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**EXPLORING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
EXPERIENCES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
ABUSED WOMEN IN MALAYSIA**

by

Mariny ABDUL GHANI

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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This thesis is dedicated to everyone whose work to prevent and put an end to the plague of domestic violence.

This piece of research is dedicated to

My late father,

ABDUL GHANI BIN HASHIM

(31 July 1946 – 3 May 2005)

*Whom his memory has been a source of inspiration to
me....*

ABSTRACT

Very little is known about the actual living experiences of Malaysian women who are in a domestic violence relationship. This current study attempts to redress this shortfall by listening to the women's stories, understanding their home-life situations and ultimately offering ideas, strategies as well as information to prevent domestic violence in Malaysia. Underpinned by a feminist perspective, a qualitative approach was employed to explore the abused women's accounts in relation to domestic violence impacts, barriers to violence disclosure, as well as useful resources for support of women victims in dealing with domestic violence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 women who identified themselves as victims and survivors of domestic violence perpetrated by their husbands/ex-husbands.

Via the analysis of thematic, six major themes were identified to be the impact of domestic violence, as described by the participants. The impacts include physical injuries, mental health problems, social isolation, a growing faith as well as adverse effects on the children and on the women's self-worth. The study also found that many of these abused women were reluctant to disclose abuse because they wanted to conceal those violence experiences from others because of Malaysian perception on disclosing marital affairs, they were concerned about the children's well-being, they felt partly responsible in provoking the violence, and they admitted to lacking knowledge on the provisions of support available for domestic violence victims in the country. From other aspect, the women also struggled to avoid negative labels given for being disrespectful to their men. In addition, the findings revealed four main themes related to the underlying issues on the needs and support of domestic violence service provisions that women drew on in their accounts: theme 1, unpleasant experiences when accessing the services; theme 2, the problems with procedures in disclosing and in the help-seeking process; theme 3, the usefulness of services and theme 4, women's needs and support mechanisms. As a review, the results gained from this present study prove the existence of domestic violence in Malaysian families. Indeed, the interference of cultural values as well as religious beliefs upheld by the Malaysian community was greatly associated with its occurrence.

In relation to Malaysia, cultural as well as religious beliefs play a significant role in moulding its people. The results presented seem to add interesting knowledge to the existing literature, where battered Muslim women in Malaysia perceive their violence experiences as a motivation to surrender themselves to God and seek spiritual assistance as one of the impacts due to domestic violence problems. Further, the women's misapprehension of Islamic concepts such as disobedience and *nusyuz* (to the male partner) has made disclosing violence experiences difficult. Over and above this, the researcher found that the mechanisms of domestic violence resource provisions are worthy of investigation. The findings from this research demonstrate helpful and unhelpful provision of services identified by abused women, in particular relating to institutions in the nation. Prior to ending, this research proposes a number of recommendations for change in regards to formal supportive network resources, education on violence against women at the societal level, as well as the implication of the findings for the development of domestic violence social policy and practise in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a traumatic episode which is influenced by complex social, cultural, and psychological factors. It is often referred to as the violence between husband and wife or non-married partners. Mitchell and Hodson (1983) state that women rather than men are at higher risk of being targeted as a victim, either in marriage or in a relationship. This claim was supported by the findings from the British Crime Survey (BCS) in 2001 which found the percentage of women experiencing domestic violence was approximately twice that of men (Walby & Allen, 2004).

Furthermore, the domestic violence problem has been identified as occurring across all religions, ethnicities, cultures, ages and economic status (Pyles & Postmus, 2004). Despite a large number of studies having been conducted around the globe focusing on these abusive relationships, knowledge about abused women's experiences is lacking. Notably, the impact of such victimization experiences may have adverse consequences not only for the victims, but their children, families, friends as well as the whole of society.

Heise, Raikes, Watts and Zwi published a paper in 1994 describing domestic violence as a significant social and public health problem in many countries. Besides being a tremendous burden to social services, health care and the criminal justice system, the harm wrought by domestic violence is more problematic in terms of the physical, emotional, psychological and behavioural damage (Berry, 2000). Thus, issues of domestic violence need to be considered as an urgent and important matter because a substantial proportion of resources are demanded from everyone in dealing with this problem.

Background

Definitions and terms

Domestic violence is often described as a family-centred problem and generally understood as patterns of abusive and coercive behaviour which may cause physical injuries, psychological and emotional disturbances, sexual intimidation as well as financial oppression of the victim. In fact, it is portrayed as the act of maltreatment of one's partner by the other in the context of an intimate relationship. A similar definition, described by Healey, Smith and O'Sullivan (1998), is that acts of violence and abusive behaviours are used by adults to control and dominate their intimate partners, and is thus classified as domestic violence.

There are many definitions for domestic violence, which may differ from one another depending upon the perspective of the definer(s). Straus and Gelles (1990) argued that proper definitions of domestic violence are essential, since without accurate description the problems related to the occurrence of violent domestic incidents seem to get more severe. The World Health Organizations (WHO) defines violence in the following way:

“Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation” (WHO, 2009).

Meanwhile, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States identifies domestic violence as offences against the family and children and describes it as “Unlawful violent acts by a family member (or legal guardian) that threaten the physical, mental, or economic well-being or morals of another family member and that are not classifiable as other offences, such as assault or sex offences. Attempts are included” (FBI, 2006).

From the Women's Aid UK (United Kingdom) website, their definition distinguishes the issues of coercion and control and states that domestic violence is:

“Physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that take place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called ‘honour crimes’ ” (Women's Aid, 2009).

In respect of the UK legal definition, the Home Office defines domestic violence as “any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality” (Home Office Crime Reduction, 2009). Last year in March 2013, the extended definition of domestic violence took effect to include people under 18 years of age and also to incorporate the coercive control behaviour of the abuser. This new cross-government definition of domestic violence states:

“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”.

It is believed that the extension of this definition aims to increase awareness among young people about violence in intimate relationships, as well as to encourage violence disclosure for the seeking of appropriate support services (Home Office, 2013).

Goldstein (2007: 9) defines domestic violence in the following way:

“Domestic violence is behaviour driven by a need to control. It can range from threats, annoying telephone calls and stalking (such as following the victim to and from work, and threatening her/him), to unwanted sexual intercourse, hitting and, in the worst case, even death. Domestic violence is usually not a single event and often becomes more severe and frequent over time. Many abusers are not violent in other relationships, such as at work or with friends. They routinely deny the domestic violence and the severity of that violence.

When confronted with their abusive behaviour, they tend to blame their partner for provoking it or refuse to accept responsibility for it”.

The Women’s Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO) states: “Domestic violence is an abuse of power. It is when one partner, usually a boyfriend or husband, attempts to control and dominate the other, usually a girlfriend or wife through violence, threat of violence, or by controlling the couple's finances and social life” (WAO, 2009). Similarly, the All Women’s Action Society Malaysia (AWAM) defines it as: “The incident when a partner, former partner or family member attempts to control and dominate a person through violence, the threat of violence or other means of control such as deprivation” (AWAM, 2009). In contrast, both of these definitions take into consideration the violence which occurs within non-marital couples, although in Malaysia, domestic violence is only regarded as the violence occurring among intimate partners who are either spouses or ex-spouse of a legal relationship as stated in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) [DVA]. Other definitions include: “It is an act of violence committed by a husband or wife against the other spouse or any member of a family against another member of the same family. It can take the form of physical abuse such as punching and beating, or verbal abuse such as taunting and threatening words” (Kandiah, 2003: 36).

According to Goldstein (2007: 10), “The type of violence depends on cultural, ethnic, educational and economic backgrounds. The abuse may happen once, or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years”. The occurrence of physical and emotional abuse during the relationship may be continuing even after the relationship has ended. Tjaden & Thoennes (2000) also reported that repeated occurrences of domestic violence were experienced by the victims and the suspects.

In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted in 1993, violence against women is seen as:

“Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to

exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs” (United Nations, 1994 citing Dutton, Kilpatrick, Friedman & Patel, 2003: 156)

There are a few key words which similarly describe the term violence in an intimate relationship. The majority of the terms have been used interchangeably and they refer to: “Any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). As Kelly and Johnson state: “The terms have been used interchangeably by women’s advocates, domestic violence educators, and service providers for three decades, based on their belief that all incidents of domestic violence involve male battering” (Kelly & Johnson, 2008: 478). Some of the terms have a gender-specific connotation, for example ‘wife abuse’ and some of them are referring to non-marital relationships such as ‘dating violence’. A typical variety of terminologies used by the authors of research in previous studies include:

Domestic violence	Intimate partner violence	Domestic abuse
Spousal abuse	Partner abuse	Family violence
Partner violence	Marital violence	Women battering

While an array of definitions and terminologies have been suggested, throughout this report the term ‘domestic violence’ will be used with the definition by Healey *et al.* (1998: 3) who saw it as: “A pattern of assault and coercive behaviours including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners”. This definition is used as it comprehensively addresses the nature of the problems that come under the heading of domestic violence.

Movements opposing domestic violence against women

One of the most important world events of the 1970s was the advent of the women's movement opposing domestic violence against women. Due to the resurgence of the movement, there was greater public awareness about domestic violence and it began to be recognized globally as an important social problem. Great Britain and the United States of America had become the pioneers in providing the foundation to address domestic violence issues with regard to institutional practices, economic segmentation and cultural beliefs (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

Prior to the years of the 70s, domestic violence was thought to be a private matter and any disputes were mainly ignored and left to be settled within the family. As Gartner and Macmillan (1995: 394) state: "Women are most likely to be victimized by people they know well and because of this they are less likely to inform the authorities". In addition, a study by Dhakal (2008) found that the majority of women experiencing domestic violence episodes in Nepal did not press any charges against the abusers so as to maintain male or family honour. Besides, Mitchell & Hodson (1983) explain that the reason for prolonged violence in a relationship is because families or couples are keeping the problem hidden from their social circle.

In some other countries, the growth of the women's movement has helped to raise awareness of the increase in the incidence of intentional injuries which had affected many people, especially women and children (Krug *et al.*, 2002). This view is supported by Kilpatrick (2004), who notes that in the mid-1970s, the impetus towards combating domestic violence had penetrated into several countries such as Australia, the Republic of Ireland and Canada. Malaysia, on the other hand, had a later start in acknowledging the issue of violence against women. Since the 1980s, the recognition of domestic violence as a problem became evident with the establishment of Malaysia's first refuge for women victims. Thereafter, as a result of feminist pressure, the enactment of The Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) was then successfully implemented in 1996. More details regarding the movement opposing violence against women in Malaysia are discussed in the next chapter.

Prevalence of domestic violence worldwide

The real magnitude of the domestic violence problem has remained unclear as available data on violence against women varies depending on the sampling procedures, the research methods applied and the parameters used to define the term ‘domestic violence’ itself (Gazmararian, Lazorick, Spitz, Ballard, Salzman & Mark, 1996). Another major obstacle in identifying the extent of this issue is the unreported cases of domestic violence (Newton, 2001). Hence, statistics on violence in families are still a matter of some dispute. “Some experts believe domestic violence is increasing. Others believe that there has been a slight decrease, but that more women are reporting abuse. Either way, the numbers prove that it still happens far, far too often” (Berry, 2000: 6).

