings such as guilt and shame, loss of significant relationships, fear of criminal prosecutions among others. Each of these has implications for initiatives that are targeted at facilitating change in IPV.

Walker et al. 2015 found that catalysts for change occurred at a personal level, gradually accumulating over time in terms of frequency and type. These catalysts eventually became noticeable and strong enough for perpetrators of abuse and violence to encourage them to change their behaviours. This is mostly due to the fact that the consequences of violence on both the individuals who commit the acts and those who experience them are not inherently capable of independently bringing about change. To effectively prompt perpetrators to change their behaviour, it is necessary to supplement the process with the acquisition of new skills, such as employing time-outs, developing an understanding of abuse, and recognising the consequences of those behaviours on others. Thus, the pathway towards change is expected to be the outcome of the gradual accumulation of these factors.

Walker et al. 2015 suggest that the point of autonomous resolution occurs when individuals experience a shift in their values and belief systems, which increases the likelihood of achieving desistance. The converse of this statement is as valid, as evidenced by the narratives provided by the male participants in this research. Both the desisters and persisters reported feeling aspects of the values and beliefs to a degree that felt distinct to them. The discussion revolved around the importance of questioning and re-evaluating values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding women, in order to develop a new set of values and beliefs concerning how individuals should perceive their intimate partners. In this regard, they recognised and appreciated the significance of negotiation, communication, and emotional management as essential components of healthy relationships.

The findings also speak of the decisive momentum (Göbbels et al. 2012) that can be the turning points that can stimulate change when individuals are ready, and this is contingent on their personal characteristics. Further investigation is required. Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) concluded that the distress of relationships ending (including restrictions on contact with children and separating from partners) were important explanatory variables strongly associated with change towards non-abusive behaviours. Maruna (2001) also supports this perspective that the fear of the criminal justice system can act as another trigger for change. However, one might argue that

motivations for engaging in interventions ought to be meaningful to the individual and go beyond the perceived negative consequences.

What these findings further suggest is that using the COM-B model is extremely useful, albeit insufficient, as a behaviour change tool or model. This is partly because most themes do not fit neatly within a single sub-component. Additionally, the three (3) components and any others that I have reviewed, appear to be self-directed, with limited focus on other-directed attributes. While as McDonagh et al. (2018) argues, the themes emerging from studies around pro-positive (motivation) behaviours can influence, and be influenced by, opportunity (group work) and capability (new skills), not all of the themes neatly fit in in the COM-B paradigm.

These conclusions from this study are consistent with those of Morrison et al (2018) who examined the impact of programmes on intimate partner violence male perpetrators as part of a two-year ethnographic study of a community-based intervention. The study found the perpetrators had reported gaining “(1) a more holistic understanding of IPV, (2) a greater sense of accountability for their behaviours, (3) the ability to identify and deescalate anger, and (4) new skills to improve communication” (Morrison et al. 2018:311).

Consequently, any proposed conceptual framework for developing effective ways to address violent and abusive behaviours in intimate partner

relationships should encompass both internal and exterior aspects related to the individuals undergoing treatment. This involves motivating perpetrators to cultivate active and positive expressions of empathy, encompassing compassion and kindness, among other things. According to Cherry (2019), compassion involves the ability to feel empathy for others. This is a crucial motivating factor for engaging in pro-social actions and forms the basis for the longing and the desire to help others. The capacity to sense compassion towards others requires both an understanding of and the ability to empathise with them. Essential to this argument is the requirement of possessing cognitive awareness regarding the challenges faced by other individuals and the ability to empathise with their perspective.

It is important to recognise that compassion includes other aspects beyond empathy. In addition to fostering empathy and enabling individuals to empathise with the pain of others, compassion motivates them to actively help others and alleviate their suffering.

Until recently, scientists understood extremely little about whether compassion could be cultured or learnt. Weng et al. (2013) conducted two recent experiments that were published in the *Journal of Psychological Science* (2020). The initial study aimed to investigate the possibility of training individuals to change their behaviours over a very brief timeframe. The study explored the utilisation of compassionate meditation, employing

the traditional Buddhist method (Weng et al. 2013:1171), in order to enhance sentiments of empathy towards individuals facing difficulties. In contrast, individuals in the control group underwent cognitive reappraisal techniques training, which aimed to instruct them on reducing negative emotions (Weng et al. 2013:1171).

The training lasted about half an hour every day for two weeks on an internet-based programme. As part of the experiment, participants were also asked to narrate their experiences with the programme and their compassionate feelings towards diverse types of people, such as family members, strangers, and those they had had conflict with.

In one particular experiment, participants were asked to visualise an occasion in which someone was experiencing suffering and later asked to rehearse their wishing relief of that person's suffering. Researchers established that interventions could influence brain processes in adults which, in turn, can result in them being more “receptive to compassion and altruistic behaviours” (Weng et al. 2013:1179-1180). This promising research confirms that it is possible to help individuals be more compassionate and that it can become part of autonomous and reflective of how people act or think.

The second study sighted by Weng et al. (2013) was where participants were asked to play an online game in which they could expend the financial

resources in helping other needy persons. The game included two anonymised people who were either a dictator or victim. The study started with the participants watching the dictator apportion a biased amount of money with their victims and subsequently deciding how much of their own money they wished to share with both the dictator and victim.

This simple experiment revealed that the participants who had received compassion training exhibited a higher likelihood of their financial resources being apportioned to the player who had been treated unfairly. This experiment and actions were attributed to altruistic behaviour. It emerged that players who were trained in compassion meditation were highly likely to be engaged in altruism than those in the control group who had been trained in cognitive reappraisal methods.

According to Weng et al. (2013:1180), using “functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)” which was conducted at the start and end of the training in both cases led the researchers to conclude that compassion meditation had had a noteworthy influence on brain activity. What researchers observed was that the high likelihood of the participants being altruistic after the training on compassionate qualities had an increase in brain activity in the inferior parietal cortex, the brain area closely correlated to the quality of empathy for other people. Similar brain activities were also noted in other parts of the brain which are associated with positive emotions and emotional regulation.

When equally applied to IPV, what these research findings confirms is that it is possible to help individuals to be more compassionate. In fact, other research such as Bertrand et al. 2018; Jolliffe and Farrington 2021; Casel, 2015; Sahin 2012; Hein et al. 2018; Malti et al. 2016) confirm that empathy training can help some so much so that it becomes part of thinking and actions (motivations) and offers the hope for successful interventions. In a sense, it implies individuals can learn and practise active pro-social conduct.

Based on the foregoing analyses and observations, it is safe to conclude that like many other abilities and capabilities, compassion is a skill that can be taught and improved upon with practice. In this regard, I agree with findings from other studies which offer thrilling possibilities for helping intimate partner violence and abuse perpetrators to build qualities of compassion and kindness. Equally important is the fact that training in behavioural change skills has the veritable potential to transform lives of many victims of IPV. The training also has the potential to address other social problems such as bullying in schools. As such, training around compassion and kindness needs to be introduced early preferably in relationships and sex education (RSE) of personal, social, health and education (PSHE).

Why it is important to know why even adults can learn to be more compassionate is an integral component of a vast range of pro-social behaviours such as altruism and heroism in society. Understanding the

suffering of others can only be meaningful if accompanied by the desire and drive to relieve others of the same. Baumsteiger and Siegel (2019) have noted the accelerated scramble, scholarship, and research on and conceptualisation of prosocial motivations, attitudes, and behaviours. According to Eisenberg et al. (2016:1688) prosocial behaviour is “voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another, such as helping, donating, sharing and comforting”. Similarly, Gilbert et al. (2019:2259) argues, prosocial behaviours are underpinned by a range of similar but distinct concepts and processes such as “cooperation, care-providing, altruism, empathy, sympathy, compassion, basic kindness, loving-kindness, including directing it to oneself”. This implies doing something for others, usually, without reciprocity.

When examining intimate partner violence and abuse, it is evident that compassion, as argued by Weng et al. (2013), encompasses three essential requirements. First and foremost, those who engage in IPV should acknowledge the gravity of the consequences that their behaviours have on others. Furthermore, it is imperative to refrain from assigning responsibility to victims or survivors. This will perhaps facilitate the development of empathy and enhance individuals' willingness to help. Ultimately, it is crucial for perpetrators to empathise with comparable circumstances and, ideally, be motivated to help others escape from their anguish. Upon completion of this cycle, it can serve as the foundation for pro-social behaviours that empathy alone is incapable of eliciting.

As indicated elsewhere in this report, this illuminating research finding suggests that, regardless of complications and length of time required, compassion can be taught and learned. I, therefore, strongly believe that human beings have an intrinsic propensity to learn how to develop more compassion and to build their emotional ability to compel others to assist and alleviate those suffering as victims of violence and abuse. I strongly believe that the compassionate framework can be learnt and strengthened and can result in improved interpersonal and intimate partner relationships. In turn, this can assist people in building deeper and more meaningful interpersonal connections, motivate good works, helpful actions, and kindness.

The significance of compassion and kindness lies in the fact that current domestic violence intervention programmes primarily emphasise cognitive empathy (Kerr-Gafney et al. 2019) and to some extent affective empathy (Jones et al. 2010; Goleman et al. 2020). The change from cognitive and affective empathy into compassion occurs when individuals actively demonstrate caring behaviours and actions towards others, which is a result of the rewiring and synaptic processes of brain competencies (Dunbar, 2017). This phenomenon occurs when individuals attain self-awareness and employ their cognitive abilities and meta-cognition to predict the significance of their behaviours and their impact on others.

Taken together, it would appear that the processes of diarising experiences and sharing in group work, for example, largely include descriptions of what has happened, how the men reacted and what they might do differently in the future. What this model interrogated in this thesis was how well perpetrators of violence and abuse could act differently in the future and what they were required to be doing continually. Quite obviously, this has extensive, deeper, and wider implications for specific types of empathy.

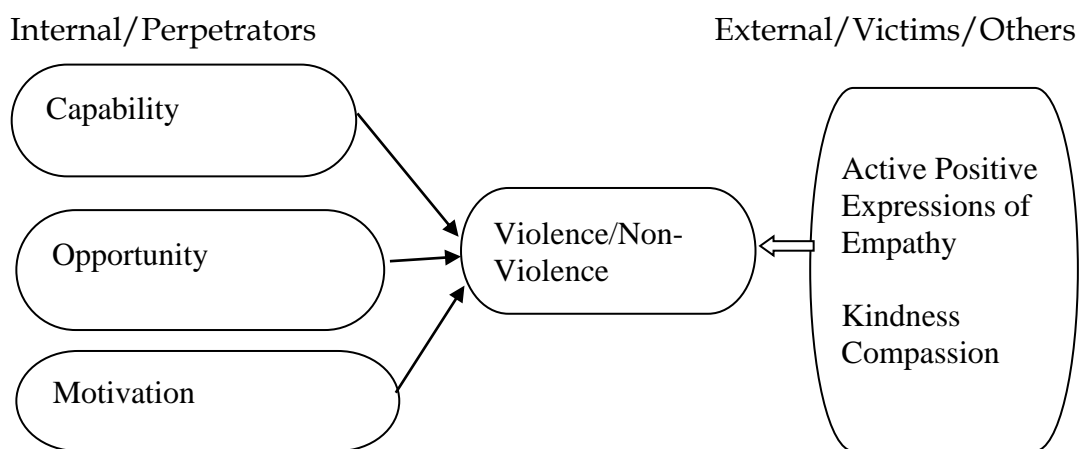
Goleman et al. (2020) has argued and introduced the concept of compassionate empathy. Compassionate empathy, according to Goleman et al. (2020) is that type of empathy which moves people to not only understand others' predicament and feel for them, but spontaneously move them to help others, if needed. Earlier, Gilbert (2010), Kanov et al. (2004) have previously contributed to the argument by describing compassion as a quality that encompasses empathy with the latter being a key component of compassion. That said, it is suggested that the quality of compassion has added components in addition to empathy. In particular, a desire by an individual to take action to alleviate the suffering experienced by another is understood as a fundamental feature of compassion but not empathy. It is the case that compassion has components such as kindness (Neff, 2003; Pommier, 2010).

In the context of my study, I define this as *active positive expressions of empathy*. This encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes

that involve recognising and understanding the suffering of others, experiencing empathetic feelings towards their sorrows, and being genuinely concerned about their distress. This leads to a strong desire and motivation to take action in order to alleviate their suffering. The latter part of this seems to be the one aspect of empathy that achieves a strong balance around empathy involves taking action to alleviate the suffering of others. Essentially, ceasing aggressive and abusive behaviour is considered a positive action. However, in order for this change to have significance for others, it is necessary to consistently exhibit positive behaviour towards them and others.

