



Counselling as an intervention strategy for men who use violence in their intimate relationships

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ABSTRACT: International research increasingly highlights that if a significant reduction in intimate partner violence (IPV) is to be achieved, it will be important to establish interventions that include both men and women, and are aimed at addressing the social norms that maintain such violence. In South Africa 1 in 4 men report to use some form of violence in their intimate relationships. In some instances in South Africa it has been found that men do not view their behaviour as constituting violence since these harmful practices are ingrained in the culture as normal, culturally appropriate, and normative intimate relationship behaviour. In the current formative evaluation, an exploration into counselling services as an intervention strategy for men who use violence was done in Mitchell's Plain, South Africa. This study included in-depth interviews with men (N=6) who used violence in their intimate relationships, and focus-groups with their counsellors (N=4). Men reported violence as a personal crisis aggravated by social environments. Furthermore, counsellors perceived help seeking of men to be based on individual choice. The conceptualisation of IPV, experiences of reciprocal abuse in relationships, help-seeking behaviour and masculinity, access to intervention services for men, and ultimately the preliminary outcomes of counselling on men's violent behaviour were explored.

KEYWORDS: intimate partner violence; counselling; help-seeking behaviour; masculinity; relationship abuse; qualitative research



Global statistics continuously show that the most prevalent form of violence perpetrated against people, regardless of country, culture, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, is the violence perpetrated in intimate relationships (Chibber and Krishnan, 2011). This violence which occurs, by definition, between dating, cohabiting and married couples, is most commonly described as the repeated threat or practice of physical violence; psychological abuse through intimidation, humiliation, and controlling behaviour; and coerced or forced sexual violence (Alhabib, Nur, & Jones, 2010). The lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) has been reported to vary from 15% to 71% according to a WHO multi-country study (Garcia-Moreno, Heise, Jansen *et al.*, 2005), recognising it as a legitimate human rights, public health and societal concern, necessitating effective interventions (Joachim, 2000).

Although legal frameworks and societal definitions around issues of gender-based violence, more specifically IPV, differ in relation to country and culture, the leading theories and descriptions view the victim and the perpetrator as clearly distinct individuals. As a result, interventions for individuals in IPV situations are predominantly focused on shelters, medical and counselling services for women as the victims; and protection orders or court-ordered brief treatment programmes for men as the perpetrators (Tilley and Brackley, 2005; Jewkes, 2002). In the same way, research from South Africa (SA) predominantly suggests that IPV is perpetrated by men against women. In SA this form of violence is often justified by the amount of literature indicating that masculinity and violence has been yoked together in the history and cultural norms of the country (Abrahams and Jewkes, 2005; Morrell 2001). Researchers studying this relationship between masculinity and IPV suggest that violence is often a manner in which a man responds when his perceived gender role is challenged or threatened in society (Moore and Stuart, 2005). These gendered risk factors for IPV perpetration include a strong patriarchal belief with regard to gender roles, power and control; objectification of women; and a feeling of entitlement to respect and sex (Weldon and Gilchrist, 2012; Moore, Stuart, McNulty, *et al.*, 2010; Smith, 2007; Jewkes, 2002). However, men's use of IPV has also been closely related to their use of violence against other men as an essential behavioural means to resolve conflict (Fulu, Jewkes, Roselli, & Garcia-Moreno, 2013; Katz, 2006; Morrell, 2001). Hamel (2007) suggests that while patriarchal beliefs contribute to IPV incidences, more intrinsic facilitative factors are the harbouring of pro-violent attitudes. These attitudes are supported by IPV

risk factors, as depicted in research, including ineffective anger management skills; desensitisation to violence; childhood exposure to IPV; parental neglect and isolation; financial insecurity and/or unemployment; abuse of alcohol or drugs; failed previous relationships; actual or perceived infidelity and mistrust; retaliation; emotional dysregulation and meeting the criterion for a DSM Axis II personality disorder (Weldon *et al.*, 2012; Ross, 2011; Wei and Brackley, 2010; Smith, 2007; Medeiros and Strauss, 2006; Tilley *et al.*, 2005; Lipsky, Caetano, Field, *et al.*, 2005).