Krug *et al.* (2002) revealed that between 10 and 69 per cent of women in their survey had reported intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Studies are beginning to estimate domestic violence occurrences within marital relationships but, as the understanding has evolved, the research scope has been extended to include non-marital relationships. The prevalence rates for abuse among cohabiting and dating relationships have been found to be as significant as between married couples (Deal & Wampler, 1986; Makepeace, 1983).

Domestic violence is often seen as a gender issue. According to Walby and Allen (2004), women are more prone to be the victims of assaults compared to men, especially in regards to sexual violence. In a study conducted by Tjaden and Thoennes (2000), twenty two per cent of women had reported being assaulted by their male partner or ex-partner compared to a figure of only 7.4 per cent regarding male victims.

In the UK, statistics show that one in every four women has experienced episodes of domestic violence at some point in their lives (Women’s Aid, 2009) whereas, in the United States, approximately two million women are subject to violence by their intimate partners every year (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Table 1.1 indicates the prevalence of domestic violence against women in 22 countries (UNICEF, 2000: 5).

Table 1.1: Global statistics on domestic violence against women

Country	The prevalence of domestic violence episodes
Cambodia	16% of women (a nationally representative sample of women) reported being physically abused by a spouse; 8% report being injured.
Canada	29% of women (a nationally representative sample of 12,300 women) reported being physically assaulted by a current or former partner since the age of 16.
Chile	26% of women (representative sample of women from Santiago) reported at least one episode of violence by a partner, 11% reported at least one episode of severe violence and 15% of women reported at least one episode of less severe violence.
Colombia	19% of 6,097 women surveyed had been physically assaulted by their partner in their lifetime.
Egypt	35% of women (a nationally representative sample of women) reported being beaten by their husband at some point in their marriage.
Estonia	29% of women aged 18-24 fear domestic violence, and the proportion rises with age, affecting 52% of women 65 or older, according to a 1994 survey of 2,315 women.
India	Up to 45% of married men acknowledged physically abusing their wives, according to a 1996 survey of 6,902 men in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
Israel	32% of women reported at least one episode of physical abuse by their partner and 30% reported sexual coercion by their husbands in the previous year, according to a 1997 survey of 1,826 Arab women.
Japan	59% of 796 women surveyed in 1993 reported being physically abused by their partner.
Kenya	42% of 612 women surveyed in one district reported having been beaten by a partner; of those 58% reported that they were beaten often or sometimes.
Korea	38% of wives reported being physically abused by their spouse, based on a survey of a random sample of women.
Mexico	30% of 650 women surveyed in Guadalajara reported at least one episode of physical violence by a partner; 13% reported physical violence within the previous year, according to a 1997 report.
Nicaragua	52% of women (representative sample of women in Leon) reported being physically abused by a partner at least once; 27% reported physical abuse in the previous year, according to a 1996 report.

New Zealand	20% of 314 women surveyed reported being hit or physically abused by a male partner.
Poland	60% of divorced women surveyed in 1993 by the Centre for the Examination of Public Opinion reported having been hit at least once by their ex-husbands; an additional 25% reported repeated violence.
Russia (St. Petersburg)	25% of girls (and 11% of boys) reported unwanted sexual contact, according to a survey of 174 boys and 172 girls in grade 10 (aged 14-17).
Switzerland	20% of 1,500 women reported being physically assaulted according to a 1997 survey.
Tajikistan	23% of 550 women aged 18-40 reported physical abuse, according to a survey.
Thailand	20% of husbands (a representative sample of 619 husbands) acknowledged physically abusing their wives at least once in their marriage.
Uganda	41% of women reported being beaten or physically harmed by a partner; 41% of men reported beating their partner (representative sample of women and their partners in two districts).
United Kingdom	25% of women (a random sample of women from one district) had been punched or slapped by a partner or ex-partner in their lifetime.
United States	28% of women (a nationally representative sample of women) reported at least one episode of physical violence initiated by their partner.
Zimbabwe	32% of 966 women in one province reported physical abuse by a family or household member since the age of 16, according to a 1996 survey.

As can be seen from the table, the figures show that domestic violence episodes occurred in nearly all parts of the world, from the industrialized countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom and New Zealand to European countries and the countries of Continental Africa. Most of the countries surveyed reported the prevalence rates of domestic violence as being 15 to 35 per cent. The highest percentage was Poland (60%) while the lowest was Cambodia (16%). Asian and Pacific countries such as India and Japan recorded among the highest prevalence rates with 45 per cent and 59 per cent respectively.

The data available from violence against women surveys confirms that the prevalence of violence does include various forms of abuse such as physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse as well as sexual abuse. Even though many countries still do not consider forced sex in marriage as rape, in recent years some countries have begun to legislate against marital rape and view it as a crime. These countries include Australia, Austria, Barbados, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad & Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (UNICEF, 2000).

Similarly, regarding the researched country, Malaysia, the magnitude of this social issue is huge and it has been put forward as part of the national agenda. The next section gives a brief overview of facts and figures regarding domestic violence cases in Malaysia in order to describe the current scale of the problem. A detailed discussion on the prevalence of domestic violence, however, is presented under chapter two – The Malaysian Context.

The Research

Problem statement

Violence against women remains a problem in Malaysia. Although many dramatic cases have been reported in the media, the issue is still viewed with little interest by the general public. According to the Royal Malaysian Police Force figures, it can be seen that the latest data documented on all forms of violence against women in Malaysia was in 2010. Statistics in 2007 showed that domestic violence makes up nearly 50 per cent of the reported cases of violence against women in Malaysia; followed by cases of rape as well as a small percentage of incest, child abuse and abuse of domestic workers (WAO, 2009).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the proportion of violence inflicted on women in 2007, and which identifies domestic violence as the main problem faced by most of Malaysian women.

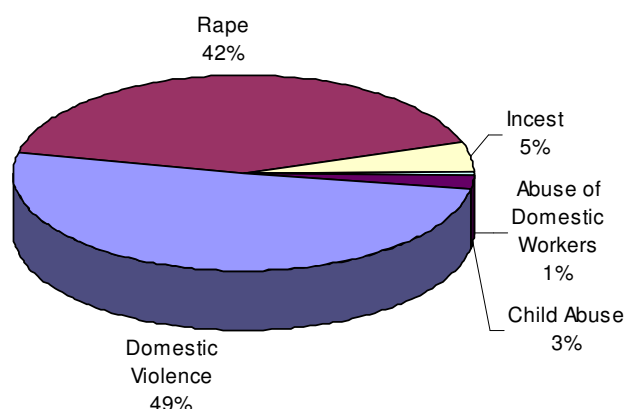


Figure 1.1: Reported cases of violence against women in 2007

Meanwhile, latest police statistics 2010 on violence against women in Malaysia demonstrate that domestic violence cases were recorded as among the highest over a ten year period. Although many strategies and plans have been implemented in attempting to combat this social problem, surprisingly the number of cases reported for domestic violence still remains comparatively very high. Therefore, the effectiveness of intervention measures should be questioned. However, from the perspective of the violence disclosure, this increment showed a positive improvement in which indicated more openness on Malaysian women regarding disclosing domestic violence issue. Table 1.2 below shows the latest statistics sourced by the Royal Malaysian Police and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (WAO, 2011).

Table 1.2: Statistics on violence against women in Malaysia (2000-2010)

Police Reports	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Domestic violence	3468	3107	2755	2555	3101	3093	3264	3756	3769	3643	3173
Rape	1217	1386	1431	1479	1760	1931	2454	3098	3409	3626	3595
Incest	213	246	306	254	334	295	332	360	334	385	N/A
Abuse of domestic workers	56	66	39	40	66	37	45	39	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child abuse	146	150	123	119	148	189	141	196	N/A	203	257

The Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) has been in force for almost 17 years in the nation; however it fails to protect the victims as it should (WAO, 2009). The reason is considered to be some of the legal loopholes that appear to have weakened the enforcement of the Act itself. Women's groups criticize the Act as insufficient and there is an urgent need for it to be reviewed.

One of the issues that have been highlighted by the women's rights activists for improvement include legal protection for victims from sexual and psychological abuse, since the Act is currently limited to cases in which visible evidence of physical injury is present, despite its interpretation to include sexual and psychological abuse. The powers of arrest based on this Act are outlined in article 7(1): "Where the court is satisfied that the person against whom a protection order or interim protection order is made is likely to cause actual physical injury to the protected person or persons, the court may attach a power of arrest to such protection order or interim protection order, as the case may be" (Domestic Violence Act 521, 1994: 10).

Over the last three decades, domestic violence has been recognized as a social problem in the country since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. Even though various strategies, campaigns and legislation have been set up in order to tackle the problem, the wide patriarchy system practice in the society remains as a cultural barrier. In spite of that, the effectiveness of those approaches mentioned above also still in doubt as there is a lack of studies conducted in order to review its efficiency.

The knowledge about this social problem in Malaysia is somehow restricted. Fundamental issues such as the nature, causes and consequences of domestic violence, are still under-researched. Furthermore, according to National Report on Violence and Health (Malaysia) 2006, local data on the impact of intimate partner violence in Malaysia is not available. It is believed that the outputs from empirical research are the key elements in proposing any possible solutions to overcome this problem. In the researcher's opinion the lack of empirical studies may be due to financial constraints (i.e. limited grants and research funds) and that the 'culture' of conducting research is not widely adopted in Malaysia. These obstacles may have prevented the huge

potential of new knowledge and an in-depth understanding concerning this spousal abuse problem.

In recent years, the Malaysian government has acknowledged the importance of empirical research in helping to revise as well as develop the country's policies and practices. On that account, academics and researchers in public and private universities in Malaysia are encouraged to perform studies on diverse disciplines. As for domestic violence research, University Sains Malaysia has taken the initiative by establishing the Centre for Women's Development Research. This centre aims to provide space and mobilise researchers to conduct studies in relation to women's development. In this regard, there are two ongoing research initiatives which are related to domestic violence issues entitled 'A country level study of women's well-being and domestic violence against women' by Shuib, Ali, Endut, Onn and Shahrudin (In press) and 'A study of enforcement and justice agencies within the legal framework of domestic violence in Malaysia' by Endut, Azmawati, Mohd Hashim and Mohd Jalil (In press). These are national studies that are financially supported by the Ministry of Health (MOHE) and an IRPA grant (Intensification of Research in Priority Areas). In brief, the studies are investigating the problem of domestic violence as an aspect of Malaysian women's health, as well as legal remedies and supports available for handling such cases in the country. The researcher hopes that these studies will inspire more research in the future to examine various aspects of domestic violence in Malaysia.