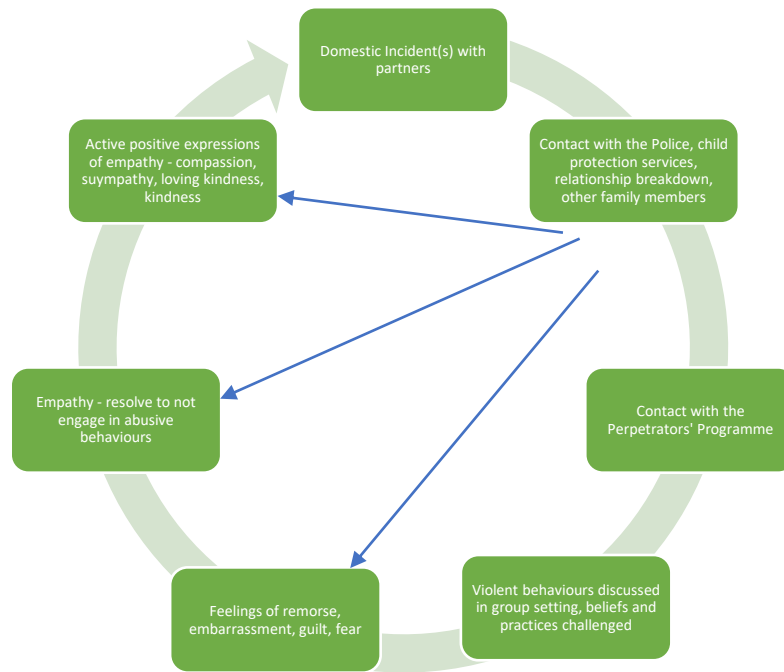
Given this context, I would like to offer the following conceptual model that aligns with the majority of behaviour change interventions. The diagram presented below depicts the modified version of the COM-B model, which focuses on the behavioural aspects of change related to domestic abuse.

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework for Behaviour Change Interventions



Based on the above figure, the proposed pathway towards changing attitudes around intimate partner violence and abuse might look like in Figure 8 below.

Figure 5: The Proposed Pathway towards changing attitudes around intimate partner violence.



Key:  Motivational Interviewing

Theoretical Propositions: Towards a Theory of Effective Perpetrators Programmes

Charmaz (2000:522) states that the analysis conducted by grounded theorists involves narrating the experiences of individuals, social processes, and circumstances. This analysis is influenced by the theorists' own subjective interpretations. Furthermore, the interpretations of the accounts and

reflections are not solely limited to those of the participants but also encompass the perspectives of researchers.

The purpose of this section of the report is to analyse and formulate theories based on the significant facts presented in this and prior chapters. The primary aim of this study is to utilise the COM-B model to explore men's experiences of the perpetrators' programme and develop a "substantive theory" (Crossetti, et al. 2016:48) that enhances our understanding of intimate partner violence (IPV) and potentially guides future interventions.

The discussions presented herein consist of the key conclusions of this study, supported by appropriate literature and my own interpretive perspectives based on personal and professional experience. This section not only acknowledges previous research in the field but also co-locates the study within current knowledge and proposes new substantive theoretical contributions to the scholarship on intimate partner violence. Charmaz (2006:169) suggests that the analysis will demonstrate how these results "fits or extends relevant literatures and theories."

In my presentation, I have utilised the constructivist grounded theory approach to support the development of a conceptual framework. This framework aims to enhance our understanding of men's experiences in the perpetrators' programme, with a focus on capturing their perspective as

accurately as possible. To achieve this, I have employed the COM-B model of behaviour change. Consequently, I have addressed the fundamental conceptual and methodological strengths, as well as the potential limitations and applications, of the COM-B model in assessing changes in behaviour related to intimate partner violence (IPV). This analysis has led to the creation of an empirical model that focuses on promoting *active positive expressions of empathy*, with compassion and kindness as central components. This facilitates the delineation and arrangement of the essential and foundational aspects of compassion and kindness from the perspectives of participants. Equally critical is the identification of fundamental virtues and antecedents of compassion and kindness, which help in differentiating and distinguishing compassion and kindness from related concepts of empathy and sympathy. Kindness and compassion necessitate engaging in behaviours that align with a pro-social motivation and are distinguished by active listening and presence (non-verbal communication), rather than mere passivity or inaction.

Charmaz (2006) states that researchers can develop an abstract theoretical proposition regarding the phenomenon under study based on their experiences. This caution often causes researchers to develop a generalised working understanding of the phenomenon that merits regular revision, updating, discarding and reinvention within the context of the ever-changing human lives and circumstances. The reasoning is that the veracity and richness of data around a particular theory of human behaviour emanates

from a thorough and reiterative description and review of human behaviour. It is, therefore, inadvisable to assume that the veracity and richness of data can truthfully be reported by those directly affected by them.

The preliminary data analysis stages identified specific and distinct categories that were connected to the discharge procedures for men who attended more than the scheduled 36 sessions of the intervention. Upon analysing the initial interviews, it became evident that the men expressed their continued participation on the programme because they enjoyed therapy and found the environment supportive. During a series of consecutive interviews, I inquired further about the reasons why certain participants remained on the programme for a duration exceeding the planned 36 weeks. They indirectly alluded to the trainer's evaluation of progress in taking responsibility and accountability for behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Based on my observations, it can be inferred that certain men who attended fewer than thirty-six (36) sessions were either assessed or potentially assessed as having embarked on the path of taking responsibility and accountability for their violent and abusive behaviours. Conversely, some of those who continued attending were assessed as not yet being ready to take the same path. Obtaining further accounts from the trainers could have contributed to a more thorough and strong development of this theme.

Further, I found that utilising memos from each interview was quite useful in organising and preparing for subsequent interviews. In addition, they were helpful in me to "move back and forth between the data and categories/nodes", (Charmaz, 2006:110). In subsequent interviews with the men, I employed my understanding of the previous interviews and memos to "perform theoretical integration of categories and a comparison of categories at a higher level at an abstract level" (Charmaz, 2006:115).

The conceptual framework, which not only connects concepts but also plays a crucial role in theory development (Charmaz, 2006), was the trajectory of change that I found to be associated with participating in the men's programme. This facilitated the process of theorization by transcending the stages of data coding, resulting in the identification of overarching categories that had reach, incisiveness, and power which in turn, helped further in conceptualising theory. Consequently, learning new skills, expanded awareness of intimate partner violence and abuse, learning from others, and self-awareness, all demonstrated a correlation with cognitive capabilities. By employing a similar methodology, interventions conducted in group settings that involved the discussions, questioning, and changing of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours were connected with the opportunity. Likewise, the incentives behind intimate partner violence (IPV) and the resulting consequences, such as the fear of losing one's family and facing criminal sanctions, were interconnected with the reasons. Ultimately, it was

determined that compassion for and kindness to others were fundamental cornerstones of effective interventions regarding intimate partner violence and abuse. Throughout the process, there arises a necessity for the utilisation of motivational interviewing techniques.

During the entire research process, I constantly maintained awareness of the potential risk of prematurely selecting core categories while collecting data. Nevertheless, I was receptive to revising the categories, and over time, it became evident that certain categories required adjustments to accurately depict their interconnectedness with other categories in the trajectory of change. As previously mentioned, motivation was broken down into two variants: self-directed and other-directed. Likewise, accountability and attrition were both related to discharge from the intervention.

The study's theoretical concepts evolved through repeated processes, gradually becoming more focused. The categories that emerged from the data also became increasingly abstract. The study developed theoretical core categories and concepts, including 'kindness', 'compassion', 'being nice', 'fear of the Police', 'loss of family', 'taking responsibility', 'awareness of violence', and 'learning from others'. These concepts were integral to the men's learning and experiences during the programme.

This experience demonstrates the presence of several processes at work in any given social setting. Additionally, it demonstrates the viewpoint of Charmaz (2006) that we should remain open to unforeseen occurrences, including either intentional or inadvertent deception. One of the challenges I encountered was finding a way to engage with the men in a non-confrontational manner, while also motivating them to be as open as they could be. Another problem I identified was a dearth of well-researched information exploring the views and perceptions of men who have utilised the perpetrators' interventions. Invariably, this also presented the additional difficulty of acquiring reliable, competent, and verifiable data.

Nevertheless, according to Locke (2007:575), "ambiguity and uncertainty are inherent in the process of theorising." However, we must not lose focus on the imperative of deciphering the precise meanings of particular expressions when engaging with the data. This is essential to ensure a thorough and deliberate interpretation of the expressions.

Throughout my research, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to engage with men who had utilised the perpetrators programme. I had meaningful conversations with them, treating them with respect and actively listening to their stories. Additionally, I observed their body language and carefully considered my interactions with them, documenting my thoughts in memos. Through these exchanges, I collaborated with others to co-construct meanings

and interpretations of their experiences engaging in the perpetrators' programme. This process also allowed me to formulate hypotheses.

Lempert (2007) contends that the substantive theory (of *active positive expressions of empathy* - my own) is a set of explanations that consider various aspects of the perpetrators' programme. These aspects should be given equal importance to taking responsibility for abusive and violent behaviours, as well as acquiring skills in managing and resolving conflicts in pro-social ways. Therefore, the proposed substantive theory is derived from the interactions with a cohort of individuals who possess knowledge and familiarity with the perpetrators' programmes. This study focuses on the change process within the social context, specifically from the perspective of men who participated in perpetrators' programmes from 2006 to 2018. The study took place between 2019 and 2020 in a borough located in North London. It may lack implications for replicability or inclusion in a formal theory in other regions of the country or globally. Nevertheless, additional research is necessary to determine the applicability of the findings elsewhere.

For several men, the preliminary stages of the experience of engaging in a perpetrator's programme was a new phenomenon and, hence, their understanding of intimate partner violence and abuse was limited. Subsequently, they indicated a significant improvement in their comprehension of domestic violence and abuse, especially its adverse impacts

on victims, after their attendance on the programme. Several men reported that their understanding of the factors, such as traumas or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), that might explain their perpetration of domestic violence and abuse, and this had expanded as a result of their engagement with the perpetrators' programme. Furthermore, it is worth noting that other individuals also admitted that the programme had not only influenced them but also served as a reminder that if they persisted in their behaviours and actions, they would face the possibility of being apprehended and legally prosecuted, as well as losing access to children. This was a revelation to them, as they were previously unaware of these consequences before their involvement in the perpetrators' programme or any police involvement.

The subsequent question pertained to the implementation of the several forms of empathy established in the study, within the framework of the COM-B model, as it relates to men's engagement in the perpetrators' programme. The improved version of the COM-B model, which incorporates the target for intervention and other factors, is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Comparison of Self-Centredness and Selflessness

Self-Centredness /Empathy	Selflessness/Compassion, Kindness
Capability - awareness, new skills,	Capability - awareness, new skills,
Opportunity - masculinity redefined, beliefs and values challenged	Opportunity - masculinity redefined, beliefs and values challenged
Motivation - avoidance negative consequences of behaviour,	Motivation - avoidance of negative consequences, giving without expecting anything in return, positive actions, valuing others

This proposed approach transcends the individualistic perspective to encompass the inclusion of others. As previously stated, the inclusion of other forms of empathy can encompass acts of selfless giving to others without any expectation of reciprocation. This strategy has the potential to have a greater impact and longer-lasting effect in bringing about change.

My recommendation is that the specific type of empathy, which is other-directed and which, when it becomes salient, has the potential to give the best promise for confronting IPV among perpetrators. However, this does not imply absolving perpetrators from being held accountable and taking responsibility for their abusive and violent behaviours. Rather, in addition to taking responsibility, it is imperative to teach perpetrators with the possibility of opting for other-oriented actions that prioritise the well-being of others. They should be guided by training the qualities of compassion and kindness.

The substantive hypothesis is based on the analyses and interpretation of men's descriptions of their experiences in the perpetrators' programmes, including how they felt and the significance they attributed to those events. The pathways encompassed the mechanisms by which individuals acquired knowledge and established connections with various programmes. These pathways also involved their understanding of experiences that were typically external to their familiar world, and how they integrated these

experiences into their own identity, as well as the potential impact on future relationships.

Following the argument made by Aspers and Corte (2019) that qualitative research involves coining new concepts and the identification of new variables, a substantive theory of active expressions of empathy (or compassion and kindness) from the perspectives of men was developed using constructivist grounded theory methodology. The substantive theory is succinctly outlined here and subsequently elaborated upon.

Three participants spoke eloquently and articulated their thoughts on alternative topics that may have been addressed in the programme. Their conversation revolved around the topics of love, compassion, and kindness. The programme or intervention primarily emphasised assuming complete responsibility for abusive behaviours and raising awareness about the impact of such behaviours on others. Some suggested that individual and self-directed incentives, such as shame, guilt, stress, and fear of the criminal justice system, were factors influencing behaviour. However, other-directed emotions that are also indicative of withdrawal and non-social behaviours can be captured by such verbal expressions as,, 'I feel with you, I feel your suffering, I feel for you and care about your suffering, and I acknowledge your suffering and sorry for you, I will stop acting/behaving in

a particular way (intimate partner violence) because I know you are suffering.'