These findings propose that IPV is a multifaceted phenomenon driven by individual, situational and relational factors in both men and women which need to be considered by policy-makers, researchers, and health professionals when developing interventions for victims and perpetrators (Hamel, 2009). In a recent assessment of national policies and laws in 11 African countries, on the level that men are engaged in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, South Africa ranked fourth (Sonke Gender Justice Network, 2012). This assessment indicated that some initiatives on the engagement of men regarding GBV were adequate, whereas other areas still had room for improvement, including: the conceptualisation of IPV, insufficient focus on preventative measures, commitment to transform gender norms, and inadequate acknowledgement of the violence men experience and its likelihood to increase the risk of men perpetrating violence (Sonke Gender Justice Network, 2012).

With 27.5% of South African men reporting the use of physical violence in their most recent intimate relationship (Gupta, Silverman, Hemenway, *et al.*, 2008) it is necessary that programmes for men who use violence become ever more accessible and effective in promoting the wellbeing of both men and women. This paradigm shift in the intervention and prevention of violence against women has been strongly supported by Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2015) in their review of multiple interventions' effectiveness in reducing violence and its risk factors. Approaches were considered most effective when a focus on strengthening women's resilience was combined with men's active involvement in programmes for sustained gender transformation. An increased focus needs to be placed on understanding the experiences and motivations of violent men, in order to tailor interventions toward addressing men's attitudes, behaviours, identities and associations of violence in their relationships (Moore *et al.*, 2005; Flood, 2011). Against this backdrop, a formative evaluation was conducted of counselling as an intervention strategy for men from a low income community in South Africa who use violence in their intimate relationships.

Methodology

Formative evaluations are generally employed during a project's implementation and focus on ways of improving the effectiveness of a programme. This is done through the exploration of processes from the viewpoints of both participants and project staff and/or stakeholders. In the current study, qualitative data were collected from the target population (male clients) and their counsellors to better understand their profiles, needs, help-seeking related experiences, and perceived benefits of the programme.

The counselling programme included in this study was the *Toolkit for Men: male counselling in the context of intimate partner violence* implemented by *Mosaic Training, Service & Healing Centre for Women*. *Mosaic* is a non-profit women's rights organisation offering psycho-social, educational and awareness services to persons affected by and at-risk of domestic and sexual violence. Included in the holistic approach is the inclusion of services that engage men and boys on the issues of gender-based violence, and a specific counselling programme keeping men who use IPV accountable and working towards ending the violence in the relationship by engaging with both the client and his partner. Gender transformative approaches are employed and sessions address the social tolerance of violence, norms around masculinity in the South African context, and the justification for using violence. The Toolkit for Men has been designed to be implemented by social service professionals and consist of a 12-session male counselling programme aimed at men who use violence within their intimate relationships. The programme works together with men, their partners and where necessary, their families. The underlying assumption in developing the Toolkit for Men was based on the principle that violence against women is never acceptable and must stop; that men are 'gendered' persons, and men have the potential to change. A further important component to counselling is the regulation of non-violent behaviour during the three month period of counselling. This often serves as a reflection of how the client is responding to counselling and the progress that is made.

The research project was initiated after receiving approval from the relevant partner institution's review boards. Study participants (N=10) were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling in the community of Mitchell's Plain in Cape Town, South Africa, through current programmes focused on counselling men who use violence. Four men who self-reported as having used violence in their in-

timate relationship and currently participating in the counselling programme, and six counsellors of the Toolkit for Men, volunteered as participants in the research study. Male clients were eligible to participate if (1) they were currently in counselling for IPV perpetration; (2) were at least 18 years old and provided informed consent; and (3) did not have serious addictions to alcohol or other substances which could limit effective participation and reliable outcomes. All the clients were in counselling for using violence in their intimate relationships and most entered counselling voluntarily (even though some did so as the prerequisite for a protection order suspension).

Data were collected by student research assistants through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The individual interviews with men who were perpetrators of violence were conducted by a trained researcher and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The researcher probed for information on men's motivation for entering into counselling; their perceptions of the violent behaviour in their relationships; the perceived effect of counselling on men and their relationships; and recommendations on what can be done to improve counselling services for men who use IPV. The counsellors (one male; five female) were split into two focus group discussions (N=3 per group). All of the counsellors had more than 3 years of experience in counselling men who engaged in IPV. The researchers sought to understand counsellors' perceptions and experiences of counselling men; the challenges and benefits of counselling men; and the perceived influence of culture and gender roles within the South African context. The discussions also allowed for both male clients and counsellors to share their thoughts on how to engage other men who use violence in their relationships. Men in the study were open and willing to share the intimate details of their experiences.