Research aims

The purpose of this study is to add to the growing body of knowledge in Malaysia on domestic violence against women. This study is useful as part of the growing literature on this subject as the estimation of the prevalence of domestic violence in Malaysia is hampered by the under-reporting of cases. Evidence found in this study can be accessed to assist in the future improvement of the provision of services, as well as to enhance an understanding of the highlighted issues. Explicitly, the present study seeks to explore from the viewpoint of abused women their experiences living within an abusive relationship in Malaysia. This led to specific research questions of which the following three were formulated as follows:

1) How does the experience of domestic violence impact upon the abused women?

This question will perhaps provide an in-depth understanding regarding the consequences of domestic violence experiences on the abused women's lives. There may be issues pertaining to culture, religion or belief that play a significant role in the women's perception of the abuse. As for example in Amirthalingam's statement: "The cultural perception that women should tolerate some amount of violence must be reviewed" (Amirthalingam, 2003: 9). Moreover, the impact of domestic violence may include such aspects as the physical, social and psychological dimensions and women's emotional well-being.

2) What are the barriers that inhibit the abused women from disclosing and seeking outside help?

Domestic violence is believed to be hugely under-reported in Malaysia. The question perhaps will allow the abused women to expose the genuine reasons for delaying or not reporting their experiences. According to the National Report on Violence and Health (Malaysia) in 2006, domestic violence victims or survivors were usually trying to hide the problem, as they believed in the sanctity and the privacy of the family, as well as seeking to avoid shame. Typical barriers such as negative social stigma attached to the domestic violence victim/survivor may influence the women's decision in disclosing or not disclosing the violent incidents.

3) What are the issues highlighted by abused women in relation to their needs and the support of domestic violence service providers?

The responses given by the abused women will perhaps facilitate the identifying of issues related to the existing needs of the women and the supports offered by domestic violence providers for abused women within the nation. This feedback is highly valuable as a number of improvements can then be made in order to better serve the abused women in the future. The study expects to propose a number of practical recommendations as well as constructive suggestions as part of the research contribution to the abused women specifically and also the whole community in general.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers the experiences of domestic violence among Malaysian women. This investigation is aimed at understanding the dynamics of families with violent relationships and rectifying the problem so as to address this sensitive issue more efficiently in the future. The findings are based on data gathered from qualitative interviews with the abused women and the professionals who work in related service sectors. Taken together, it is worth mentioning that the problem of gaining access as well as recruitment of the participant was very challenging. Although the small number of participants may not be representative of all abused women in Malaysia, generalisation is not what this study aimed for. Indeed, data saturation is the central key in determining the aptness of this research. Through this study, the experiences of these abused women were captured and their world becomes clearly visible for others to see. As the study focuses on the women's view, the need for a better understanding of the perpetrator's perspective is strongly recommended for future work. The 'check-and-balance' process may explain these two different outlooks and perhaps enhance the extent of awareness and recognition of the problem. Further discussion about the suggestions of future research is outlined towards the end of this dissertation.

Importance of this study

The importance of this study is mainly related to the fact that numerous issues regarding domestic violence in Malaysia are still under-researched. At the moment there is still little empirical data obtained from the literature on domestic violence against women in the context of Malaysia, particularly on the experiences of abused women living in the violent relationship. Although a few studies have investigated the health of this group of women (Shuib *et al.*, In press) as well as on existing support services provided (Putit, 2008), little information is available about the impact that such violence has on a woman's sense of well-being, about their violence disclosure and also on their experiences of seeking professional assistance while dealing with the abuse.

Based on the latest statistics in 2012 that are sourced from the Royal Malaysia Police and Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, urgent attention is needed to study this matter because the data showed that cases of domestic violence are increasing every year, and has been recorded as the highest form of violence against women in Malaysia for more than a decade. As such, this study attempts to delve deeper into this social issue. Even though at the moment the service provisions for abused women are in place, the study was interested in looking at the ways in which the services provided had affected the women, as well as possible downsides to such engagement. This should be pertinent to future service enhancements.

It is also believed that this study is able to fill a gap in the growing body of knowledge on domestic violence in Malaysia. Besides adding to the emerging literature on violence against women in Malaysia, the study will aim to be of significant use in gathering new and valuable data from the abused women's perspective. Current practises in the country mean that information and records regarding domestic violence are non-integrated and disconnected from one another. Therefore, the study aspires to offer contributions on such issues as data sharing with agencies such as the Royal Malaysian Police, the Social Welfare Department, the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, as well as with non-governmental organizations for the benefit of abused women (and their children) in Malaysia.

In specific terms, the present study may add information in relation to the impact of domestic violence on the abused women and the reason why some of them are reluctant to disclose the violent incidents. Moreover, it is essential to recognize factors that inhibit abused women from seeking outside help. The issue of need and support in regard to the domestic violence service provisions has also been investigated. The expected outcomes from the study are as follows:

- Increase knowledge about the impact of domestic violence on the abused women in Malaysia.
- Increase understanding of the factors that inhibit the women from seeking outside help and suggest some practical solutions to overcome this situation.
- Increase the understanding of the resources that are perceived as being helpful to the women while dealing with the domestic violence problem.

- Provide guidelines for the establishment and development of useful mechanisms that can facilitate women's access to the full range of available services.
- Raise awareness of the damage caused by domestic violence at a societal level.
- Influence future policy development and practices concerning the problem of domestic violence in Malaysia.

Hence, it is of vital significance to research the issues related to victims/survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia. The findings may highlight the central problem faced by the abused women, thus offering practical solutions to improve the situation. According to Kelly and Johnson (2008), the implications of empirical work in understanding domestic violence have led to the creation or improvement of court processes, health treatments, training programmes for social services, and legal policy. Furthermore, Mears and Visser (2005) also argue that the shelter is only a temporary strategy to lessen the violence; by separating the victims from the offenders. However, there are other aspects to be considered as further support, including legal interventions (e.g. restraining orders and criminal prosecution), healthcare interventions (e.g. screening and provision of mental health services), social service interventions (e.g. peer support groups and advocacy services) and collaborative interventions, such as substance abuse and domestic violence treatment programmes, which may improve the existing services as well as developing new services in the future for women experiencing domestic violence in Malaysia.

The Summary

Brief review of previous studies

The issue of domestic violence has received considerable critical attention. Over the past thirty years, since the advent of the feminist movement, the problem has received extensive recognition worldwide. Empirical evidence shows that one case of domestic violence has been reported to the police in the UK every minute (Stanko, 2000) and the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan (2009) reported almost 50,000 women

in the UK have sought refuge and other emergency safe supports since commencement of operation of the service in April 2008. Similarly in the researched country, Malaysia, an increasing trend of domestic violence cases is demonstrated in the country's national statistics on violence against women from the year 2000 to 2010 (WAO, 2011).

A substantial amount of literature has been published in the field of domestic violence. These studies have examined the impacts of domestic violence in social aspect (Pilar Matud, 2005; Levendosky, Bogat, Theran, Trotter, Von Eye & Davidson, 2004) as well in physical term (Ellsberg, Henrica, Jansen, Heise, Watts & Garcia-Moreno, 2008), children's presence in an abusive relationship (Khosravizadegan, Azizi, Khosravizadegan & Morvaridi, 2008; Lee, 2007; Cummings, Pepler & Moore, 1999), types of violence (Povey, Coleman, Kaiza & Roe, 2009; Kershaw, Nicholas & Walker, 2008) and factors that influence domestic violence (Lee, 2007; Wilkinson & Hamerschlag, 2005). Evidence from research in Northern Ireland suggests that women who are domestic violence victims display more indicators of distress such as depression, anxiety, guilt and dissociation than women from the general population (Dorahy, Lewis & Wolfe, 2007). Similar findings were also found by others (Hill, Mossakowski & Angel, 2007; Phillips, Rosen, Zoellner & Feeny, 2006).

Research development in Malaysia (particularly on domestic violence) is progressing. Nonetheless, at the moment there are plenty of unexplored areas in domestic violence and this study aims to add to the growing body of Malaysian literature by gaining a deeper understanding of battered women's experiences living in abusive relationship. In the health care setting, a number of studies have been carried out to investigate the importance of domestic violence screening tests (Wong & Othman, 2008) and (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008). Meanwhile, prevalence studies were conducted by a few researchers such as Jahanfar, Kamarudin, Sarpin, Zakaria, Abdul Rahman and Samsuddin (2007), Norasikin (2002) as well as the WAO of Malaysia (1995).

In regards to disclosing domestic violence incidents protection issues such as trust, privacy and confidentiality are essential. Recent evidence suggests that effective servicing by formal and informal supportive networking may encourage violence disclosure and seeking assistances among abused women. Previous studies have

reported a number of issues identified as contributing factors to the women's negative experiences with the service providers (Dunlop, Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman, Malik & Fuster, 2005; Krugman, Witting, Furuno, Hirshon, Limcangco, Perisse & Rasch, 2004; Senturia, Sullivan, Cixke & Shiu-Thorton, 2000). Besides describing the service providers as insensitive, unhelpful and unsupportive, the studies also claimed that procedural issues in seeking professional assistance hampered the violence disclosure among the victims (Ismail, Azmi & Yaso, 2011; Colombini, 2007). Nevertheless, fear of losing the children's custody as well as shame and embarrassment have been identified as the women's biggest inhibitors in disclosing abuse (Izzidien, 2008; Khosravizadegan *et al.*, 2008; Sricamsuk, 2006). Other barriers of violence disclosure noted in previous studies include women's lack of awareness on available resources provided for victims and survivors of domestic violence (Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas & Engel, 2005; Peckover, 2003).

Synopsis of research methods

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. According to Polit and Hungler (1999), an exploratory study is carried out when the researcher's interests involve the investigation of a new topic area. In line with this suggestion, in Malaysia, the issue of domestic violence is still under-researched. In other words, little is known about the real magnitude as well as the details of this problem in the country due to the under reported number of cases among the victims and survivors of domestic violence. Hence, the purpose of this study is to contribute new knowledge regarding the experiences of domestic violence from the perspectives of Malaysian abused women. It was assumed that there may be one or many factors that underlies why most of the abused women are keeping the violence experience to themselves. The questions that require further examination via the present study are: "What impact does domestic violence has on abused women?", "What are the barriers that inhibit violence disclosure?" and also "What is the nature of the assistance that may useful for abused women in handling themselves (and their children) throughout these traumatic episodes?"

The approach to empirical research adopted for this study is one of a qualitative, semi-structured interview methodology. A semi-structured approach was chosen because it offers the researcher an interactive approach as well as providing in depth research data (Wengraf, 2004). The primary source of the present study was drawn from face to face interview with 25 women who identify themselves as experiencing domestic violence at some point in their marital relationships. All of the participants were aged between 19 and 65 years. Almost half of the total sample were the residents and ex-residents of a shelter place and refuge centres (n = 12). Of the remaining, a number of women were clients recruited from the government agencies' counselling centres (n = 4) and also introduced by women's associations/groups (n = 9). Apart from the interviews with abused women, the researcher also made some extra effort to enrich the research data by obtaining invaluable inputs from the professionals who work with domestic violence service providers (i.e. staff in the organizations). It can be concluded that both interviews conducted with abused women as well as the professionals in the agencies made a great contribution to the study.