Another lesson is that negative consequences alone are not automatically and sufficiently robust to enable change from a pathway of violent behaviours (Göbbels et al. 2012). I wholeheartedly agree with Maruna and Roy (2007) perspective that instead of focusing on negative consequences, it is essential to provide individuals with new scripts for the identification and embodying positive qualities such as being a good man, partner, father, and role model. This entails adopting new scripts of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Hence, I argue that the revised script should not only encompass empathy, but also encompass actions of compassion and kindness (referred to by the participants as 'love' towards others). This should involve integrating other associated emotions marked by positive feelings. The motive in this scenario might include such feelings as 'I am moved by you, and I want to relieve you of your suffering'.

As previously said, empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. It is a construct of multiple mechanisms. Emerging research indicates that empathy plays a crucial role in inspiring pro-social activity by influencing our preferences and behavioural responses. Additionally, empathy serves as the emotional and motivational basis for the development of morality. Traditionally, researchers have studied this using

behavioural models. However, more recently, evolutionary biology, developmental, and cognitive neuroscience models have shed light on how these abilities are connected and initiated in the neural circuitry system.

The study conducted by Jutten et al. (2018) explores the relationship between empathy and anxiety among informal care givers, finding a significant positive correlation between affective empathy and anxiety. When applied to intimate partner relationships, cognitive empathy, which typically involves accepting responsibility for violent behaviours, indicates the necessity of enhancing affective empathy - the promotion of good behaviours. This can frequently encompass acts of kindness.

The teaching profession, in a review of experiences of violence in schools, has recognised the importance of providing equal attention to kindness as catalysts in the development of what McNeill et al. (2012) refers to as social and human capital. According to Sampson and Laub (1993), empathy, kindness, and compassion serve as the cohesive force that connects individuals to society. Recently, there has been a growing body of evidence highlighting the significance of "self-identity" and the necessity for offenders to develop and cultivate a "coherent, pro-social identity" for oneself (McNeil et al. 2010:7). While some researchers contend that individuals with psychopathic tendencies exhibit a deficiency in empathy, this assertion may not always hold true. Indeed, there is a contention that psychopathy can be

enhanced by strong cognitive empathic capacities and abilities. Therefore, based on this assumption, it is crucial for individuals to grasp the experiences of victims of abuse in order to comprehend the acts and behaviours of perpetrators towards them. Regarding this matter, I believe that psychopaths commonly exhibit a deficiency in sympathy, kindness, and compassion. They are frequently cognizant of the victim's suffering caused by their conduct; however, they display a lack of concern or motivation to cease their abusive behaviour. Instead, they persist in committing acts of violence and abuse for their personal gain, which may encompass power, coercive control, or other motivations. The hallmark of psychopathic qualities is the capacity to manage emotions, as stated by Molenberghs (2017).

Consequently, it is logical to infer that empathy can also limit social behaviours and actions, or even result in unethical conduct, such as opting not to assist an injured individual due to a fear of blood. On the other hand, it can also prompt others to take measures to safeguard their family members. For instance, this could entail displaying hostile actions towards others whom they deem as endangering the well-being of their loved ones. According to research in brain and neuroscience, the anterior insula is linked to affective empathy, while the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex is related with cognitive empathy (Eres et al. 2015:305). Molenberghs (2017) contends that contemporary research offers valuable insights into the process of

desensitisation to violence and the factors that influence varying levels of guilt associated with causing harm to others.

Research on motivational interviewing indicates a positive effect on behaviour change for overall desistance from criminal activities. Nevertheless, it is crucial to continually cultivate and maintain empathy, ensuring that it aligns with our core values and aspirations. When men are trained to reject violence and understand that it contradicts their duty as positive role models, they demonstrate themselves to be loving, caring and compassionate spouses and partners. These attributes also help them form strong connections, both with their partners and with the larger community.

Based on this premise and as argued in other sections of this report, it seems that active empathy serves as the transition between negative consequences of IPV and pro-social behaviours. In the context of this study, the bridge between learning new skills and motivation to desist from violence is what has been referred to as *active positive expressions of empathy*. This definition is associated with **compassion and kindness**, all of which entail positive actions. Batson, et al. (1997; 2003) argue, compassion and kindness may lead to a desire to alleviate the suffering of others, surpassing self-interested egoism. This implies that, in order for empathy to be meaningful to others, it has to be accompanied by positive expressions such as sympathy, kindness and compassion, which often motivates people to help others. Whereas

empathy would usually include ceasing inflicting pain on others, kindness and compassion includes actively relieving others of pain.

Straughair et al. (2019) conducted a constructivist grounded theory study to explore the concept of compassion by examining individuals' perspectives of their nursing care experience. Their finding suggests that an individual's personal encounters with nursing care and life experiences within society play a significant role in shaping the essential element of compassion (a core category). Participants in this study expressed that compassion was most exemplified through their encounters with nursing care that adopted a humanising approach. The study additionally concluded that the biological, psychological, and social-contextual elements had a crucial and meaningful role in shaping the humanising experiences of the participants. The study provides further understanding of the idea of compassion, which warrants further exploration with persons in different care contexts outside of nursing and other healthcare settings.

Considering these and other findings, it seems that cognitive (enhanced skills training, increased awareness) and possibly emotional (feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment) empathy are evident in both the short and long-terms. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether enduring attributes of compassionate empathy and love-kindness (active positive expressions of empathy) are evident over an extended period of time. In my perspective,

it seems that this is the fundamental aspect of achieving enduring change about intimate partner violence and abuse.

While the plausibility of compassion training is contested and some argue that it is contingent upon the baseline innate human qualities, it may be appropriate to evaluate its beneficial effects at baseline with a view to tailoring suitable learning plans and motivational interviewing.

What are the implications for social work practice?

The accounts from the men who took part in the programme and this study reveal an array of change dynamics, and that the change process is not linear, but complex, multi-dimensional and multi-layered. These findings suggest that in the change process, the transtheoretical model of change remains a valuable analytical framework for understanding the stages of change and how other models of behaviour change such as the COM-B, can fit in. This finding has important implications for social work and public policy around IPV and more generally, other social problem areas.

One implication is that the men who took part in the programme demonstrated, in certain instances several years later, that they were still able to recall the skills and lessons they acquired from it. They mentioned several topics, including time outs and their increased understanding of violent and

abusive behaviours, as significant turning points in their decision to cease engaging in domestic violence and abuse. This revelation would appear to support the veracity of interventions that seek to explore the capacity for men to change their violent and abusive behaviours in intimate relationships, especially community-based interventions for men do not meet the criteria for criminal prosecution. Skills learnt from the group environment with specific focus on psychoeducational, feminist socio-political and cognitive behavioural based curriculum are accountable for the men's expanded insights and awareness of the power and control dynamics of intimate partner relationships (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006) and Walker et al. (2015). They are also accountable for the perpetrators' changed behaviours and their resolve to embark on the process of change around intimate partner violence and abuse. Groupwork was also instrumental in modelling and shaping attitudes and beliefs around IPV. CBT teaches individuals skills to identify, analyse and change behaviour by focusing on re-education and in turn has the potential to enable men take accountability for their behaviours.

Study findings also demonstrates that negative consequences of violence and abuse can, further, contribute towards the change process (Saunders, 2008; Walker et al. 2015) and may also be instrumental in the development of empathetic traits in men who abuse intimate partners.

As part of a multidimensional approach to efforts to eradicate intimate partner violence and abuse, it is also necessary to promote the development of new communication skills and opportunities for learning, such as the provision of reminders regarding the negative consequences and negative emotional reactions associated with abusive behaviours. This because, just like others, men have an inherent ability to learn about themselves and how they can have positive relationships with others.

Granted, the purpose of my study was to test the applicability of the COM-B model to explore the men's experience of engaging with the domestic abuse perpetrators'/batterer's programme. However, its findings have raised several implications. It has, for example, demonstrated that empathy is differently expressed by men. Secondly, it is less clear whether their capacity for empathy before, during and after intervention remains constant or changed, which may call for further research.

According to Daniels and Murphy (1997) most of the recent studies in behavioural change have often explored the connection between and among interventions, responses, and outcomes. It would, however, appear that further research is required around the specific stages of change, and the presence of empathy, compassion, and kindness with a view to illuminating the dynamism of attitudes and beliefs about IPV. This may need to be accompanied by the development of tools and techniques for the exploration

of the capacity of perpetrators for *active positive expressions of empathy*, such as kindness and compassion. My considered view is that this approach should also seek an exploration of the different typologies of *active positive expressions of empathy* at various stages and cycles of the change processes and interventions. Exploring and assessing men's capacity and motivation for *active positive expressions of empathy* (compassion and kindness) at diverse intervention stages (taken together with the transtheoretical model of change) might offer insights into what and the extent to which the interventions are successful with working with perpetrators of IPV. This is important because of the need to ascertain whether possession of new skills and awareness of the expanded view of IPV, including knowing the negative consequences of abusive behaviours, are in and by themselves, sufficient to motivate change.

It is also important to know the fact that the available unique expertise by social workers can immensely contribute to the success of perpetrators' programmes. Conversely, if social workers act with a comprehensive understanding and passion, actively accept, and engage with men who are violent and abusive but who do not admit responsibility, they will enhance their own capacity for *active positive expressions of empathy* in their relationships with the men who abuse. This suggests the need for social workers to be equipped with motivational interviewing skills in their work with perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. In this regard, collaborative overtures between and among social workers and agencies who

work with perpetrators can profoundly facilitate the establishment of supportive interventions essential for building trusting relationships. Trusting relationships, in turn, can offer hope to perpetrators of IPV by enabling them to overcome some of the negative self-directed emotional responses such as shame, guilt and embarrassment. Quite obviously, this will require stakeholder advocacy for funding of interventions for the enhancement of collaborative systems of agencies and other stakeholders who work with perpetrators and victims of IPV.

Furthermore, as frontline professionals who work with individuals and families in environments where IPV is a presenting and difficult challenge, social workers are in an exceptionally favourable position to provide guidance, support and especially motivational interviewing that can make engagement in treatments feasible and possible. Indeed, if social workers sufficiently honed their therapeutic skills for motivational interviewing, they could effectively contribute to public and private initiatives that are targeted at setting perpetrators of partner violence and abuse on the trajectory towards positive behavioural change.

Social workers can, on the other hand, play a significant role in advocating for the mainstreaming of budgetary allocations and funding commitments to anti-IPV interventions. This is, especially, critical in the face of the

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has escalated the urgency of addressing domestic violence and abuse.

Coordinated perpetrators' programmes that target prevention of violence and abuse at early stages, such as pre-puberty and adolescent groups are also needed for pre-emptively tackling IPV. The importance of early interventions is also advocated for by Feldman (2007) and Hoffman (2000) who argue that qualities of empathy are thought to begin to develop in life's early stages. This underscores the need for funding of interventions that aim to foster early empathy and compassion development. I am of the view that changing youth's attitudes and thinking patterns around intimate relationships is essential.

It is equally important to scale up social workers' motivational interviewing skills with a view to meaningfully engaging individuals and families as a means of not only raising their awareness of the socially debilitating consequences of partner violence and abuse and breaking the cycle of these vices, but also preparing perpetrators for engaging in interventions. This is extremely important as it was discovered some perpetrators of violence and abuse were ill-prepared for the programmes. This study, in addition, established that, in some cases, there were weak connections between and among values and attitudes, including uncertainties regarding the meanings of partner violence and abuse and acceptable partnerships and parenthood.

Historically, social workers had a commitment and expertise in working with disenfranchised groups and 'hard to reach' (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015) populations. They experimented with innovative methods to safeguard children and ensure positive outcomes for them. In this process, they discovered that men who abuse their partners need external social support from experts such as social workers. Unfortunately, through my experience as a social work manager, I have come across social workers and other professionals, in the child protection systems, who find working with perpetrators of IPV challenging and who, sometimes, actively avoid them. This could, perhaps, be attributed to inadequate training, expertise, and skills for working in complex social environments, which would call for dedicated in-service skills training programmes.

The nature of violence and abuse perpetrated by men has undoubted intergenerational implications and social workers must resolutely contribute to finding sustainable solutions. Given their skills and experience, social workers, stand in a unique position to set perpetrators on the change trajectory.