Focus groups and interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by the research assistants. The recordings were destroyed after transcription and pseudonyms were used for participants during data analysis such that responses could not be traced back to individual participants. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by means of *Atlas.ti* to highlight and extract any obvious emerging patterns. Data analysis were initiated through open coding, examining the data sentence by sentence, to identify distinct concepts. Subsequently, discrete concepts related to similar phenomena were grouped together and along with discourses highlighted in the transcript, themes were built. In an attempt to establish credibility (Shenton, 2004) of the thematic analysis and

interpretations, all members of the research team reviewed the transcripts and critiqued emerging codes and themes. Finally, the themes and findings were brought back to the partner community to confirm the accuracy, relevance and meaning of the findings. Prominent themes which emerged included: varied attribution of responsibility in IPV; violence as a personal crisis aggravated by social environment; factors that bring men to counselling; cultural and societal challenges to men's help-seeking behaviour; counsellor characteristics enabling successful male counselling; and the perceived benefits of counselling.

Findings

In exploring counselling as an intervention for men who experience IPV, counsellors reflected on some practical obstacles to successful outcomes when men refuse to cooperate with counselling practices such as, not keeping appointments, attending sessions while under the influence of substances, or when crossing respectful boundaries. In most of these cases the appropriate referral is made to assist the client to be able to address other self-harm behaviours thus allowing them to fully participate in the counselling programme. A complexity in counselling men who use violence is the prevalence of manipulation in these clients' interactions, and how counsellors often spend a lot of time "on getting to the truth" with regard to the challenges and triggers in a relationship. It is within this context that the current study explored participants' conceptualisation of IPV along with narratives on cultural and societal challenges to men's help-seeking behaviour in violent relationships. Analysis revealed the landscape of counselling men who use violence in their intimate relationships, the counsellor characteristics that enable successful engagement with men and the change in violence initiated by counselling.

Violence as a personal crisis aggravated by social environments

Male clients described the prompts to violence as being a perceived loss of control over their relationships, reminders of abuse from their personal histories, and the inability to effectively express their emotions and viewpoints. A history of infidelity from their partner along with the manner in which women verbally responded to them were significant in challenging the participants' masculine ideas of being in

control making them feel *'disrespected and blamed by dominant women who undermine'* them. The counsellors agreed that violence is a personal response that is aggravated by society's perception *'that women should be submissive and that men are the heads of the household, should be in control.'*

Frustrated expressions: a lifetime characterised by violence

According to the participants' accounts, violence occurs when men struggle to deal with their anger that is often connected to an event in their individual past or in the history of the current relationship that resurfaces and brings about frustration and anger, which gets channelled towards their partner.

I can say whenever maybe a situation occurs between me and that person, or maybe that person is disrespectful, I think it kinda have flashbacks of everything my father said to me and the way he treated me at home and all the violent things that degraded me. That's the kinda thing that go through my mind so I channel all those things in the situation that I am, in the moment. I think that's what triggers the anger that I've got inside. (Ntokozo, male client)

Men further shared their experiences of being unable to fully express themselves within an argument which can then lead to them reacting violently. Men often spoke about the state of their mind during these incidences as being detached from the actions of violence they are involved in at that moment. One male client shared:

I'm angry that time, I won't still think that time. It will just happen, afterwards I will realise what I have actually done now ... there is no thoughts you are just doing, you are just doing it. (Douglas, male client)

The frustration of limited communication skills along with inadequate emotional regulation evolves into the perception of being manipulated and being dominated by a verbal forcefulness from their female partners.

I take her emotions in and as soon as I open my mouth then she shouts me down. So that frustrates me big time ... somebody does something to me I feel

like I need to lash back. My wife is very intelligent and I find it difficult in being able to retaliate verbally. (Max, male client)

Is it because they dominant or is it because the wife threatens them. In my case I think sometimes woman is abusive then men intend to, uhm, what's the word now, defend themselves and in a violent manner. (Douglas, male client)

These are often also connected to men coming from households where they were exposed to domestic violence and perceive violence as a normal way of communicating between partners and establishing dominance in a household.

Culture, gender, society and men who use violence

Counsellors acknowledged that engaging men who use violence is impossible unless you are very mindful of the part gender roles and individual histories play in relationships. Gender roles especially contribute to violence when there is limited or non-effective communication in the relationship with misunderstandings, assumptions and accusation being the result. This is exacerbated when men grew up within homes and communities characterised by violence and perceive violence as a normal way of communicating between partners and establishing dominance in a household.