As mentioned earlier, qualitative interview was the method used for this particular line of investigation. These series of meetings took the form of a face-to-face interview ranging from 25 minutes to 80 minutes each. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed in verbatim form, verified and finally coded into themes for further analyses by the researcher. Research data was recorded using a digital audio recorder, transcribed manually and analysed using a qualitative data analysis computer software package called NVivo 8.0 version.

Before the beginning of each interview, a form consisting of structured questions was given to the participants to fill in. The design of the questionnaires was based on the demographical information of the participant. It is believed that information gathered via biographical questionnaires would usefully supplement and extend the rigour of qualitative interview. The methods employed were designed to be explanatory, descriptive as well as providing empirical evidence, which was therefore useable for this research. Due to the ethical issues in relation to the sensitive nature of the investigation, the researcher was obliged to take full responsibility regarding research implementation during the fieldwork as well as protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the data.

Organization of the thesis

The overall structure of this report takes the form of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. This chapter was organized into three sections, namely the background, the research *per se* and also a summary of the overall chapter. First, the researcher introduced the study by providing an overview of domestic violence definitions from various perspectives along with the terminologies used in previous studies. It was then followed by developments regarding domestic violence against women as well as a sub-section on the prevalence of domestic violence worldwide. The chapter also outlines the problem statement, the research aims and the importance of the study.

The second chapter presents the issue of domestic violence from the perspective of Malaysia. It is composed of three major topics which include an overview of the researched country, Malaysia, Family life in Malaysian society, and Domestic violence in Malaysia. This chapter attempts to put the research into context where the essentials of socio-economic as well as gender gaps issues are discussed. The significant events regarding domestic violence and the prevalence of domestic violence in Malaysia are explained along with the discussion of several important issues related to the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994). The chapter then resumes with an overview of the current support systems and the established networking for abused women in Malaysia.

Chapter 3 focuses on reviewing the literature about domestic violence research inside and outside Malaysia. This chapter begins with the explanation of what Islam says about violence against women with reference to women's rights and the concept of wife abuse in this religion. Subsequently, the discussion on domestic violence impacts, barriers to disclosing abuse as well as various issues highlighted in the literature regarding domestic violence service provisions are also outlined in this chapter. The theoretical frameworks, namely the feminist perspective and the psychological perspective, are discussed along with a review of Malaysian studies on domestic violence. This chapter ends with a significant topic called 'Gaps in the literature'.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the methodology that is used for this research. It presents the aims of the study and the research approach under the introductory section. The next section, named data collection, contains an explanation of the sample of the study, the method employed in undertaking the study, as well as the pilot study. Ethical issues and considerations in conducting research with domestic violence victims are also outlined in this chapter. Towards the end, the researcher discusses how to proceed with the data analysis stage in which the focus is on the use of thematic analysis from qualitative interviews. In addition, a descriptive analysis for demographical data is presented before the sub-section discussing the validity and reliability of the study.

Chapter 5 presents the study's findings on demographical characteristics and the descriptive results of the samples studied. The samples include the abused women, their partner's profiles as well as the organizations that were involved in providing services to domestic violence victims/survivors (and their children). The chapter brings together the key findings of the study, the overall prevalence of domestic violence according to type of violence, weapons used and domestic violence causes as reported by these women. The findings of the study are illustrated using a mixture of text, figure and tables. As well, the results pertaining to the disclosing of partner violence and help-seeking matters are also made available in this chapter.

Next, chapter 6, 7 and 8 present the results obtained from the qualitative analysis or, specifically, the analysis of themes (thematic analysis). Data gathered from face-to-face interviews with abused women are identified and formulated as themes in relation to the study's research questions. Fragments of excerpts and quotations acquired from the sample were used to represent the research findings as the themes emerged. These chapters focus on how abused women in Malaysia described marital violence impacts, the barriers that inhibited the women from disclosing spousal abuse and their feedbacks regarding services offered by the existing support system networks in Malaysia. Above all, the results are comprehensively discussed in relation to the literature on domestic violence inside and outside of Malaysia. Comparisons are made with previous studies pertinent to the impact of domestic violence on abused women (Chapter 6), barriers that inhibit the disclosing of spousal abuse and seeking assistance (Chapter 7) as well as the issues highlighted by the abused women in

relation to the need for and support of domestic violence service providers (Chapter 8). The conclusions drawn from the findings are presented as the main component in every chapter.

The final chapter, chapter 9, named 'Recommendations and Future work' presents the implications of the research findings, the agenda for future research, as well as the concluding remarks for the entire dissertation. The implications of this study are outlined, as is the need to engage in raising awareness about domestic violence in Malaysian society, particularly among women. In order to increase public awareness regarding domestic violence, plans and strategies are outlined in the study along with the need for supporting existing activities and various established programs at present. The significance for socio-legal reform in domestic violence service provision in Malaysia is also discussed later in the section.

CHAPTER 2

THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

This chapter presents an overview of the country that is the focus of this research, Malaysia. The ‘Overview of Malaysia’ section below describes the diversity of its society, the issue of gender equality as well as Malaysian studies in the subject area of investigation. A general overview of the culture of Malaysia is presented in the section named ‘Family life in Malaysian society’. It is then followed by a description of significant events and the prevalence of domestic violence in the country. The current study presents key explanations regarding the obstacles in combating this problem, such as issues in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) to issues in seeking protection for domestic violence victims and survivors in Malaysia.

Overview of Malaysia

Historical background

Malaysia has its origin in the Malaya Kingdom and was first founded at the end of the 14th century by a prince of Palembang named Parameswara. It originated from the Malacca Empire. The religion of Islam was introduced to Malaysia (Malaya at that time) in the 15th century by the seafaring traders from India. It was believed that during the 1500s, Malacca had a thriving port based on trade with Arab, Chinese and Indian ships sailing there. Due to its prosperity, potent countries such as Great Britain and Portugal had a growing interest in Malacca during the 1800s.

In the 18th century, Malaya became one of the British colonies. It was formed by the British and unified into the Malayan Union in 1946. The Federation of Malaya was restructured two years later. Malaya gained its independence from the British Empire on 31 August, 1957, however was reconstituted into a new country named Malaysia in 1963. Years before that, the Japanese had once invaded Malaya during World War II. The Japanese occupation of Malaya however only lasted for less than three years (1942 to 1944). Communist guerrillas somehow also took the opportunity to begin a

war of national liberation against the British during the vital period of transitional power between the Japanese and the British.

Now, it has been 56 years since Malaysia's independence and this developing country has transformed itself. There has been a great deal of expansion in various sectors due to its substantial economical achievements. In regard to Malaysia's political structure, it currently exercises a constitutional monarchy with a system of parliamentary democracy. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (king or supreme sovereign) is the head of the country. The patriarchal system practised in Malaysia is evident in that only male heirs will be selected as the ruler. This statute applies to the head of the country (*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*) as well as the head of every state countrywide. The leader of government is the Prime Minister. At the moment, female cabinet members are a minority group. Thus, the current system in Malaysia reflects little involvement for women in terms of governance and decision-making positions as well as in the realm of political participation.

Demographics of Malaysia

Malaysia is situated in the heart of Southeast Asia with a total land area of about 329,758 square kilometres. The area incorporates the Federation of Malaya, which is now known as Peninsular Malaysia (the West) and also the East of Malaysia. Both East and West are non-contiguous. They are two distinct parts and separated by the South China Sea. Since 1965 Malaysia comprises of 13 states including three federal territories. Peninsular Malaysia consists of the states of Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan as well as the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya (with overall area of 131,598 square kilometres); whereas the East part of Malaysia is made up of the states of Sabah (73,620 square kilometres), Sarawak (124,449 square kilometres) and 92 square kilometres of the Federal Territory of the north-western coastal area of Borneo Island (also known as Labuan). In terms of its location to other countries, Malaysia shares a land border with Thailand in the north and with Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia respectively on the north and south of Borneo Island. Singapore has maritime frontier with Peninsular Malaysia via the Johor Straits. Figure 2.1 shows the geography of the researched country, Malaysia.

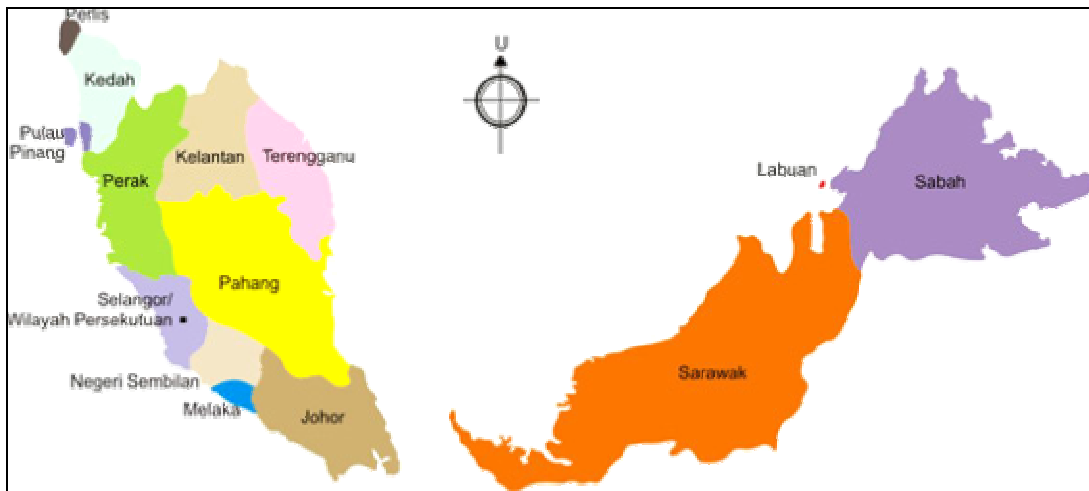


Figure 2.1: Map of Malaysia

The population of Malaysia is 29.18 million (July 2012 estimate) and women account for about half of the population of Malaysia (Malaysia Demographics Profile 2012). It is estimated that the population will reach 31.6 million in the year of 2020. Malaysian citizens account for about 91.8 per cent of the total population and the remaining 8.2 per cent were non-citizens (2010 Census). It is known that Malaysia is a multi-racial country with diverse ethnic groups, cultures, languages and religions. The citizenry of Malaysia consists of the ethnic groups of Bumiputera (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.7%). The Malays are predominant in the Bumiputera ethnic group in Peninsular Malaysia with 63.1 per cent. Besides the Malays, Bumiputera also includes indigenous tribes such as the Ibans in Sarawak (30.3%) and the Kadazan Dusun in Sabah (24.5%). Chinese, Indians and others including non-Malaysian were considered as non-Bumiputera.