As a social work practitioner, I am convinced that social workers can employ their innate and acquired caring skills and motivational work to promote positive behavioural change among perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. Social workers can do this in multiple ways. Firstly, they can do this

by tactfully studying the mindsets, psychology, motivations, and modus operandi of perpetrators of violent and abusive behaviours. Secondly, they can help perpetrators of partner violence and abuse by making them aware of the inconsistency between modelling of positive behaviours and IPV. Lastly, the same results could be attained through actively encouraging males to project themselves as visible faces of acceptable parenthood, especially within the child protective services. Evidence was found in a few of instances throughout this research.

In my experience as a social worker, my daily schedule often involves working with children and families traumatised by abuse. These encounters call for expertise in the formulation of interventions and ensuring that the same are in consistent with accurate assessments of values and attitudes around IPV. Equally important is having the expertise to motivate perpetrators to engage in supportive interventions which help them change their attitudes, values and beliefs regarding how healthy relationships ought to look like. It also involves raising awareness about in a non-therapeutic yet carefully balancing support and confrontation of negative perceptions of violence in IPV.

My study provides an exceptional prospect for evaluating men's accounts of the processes of change as directly linked to their engagement with the perpetrator's programme. Participants' accounts are largely similar to those

found in other studies which suggest that abusive men actually benefit from training programmes, fellow men who have changed and model positive behaviours towards others and the trainers.

It is possible to draw several interesting conclusions from these findings. Among them is the fact that several factors account for the success of the interventions in intimate partner abuse. The other is that the transition between the domestic incident and contact with the perpetrators' programme and keeping the men motivated to engage with it, is partially a function of motivational interviewing. Behind every perpetrator of violence and abuse who is fully engaged in treatment is an army comprising skilled social worker, skilled trainer, supportive groups, and individuals who are determined and resolved to change their behaviours. What drives the men to engage in the change process is also linked to the negative consequences of the criminal justice system, permanent loss of relationships, and/or empathy. Ultimately, the individuals must determine whether or not to engage.

According to Walker et al. (2015), Hester et al (2006) participants described how the criminal justice system could, sometimes, form part of the turning point for changing violent and abusive behaviours. Men who had emotionally invested in relationships and families, were more likely to engage with the interventions that those had not. It is heartening to realise that participants acknowledged the value and relevance of the criminal justice

system to their facilitation of the process of changing their violent and abusive behaviours. When planning future programmes, it is important to thoroughly assess the appropriateness and impact of ongoing criminal justice sanctions for specific violent and abusive situations. This is a crucial point to consider, as past research has demonstrated that the criminal justice system can have a positive influence on processes of change.

The programme participants were unequivocal about the impact of trainers in the change process. The trainers' ability to foster an environment that promotes questioning of deeply ingrained attitudes and behaviours was key, along with their demonstration of respect for the individuals. This also included the opportunity to question negative perspectives, all of which were crucial to the process of change towards behaviours that reject violence. In addition, Walker et al. (2015) and Wangsgaard (2001) argue that trainers can serve multiple roles, including providing support, being confrontational, acting as a role model, and offering instruction.

The trainers' ability to confront trainees on their attitudes, denial, and minimization of their abusive behaviours was noteworthy on two levels. Firstly, it facilitated the enhancement of motivation among some individuals, leading to their active participation and successful completion of the project. Furthermore, it empowered other individuals to make well-informed choices to withdraw from the programmes. As previously stated in this study, the act

of dropping out of a programme or institution has consequences that can lead to a higher likelihood of recidivism.

According to Wangstaard (2001), group sessions can also be a catalyst for change as participants support and learn from one another, showcasing positive behaviours and fostering a sense of belonging. This became especially clear during my research as participants shared their personal experiences. This supports the study findings and conclusions by Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) that being in a group decreases the men's feeling of isolation and fosters a sense of security.

In their studies, Eckhardt et al. (2013), Scott and Wolfe (2003), and Stefanakis (2000) all argue that men who documented their experiences in journals, practiced positive self-talk, and wrote letters of accountability to victims experienced a significant impact on their journey towards ending violence and abuse. Through group sessions, the men gained a deeper understanding of intimate partner violence and the profound impact it has on victims, including their partners and children. As a result, this broadened understanding of IPV inspired them to explore different non-violent actions and behaviours for their present and future relationships. These draw upon previous studies by Pandya and Gingerich (2002) and Scott and Wolfe (2003), emphasising the significance of recognising and taking responsibility for abusive behaviours, and their crucial role in the process of change.

Recognising and taking responsibility for abusive behaviours is an important first step in acknowledging the presence of a problem and the necessity of taking action to resolve it.

Paradoxically, the men's accounts show that both support and confrontation were necessary for inducing change. This dual process helped the men to gain awareness of their behaviours and their impact on others and also to appreciate the need for avoiding environments which have the potential to perpetuate gendered violence. It was, therefore, necessary to combine support and confrontation as part of the training.

My research reveals that the process of desistance is quite intricate, as not all individuals have fully desisted from their harmful behaviours, and not all of them are forthcoming about their violent and abusive behaviours. This brings up the unavoidable question of whether the training has truly led to enduring, sustained, and significant behavioural change. Hence, it is crucial for future research studies on change processes to gather supporting accounts of behavioural shifts from previous and current partners, as well as from authoritative sources like the Police and other organisations. Furthermore, the accounts shared in my study were based on retrospective recollection and, therefore, have the potential to be self-serving constructions of the process of change in IPV. Reflective accounts are valuable for gaining insight into how individuals construct and reconstruct the process of change. However, they

may not always accurately and authentically capture the changes they have experienced. One potential strategy to address this challenge involves exploring the individuals' behavioural patterns at various intervention points.

A key element is the need for accumulation of sufficient knowledge about the change process around IPV. Furthermore, my study substantiates conclusions from previous studies which highlight aspects of the processes of change at an individual level, such as awareness, attitude changes, and motivation for change. In addition, my study findings also add to existing literature which supports the view that there are multiple levels of the change process (Edleson and Tolman, 1992; Walker et al. 2015). Implied in this is the need for longitudinal studies to explore how the relationship between and among these processes could lead to the most effective intervention outcomes.

Motivational interviewing has a beneficial impact on behavioural change by fostering empathy in individuals. In this instance, a social worker was actively promoting a man's participation in the perpetrator's programme and emphasising the importance of exhibiting positive behaviours, such as being a responsible family man and setting a good example for his children.

Reflectivity on the Researcher

Qualitative researchers must be vigilant about the impact they have on the research process. According to White and Stancombe (2003), reflexivity entails adopting a self-critical approach towards the generation of knowledge on research participants and navigating the power dynamics involved in the process. For social workers, this also encompasses the role that emotions play in the process (Ruch, 2002). As researchers, it is crucial for us to contemplate methods for diminishing and ultimately eliminating power disparities. Cohen et al. (2011) and Holloway and Biley (2011) share the same perspective on employing reflexivity to mitigate potential biases, emphasising the importance of consistently acknowledging our relationships with others.

I deemed it crucial to utilise a variety of strategies in order to recruit research participants and effectively involve them in the interview process. According to Crosby et al. (2010), McCormach (2014), Lysaght et al. (2016), qualitative researchers can employ several strategies to recruit and engage service users in their research. One of my initial strategies was to develop relationships within the organisation to gain access to information. The extent of gatekeeping by the service providers who administered the perpetrators' programme was highly frustrating, despite significant efforts made to reach participants who met the study's requirements. After successfully overcoming this obstacle, the subsequent stage of recruiting research

volunteers was similarly time-consuming and arduous. I used non-probabilistic sampling strategies to ensure that a higher number of individuals who fit the research requirements were included, as suggested by Bonevski et al. (2014). Robson (2011) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) agree that the sample must align with the research goals. Therefore, the sample focused more on theoretical features than on existing sampling traditions.

In addition, the discussion of sensitive topics, such as intimate partner violence, can elicit strong feelings of embarrassment, shame, and distress, as well as trigger painful and frightening memories. This raises practical and ethical considerations, as highlighted by Shorey et al. (2011), Sydor (2013), Gruber et al. (2014), and Sullivan and Cain (2004). For instance, one participant opted out of the interview, while an additional two participants outrightly declined to engage in the interviews. I demonstrated utmost respect for all the interviewees, even those who chose not to participate or withdrew from the process. Nevertheless, these experiences underscore the inherent challenges associated with researching sensitive topics.

The next step was recruitment and engagement of participants. For hard-to-reach populations, multiple strategies (Crosby et al. 2010) might be employed to reach them, and this might include writing letters, telephone calls and sometimes doorstep visits to the home. I used this method, but once I went to

the man's old address where he no longer lived, causing anguish to the family members, particularly the daughter.

Being both a researcher and social work practitioner may have sometimes raised participants' concerns about me conducting the study. Some participants may have thought that my profession in social work would lead me to hold them accountable for the violence they perpetrated, therefore they may have tried to portray themselves in a favourable way. However, being both a practitioner and researcher enhanced my capacity to handle this duality, as noted by Bourke (2014), even if it might potentially impede certain men's participation in the study.

The participants might have worried that my insider status would jeopardise the credibility of any disclosures that undermined the worthiness of the interventions they had accessed. They might have worried that if they had not found the intervention beneficial in any way, they would be adjudged to have not changed their attitudes towards IPV. However, this occurred only once where a participant withdrew after I had identified my role as a researcher and social work practitioner.

Consequently, I engaged in negotiations to provide reassurance by emphasising the principles of beneficence and empowerment. The ultimate objective was to uncover knowledge, educate others and enhance

understanding of the change process. Additionally, I aimed to contribute to the development of interventions that considered the viewpoints of perpetrators, rather than solely adopting a feminist approach. This statement does not imply that I had and have abandoned my pro-feminist beliefs, but rather emphasises the importance of generating knowledge that is as unbiased and balanced as possible. Additionally, during the interviews, it was necessary for me to demonstrate respect for their responses. In cases where I was aware of contradicting narratives they provided, I had to address this in a way that encourage honesty rather than attempting to catch them out for not speaking the truth. It was crucial to establish a mutual understanding that certain behaviours of the individuals involved were causing concerns and that the process of desistance was evaluated both internally and externally by both the individuals themselves and myself as a researcher. Furthermore, although their occasional dishonesty presented difficulties that had a detrimental effect on me such as feeling angry, I had intended to approach the situation with caution and tact by using respectful questioning and probing techniques. Cunningham and Carmichael (2017) suggest that interviewers with skilled abilities, especially in compassionate professions, may help obtain more thorough data even with small sample numbers. Consequently, my adeptness in social work skills enabled me to elicit more comprehensive data from the interviews. These experiences not only enhanced my abilities in memo-writing and analysis, but

also strengthened my belief that power imbalances can be levelled (Belur, 2014) through the effective use of skills such as empathy and respect.

Retrospectively, the location of the interview did play a part. Despite my high level of awareness about safety procedures, my experience of working as a social worker led me to believe that I did not expect to be at risk of physical harm. It is possible that being of the same gender (male), influenced the participants decision to engage in the process wherein it is possible that if this study were undertaken by a female, the level of engagement would have been different. As Morran (2013) and Crawley (2004), it is possible that being male would have elicited a sense that I would have shared their perspective, sometimes possibly being collusive of holding similar oppressive values.

On reflection on the fieldwork experiences, there were moments of joy with every successful interview completed, but also considerable frustration when I faced challenges to access and arrange interviews or those who cancelled having indicated initial agreement to take part. At times, several changes to meeting times also raised doubts into whether or not the study would actually take place. These experiences were far more illuminating but highlighted the need for me to be more flexible (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015).

On one hand, you have to establish trust with participants in order for them to understand and support your research. As Silverman (1998) argues,

establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest are important in rapport building. It felt more like front line child protection work. I also know from experience that it is difficult to engage men in child protection work. I also know that it is difficult to engage men in discussing their abusive behaviours. And of course, it is much more difficult to engage men to discuss their experiences of the perpetrators' programme. I had to be a good listener and used my professional skills (Davison et al. 2004). One of the key skills I needed to master from social work is how to work with minimisation, denial and how these can shape the interviews. When I listened to the transcripts over, I realised that my tone of voice and the type of questions asked were indicative of how I adopted the non-judgmental way.

On at least three occasions, certain individuals had to abruptly cancel meetings. Two participants withdrew from the study just before it began, while another participant who had agreed to participate later declined. An individual who was not involved in the study expressed reluctance to discuss a challenging aspect of their life that they had already addressed. They briefly mentioned that the programme had been beneficial, but declined to elaborate further, stating that they and their spouse had 'moved on'. Despite my knowledge that these four men had received both my letters of introduction and my communications, they did not establish contact with me, even though I personally visited their residences. Both scenarios were exceedingly exasperating on occasion.