If you as partners are fighting or arguing over a certain issue it is like normal for the female partner to get smacked or kicked it's like a normal thing and the culture allows that. As the man you are the head of the house you take decision, you take control you know, so it's not something like unusual. (Jabu, male counsellor)

It is a learned behaviour, they are taught: 'you will see when you grow up my son that a woman cannot listen or understand without the use of a fist upon her' ... it's like a normal thing and the culture allows that. (Debra, counsellor)

Counsellors believe that during counselling a focus should be on unlearning negative behaviour learned in childhood and replacing these with positive behaviours and tools along with developing a personal value system.

Attributions of responsibility: victim's problems vs shared problems

Attribution of responsibility is a major issue and can be a driving force of the self-justifications and self-rationalisations of the behaviour of men who use violence. Also the male clients' belief that IPV is normal behaviour in their culture or that their partners elicit the violence from them. Some male participants normalised their behaviour by introducing it as an act of self-defence.

... but I just need her to stop pushing me to the point and she knows she is doing it, she knows the outcome and she doesn't care about the outcome and when it happen then all fingers get pointed at me. (Max, male client)

In this context, some of the men still appeared to not see the significance of the violent behaviour between partners. This was most evident in one of the male client's narrative of abusing his wife in the viewpoint of the strong love he feels towards her and how his wife knows the consequences of her behaviour towards him:

And I love my wife very much ... if I didn't love her I wouldn't act the way I do but I just need her to stop pushing me to the point and she knows she is doing it, she knows the outcome and she doesn't care about the outcome and when it happens then all fingers get pointed at me ... (Max, male client)

The narrative throughout this study exposed violence in intimate relationship as an interplay between personal and relational factors, making the conceptualisation of perpetrator versus victim, and the onset of abuse difficult. Both counsellors and male clients highlighted the increasing amount of men self-reporting abuse by their female partners and how this appears to be ignored by relevant stakeholders. Counsellors believe that because IPV often arises in relationships as a result of power, and violence being perceived as physical abuse, men are seen as physically stronger than women, the blame is most often shifted on men. All the male participants articulated a sense of injustice associated with the lack of interventions for them; along with them believing that they were either also abused or that the violence was a general relational problem that needed intervention with both men

and women. It is in light of this that counsellors resolutely stated that:

It's no use trying to help one person and leaving one party out because that person will still continue with his or her abusive ways. Our role is to teach them both that there are other ways of resolving problems without the use of violence. (Miriam, counsellor)

What brings men to counselling?

Several themes regarding men's help-seeking behaviour emerged from the results including the role of masculinity in help-seeking; numerous accounts of missed opportunities; and the critical need for awareness of and access to services for men.

It's a personal decision to do counselling

A number of the participants stated that it is only through a man's personal decision that they want or need counselling that is able to bring them to a place of optimally accessing services. Male clients shared their stories of realising that they needed help, combined with becoming aware of services available to men that brought them to counselling. Counsellors reiterated the importance of IPV awareness campaigns in attracting male clients.

Men start to see themselves in the pictures. I once had a pamphlet in my office which read 'are you an abuser, do you feel that you are violating other people's rights' and this man came into my office immediately after reading that and admitted that he was an abuser and he needed help. (Zanele, counsellor)

Some participants did admit that it took a court order for them to realise that violence in their lives were getting out of hand and that they needed to seek services available to them to work to change their current situation.

I don't think it is easy, because men don't realise they have a problem man. Its yourself also, if you admit you have a problem you will come, if you don't admit you have a problem then you won't come. (Leonard, male client)

The role of social support during stressful life events

Men did not generally access services from a personal decision, as they believe they have to keep their challenges hidden. Male clients voiced the lack of support they receive from their peers, family and other support networks.

Men experience isolation in not being able to share about the violence used in their relationships, their struggles to express their emotions and also the perceived belief from society that it is only men who use violence in relationships: the perception that men are the sole perpetrators in violent situations and not also potential victims in a relationship of reciprocal abuse.

I think more men should come forward basically because a lot of men I know where I live, in the area, uhm, that needs this support and men don't really speak out. Pride they have too much pride and so a lot of them just turn to alcohol and drugs and suicide or respond in a violent manner and a lot those men aren't violent men, but they tend to keep it in them. They keep in and in and there comes a time when you explode so I think they do approach more men.
(Leonard, male client)

Counselling is risky behaviour: Help-seeking and masculinity

The social construction of masculinity is often an obstacle to men seeking help and support. A counsellor expressed that 'being a man in a community means you don't seek help, you keep quiet, you suffer inside, you don't talk'.