Bahasa Melayu (Malay language) is the official national language of Malaysia and English is named as a second language. Nevertheless, various forms of Chinese (i.e. Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan and Foochow) as well as Indian dialects (i.e. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Panjabi) are widely used both in written and spoken forms. In addition, several local forms of languages are found to be used in the East of Malaysia (i.e. indigenous dialects such as Iban and Kadazan). In Malaysia, the linkage between ethnicity and religion is compelling. According to the Population and Housing Census 2010, Islam is recognized as the official religion of the country. Thus, it was the most widely professed in Malaysia with the proportion of

60.4 per cent. It was followed by 19.2 per cent Buddhist, nine and one tenth per cent Christian, six and three tenths per cent Hindu and 2.6 per cent practicing Confucianism, Taoism and other traditional Chinese religions. Other or unknown faiths accounted about 1.5 per cent whereas the remaining 0.8 per cent reported atheism. The evidence showed that even though Islam is the official religion under the constitution of the Malaysian Federation it is a multi-religious society and respects the religious diversity of its people.

According to the Malaysian Census 2010, it can be concluded that men outnumbered women with the sex ratio of 106. Dating back to 1980, the ratio between male and female was slightly lower with 101 males for every 100 females. Besides, a similar pattern of gender-ratio in Malaysia was observed in the years 1991 and 2000. From the almost 29 million total population of the Malaysian people, 14,141,559 of this were females, and 9,253,574 aged between 15 – 49 years old (2010 Census). Based on the same source, the ratio of males to females was relatively high for Pahang (113:100), Johor (112:100), Negeri Sembilan, Sabah, Selangor and the Federal Territory of Labuan with 107 each. It was followed by Sarawak (106:100), Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Terengganu (104:100) as well as Perak and Kedah with respectively 102. Melaka and Kelantan share the ratio of 101 while Pulau Pinang has indicated an equal ratio of male to female (100:100). In contrast, women outnumbered men in two states namely the Federal Territory of Putrajaya (89:100) and Perlis (97:100).

It was found that the country's crude birth rate in 2010 was 21.08 per 1,000 while the crude death rate was 4.93 per 1,000 (2010 Census). The reported median age for Malaysian men and women is 26.7 and 27.0 years respectively. Furthermore, a balanced age structure between male and female was shown for all categories 0 – 14 years (male 4,374,495/female 4,132,009), 15 – 64 years (male 9,539,972/female 9,253,574) and 65 years and over (male 672,581/female 755,976). The current data however shows that life expectancy among Malaysian females is higher than that of males in their later stage of life (2010 Census).

The latest census conducted also showed in 2010 that 35.1 per cent of the population aged 15 years and over had never been married. Over half of the population was stated as married (59.6%) with a mean age at first married for male versus female as 28 years and 25.6 years respectively. The proportion of females who were divorced/permanently separated is significantly higher than their opposite gender (7.2% to 1.9%). However, the ratio of males and females who were married were almost identical at 59.8 per cent and 59.4 per cent respectively.

Overview of studies on domestic violence in Malaysia

In Malaysia, studies on domestic violence are relatively limited. Throughout the extensive review of the literature, only a small amount of research was able to be retrieved. This may signal the paucity of research on domestic violence in Malaysia or perhaps inaccessibility, or that the studies went unpublished. The first ‘proper’ study and analysis of this issue was done by the Women’s Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO) in 1995. In recent years, the growing body of literature on domestic violence studies in Malaysia has positively progressed, focusing on several fields of study such as health and healthcare issue, domestic violence prevalence, domestic violence resources and a few others subject areas. The examples of the research comprise a study by Othman and Mat Adenan (2008), Wong and Othman (2008), Jahanfar *et al.* (2007), Phillips *et al.* (2006), Jamayah *et al.* (2005) and Norasikin (2002). Therefore, it could be argued that at this point of time there are many other research areas and issues pertinent to domestic violence from the perspective of Malaysia that are left unexplored.

One study by Wong and Othman (2008) in Selangor state has examined the importance of early detection and prevention of domestic violence by using a screening test on 710 female respondents attending eight health centres in Primary Health Care Clinics. This quantitative study was carried out to determine the relationship between social correlates (i.e. ethnicity, income levels, education levels and partner’s abuse of substance) of adult patients and domestic violence screening. Being aware of their role as gatekeepers, the responsibilities of primary care providers are extremely vital. As currently is the case in Malaysia, the OSCC (One-Stop-Crisis Centre) serves as a medical and health service centre for domestic violence victims

and survivors. The OSCC is the place where the victims can seek treatment as well as obtain other forms of necessary help. In other words, domestic violence victims are provided with appropriate medical, psychological and social support at the OSCC.

The research findings showed that through the WAST (Women Abuse Screening Tool) screening in respect to ethnicity distribution, almost 58 per cent of 40 female patients who screened positive for domestic violence were Indian, followed by Malay (32.5%) and another 10 per cent were Chinese. Further, the low-income group recorded the highest percentage of those screened positive while middle and high-income earners showed an incidence of below 28 per cent for both groups (22.5% and 5% respectively). In relation to attitudes towards domestic violence, it was found that more than 90 per cent of the participants concurred that a man does not have the right to abuse his wife/girlfriend. There were significant differences obtained in social correlates such as ethnicity, income and husband/partner's abuse of substances between those screened positive and negative for domestic violence. An interesting result demonstrates that one thirds of the women patients reported that they would not voluntarily tell the doctor about the violent relationships. However, the authors offer no explanation as to what reasons inhibited these patients from revealing the abuse. The study might have been much more useful had the authors undertaken an extensive exploration of the issues of domestic violence disclosure in Malaysian primary health care settings.

Similarly, another study focusing on the health care settings in Malaysia was done in order to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of primary health care provider teams in relation to the identification and management of domestic violence (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008). It was cross-sectional research using a questionnaire adapted from a study by Sugg, Thompson, Maiuro and Rivara (1999). The sample was altogether 108 respondents consisting of 61 clinicians and 47 nursing staff. The findings in this study highlight the knowledge and personal values regarding domestic violence among the staff. The majority of the respondents (62.3% of the clinicians and 65.9% of the nursing staff) perceived that domestic violence within the patient group was either 'very rare' or 'rare'. This result alone may not signal a low prevalence of domestic violence cases. Surprisingly, more than half of the clinicians (65.6%) reported not asking their patients about domestic violence due to lack of time.

Fifty three per cent of the respondents were afraid of offending their patients because domestic violence is culturally perceived as a marital problem between the couple (52.5%).

The medical team providers (28.0% of the clinicians and 51.1% of the nursing staff) also concurred with the item stating that ‘the abuse person usually has done something that would trigger the perpetrator to abuse them’. Only when seeing someone with injuries, the clinicians did ask about the abuse (52.5%). Overall in this present study, no attempt was made to quantify the association between non-physical injuries and symptoms (related to domestic violence) and respondents’ confidence in asking about the violence problems. In line with the study’s findings, previous research in Hong Kong showed that traditional beliefs regarding family privacy, family unity and gender role was found to have posed difficulties to health care providers in their management of domestic violence cases (Wong, Chung & Yiu, 1997).

A recent prevalence study to be done nationally is entitled ‘A country level study of women’s well-being and domestic violence against women’ by Shuib *et al.* (In press). The main objective of this study is to collect data which allows for comparable analysis in the Malaysia context. The study is planned to be a population-based survey using the standardized questionnaire adapted from the WHO multi-country study of 2005. It is estimated that a total of 10,000 household samples will be included to represent 13 states in Malaysia (Peninsular and East Malaysia). The key advantage of this research relies upon its informed methodology. Focus group discussions with men are added as a significant component of the qualitative method used. Although a smaller number of men respondents may be involved, the opportunity from this large survey is utilised by the study in order to explore men’s experience and perceptions of violence against women in Malaysia. The findings from the study are expected to provide important information for the future development of domestic violence prevention interventions nationwide.

Likewise, another study from the Women’s Development Centre (KANITA) is investigating the enforcement and judicial agencies in Malaysia. The study status is in-progress and it is conducted by Endut and her research teams (In press) from

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The aims of the study are to examine the legal remedies available for domestic violence cases, investigate the administrative measures imposed by the enforcement and justice agencies, to gather the accounts of enforcement and justice agencies in relation to their personal and professional responses as well as to identify the underlining problems highlighted by enforcement and justice agencies during domestic violence cases handling. Three important agencies namely the police, Social Welfare Department and the courts were identified as the frontline services to domestic violence victims and survivors in this present study. The final results may suggest a number of practical recommendations to policy makers as well as to the legislators for the improvement of existing legal mechanisms pertinent to cases of domestic violence in Malaysia.

One study of domestic violence prevalence against pregnant women in Malaysia was conducted by Jahanfar *et al.* (2007). This cross-sectional study was based in Ipoh General Hospital in the State of Perak with a determination to obtain the prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women as well as to measure the risk factors associated with domestic violence during pregnancy. A selection of 134 pregnant women was included in the study. Standardized questionnaire along with a medical health record checklist were employed during individual interviews with the female patients. Demographical data showed that most of the respondents were housewives (61.9%), had a mean age of 28.8 years old and lived in rural areas surrounding Ipoh and other parts of Perak state (54.0%). The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women in this study was 4.5 per cent. Although the prevalence percentage in the present study was recorded as 'very low', further comprehensive studies should be conducted in order to verify such findings.

A much more systematic study would identify how disclosing the abuse interacts with other variables (for instance cultural values and religious issues) that are believed to be linked to the need for screening tests for domestic violence. Besides, other elements such as methods of sampling, research instruments and larger numbers of subjects may be reviewed and adopted so as to produce statistically significant results. In respect to the risk factors associated with domestic violence during pregnancy, hypertension (17.2%) was recorded as the most frequent of the clinical symptoms occurring in the respondents followed by pre-eclampsia (10.4%) and placenta previa

(8.2%). Overall, the study concluded that there was neither a significant correlation between any of the socio demographic variables (i.e. age, race, education level and occupation) with domestic violence nor with any of the pregnancy and delivery outcomes.

Phillips *et al.* (2006) examined the psychological impact of partner abuse in a sample of non-Western women with reference to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The study included 17 female residents at a women's shelter home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and 17 American women who had experienced partner abuse and currently seeking emergency restraining orders from the Philadelphia Family Court Domestic Violence Unit, Philadelphia. This cross-cultural study was conducted through semi-structured interview as well as standardized measures to assess post trauma morbidity (i.e. *Severity of Violence against Women Scales* [SVAWS], *PTSD Symptom Scale-Self-Report* [PSS-SR] and *Revised Impact of Events Scale* [RIES]). The findings were then compared between the Malaysian participants and to the group of women in the United States. The results found that women participants from Malaysia reported experiencing physical abuse (100%), psychological abuse (88.2%) and intimidation (87.5%). As well, more than 80.0% had reported at least one act of sexual assault was perpetrated by their partners. A majority of the Malaysian women met criteria for PTSD (82.4%) and on the RIES (76.5%). The high rate found in this sample was consistent with rates found from women in the Philadelphia sample.