There were additional ethical reflections of being caught in the middle between a social worker and researcher. At the outset of the meetings with the prospective research participants, I explained to them my role as a researcher and practising social worker. I did this to ensure that they were fully aware of the potential implications of sharing information and my responsibility as a social worker. For example, some of the men blatantly denied engaging in further incidents of domestic abuse. Although the men denied this, I was aware that in at least two (2) cases, I was aware that the men had had some contact with the criminal justice system (Police) since they attended and completed the programme but during the interview had either denied or minimised further incidents of domestic abuse. This seemed to have been a case of minimisation whereby participants attempted to paint a picture of having learnt how to manage non-violent relationships, when I could sense both from my knowledge about the case and body language through prompts that there had been subsequent incidents of perpetration of abusive conduct and behaviours being manifested.

This could have been due to social desirability (Saloniki et al. 2019) effects common among the population group. This is consistent with Hearn (1998) who argues that when men speak about violence, they often portray themselves as victims but also tend to minimise this. I managed this by, whilst being aware of my need to be very respectful, I equally needed to be challenging in a probing manner. In this case, I relied on my memo and

played back the video to confirm how I handled this. It was noticeable that I simply challenged the response by asking the following question, 'nothing at all. Not even thinking about the different types of abuse that you learnt, and your partner did not raise this as a concern.' The participant looked at me, gave way to a smile, and said, "I think there was one occasion, the Police came and another when she told me that my behaviour was not right".

These incidents helped me to realise that it was important to negotiate my contacts and interactions with these men in a respectful manner. Upon reviewing the audio transcripts and analysing my tone of voice, it became evident that I had maintained a non-judgmental stance while effectively questioning the men with the appropriate tone. Indeed, it was an extraordinary experience.

Constructivist Grounded theory is particularly appealing in fields where there is limited existing research, as we have previously discussed. The aim is to encourage or strengthen investigation into unestablished theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2019). There has been a significant lack of research specifically examining the experiences and changes that men undergo when participating in perpetrator's programmes. Interestingly, I have not encountered any studies that have utilised the COM-B model to explore the perspectives of men participating in perpetrator programmes. The majority of studies in this field have focused on overall criminal behaviours, indicating

a lack of research on the specific variables and complexities surrounding intimate partner violence. The opportunity to take part in the research allowed some individuals to discuss how they navigate a pathway towards moving away from past abusive behaviours and embracing positive changes (Maruna, 2001). Hence, constructivist grounded theory proves to be a suitable methodological approach for this study, facilitating the generation of theory that can serve as a foundation for future examination of interconnected constructs regarding the dynamics of change around IPV. Once there is sufficient theoretical propositions regarding this phenomenon, future research can explore other qualitative and quantitative research techniques to further test, verify or expand upon the emerging themes.

The primary appeal of CGT lies in its capacity to progressively enhance the examination of frequently imperceptible actions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviours by the individuals involved. It also enhances the reflexivity of researching themes related to intimate partner violence (IPV). According to Charmaz (2017:35), having "methodological self-consciousness" allows researchers to examine occurrences from many viewpoints and effectively incorporate them into theory development. Hence, endeavours were undertaken to recognise and consider both my viewpoint and the perspectives of the participants. Thus, the resultant emergent theoretical proposition is *active positive expressions of empathy*.

Limitations of the study

There are primarily two broad limitations. First, the sensitive nature of the topic of domestic violence and abuse (Lee, 1993) invariably presented obstacles in recruiting participants for the study aimed at exploring this phenomena. This is apparent from the relatively small sample of the respondents willing to engage in the study. The sample was drawn from the records held by the Local Authority of those men who were directly known to the children and adults' services teams and not directly from the perpetrators' programme. Although I probably benefitted from insider-led knowledge about the service and my own contacts, a related additional limitation was that this may have raised concerns about conflict of interest (Murray and Lawrence, 2000). As a practising social worker, some of the participants might have hesitated to take part in the study, especially for those to whom I had spoken. However, this was a small number (only 2 declined after I had fully explained the study objectives and process) and my role as a both a researcher and social work practitioner/manager. As such, the study results may be criticised for generalisability and could also be criticised for predicting easy solutions to diverse and complex issues (Ehrensaft et. 2003; Mack, 2010) such as domestic violence.

Once this limitation was overcome, the other limitation is the possibility of participants to be hesitant and reluctant to take part in the study and position

themselves as abusers. The participants were expected to be worried about providing confidential information on such a sensitive matter. As Harne and Radford (2008) argue, denials and minimisations of IPV may act as barriers to sharing experiences. This may also lead to repositioning of themselves and portraying themselves as victims (Hearn, 1998) but also externalising their abusive behaviours to other factors such as traumatic childhood. That some of the men attended therapy which some consider a weakness associated with feelings of shame and guilt against how they are socialised to share personal information (Harne and Radford, 2008; Hearne 1998) would have impacted on the stories of the participants. Therefore, recruitment proved difficult and theoretical saturation was probably not met in this study.

A further limitation is the limited contextualized representations in research around perpetrators' experiences of the change process. It is evident that there are limited available and published studies that have been undertaken to take account of the stories and experiences of men who abuse partners and how they engage with the change process and that their stories and experiences are often dismissed as anecdotal. Therefore, the context and lessons from undertaking such research has limited baseline on which to compare.

It is also likely that the men who dropped out of the interventions would have benefitted from these, one way or the other. It is possible that the trainer's assessment of the men's willingness to accountability for their behaviours

suggested that some might have been discharged from the service sooner than the scheduled thirty-six weeks. That they have not comprehensively been included in this study suggests that their valuable insight into change trajectory has been missed out.

The lack of contextualization and qualitative research in phenomena such as change around IPV, equally evokes the notion of objectivity and hence reliability. The deductive and positivistic stance of science dictates that logic, epistemic objectivity and certainty are socially constructed (Gergen, 1999) but squarely lodged in culture and history and therefore the need to not leave out descriptions and experiences of other significant parties to the social problem that domestic violence perpetrators is. Therefore, by this logic, it stands to reason that some perpetrators who do not engage or complete the perpetrators programme may offer other valuable insight into the change process around domestic violence and therefore, their exclusion from the study may limit conclusions drawn from this study.

Though most of the reviewed research rarely does adhere to firm and rigid, positivist philosophies, the postmodern challenge is to research the stories of the neglected themes and marginalised voices and their relative positivism. The relevance of this is in search of or grappling as close to the truth as possible and inevitably culminate in the design of effective interventions that take account of the lived experiences of the persons directly anticipated to

benefit the most from such interventions as well as indirectly those affected. Daly (1997) further strengthens this argument by advocating for honest and realistic investigation of ideas closer to the truth with scientific vigour on which we can base analyses and the design of effective interventions.

This study was non-experimental and also exploratory in nature. Therefore, it is likely to suffer from the same criticisms as other similar studies in being less rigorous in comparison to their experimental design cousins. As indicated, it is possible that theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2014) was not reached even though the conclusions from 3 men who participated in the latter stages of the study were consistent in what they mean by *active positive expressions of empathy* (i.e. compassion and kindness).

A related argument is that constructivist grounded theory would benefit from multiple interviewing. This study was based on single interviews of all the participants who agreed to take part in the study and although the participants were offered the opportunity for further follow up interviews or indeed focus group discussions, this was not taken up.

For purposes of this study, theoretical sampling was performed but, as has been confirmed in other studies with men (Follingstad et al. 2005), in a less than straightforward manner. The inability to corroborate these stories with the key “informants” (Charmaz, 2006:111) made it difficult to follow up main

themes and ideas and accordingly permit a more detailed theoretical sampling procedure. The facility for probable “subsequent interviews and observations to allow for deeper theoretical sampling and address conceptual issues” is a strategy identified by Charmaz (2006:111). Further and deeper theoretical sampling could have been utilised to enhance and refine emergent categories (*active positive expressions of empathy* - compassion, and kindness) and their respective properties with a much larger sample.

Study Strengths

The single and most important strength of this study is that it may well be the first, on record, to test the applicability of the COM-B model in exploring the men’s experience of perpetrators programmes. To my knowledge, this study is the first study to explore men’s experiences of the perpetrators’ programmes, and the first study to use the behaviour change wheel.

Whilst this model has been utilised to explore behavioural changes within the public health field, but as far as I am aware, none within the field of criminology or social work associated with IPV. Further, it is the case that some of the men engaged with the programme longer than 14 years previously. The findings, though, are consistent with most other studies that have been completed with short-term follow-up periods. This demonstrates and builds on previous studies around the capacity of the men to learn

valuable skills around improving intimate partner relationships. Thus, the COM-B model adds an additional step in the thematic analysis, which increased the study's efficiency and showed that the entire framework was largely adequate for purpose, albeit with some modifications.

The other biggest contribution of this study is that it has highlighted what the perpetrators found and would find most useful whilst working to make changes to their violent and abusive behaviours. It is this: for intimate partner violence interventions to be effective, they also need to be outward-looking and also encourage the perpetrators to engage in pro-social behaviours such as kindness, compassion towards others. It adds to the growing literature on empathy and specifically other-oriented empathy (compassion and kindness) and how this type of empathy could prove can be included in future interventions with perpetrators, at practice and programme levels.

The findings add to the building knowledge about what turning points/triggers for change (such as threats of criminal prosecution, restricted contact with families, shame, guilt, position, and role of parenting) around domestic abuse. It is hoped that these findings also help us to understand what works in changing behaviours. It also helps to build literature around empathy (Marshall and Marshal, 2011). The study has highlighted the role of compassion and kindness and how this brings to the fore as part of the

process to bring about change. These pro-social motivations were clearly articulated by the participants and appear promising. It is hoped that curriculum will include these *active positive expressions of empathy* to enable the transition towards permanent desistance.

The study also highlights the need and role for motivational interviewing and how this can facilitate setting perpetrators on the path towards the change process around intimate partner violence and abuse. If embedded in the referral process and throughout the interventions, it offers to likely reduce levels of attrition, without suggesting this to be the panacea.

The exploratory nature of the study helped to probe the issues around motivations in detail and obtain accounts from the men directly without too much focus on the outcomes or effectiveness of the interventions. Rather, the study focused on the pathways of engaging and sustaining the same in interventions. It is privileged access to their accounts of what they found useful from engaging in the perpetrators' programme, but also enabled them to propose future interventions and how these would benefit participants. The participants co-constructed these interpretations of this engagement and what this may mean for the development of what may prove to be effective interventions around IPV.

A further strength of the study is that despite not interviewing participants multiple times, I relied on my experience as a social worker to ensure that I reflected on each interview, used memos to evaluate codes, and formulate other codes for subsequent interviews. As Morse (2015) and Guest et al. (2006), skilled experience of researchers in the art of interviewing can and does impact on quality of collected data and richness of subsequent theory. Therefore, consistent with this and constructivist grounded theory, I used my expertise and attempted throughout to remain sensitive to subtle nuances, body language and my knowledge about some of the cases.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has demonstrated that the men's accounts about participating in a perpetrator's programme was not simply concerned about being aware of one's abusive behaviour, but also grasping that their own behaviours affected their male identities. This knowledge consequently appears to help the men in both their behaviour and their identity. By confession and self-examination through group work and sometimes one-to-one sessions, perpetrators of intimate partner abuse moderate abusive behaviours by developing restraint in their definition of new masculinity. The programme shines the light on their negative behaviours which can sometimes evoke strong emotional feelings such as guilt and shame. These feelings can sometimes lead some men from dropping out of interventions but can also embolden the men to

fully engage. Alongside the encouragement from others including motivational interviewing, the men themselves need to be personally determined and resolved to change their behaviours.

The study has argued that while empathy is an important step towards change from primary to secondary desistance, the expanded and externalised expression of empathy (compassion and kindness, otherwise referred to for the purpose of this study as *active positive expressions of empathy*) appears to hold promise for sustained change in IPV interventions.

Recognising the potential impact of compassion and kindness in interventions may greatly contribute to the elimination of intimate partner violence. This is particularly the case considering the valuable insights from neuroscience on the outcomes of compassion training in healthcare professions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has presented and highlighted the stories of men that have used violence in intimate partner relationships and their engagement in a perpetrators programme. It has attempted to use the COM-B model to test the applicability of the same to understand the crucial pathways to treatment around intimate partner violence. It has highlighted how the men increased their capacity to understand an expanded definition of domestic violence and abuse and its negative consequences for themselves and others. It has also highlighted the opportunity of belonging to groups during which beliefs, attitudes and values that promote inappropriate masculinity are challenged. Further, the opportunity to help men link past trauma (ACEs) to their behaviours were explored. Lastly, it has highlighted how the motivation for change was linked to negative consequences of behaviours for the perpetrators and also the victims. The trajectory of change has also been highlighted to often involves contact with the authorities whether the Police, child protection services, family members facilitating and necessitating their abusive behaviours being brought into sharp focus thus compelling the men to engage in the treatment. These external factors acted as wake up calls (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006) for action.