I think it's that sense of thinking if you come for counselling you are not man enough, you are weak you can't handle your issues so you need help. It's like the stigma they afraid to get it's exactly like when you come for counselling it's like you are weak for which that is not the case sometimes you need to speak to someone about any other issue. (Jabu, male counselor)

Several participants felt that emotional difficulty and violence in their relationships are amplified as they perceive support services weighing their masculinity in times of help-seeking.

I've been several times to the police station where I went to report that my wife is abusive and several stab me and then they would laugh at me and say I'm a moffie (gay), why don't I hit her back. Then I'd walk away and cry and don't know where to turn to. (Leonard, male client)

In this way participants perceived help-seeking as a risky behaviour often stigmatised by society and their peers. As a result, men usually only access services when there was a greater risk than social acceptance threatening them, for example when they are court mandated to go for counselling.

Access to counselling: Missed opportunities to engage men

Finally, participants felt that there was not sufficient awareness of the services available to men who use violence in their intimate relationships. There needs to be more communication available on where men can go to access help. Participants raised the perception that primarily women's rights and community-based support services for victims are promoted in South Africa, with the needs of men who use violence remain unmet. Men feel that they need services where they can access support:

You need to open up centres where men can have feelings and there would be less abuse ... If I could have dealt with this then, then I would not have abused my wife ... but nobody is looking at that, nobody is taking into consideration for the man. (Douglas, male client)

Counselling Men: The landscape

First Responses

Male clients' first responses were often to question why they were "summoned" for counselling and often reacted with distrust when speaking to a female counsellor whom they believed will side with the female partner. Consequently, the first stages of counselling men needs to focus on establishing rapport and trust with the client and assuring men that the counselling programme is for them, as a cli-

ent, and not as a “perpetrator”.

Counsellors revealed that a principal goal of counselling is to help the male client accept responsibility for the violence that occurred in their intimate relationships and demonstrate a willingness to change their interactions with their partners. It is a significant step for a man to enter counselling, and most of the counsellors shared the importance of acknowledging men for this precursor of commitment to change their own behaviour.

Education was highlighted as a vital part of counselling, steering men towards recognising that no form of abuse is acceptable under any conditions. It is believed that frequently male clients are not aware that their behavior constitutes abuse as some practices are deeply ingrained in the culture as normal intimate relationship behaviour.

Most of the time when you get a male client he is like lost and confused ‘why am I here because I paid lobola [dowry] for this wife and why I cannot say no, why I cannot rule because it’s how we do things we rule, we control the women’ so if now there’s not an understanding of domestic violence he is likely to continue thinking that’s it’s a normal thing. (Sandra, counsellor)

Attitudes of counsellors towards men who use violence in their intimate relationships

In the light of these personal, societal and institutional barriers to help-seeking, men indicated factors that enable access to available counselling services. Both male clients and counsellors stated that men hold the preconception that they need to be assisted by a male counsellor. However, after the first session, when they have experienced the nature of the counselling session as facilitated by the female counsellor as non-judgemental and client-centred, their perceptions are altered and are thereafter more at ease to return to the female counsellor.

The counsellors and clients alike highlighted the attitude of the counsellor as the most essential component in counselling men. The following were some of the attributes highlighted: non-judgemental and non-biased, sensitive towards men’s issues, inspire trust, ensure confidentiality, and be able to communicate respectfully towards all cultures.

Benefits of counselling

Counselors believe that the benefits of counseling for men are many but highlighted some of the benefits to include: awareness raising of what abusive behavior looks like and aiding in establishing a positive masculine identity of a good partner and father. In addition, counselling provides men with the opportunity and space to deal with various emotional, psychological and relational challenges.

I think it helps a lot because most of the time men are not given platforms to express themselves and to be open and share whatever problem they are going through so it's a good thing now that they can come, being open and not being judge. Like you know when you are raised as a man in Xhosa they say the man is not supposed to cry, men must be strong so it gives them a good platform to express themselves and talk about issues. (Jabu, male counselor)

Male clients felt that their recent counseling experience was helpful as it provided the opportunity to share what they went through in their violent experiences and in their pasts without judgment. Also, it provided them with the opportunity to learn new skills on how to handle future situations and how to more effectively express themselves.