The post traumatic reactions between two groups of women (Malaysian-American) were analysed in order to reflect the experiences of trauma victims in different cultures. There were no significant difference found for post traumatic reactions across Malaysian and US samples. In contrast, the Malaysia women reported of staying in their abusive relationships longer than women in the US (mean average of 11 years and 6 years). The main weakness of the study is the failure to address what reasons that contributed Malaysian women to remain longer in the abusive relationship rather than women in the US. In addition, the researchers' conclusion would have been more convincing if they had examined a larger sample of battered women in this study. Nevertheless, the study was greatly beneficial to the Malaysian

literature as the findings demonstrate the need for further study of emotional distress and trauma (related to domestic violence) among women in Malaysia.

In 1998, Women's Aids Organisation of Malaysia (WAO) conducted a survey on 25 ex-residents who sought shelter at WAO. The participants in this survey were all accounted as abused women who are now living independently. The survey aimed to access the residents' needs once they left the shelter. This 'Needs Assessment Survey' comprises information in regards to employment, housing, source of support and domestic violence service assistances. Perhaps, the most serious disadvantage of this survey is that it was based on a small sample. Nonetheless, it is believed that information gathered through this assessment was highly valuable so as to provide appropriate sources and needs for the women survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia. At the time of the survey, eighty four per cent (21 women) were employed with monthly income ranged from RM 201 to RM 1400 (approximately GBP 40 to GBP 280). Although the women were received salaries on monthly basis, it was far below the mean monthly gross household income of RM 2435 (£490). Over half of them reported expenditures between RM 200 and RM 799 (£40 and £160) in which mostly spent on rent, food and schooling for children. Sixty-eight per cent rented their home, three women respectively lived with their families and lived in housing provided by employer. Many of them were actually living in squatter areas, lacked of basic household necessities such as furniture and refrigerator (WAO, 2000).

The report, on support system seek by survivors of domestic violence showed that 14 women (56.0%) have sought the assistance from the Social Welfare Department, twelve of the respondents (48.0%) sought assistance from the police and 44.0 per cent sought legal assistance regarding divorce, child custody and maintenance. The underlining issues during help seeking process were identified by those women. One, in most cases there was no police investigation done in relation to domestic violence incidents. Secondly, most of the women's cases were still pending after a long wait. Legal fees imposed also were relatively still high for them. Finally, in some cases, the police considered the problem as marital dispute where they urged the couples to resolve the matters by their own. Next, the survey found that twenty-one women received supports from their families and friends. These women, however, said they were more comfortable to rely on their friends (44.0%) rather than on their families

(16.0%) when in need of help. The effort of gaining information and knowledge about survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia may lead to the appropriate sources offered in the future. Conceivably, a much more systematic study with larger scale of sample would be able to reflect the actual circumstances of domestic violence survivors in the country.

In collaboration with Women's Aids Organisation of Malaysia (WAO), Rashidah *et al.* (1994) carried out a research study on battered women in Malaysia. The methods included a survey of 1221 respondents along with in-depth interviews with 60 abused women. In addition, seventy-seven interviews were also conducted with the representatives from hospital, police, Social Welfare Department as well as civil and religious legal personnel. Thirty-eight case records of WAO shelter residents were incorporate to enhance the variation of data set. Upon completion, the study summarises the qualitative and quantitative findings so as to propose key recommendations for action to address the problem of battering among Malaysian women. It was found that 15.0 per cent of the women respondents in the survey claimed that they deserved the abuse if they failed to meet the husband's demand (for instance unable to carry out household chores as expected). Further results showed that according to these respondents, husbands were allowed to use some kind of violence on their wives on the grounds that involved:

- 1) Infidelity (72.0%)
- 2) Being disobedient to the husband (58.0%)
- 3) Refusal to have sex (4.0%)
- 4) Other reasons such as nagging, talk-back and arguing (1.0% respectively).

Although the findings may be not be generalised to the whole population, it is interesting to note that the following 'misconduct' perceived by the women may be influenced by male dominance in the patriarchal Malaysian society. This report would have been far more useful if the author had considered the variables of the perpetrators' perception in their qualitative interviews.

A study conducted in Johor state by Ismail (2008) assessed the university students' perception on the criminal cases towards women in Malaysia. The criminal cases reported comprise of murder/attempt of murder, rape, armed/unarmed robbery as well

as domestic violence. The focus of the study aimed at the students' awareness pertinent to those types of crimes perpetrated on women. This investigation used self-reported questionnaire which consist of 40 items as the research instrument. Eighty-three female students were recruited across different disciplines from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The findings revealed that 95.2 per cent of the respondents agreed the criminal cases such as murder, rape, robbery and domestic abuse were types of violence against women. In fact, all of them felt that the horrifyingly widespread of these crimes in the country was very devastating circumstance (100.0%).

Similarly, full percentages denoted by the respondents on the item 'rape is a crime against women'. Nonetheless, Ismail's conclusions might have been much more original if she had included item related to understanding towards marital rape in particular. The author overlooks the fact that the perception in the Malaysian society towards 'rape' and 'marital rape' may be varied. In relation to domestic violence issue, most of the students agreed that women usually victims of marital abuse (96.4%). Unexpectedly, fifty-nine female students (71.1%) claimed that it is acceptable for the husband to use violence in disciplining the wife. Only 24 of them disagreed and thought wife battering is inappropriate action in which should not be applied at any occasions. However, the study makes no attempt to gather feedbacks on the students' knowledge and understanding in regards to social and legal provisions offered to women victims of male violence in Malaysia.

Impediment of disclosing domestic violence problems among abused women were addressed in a study by Jamayah and her colleagues (2005). Their subjects were 94 women who had experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months. This qualitative study reported almost half of the sample preferred to keep the abuse incidents to themselves (48.0%). Others who did not decide to keep quiet had left home, been separated from their husband or applying for divorce in courts. Unfortunately, only 14.0 per cent (13 women) reported to the official agencies regarding the violence incidents. Various explanations were identified by the women as barriers of disclosing the violence to others. The reasons include shame, children, wanting to keep the family together, love, feelings of dishonour and wanting to protect the family's dignity. Further results showed that 93.3 per cent of these women

who remain staying were continually been abused by their husbands. For those who escaped, majority of them stayed with their family members/relatives (80.0%), sharing accommodation with friends (7.0%), rented their own place (6.0%) and only a small number sought help at the One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) for emergency and temporary accommodation. However, the study fails to consider the participants' awareness and knowledge concerning domestic violence resources. The authors overlook the fact that women's understanding on the availability of support system networking contributes to low rates of service engagements. The accounts of women in the study also revealed that some women expressed their disappointment due to time consuming in divorce process, no appropriate action were taken by the authorities pertinent to the abuse incidents as well as bureaucracy matters that restrict the women from seeking the professional helps.

Family Life in Malaysian Society

Social issues

Social life in Malaysian society is highly influenced by a diverse mix of ethnic origins as well as the numerous religious groups. The difference is also very much apparent between the lives of families in big cities and for those who live in the *kampungs* (villages). In general, Malaysians preserve the value of family and marriage institutions with strong ties among its kin. The common family unit is defined with the figure of a father, a mother and children in a household. The extension of this structure may also include the presence of grandparents, uncles and aunties, cousins as well as other relatives. In relation to this, family members are addressed according to their position in the family to show seniority as well as the higher-ranking of an individual. For instance, the term '*abang/adik*' (brothers) and '*kakak/adik*' (sisters) are used together with the person's name as a reflection of respect. The culture of 'ranking' in the Malaysian communities up to this present time has created a peaceful and harmonious nation.

Marital life in Malaysia is sacred. Men and women regardless of all ethnic groups or religions are bound to a legal relationship upheld with religious ceremony or custom before they can live together as a couple. No cohabitation is allowed for Muslims and non-Muslims because Malaysia is an Islamic country. Although there is no clear legal barrier regarding cohabitation among non-Muslims, a child born out of an unwed relationship is considered as an unlawful child and may have difficulty in obtaining legal documentations such as a birth certificate, a *Mykid* (identity card) as well as a passport.

Still largely practised, unmarried men and women usually stay at their parental home and share the financial responsibility in that household until they get married. According to the 2010 Census, the average marriage age for Malaysian men is higher than the female (28.0 years and 25.7 years respectively). In tradition, married men and women are specified with gender roles in the family, for example men as the head of the family with the responsibility to earn money so as to support the family. Meanwhile, the women are expected to take charge of domestic responsibilities and be obedient to her husband as well as to the parents-in-law. Today, arranged marriage is not favoured by the younger generation. Many of those have met their partners at the workplace, at educational institutions, been introduced by friends or even met through social networking media such as Facebook and online dating sites.

Nowadays, Malaysia is facing an elongated chain of social problems from juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, crime to family issues such as domestic violence. This array of problems has affected many of the people in relation to the social aspects of their lives as well as their psychological well-being. Many studies also have been carried out in Malaysian society to investigate these subject matters (Noordin, Zakaria, Mohamed Sawal, Hussin, Ngah & Nordin, 2012; Ahmad & Wan Halim, 2011; Abdullah, 2010; Gill, Oh & Pillai, 2010; Haneef, Abdullah Yusof, Mohd. Amin & Md. Noon, 2001). It is believed that modernisation and economic development has also contributed to this disturbing phenomenon. Hence, the question of what is wrong with today's society is still awaiting sound explanation.

Economic issues

Family income in Malaysian society is based on social class which is divided into three categories, namely the upper class, the middle class and the lower class income group. According to the Household Income Survey (HIS) carried out by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2011), the rising per capita income since 1970's in Malaysia has reflected the positive growth of the economy and indicates a higher standard of living among its people. In general, the lower classes usually receive a monthly income of less than RM 2000 (approximately £400 in pound sterling). The majority of the Malaysian population is distributed under the middle class group with earnings around RM 5000 (£1000) per calendar month and the upper social class group receive RM 10000 (£2000) or more. The minimum wage of below RM 800 (£160) indicates the current poverty line in Malaysia (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2011).

As one of the countries strongly accustomed to a patriarchal social system, men as the leader will take the role as 'breadwinner' in the family. In fact, before the 1980's only a small number of the Malaysian women had a place in the job market. Thus, women were financially dependent on their men for household expenditures. However, nowadays, thanks to plenty of opportunities in the education field, the employment rate among the females has greatly improved. In 2010, the census indicated that the ratio for female workers in Malaysia was almost as equal as men employees (2010 Census). Due to that trend, many financial responsibilities are shared between the husband as well as the wife in order to improve their economic condition. In the past, working women were mainly involved in traditional occupations with jobs in agriculture and the fishing sector. Conversely now, women are more diversified with many engaged in teaching, in government service, as well as private sector and even self owned businesses, both locally and at an international level.

Unemployment in Malaysia was reported at 2.8 per cent in June 2012 (Malaysia Demographics Profile 2012) where the rate indicates a lower percentage compared to the 4.5 per cent of a decade ago. At present, there is no allowance scheme or any other form of benefits that is given to an unemployed person in Malaysia. Therefore, the issue of employment is vital as it relates to financial resources in regards to meeting

the standard costs of living for everyone. In the context of domestic violence, family economic constraint is believed to be one of the possible factors in marital discord between couples, where constant arguments as well as a perpetual state of dispute may lead to aggressive behaviours in a relationship. Moreover, statistics from the Department of Social Welfare, Malaysia in 2004 show that financial problems are the most common cause of violent acts between husbands and wives. Other causes cited in the same report include extra marital affairs, conflicts with in-laws, stress at the workplace as well as substance abuse (National Report on Violence and Health Malaysia, 2006).