The COM-B model was established to be a practical tool for exploring men's experiences in this study. The motivation component, as a framework for

reviewing current interventions, was assessed to be useful, but also limited. Findings from this study provide insight into the personal, social, and environmental factors that participants report as shaping pathways for change in intimate partner violence of a perpetrators programme in a London Borough. Using the COM-B model was a starting point for understanding behaviour in specific contexts and is able to make a 'behavioural diagnosis' of what needs to change, to modify behaviour. The COM-B model has allowed me to gain deep understanding and increased awareness of the current situation and has clarified which aspects of interventions can be targeted to improve perpetrators programmes. The results presented above suggest that there is potential to optimise all three components of the COM-B model to increase effectiveness of interventions, highlighting the importance of external influences and motivations when designing behaviour change interventions.

The groups facilitated the acquisition of new norms on masculinity and the redefinition of male identity within the context of intimate relationships. This was achieved through learning from the curriculum, from other men who had similar experiences, as well as from the trainers. Additionally, the men received specialised skills in emotional regulation such as time outs and countdowns. This group offers individuals the chance to challenge their beliefs and values, as well as to moderate their violent and abusive behaviours that are detrimental to the development of healthy relationships.

When men recount their behaviours, it provokes negative responses such as embarrassment, shame, and guilt (Walker et al. 2015). It is hoped that this helps them take accountability for their behaviours but also helps men to be encouraged to cultivate the qualities of empathy.

From a less methodical perspective, empathy is essentially the capacity, capability, and ability to recognise another person's perspective. This recognition or understanding is the central basis for societal communication, respect, and morality. It directs humans back to treating others the way they themselves would like to be treated because if they cannot identify the effect of their actions on the emotions and psyche of another, then they also are not equipped with the ability and capability to process the feedback essential to alter their own behaviours, attitudes, and actions. This directly affects their ability to form and sustain deep and positively engaging relationships with the other people in their individual lives. This premise, therefore, emphasizes the role of empathy in affecting and influencing the quality of humans to nurture long-term relationships with others within society.

However, compassion and kindness go beyond understanding another person's point of view or perspective. The facets of these qualities motivate people to perform acts of kindness to others, frequently without anticipating any reciprocation. It is the selflessness of our actions that matter the most to

human relationships. When people are taught or encouraged to perform selfless acts, they are better able to make lasting relationships with others.

In a broader sense, those who lack empathy, compassion, and kindness are more prone to encountering difficulties in establishing healthy relationships with their partners, families, and communities. They will have difficulty recognising and valuing deep and meaningful connections with others, being open to understanding others' emotions on a profound level or acknowledging their deficiencies in effective communication in interpersonal relationships. That is the situation unless they are instructed to do so.

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to elucidate the intricacies of intimate partner violence (IPV), with a predominant emphasis on recidivism and attrition. Scholars and investigators alike have spent numerous years attempting to plug in the gaps, develop strategies to tackle IPV. Yet, despite the rising public awareness campaigns, minimal achievements have been made. As Walker et al. (2015) argue, we need to understand the mechanism for initiating and ceasing engaging in abusive behaviours. The goal of this study was to explore perpetrators' accounts and their experiences of the perpetrators' programme. I purposed to uncover these accounts and experiences which may contribute to the thought and attitudinal processes of males who abuse partners and provide a platform of

emerging theoretical and conceptual understanding from which future research can expand and the design of effective interventions ensue.

According to Marshall and Marshall (2011), research has generally provided and revealed minimal evidence of the perpetrators' capacity for empathy and compassion toward victims with relatively sparse information related to intimate partner abuse. Much less has been researched on compassion and kindness and the trajectory around intimate partner relationships.

As argued elsewhere, accumulating knowledge about change processes involved in IPV at individual, group (re-negotiating values, beliefs,) and wider societal levels (Walker et al. 2015) requires continued investments at multiple levels. However, it is also imperative to understand how the multiple levels interact and affect each other in perpetration and therefore addressing IPV.

Currently, there is no established intervention that effectively incorporates compassion and kindness in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV). Consequently, there is a lack of methods to accurately quantify these attributes, despite the common desire to promote empathy in existing programmes. This discovery has two consequences. Future interventions should prioritise two key areas. Firstly, they should investigate the potential for incorporating compassion and kindness into treatment and interventions

related to domestic abuse. Secondly, research efforts should be directed towards developing a measure, potentially psychometric in nature, that can effectively assess the presence of compassion and kindness in interventions.

It is important for future research to identify interventions at the individual or group level that have the potential to enhance compassion and kindness. Additionally, it is necessary to examine whether these interventions have explanatory or associated correlations with these attributes. Embedding these approaches at both personal and social levels can potentially have clear practical implications for nurturing compassionate qualities.

The men accredited the trainers and the group setting for the change process. The trainers and fellow trainees either encouraged and supported or confronted the perpetrators. If the men felt that the training format and experiences were confrontational and did not like this, they dropped out. This underscores the necessity of exploring the beneficial effects of group work against individual work within the context of formidable barriers to change and how perpetrators position themselves around intimate partner abuse, as argued by Hearn (1998) above.

While the study did not scrutinize the correlated long-term impact between changes in cognitive ability as connected to empathy, compassion, and kindness, it is evident that the new skills learnt, ways of communication,

motivations for change are present in some cases more than 14 years after the men engaged in the perpetrators' programme. This suggests that further research needs to explore the extent to which changes in thought processes can translate into influencing specific behaviours around intimate partner relationships vis a vis domestic violence and abuse and thus how to programme interventions.

The men's accounts and stories in this study are not necessarily about how they feel or whether or not they had changed their behaviours. Rather, it is to explore the emerging research on the trajectory and pathways towards change in abusive relationships to integrate these in future change efforts.

From the perspectives of the eleven men who provided detailed accounts of their experiences, they learnt valuable lessons around new ways of communicating in relationships, conflicts and how to manage these, expanding their awareness and understanding of abusive relationships, and implications for their behaviours. The results from this study confirm that it is a mixture of psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioral therapy and feminist socio-political based intervention approaches that may have facilitated the men to make changes to the ways that they think, behave and act about abuse with intimate partners, in addition to the influence of the criminal justice system, impact of behaviour on family lives and other factors.

While it cannot be concluded that the men's experiences of the programme will lead to cessation of future abuse, it is likely that more longitudinal studies are warranted which should include accounts and stories from the victims related to change outcomes in the long term to reveal further insights into real and lasting changes in intimate partner abuse.

The findings of the study also indicate that human connectedness experienced by the men in the group environment also significantly contributed to their capacity and ability to develop a new model of change in their behaviours, beliefs, values, and attitudes which they can then apply in intimate partner relationships. Further, the men demonstrated the desire for and interest in personal growth which can be offered in groups. These findings also confirm and support emerging research demonstrating that the perpetrators' ability to develop trusting relationships with change agents (trainers) is important to successful and meaningful engagement and thus facilitating attitudinal and behavioural change (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006; Freedberg, 2007). This was apparent in this study.

These findings would seem to confirm Javier and Herron (2018) position that the focus of intervention should be on increasing the perpetrators' ability, willingness, and capacity to mentalise others, which is the basis for healthy relationships. Therefore, effective interventions should unequivocally focus on the rediscovery or further development of abusers' empathy, correcting

the deficient mentalisation and promoting a positive sense of reality. The perpetrators' sense of identity should not be based on revenge, but acknowledgment of value, implicitly and explicitly, of pro-social and positive behaviours towards others.

It is essential for social workers to support breaking down the typecasts and stigma related to perpetrators of intimate partner abuse by actively seeking to engage with them as the role of social workers in motivational interviewing and success of interventions is crucial. They must be open to the undoubted possibility that abusive people are capable and have capacity for change and that this if this position is embedded in practice, it will ultimately lead to motivating the perpetrators to act differently and thus to protect the multitudes of victims. It is essential that those practitioners who feel less confident to engage perpetrators of abuse should be helped to overcome this by sometimes skilling them with motivational interviewing techniques.

As with many qualitative research studies, other variables (both internal and external to the research process) may influence the reliability and validity of findings. In this study, I attempted to ensure that the internal factors such as my tone of scepticism (in the face of blatant minimisation) was such that I encouraged the participant to be honest. I played back one of the audios' several times when the participant said that they had since not engaged in any further abuse when I knew that was not the case. I simply asked, 'no

further incidents at all' in a probing, challenging and yet respectful way. The participant turned around and confirmed that he had engaged in other types of abuse. The way I interviewed this participant was simply probing and not calling him out for saying an untruth.

It is the case that, this study offers the hope that perpetrators of IPV can change their behaviours and learn to express empathy, kindness, and compassion through training. Further research is needed to explore the capacity for empathy, kindness and compassion for men who abuse and trajectory of this in the long-term. If we continually explore the complexities of intimate partner abusive behaviour, how these behaviours are learnt and can change, we will invariably formulate effective interventions.

The research design, paradigm and methods employed in this study were appropriate to the aims, goals, and purposes of the study. The use of interview guides techniques facilitated the men's participation in it and augmented their ownership of the research methods and procedures. Interviews with men obliged me to consider the individuality, language skills, cognitive abilities, emotional resilience, and experience to partake in the interviews. The approach and style of questioning I employed in the interviews, including prompting and probing, supported to elicit deeply the men's meanings and understandings. The study also benefitted from me declaring my interests and ideas, which sometimes helped to prompt.

I also utilised my own observations as a valuable source of data on how individuals perceived the experience of change. Therefore, the use of non-verbal cues, inclusion of humour, and respectful challenging all had a substantial impact on the entire process. I am certain that by tackling the practical challenges associated with this work, it adds to the ongoing discourse about using motivational interviewing techniques to effectively engage perpetrators. Constructivist grounded theory has been the guiding framework, with interactive and iterative processes used to ensure the credibility and rigour of this research. The aim is to draw reliable conclusions that will add to the developing epistemology of IPV.

The reduction of abuse in intimate partner relationships of the future squarely depend on supporting policy and advocacy interventions that, have at their core, the promotion of preventative strategies that teach empathy, kindness and compassion starting within schools through to services for adults. Social workers and other practitioners involved in running interventions must feel confident to actively engage perpetrators of intimate partner violence and abuse. This is because perpetrators of violence and abuse have the capacity and ability to express compassion, kindness and empathy as demonstrated in this study and have shown passion about learning ways to do so. These results support the framework on which to base future research.

Although insider knowledge helped me to understand the level of denial and minimisation of IPV consistent in other studies, this was not fully explored. It is also the case that future research needs to investigate men's capacity for *active positive expressions of empathy* and the associated lasting effects in connection to the learning methods that are especially helpful in changing abusive behaviours. Consequently, more extensive research related to capacity for learning and acting on empathy, kindness, and compassion.

From the participants' perspectives, the themes advanced in this study embody the combination of internal and external influences that are undistinguishably associated with and function as impetuses for change around IPV. These negative costs (personal to IPV perpetrators, as well as victims) accrue and gain thrust over time. When these triggers become salient (might be an epiphany), they compel, possibly becoming overwhelming to the perpetrators themselves, the change process to the perpetration of IPV. The point of salience referred to as decisive point ("point of resolve") as per Walker et al. (2015:2740), which encourages them towards the desistance pathway from IPV. I do agree that the turning points, which might function as triggers and stimulants for change, when taken in isolation, are the necessitating but insufficient factors for change. It is therefore necessary to reach what Göbbels et al. (2012:453) in the "Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO) conceptualise as the decisive momentum". This conceptualised ideation is strongly allied with the conclusions of this study

and argues that the process of desistance from IPV is very dynamic and includes several other factors including the inherent (internal and external) qualities of individuals and readiness for change.

I agree with Walker et al. (2015) that it is theoretically possible that the triggers for change are a dynamic process of multiple events which are not linear but build up across time, circumstances, and space until they reach sufficient salience to individuals. This suggests that the meaning of events to individuals are what form important considerations when they culminate into embarking on a change trajectory towards pro-social behaviours.

Studies on generalised offending behaviours suggest that turning points can lead to long-term behavioural change (Laub and Sampson, 2001), despite differences in meaning across individuals and life stages (Cid and Martí, 2012). However, as argued above, these catalysts need to become salient. In order to become salient, interventions ought to also focus on positive actions towards others, especially the victims, by perpetrators of IPV. These should complement the existing alternate ways to resolve conflicts offered in the current interventions. I feel that this would form the strongest basis for a transition towards shifts and transformations in cognitive capacities (Giordano et al. 2002) to pro-social activities and behaviours. While this may be akin to restorative justice, it suggests that the perpetrators are encouraged

to not only think of others but to engage in positive actions due to the beneficial results of compassion and kindness to others but also themselves.