Uh, talking it out with (counsellors name) and getting a few idea on how to handle the situation and giving me tips on things to try on whenever there is a certain situation that occurs in that certain time, so that's the thing that I enjoy. (Ntokozo, male client)

Participants concluded that they would like to talk about *'family life, everything, marriage, relationships, everything.'*

Discussion

This study formed part of a larger formative research project establishing an integrated approach to engaging men and boys as respectful partners and caring fathers within a South African context. This paper, with the focus on interventions

for IPV, was decided on as a vehicle to encourage discussion and debate on IPV prevention and intervention strategies aimed at men who use violence. It further places emphasis on the need to acknowledge and take caution not to overlook the issues experienced by men who use violence within violent relationships such as responsibility assumption for violence, reciprocal partner violence, and gendered access to services.

Male clients endorsed retaliation, a loss of control, infidelity, history of violence in the family and an inability to constructively express themselves emotionally as reasons for violence. It is with this understanding that it is necessary to have interventions that allow scope for the counsellor to adapt the content to where the client is at the moment of entry into the programme. Counsellors in the study confirmed that a one-size-fits-all intervention does not work as the issues of IPV are beyond gender roles but reflect on a society that uses violence, a population with low emotional and communication skills, and challenging situational factors. As a result, we need more flexible intervention alternatives beyond the protection order and legal redress to include intensive individual therapy, couples counselling, structured perpetrators groups, and restorative justice approaches.

Findings highlight risk factors for IPV as individual violent histories which were exacerbated by relational conditions between men and women in the violent relationships. Therefore, findings from this study, in correlation with recent research in the field (Jewkes, *et al.*, 2015; Fulu, *et al.*, 2013; Ricardo, Eads, & Barker, 2012), suggest that meaningful change in intimate violence perpetration will need interventions that target both males and females. The current study indicated men's need for intervention services along with their preference to seek help from formal sources such as the police service. but also now their preference to engage with a counsellor, more specifically male counsellors, as oppose to a family member or friend. Male clients highlighted that some interventions and communication around IPV, especially those in the policing and criminal justice sectors, are not gender inclusive and discourages men from accessing services. Changing the prevalence of violence in intimate relationships will require systematic and sustained efforts at the levels of relationships, families, communities, institutions, and legislations (Flood, 2011). This will need to include the training of health professionals and criminal justice agents to be non-judgemental and to understand the interplay involved in IPV relationships.

The findings suggest that gender bias should be carefully considered when developing awareness campaigns and criminal justice policies. More advertising and awareness campaigns are needed for the services available to men who use or experience violence in their intimate relationships. Assistance for men who use violence need to be made more readily available in order to shift societal norms, encourage help-seeking behaviour and ultimately intervene in relationships early enough.

Limitations

The limitations of the study, as with all qualitative studies, were those of self-report along with a small sample size from which findings were drawn. Researchers often reveal that experiences individuals recount from violent incidents are different, with individuals more often than not remembering that they were acting justly in the conflict (Armstrong, Wernke, Medina & Schafer, 2002). However, this method of data enquiry allows for an in-depth view of personal experiences of men who have perpetrated violence to a partner. This study is limited to a sample from a specific low income community in Cape Town and all participants were affiliated with an organisation working in the participants' community of origin. The findings, though extensive, present a snapshot of the perceptions of violence in the communities of interest and cannot be generalized to the entire community. However, the findings provide a valuable resource as baseline information for further inquiry.

Conclusion

Exploring male counselling for behavioural change with regards to intimate partner violence, in a low income community, with high levels of violence and crime and low levels of help seeking behaviour, has provided insight into the understanding and experiences of male perpetrators of violence as well as the challenges and experiences of those who provide the counselling. Participants experienced violence as a personal crisis when their lives had been characterised by violence in their communities and in their households during childhood and felt further aggravated by the perceived loss of control in their adult relationships and current social

environments. Men who accessed counselling in this study did not access services voluntarily, however, the majority of men believed in the benefits of counselling.

Paradigm shifts regarding masculinity and violence are necessary to affect change on an individual level and to further develop intervention programmes that encompass how individuals and specific societies/cultures understand IPV, identifying the specific individual treatment needs of participants, and learning how to deliver programmes in a way that is engaging to men, and motivates help-seeking. In addition, strategies need to be developed that can enhance motivation to change, as a long initial contemplation of change phase was indicated by men. These can include awareness raising of both IPV and the availability of interventions.

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