Gender gap issues

Malaysia is a developing country in which urbanization is very important within the nation's economic agenda. Therefore, the contribution of all Malaysians, men and women, towards the country's development is critical. However, to this present moment, the patriarchal structure is still strongly influential in Malaysian society. This has meant that gender inequality issues have been continuously debated for decades. The social structure of patriarchy for instance in the family institution, the workforce and political empowerment has reflected the cultural belief of male dominance in Malaysia.

According to Eva, Kris and Tracy (2001), Malaysian cultural perception is that it is the men's role to be head of the family as opposed to women who were seen more as 'the caregiver'. The female in the house was fully in-charge of the child rearing as well as taking care of the domestic responsibilities. Evidence proves that even after 56 years of the country's independence, there are still gaps between the participation of male and female roles, from traditional gender tasks (i.e. household chores and child rearing) to the socio-economic-political context. Table 2.1 below indicates gender gap in Malaysia according to The Global Gender Gap Report in 2011 (Hausman, Tyson & Zahidi, 2011).

Table 2.1: Gender Gap Index in Malaysia

Gender Gap Index	Score (0.000 = Inequality, 1.000 = Equality)
Overall Gender Gap Index (rank 97 out of 134 countries)	0.653
Gender Gap Subindexes	Female-to-male ratio
<i>Economic Participation and Opportunity</i> - Estimated earned income - Legislators, senior officials, & managers	0.43 0.32
<i>Political Empowerment</i> - Women in parliament - Women in ministerial positions	0.11 0.07
Additional Data	Scale (1.00 = Worse score, 0.00 = Best score)
<i>Basic Rights and Social Institutions</i> - Paternal versus maternal authority - Polygamy - Existence of legislation punishing acts of violence against women	0.50 0.50 0.42

In reference to the table above, Malaysia records an average score in the overall gender gap index of 0.653 and was placed at position 97 from 134 countries surveyed. Likewise, gender gap sub indexes also displayed the distinctions between female-to-male ratios in many fields such as the economy, and political as well as social aspects. The difference, however, was clearly shown with the imbalance ratio between women and men in parliament, associated therefore with the number of policy makers.

In the table above the paternal versus maternal authority sub index (0.50) proves that Malaysia practices the patriarchal system until now. Furthermore, traditional customs and the Islamic religion permit the men (only) to have more than one wife at a time but not vice versa. Therefore, polygamy is considered as widely practiced (0.50) among the Muslim men. On the other hand, the existence of legislation punishing acts of violence against women recorded a score of slightly below the average with 0.42. The result demonstrates that Malaysia as a country has taken the initiative to establish the provisions of legislation for violence against women yet needs to expend more

effort in terms of implementing such laws in order to overcome spousal abuse problems in the country.

Matrimonial affairs in Malaysian customs

Marriage

In Malaysia, the only way a man can live with a woman, or for them to legally cohabit and have children, is through a marriage. This is because Malaysian culture does not recognize cohabitation, and neither does it recognise same sex relationships. In addition, children are expected to be born within lawful wedlock. Although in reality such relationships have existed, they are however regarded as illegal and are not accepted by mainstream society. The laws relating to family matters play a significant role in maintaining and strengthening the structure of the Malaysian family. The scope of such laws cover issues such as the unification of two individuals in a marriage, nullity of marriage, legitimisation of unlawful children, judicial separation and dissolution of marriage. Malaysia engages two types of laws pertaining to family matters which differentiate their application between non-Muslims and Muslims. The 'Family Law' is for non-Muslims and the Muslims are governed by the Islamic Family Law (also known as the *Sharia* Law). Below are the declarations in the Family Law and *Sharia* Law:

- **Family Law**

The characteristics of Family Law in Malaysia reflect the diversity of its people. Different races, religions, customs and practices in family matters required Malaysian Family Law to be subjected to certain specified statutes. In 1982, The Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976 was enforced throughout Malaysia. It, however, does not apply to a Muslim or any person who is married under the Islamic Family Law. The Act amends and consolidates the law relating to marriages and divorces, provides the law on maintenance for spouses and former spouses (and children), the custody of children and matrimonial property (Kandiah, 2003).

After the Law Reform legislation was enacted, a marriage solemnised under any law, religion, custom or usage must be registered in accordance with the Act. The couple must be at least eighteen (18) years old, deemed as unmarried and there must be no

caveat or notice of objection to the marriage from the close family members of both parties. For a female who is above sixteen (16) years old but under the requirement age of eighteen years old, a special marriage licence can be granted by the Chief Minister. Nevertheless, no male under the requirement age is allowed to marry. Consent of the parents or guardian must be obtained for all couples below twenty-one (21) years of age. Such permission is no longer required for those who have been previously married. In any circumstances where parent or guardian's consent cannot be given, the couple may apply for the consent of the High Court.

Once a marriage is solemnised and registered under the Family Law, the parties are bound in a monogamous marriage and the law prefers that it should be continued, unless the marriage is terminated by death or divorce. Bigamy, or entering into a marriage while still married to someone else, is deemed as a matrimonial offence in which the subsequent marriage is determined to be null and void if the first wife is still alive and the couple are not divorced. The offence of bigamy contravenes Section 494 of the Penal Code for which the individual shall be liable to punishment under the section as follows (Lawyerment, 2011):

“Whoever, having a husband or wife living, marries in any case in which such marriage is void by reason of its taking place during the life of such husband or wife and whether such marriage has take place within Malaysia or outside Malaysia, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven (7) years, and shall also be liable to fine”.

- ***Sharia Law***

The application of the *Sharia* Law in Malaysia only relates to Muslims. Nonetheless, the degree of power and authority between *Sharia* Law and Family Law is equivalent as both laws cover the issues related to marriage, divorce and reconciliation. They also encompass other family concerns such as claims for financial maintenance, child custody and matrimonial property. The *Sharia* Court and the Islamic Religious Affairs Department are the central institutions which are responsible for putting Islamic Family Law into practise in Malaysia. The roles of these institutions are to ensure the enforcement of *Sharia* Law as well as managing Muslim family affairs in the country. The enforcement of the *Sharia* Law, however, varies slightly within the 13 states in

Malaysia as Islamic matters are ruled not by the federal government but under the sultan's authority in their respective states.

No marriage may be solemnized for a male less than eighteen (18) years old and a female under sixteen (16) years old unless a *Sharia* judge has granted permission in writing in certain circumstances. *Sharia* Law in Malaysia also prohibits a Muslim to marry the person of another religion. Consent is an absolute requirement for the *wali* of the women, the *wali* referring to the woman's closest adult male relative who is responsible for the woman seeking the marriage. *Wali mujbir* means the father or paternal grandfather and above or *wali raja* means a *wali* authorized by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, in the case of the Federal Territories, Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak. It also refers to the Ruler, in the case of any other States, to give away in marriage a woman who has no *wali* from *nasab* (descent based on a lawful blood relationship). At the time the marriage is solemnized, *mas kahwin*, which is also known as *mahar*, is given as an obligatory marriage payment from the man to the woman; usually in the form of money. It symbolises the beginning of a husband's responsibilities towards his wife as well as a sign of his willingness to start a life with the woman whom he chose to get married to.

Whilst the Family Law provisions continue to insist on strictly monogamous marital relationships, polygamy is allowed under *Sharia* Law. Polygamous marriage is recognized under Section 23 of the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984 (Law of Malaysia, 2006). Polygamy means men can marry up to four (4) wives at any one time. The permission for granting polygamy, however, is given with certain restrictions as follows:

“A husband desiring polygamy must obtain the consent and views of the existing wife or wives and the permission from the *Sharia* Court to enter into a polygamous marriage, failing which he is deemed to have committed an offence under Section 123 of the Act”.

Although polygamous marriage is allowed, it certainly is not encouraged. Thus, most men have only one wife. In contrast, Muslim women are not allowed to have more than one husband at the same time. It is clearly stated in the *Qur'an*, Chapter 4, that

fairness, justice and equality of treatment among wives is the fundamental basis of living in a polygamous marriage. “If you fear that you will not be able to deal justly (with them [your wives]), then marry only one” (*Qur’an* Verse 4:3 cited in Sisters in Islam, 1991). Hence, it is obvious that the *Qur’an* does not promote polygamy because the responsibility of the men who chose this route is immense.

Subsequent marriages (up to a maximum of four) require special permission approved by the *Sharia* Court in accordance to Section 23 of the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984. The husband who fails to submit an application before marrying a second or subsequent wife is deemed as committing a matrimonial offence under Section 123 of the Act. The offender may be liable to punishment with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit Malaysia (exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report) or with imprisonment of up to a maximum of six (6) months or both. As mentioned earlier in this part of the subject matter, the procedure for granting permission for polygamous marriage varies slightly according to the state’s *Sharia* Law. Due to the inconsistency of the *Sharia* Law practiced throughout the country; such loopholes may become an advantage to some errant men who choose to abuse the law.

Dissolution of marriage

The Family Law and *Sharia* Law in Malaysia recognize the necessity of divorce, although it is certainly considered a last resort and all means should be used to uphold the family structure. The breakdown of some marriages is bound to occur as marriage is the union between a man and a woman for life, and in which both partners bring along their unique characteristics, preferences, strengths as well as weaknesses. Both laws strive to prevent the break-up of the families concerned and to prevent divorce occurring. Hence, a number of preventive measures are taken in order to keep marriages intact. The examples of these measures are the couple being required to be a certain age before they can marry, obtaining consent from the legal guardians and reconciliation efforts prior to divorce approval. However, in certain circumstances, such as prolonged abusive relationships, divorce is the best solution to resolve this marital conflict. In the case of domestic violence, women had become very vulnerable, and therefore divorce comes to the rescue in putting an end to the violent relationship. Previous studies found that abused women had stayed in the violent relationship for

several years before disclosing this and seeking outside help (Rashidah, Rita & Schmitt, 1994; Jamayah, Napsiah, Zabidah & Elicabet, 2005; Sricamsuk, 2006).

According to the Family Law, a divorce and therefore the end of a marriage may be granted only by a court in two ways; by mutual consent of both parties or by contested petition as no mutual consent was given by both parties. A divorce by mutual consent may be granted on the grounds of the following (Kandiah, 2003):

- I. The spouse has committed adultery and it is intolerable to live with the spouse;
- II. The spouse has behaved in such a way that it cannot reasonably be expected to live with the spouse;
- III. The spouse being deserted for a continuous period of at least two (2) years before the date of the petition;
- IV. Both parties have lived apart from each other for a continuous period of at least two (2) years before the date of the petition;

Contested petition to divorce, however, must be referred to a Conciliatory body at the district's Registry of Marriage and the body will issue a Certificate of Reference if the couple has failed to be reconciled after six (6) months. Thus, in a domestic violence situation, evidence of a crime is crucial to support the case if the abuser has contested the petition. A divorce petition also includes the application regarding custody of the children, maintenance claims for the wife and the children, division of matrimonial property and the cost of the court proceedings.