Recommendations

This study was based on a small sample based on a particular perpetrator programme delivered by one London Borough, albeit over 14 years, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other contexts. There are, however, some important insights gained from the study which can inform the set of recommendations below:

Practice

- Perpetrators programmes and child protection staff to be trained and skilled in empathetic exchanges in the early stages of contact with perpetrators for successful engagement with interventions.
- Train programme staff to prioritise responsibility and accountability without diluting non-abusive actions like compassion and kindness.

Programme and Policy

- Professionals working with perpetrators' and similar interventions to develop curriculum that integrates compassion and kindness.

- Develop qualitative and quantitative measures for testing presence of *active positive expressions of empathy* in perpetrator interventions.
- Explore perpetrators' and similar programmes along a continuum of individual and group contexts, ensuring inclusion of intersectionality.
- Ensure long-term funding and human commitments to perpetrators or similar group and 1:1 programmes/interventions.
- Include concepts of kindness, compassion, and sympathy in current RSE curriculum for adolescent and young persons.

Future research

- Test the applicability of COM-B model to explore differential outcomes for completers against non-completers of perpetrators' programmes.
- Examine how motivational interviewing may enhance kindness, compassion, and sympathy to evaluate the proposed model.
- Explore how cognitive empathy can translate to *active positive expressions of empathy* and lasting change in abusive behaviours.
- Explore whether the change processes remain consistent across various stages of interventions and inform programme development.
- Future research to compare the understanding of meaning of 'taking responsibility' for IPV and practice implications with perpetrators.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BIP	- Batterer Intervention Programme
COM-B	- Capability, Opportunity, Motivation - Behaviour
DA	- Domestic Abuse
DV	- Domestic Violence
DVIP	- Domestic Violence Intervention Programme
HIV	- Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
IPV	- Intimate Partner Violence
WHO	- World Health Organisation
LSHTM	- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
PSHE	- Personal, Social, Health and Economic
RSE	- Relationships and Sex Education

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Ethics Application Form and Approval



ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON SIMPLIFIED ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

For staff and student dissertations and research projects involving data collection from research participants (observations, interviews, questionnaires, group discussions, recordings, video etc).

This form should be discussed and completed jointly by both student and supervisor (and in the case of staff, with their immediate line manager) with each keeping a signed copy of the form.

If the proposed work involves human participants and is judged by the supervisor/line manager potentially to give rise to ethical problems, ethical approval must be sought in advance. The supervisor will recommend whether the completed/signed form and any supporting material should be considered only by the Department's internal approval procedures or be referred to the College Ethics Committee.

To be completed by the applicant

(delete as appropriate)

YES/NO

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Will the study be <i>covert</i> in any way? | NO |
| 2. Will resulting data be used for purposes outside this study? | YES |
| 3. Are you working with a vulnerable population? | YES |
| 4. Is it possible that your study will cause distress or harm to participants? | YES |

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'YES' please supply relevant supporting materials and explanations.

The working title of my dissertation/project is:

Pathways to Change: Men's Experiences of Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programmes

I am fully aware that the research carried out for my undergraduate/masters/doctoral dissertation/study *(delete as appropriate)* requires that I take due care of ethical issues.

I will ensure that consent is obtained from all participants which, saving exceptional cases, will be in writing.

For students: these issues have been discussed with my supervisor.

For staff: these issues have been discussed with my line manager.

Staff/Student Name (print below):

Signature:

Date:

David Mwanza

David Mwanza

15/05/2017

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Appendix II: Information Sheet and Consent Form

A study on Pathways to Change: Men's Experiences of Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programmes

This study is to describe perpetrator's experience of working with perpetrator programmes to gain an understanding of their group's change journey and document factors that account for change. It also seeks to identify factors that explain the process of stopping to behaved in what can be considered violent behaviours. It is hoped that this information will be useful in planning and delivering appropriate domestic violence services for men.

You are invited to participate in this research and to share your stories/experiences with the perpetrators' programmes. By sharing your stories/experiences you will help us to learn about your experience of this service. It will aim to address the three related issues. First, it aims to gain an understanding of intimate partner violence. Second, it will aim to document your experiences of the change process, as part of our wider understanding of intimate partner violence. Third, it is hoped that this information will draw society's attention to the issue of change process and facilitate the design of suitable and appropriate domestic violence programmes and measures. Such insight could fill a missing gap in our knowledge around domestic violence in informing treatments targeted at perpetrators.

The information you provide will make a meaningful contribution to research, and you and the society as a whole may be enriched by helping to bring awareness about domestic violence situation and bring about a social change.

Your participation will involve a one-to-one interview which will take about 60 to 90 minutes and will consist of questions about your life and your experiences and perception of programme and what specific aspects of the programme that you found beneficial. It will include questions such as "how you became involved with the perpetrator's programme, what you found useful in the session, what ideas you have implemented in your life".

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can terminate the interview at any time without negative consequences. If any of the questions asked during the interview may cause discomfort to you, you may stop the interview at any time. You can also contact Respect (<http://respect.uk.net> or www.respectphonenumber.org.uk, Fourth Floor, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT Tel: 020 7549 0578 or 0808 802 4040 e-mail: info@respectphonenumber.org.uk).

The interview can be held at your place of choice. This can be at your home or in the Local Authority offices in ***** or nearer to your home.

Any information that you share will be treated in confidence, and your identity will not be revealed in any reports or publication resulting from this research.

As person with direct personal experience, your contribution to this work is important. In appreciation, the project group would like to provide you with a gift of £25 as a thank you. If you are in receipt of state benefits, this gift does not affect your benefits. In addition, our policy is to cover expenses that are incurred necessarily, wholly and exclusively in the course of your involvement.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

David Mwanza
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Telephone: + 44 (0) 1784443379
E-mail: pbva085@live.rhul.ac.uk, or

Dr Frank Keating
Supervisor
Department of Social Work
Royal Holloway University of London
Egham
Surrey TW20 0EX

Tel: 01784 414964
E-mail: F.Keating@rhul.ac.uk

Consent Form

My consent allows David Mwanza:

a) to tape record/take notes for this meeting/interview

b) to use information given by me in this meeting for the purpose of his research

I further understand that:

a) My participation in this research is voluntary

b) b) I can refuse to participate in this research at any time

c) All information given by me will be treated in confidence

d) Any papers or reports either published or unpublished, that result from this research will preserve codes of confidentiality and anonymity

If you have any questions or concern about the research or wish to know more about the research do not hesitate to contact Mr David Mwanza, :+ 44-07821602843 or email: pbva085@live.rhul.ac.uk, or her Supervisor Dr Frank Keating at : +44-1784 , email F.Keating@rhul.ac.uk

I -----(Name of Participant) have read and understand the information sheet which describes this study and its purpose. I hereby consent to participate in this study.

Name: (Participant) _____ Signature _____ Date:

Name: (Researcher) _____ Signature _____ Date:

Appendix III: Letter to Organisation

The Director

***** Council/Men's Programme Coordinator/DVIP Programme

***** Council/DVIP Programme

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Research Study - Pathways to Change: Men's Experiences of a Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programme

My name is David Mwanza, and I am writing to seek your support for a research study. I am a research student at Royal Holloway University of London, London.

My aim is to investigate to perpetrator's experience of working with perpetrator programmes to gain an understanding of their change journey and document factors that account for change process. It also seeks to identify factors that explain why people cease being violent in intimate partner relationships as a result of attending a perpetrator's programme. It is hoped that these findings will facilitate the thinking behind the design of appropriate domestic violence intervention services.

This research already has full ethical approval from the University research panel.

This Doctorate research study will aim to address the three related issues. First, it aims to gain an understanding of intimate partner violence. Second, it will aim to document your experiences of the change process, as part of our wider understanding of intimate partner violence. Third, it is hoped that this information will draw society's attention to the issue of change process and facilitate the design of suitable and appropriate domestic violence programmes and measures. Such insight could fill a missing gap in our knowledge around domestic violence in informing treatments targeted at perpetrators. Such insight could fill a missing gap in our knowledge around domestic violence in informing treatments targeted at perpetrators.

The sheer effect of domestic violence and effectiveness of interventions continue to worry policy makers because domestic violence is one of the main causes of repeat victimisation. Yet, it is grossly underreported, and questions arise about effective interventions are. It is therefore important to explore this topic further by specifically hearing from the men who have attended this course before.

I am well informed of the issues around the ethical considerations in safeguarding participants. Strict confidentiality and participant anonymity is guaranteed.

I would be delighted if you could support recruitment of participants for this research study. I am seeking to recruit men who have attended the men's programme for the last 10 years. If possible, I would appreciate any help in locating these men by obtaining their last known contact details.

I would be more than happy to answer any queries you may have relating to this research study. If you feel you are able to help, I can be contacted by return e-mail or on the following number Mobile: 07821602843.

I thank you for your time in reading this long e-mail and hope I can count on your kind support. For any confirmation of the legitimacy of this study, please contact my supervisor Dr. Frank Keating.

Full acknowledgement of all participating organisations will be recorded in the published findings.

Kind regards

David Mwanza

Appendix IV: Interview Schedule



Section A. Demographic information

Tell me about your age, when and where you were born.

How many children do you have?

What is your profession/trade and what work do you do?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Section B. The programme

Tell me how you became a part of the programme, how did you find out about the programme? Did someone, perhaps, a professional refer you?

Was there a specific incident/event?

Tell me about the programme – how long you were on it, how often did you attend, did you miss any sessions and what were the reasons for this.

How many people were in the group?

How did you find the programme (useful not useful, why)?

What benefitted you the most from the programme? What was most helpful things from being on the programme? (why?)

What part of the programme, do you think has led to you changing your behaviour towards a partner, women, or other people? In what ways and has it led to change in your behaviours? Tell me the ways in which this has happened.

What part of the training or being on the programme do you think was not particularly helpful/useful for you (why is that)?

What, if anything, do you think you need to help you with your behaviour which was not dealt with by this programme?

Additional Questions

What were the things that you have found to be important to you during the programme especially in relation to your own circumstances/life?

In terms of your own experience, what do compassion, and kindness mean to you? Do they mean the same thing as empathy, sympathy, pity? Explain what your meaning of these are.

Give me an example of kindness and compassion and how one can show this to others and how does one know when someone has been treated with compassion and kindness?

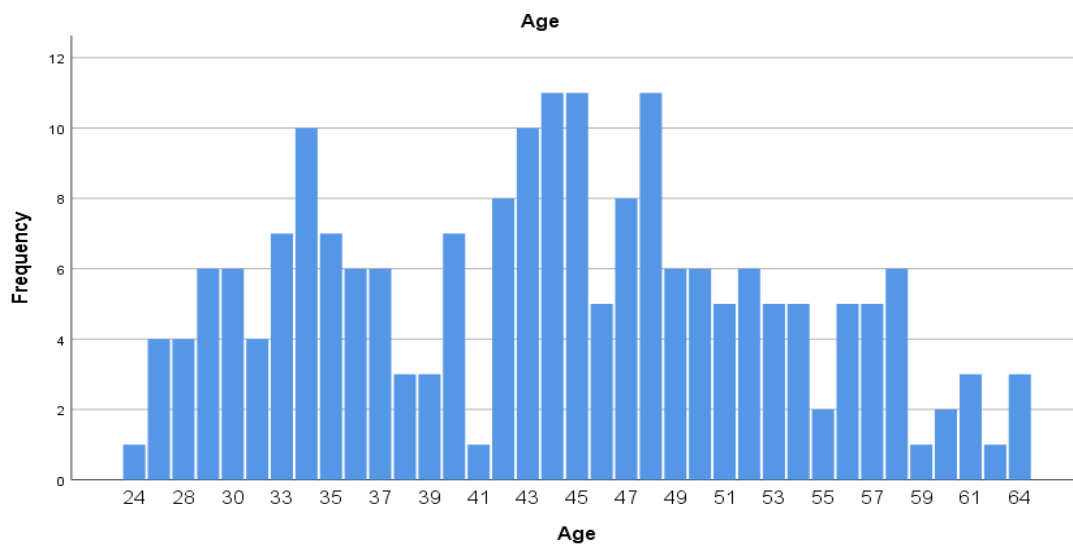
What suggestions do you have that future training can include regarding expressing compassion and kindness? Do you think it is possible to teach people to be kind or compassionate?

Appendix V: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample and Sessions Attended with the Perpetrators Programme

Appendix V.I: Demographic Information on Men Involved with the Perpetrators Programme

Characteristic	Value	Percentage (%)
Mean Age (years)	43.7	
Median Age (Years)	44	
Ethnicity		
White British	63	31.5
Other White	5	2.5
European	14	7.0
Asian British	51	25.5
Other Asian	10	5.0
Black Caribbean	22	11.0
Black African	24	12.0
Dual Heritage	4	2.0
Other	7	3.5
Number of sessions attended		
0-4	125	62.5
5-9	23	11.5
10-14	14	7.0
15-19	8	4.0
20-24	6	3.0
25-29	5	2.5
30-34	6	3.0
35-39	1	0.5
Above 39	12	6.0

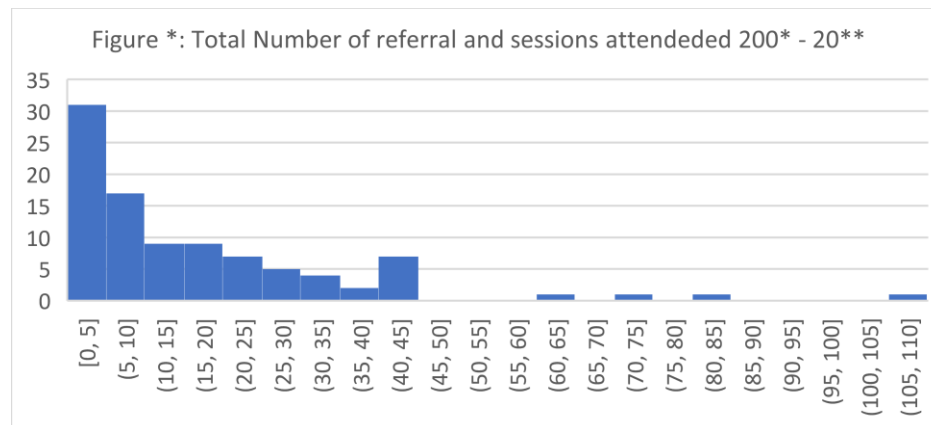
Appendix V.II: Age distribution of Men who made contact with the Perpetrators Programme



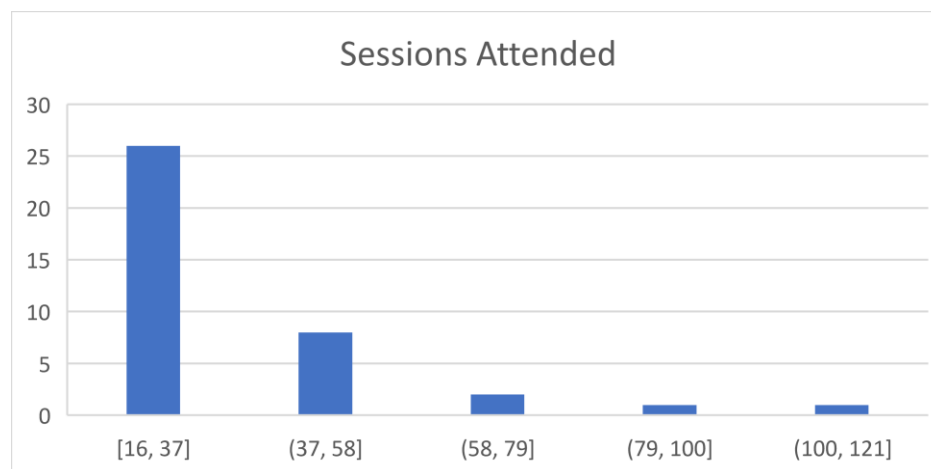
Appendix V.III: Descriptive Statistics of the Men who came into Contact with the Men's Programme

Sessions	Statistic
Mean	8.15
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
Lower Bound	5.99
Upper Bound	10.31
Median	0.00
Variance	240.06
Standard Deviation	15.49
Minimum	0
Maximum	108
Range	108
Interquartile Range	10

Appendix V.IV: Total Number of Referrals and Sessions 2014-2018



Appendix V.V: Distribution of the Total Number of Sessions Attended



Appendix V.VI: Demographics of the Study Participants

Characteristic	Value/Percentage
Mean Age (years)	50.2
Ethnicity	
White British	4
Asian British	2
Other Asian	1
Black Caribbean	2
Black African	2
Dual Heritage	1
Relationship Status	
Single/Never Married	3
Married/Common Law/Cohabiting	6
Divorced/Separated	1
Separated	2
Participant Living with	
Spouse/ Partner	6*
Spouse who was with them at the time of the DV incident	3
Parents/Siblings/Other Relatives	
Child(ren)	2*
Friends	2
Alone	4
Employment Status	
Employed (Full or Part-time)	6
Unemployed (Sick leave, disability)	6
Retired	
Number of sessions attended	
15-19	9
20-24	7
25-29	4
30-34	5
35-39	3
Above 39	12

*: Some of the participants lived with their partners as well as their children.

Appendix VI: Memo from Interview with Interviewee 1

My interview with 48-year-old Justin (pseudonyms are used) was exactly a month since I first made contact. On completion of the interview, Justin said that he was happy to have assisted to in the programme. I was relieved!

When I first contacted him by telephone to make the time for this interview, Justin said that he would make contact with me the following week. He called me a few days after and said that he had been unwell. He agreed to meet me the next time he was on leave. I was really anxious he would make the meeting. We had missed one after all.

Before leaving my home, I transiently considered the appropriateness of my dress. Having checked that I had all I needed for the interview including the recorder, not bad and my phone fully charged, I drove off.

When I found the home, I was greeted by Justin's daughter.

Justin's daughter invited me in the home, and I was taken aback by the state of the home. It was not very maintained house with bags everywhere. It looked like there were repair works going on. It looked more like a poorly maintained home. I immediately thought, what is Justin teaching his teenage daughter about the importance of cleanliness.

I found Justin sitting on the couch and he invited me to sit down with him. He wore a smile on his face and looked quite a tall sporty guy. I wondered whether to seat on the couch as I felt uncomfortable. I would never refuse a seat, and obviously out of politeness, I sat down. I made myself comfortable, oh well, sort of, anyway! I thought to myself, does this situation warrant a call to the social work team.

Justin's daughter immediately left us alone to start talking.

We started the interview. I was in the house for about 88 minutes. I thanked Justin for the opportunity to meet him in his own home and his own personal space and to make me feel welcome that this was a real privilege. The description of the home environment is never reflected in research reports. This interaction was for me the most valuable and rewarding experience.

Appendix VII: Memo from Interview with Interviewee 4

Had a really good interview today with **** Interviewee 4. He is a 51-year-old male of Black British Caribbean heritage.

This interview was particularly interesting. The gentleman offered insight into what he thought the trainer did not accept to address in the interview. He spoke about doing things such as “making a cup of tea for his partner” and when he wanted to share this with the trainer, he said that he was told that “the training needed to focus on him taking responsibility for his actions”.

We discussed together and wondered why doing little things like that is not considered important in the course of the training.

He also spoke about what he would like men to be taught such as doing things for others without expecting anything in return. This makes empathy have a new meaning.


Empathy is about putting ourselves in someone else’s shoes. However, this act *** is referring to is active expression of empathy. This is self-less, (a bit like you donate money for charity to feed hungry children around the world) - actions to benefit others – compassion or love-kindness!

We wondered together whether this might be meaningful way to help the men.

Empathy	Compassion/Kindness
Stop doing something because (a) it hurts others, (b) you might get in trouble for hurting others	Do something because (a) it will help others, even though it does not help me (b) Makes both the other person and me happy
I might get something back for not doing something	I don't get anything back from doing this

Appendix VIII: Line by Line Coding of Interview Script

Question	Response	Coding
<p>How did you become a part of the programme; how did you find out about the programme? Were you referred by someone, may be a professional or someone else?</p>	<p>Me and my missus had had an <u>argument</u> and the <u>social worker</u> said that we needed some mediation and also because I had <u>anger</u> issues. So, <u>the social worker said that I could attend this programme</u>. At the time, I was drinking a lot and did not care much. However, my daughter would have been taken into care and <u>my sister</u> told me that this would not be allowed in his family, and I needed to step up.</p>	<p>Domestic incident Child protection service</p> <p>Negative emotions</p> <p>Professional introduction to service Motivational interviewing</p> <p>Negative consequences of not engaging Role of family members</p>
<p>Was there anything else that happened before you started the programme?</p>	<p>Me and my missus has <u>separated</u>. We were arguing a lot. So the arguments, and my anger and my drinking, made it <u>hard for us to remain together</u>. But my missus was also very unwell herself so it was either my daughter <u>went into care, and I would not be able to see her again, or I dealt with my issues</u> - drinking and anger to be able to keep our daughter. Simple as! The social worker also said that we might try mediation.</p>	<p>Breakdown of family/negative consequences of behaviours</p> <p>Personal resolve/realisation/epiphany</p> <p>Negative consequences of behaviour</p>
<p>So, the possible loss of your daughter, what the social worker said and what your sister said, all these were</p>	<p>Yeah, I <u>couldn't bear the thought that my daughter would end up in foster care</u>. My sister was also encouraging to me to attend the</p>	<p>Negative consequences of behaviour</p> <p>Turning point/Triggers</p>

important to help you decide to engage with the service.	programme. My ex was also pushing that it was <u>important that my daughter was not taken into care.</u>	Turning point/Triggers
So how long were you on the programme for:	For about a year. I used to attend and attended about weekly.	
How many people were in the group with you	There were about 6 of us. I know one guy who was on the programme with me.	
Let's think back to the programme itself, what was your experience on the programme.	<p>It helped me to let off my frustrations. It helped me to re-evaluate my thinking. It was like, why do I get so angry. <u>What makes me so angry.</u> The programme helped me to process all these things. I lost my parents and turned to drinking a lot at the time. The programme helped me to realise that I <u>had not grieved properly</u>, and my anger and frustration was in relation to loss of my parents, and it was the time I left my area where I grew up in South London about the age of 11. Losing my <u>parents made me easily irritable in my relationship and therefore really difficult</u> to be around my missus at the time.</p> <p>The <u>trauma</u> and also grew up with racism and <u>witnessed domestic abuse with my parents.</u> All these things were very traumatic for me, and the group helped</p>	<p>Link behaviour to trauma</p> <p>Awareness of reasons for abusive behaviour</p> 

What was your own experience? Did you feel comfortable to talk about your feelings in the group?	I am usually a very private person. <u>So, it was really hard to talk</u> about my life in a group, initially. However, as weeks went by, it <u>became much more comfortable</u> . It was like attending AA meetings. As I said I felt like it was group therapy.	Apprehension Empathetic group/Supportive group
Did you miss any sessions?	I cannot remember the number of sessions I missed.. maybe a couple, but I stuck with it.	
The programme was for about 36 weeks, and you attended more than that, tell me why?	It felt like group therapy. To be in <u>touch with myself</u> as to why I was feeling as angry as I did. This was like the first time I had grieved properly and connected my feelings to why my <u>relationship with my missus</u> did not last. I also wanted to <u>be a good dad to my daughter</u> .	Link past trauma to domestic abuse Personal resolve to be good role model
So, tell me what you found most useful programme (useful not useful, why)?	I think some <u>guys tried to justify their actions based on religion</u> and at times, the trainer allowed them to talk much about this.	Beliefs challenged by trainers
Anything else you found least useful?	Just those I think. Others were really minor, and it was down to the guys themselves.	
Tell me what part of the programme led you to changing your behaviours.	I think <u>taking responsibility</u> for your actions. <u>Knowing what makes you angry and difficult to be around with</u> .	Take responsibility Link past trauma to domestic abuse

	I think once you do that, and of course with age, I feel I am more chilled now. I am older and wiser...hopefully, anyway.	
Is there anything that you would have liked to hear more of from the training. I ask because some people say that talking about how our actions affect others is a powerful way to bring about change.	<p>Everyone should be given a chance to talk about their experiences and take responsibility for their actions. Some people can change, I believe.</p> <p>I think the world needs more love and people should be <u>taught to love one another</u>. It is possible to see people in different light. I look back on my actions and how this affected my daughter and my missus then, <u>I feel ashamed of my behaviour then</u>. No matter how my missus <u>upset me</u>, we should control ourselves. We should always think about how <u>others feel when we act the way we do</u>.</p> <p>I think the programme could have talked about that in detail.</p>	<p>Take responsibility</p> <p>Self-less</p> <p>Negative consequences of behaviour</p> <p>Shame Guilt</p> <p>Empathy</p>
Anything else?	I think that some of the people talked about <u>religion</u> and how they are taught to treat women, which is fine. <u>Maybe I was not very patient</u> with them because I was not really brought up as Christian. But as I grew older, I realised that	<p>Beliefs and attitudes</p> <p>Empathy in group</p>

	<p>these things, religion, trauma affect how we behave, and part of the therapy should include talking about these things.</p> <p><u>But I think you can teach people to put themselves in other people's shoes</u></p>	
How did you get discharged from the programme?	The trainer told me that I could <u>leave the group</u>	Trainer, accountability
Looking back on the programme now, do you think it helped you a lot?	<p>Yeah definitely. As I said, I would recommend to anyone that is in the same position as me to attend the programme. People need a chance to talk about their experiences. Focus on their <u>upbringing and how these impacts on their behaviours and also</u> their behaviours and how they impact on others</p>	Awareness of self