Contrary to the Family Law, the decision for the dissolution of marriage in *Sharia* Law is largely based upon the husband's will. Islam has acknowledged the power of divorce to men by pronouncing the *talaq* whereas women in certain circumstances may initiate the divorce process under alternative mechanisms. Nonetheless, many Muslim women are still in ignorance on their rights as well as the options available for the dissolution of marriage under *Sharia* Law. The pronouncement of *talaq* should be made before the *Sharia* Court and any man who pronounces the *talaq* without the permission of the Court and/or outside the Court may be charged as committing a matrimonial offence (Act 303, Section 124). The pronouncement of *talaq* is restricted to three occasions only.

The first two times the *talaq* is pronounced, it may be withdrawn and the couple can reconcile without special arrangement. The marriage will be considered to have suffered an irretrievable breakdown the third time the *talaq* is pronounced. For irrevocable divorce, there are a few specific requisite formalities to complete before the couple can remarry. On the issue of remarrying, the husband can choose to do so without a waiting period after the *talaq* was pronounced; however, the wife must wait at least three times her menstrual cycle or usually three months (four months and ten days for a widow) before remarrying. The waiting period after a divorce is called *iddah*. The basic purpose of *iddah* is to ensure the women's condition with reference to pregnancy.

Another available option for women to dissolve their marriage is through the Court's orders. There are a number of applications for divorce which the wife can seek from the court. Under certain conditions, it is possible for a woman to petition a *qadi* (judge of Muslim jurisprudence) for a divorce. The mechanism includes *khul'*, *ta'liq*, *li'an* and *fasakh*. A brief explanation regarding types of divorce according to *Sharia* Law in Malaysia is described below (Act 303, Part V):

- *Khul'* divorce occurs when the husband does not agree to voluntarily pronounce a *talaq*, but the parties agree to a divorce by redemption or *cerai tebus talaq* in the matter of payment to the husband. According to Act 303 Section 49, *khul'* may be allowed on the basis of the wife's request whereby a wife has come to dislike her husband, her husband is lacking in religious commitment or for the reason that he deprives her of her rights of spending on her maintenance.

- Divorce under *ta'liq* requires a wife to apply to the Court to declare that such a divorce has taken place. Section 50 of Act 303 recognizes *ta'liq* as breached or unfulfilled conditions on the husband's part in which those conditions had been made upon the solemnization of the marriage.

- *Li'an* means a divorce granted by the Court on the ground that the parties have taken an oath before a *qadi*. Upon judgement, the *qadi* shall order them to be separated and live apart forever (Act 303, Section 50A). *Li'an* oath is a serious indictment of the spouse's adultery, and adultery is considered as a big sin in Islam.

- The definition of *fasakh* is the annulment of a marriage by reason of any circumstance permitted by Islamic Family Law in accordance with Section 52. *Fasakh* divorce does not require either the consent or the pronouncement of the *talaq* from the husband. The account of the husband's part is not significant because the petition for this type of divorce is made upon proof of specific and concrete grounds. This mechanism of divorce is believed to be very much applicable for a woman who is experiencing an abusive relationship; under Section 52 (1)(h)(i) which states "...that the husband treats her with cruelty – habitually assaults her or make her life miserable by cruelty of conduct".

Despite several options available under Malaysian *Sharia* Law for the dissolution of marriage, the exercise of preventive measures is necessary in attempting to save the couple's conjugal relationship. Thus, the requirement of reconciliation efforts must be met before the parties are allowed to divorce as the law cannot be seen to encourage divorce. A conciliatory committee consisting of a Religious officer as chairman and two other persons, one to act for the husband and the other for the wife is formed to review the divorce application (Act 303, Section 47[5]). Within a period of six months, if the conciliatory committee is unable to effect reconciliation, the parties may be granted a divorce. The committee also will make some recommendations on matters related to the marriage such as maintenance and custody of the minor children of the marriage as well as property distribution. Otherwise, in the opposite situation whereby the reconciliation has been effected, the Court shall dismiss the application for divorce. In the case of revocable divorce, the couple may resume their marital relationship (*ruju'* as in the *Sharia* Law term) within the period of *iddah* by mutual consent of recohabitation, however, special arrangement must be made for *ruju'* after the *iddah* or for the irrevocable divorce (Act 303, Section 51[1]).

Matrimonial offences

In accordance to the Islamic Family Law in Malaysia, penalties such as imprisonment or fines or a combination of both can be imposed on those who have engaged in matrimonial offences. Act 303 part IX has outlined the sanctions for each of these offences. The matrimonial offences that are important in relation to this study are as follows:

- Polygamy without the Court's permission
“Any man who, during the subsistence of a marriage, contracts another marriage in any place without the prior permission in writing of the Court commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit or with imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.” (Section 123).
- Divorce outside Court and without the Court's permission
“Any man who divorces his wife by the pronouncement of *talaq* in any form outside the Court and without the permission of the Court commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit or with imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.” (Section 124)
- Desertion of a wife
“Any person who, having been ordered by the Court to resume cohabitation with his wife, wilfully fails or neglects to comply with the order commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit or with imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.” (Section 126)
- Ill-treatment of a wife
“Any person who ill-treats his wife or cheats his wife of her property commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit or with imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.” (Section 127)

- Failure to give proper justice to a wife
 “Any person who fails to give proper justice to his wife according to *Hukum Sharak* commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one thousand ringgit or with imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.”
 (Section 128)

In terms of domestic violence cases, the provision of Islamic Family Law under section 127 and 128 offers protection to abused women. Other forms of matrimonial penalties similarly preserve the women’s rights as a wife in a marital relationship. Although these provisions are meant to safeguard women as well as acknowledge women’s position in a marriage, many Malaysian women to date are still unaware of the existence of such provisions thus leaving them vulnerable to the husband’s abusive behaviour. Endut (2000) in a study concludes that many women fear the consequences of reporting their husband’s violence, hence choosing a reconciliation process as an alternative to resolve the situation.

It was found that the prosecution of a person in the *Sharia* Court is not a straight forward process (Endut, 2000). The exercise of Act 303 under section 127 and 128 for women experiencing domestic violence was entirely appropriate but the possible outcomes of these two sections should have been clearly explained to women. On many occasions, the husbands who were prosecuted under the section 127 (ill-treatment of wife) and 128 (failure to give proper justice to wife) contested the petition to divorce by using section 129 in which they allege disobedience of their wife to counter the prosecution (*nusyuz*). *Nusyuz* in this section refers to:

“Any woman who wilfully disobeys any order lawfully given by her husband according to *Hukum Sharak* commits an offence and shall be punished with a fine not exceeding one hundred ringgit or, in the case of a second or subsequent offence, with a fine not exceeding five hundred ringgit.”

The definitions of ‘disobedient’ include leaving the house without the husband’s permission however in most cases of domestic violence the wife has no other option but to leave the house without the husband’s knowledge. The *Nusyuz* petition,

however, can be appropriately countered and contested for the case of spousal abuse with supporting documents as evidence of violence which would include the police report, written records of medical examinations and the filing of a complaint regarding a marriage dispute to the Islamic Religious Affair Department. Nonetheless, the stakes are high for a woman who loses the *nusyuz* case as she may lose the custody of her children, she will not be eligible for any forms of alimonies from the husband and she may be refused the receiving of portions of her matrimonial properties in that present marriage. Therefore, women are advised to understand the rules, regulations as well as related procedures concerning *nusyuz* divorce and to gather all the evidence needed in the case of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence in Malaysia

The Prevalence

“Jangan buka pekung di dada” or translated as ‘not to do your dirty laundry in public’ is a Malay proverb that best explain circumstances of many abused women when it comes to disclosure of violence in their relationships. In Malaysian culture, it certainly takes a lot of courage for women to reveal the abuse. As the woman herself is experiencing a shameful situation, the retaliation of the husband/partner will make the feelings of shame even worse. Disclosing partner violence brings a connotation of *“tidak jaga air muka”* (dishonour of the husband’s pride) and *“jatuh maruah”* (disrespectful). Furthermore, the thinking about other people’s perceptions or *“apa orang kata”* (what will others say) is also a major concern among people in the community.

A cultural study on family violence and family mediation in two countries; Australia and Malaysia by Professor Dale Bagshaw from Hawke Research Institute’s Centre for Peace (2008) argued that issues facing family mediators in respect to domestic violence are central. The study compares the definitions and nature of domestic violence in Australia and Malaysia in order to determine how traditions, cultural background and the influence of religion is associated with this social problem. It was reported that victims of domestic violence in both places have found it difficult to

disclose the violent incidents for various reasons. Some women reported being afraid that they would not be believed, they blamed themselves for what had happened, were afraid losing or harming the children, and also the women did not want to embarrass the family when they revealed the real situation in their relationships. Most of the domestic violence victims also thought of violence in mainly physical terms. Taking these reasons into account, family violence is still believed to be invisible among some societies in the world. The study concluded that the availability of a family mediator was essential in solving those marital disputes. In addition, clarifying contributing factors to the lower level of the reporting of violent incidents among women may influence the development of family mediation standards in Malaysia as well as other countries in the Asia Pacific region.

According to a report in 2006, national data on the prevalence of domestic violence in Malaysia is problematic. The lack of awareness of the true extent of domestic violence incidents is due to the following reasons (National Report on Violence and Health (Malaysia), 2006):

- 1) Domestic violence is believed to be hugely underreported, as there appears to be discrepancies between figures on the national survey and the number of cases received by the police in the same period of time.
- 2) Data captures only violence occurring among intimate partners who are either spouses or ex-spouses in a legal relationship.
- 3) No statistics on violence occurring between intimate partners outside the marriage institution are available.

Despite the above limitations on disclosing the real extent of domestic violence, a few studies have been conducted to examine the prevalence rates among Malaysian women (Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007; Norasikin, 2002; Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia, 1995). The only national survey conducted on domestic violence in Malaysia was between 1990 and 1992 by the Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO). The survey recruited 1,221 women respondents from different states in Malaysia and the results showed that the estimation of violence against women aged over 15 years was 39% (equivalent to 1.8 million women). Fifty eight per cent of the respondents perceived domestic violence to relate to physical actions. Nevertheless, when the comparison was made regarding the above estimated figures to the actual

reported cases, surprisingly, only 909 cases were reported to the police for that same period of time. Thus, the study concluded that intimate partner violence in Malaysia has been largely underreported. The study also revealed various factors for the low reporting of domestic violence cases namely fear of the retaliation from the abuser, being unfairly stigmatized by the community as well as inadequate assistance from the informal and formal supports networking.

Another prevalence study done in Malaysia was in 2002. This cross-sectional study recruited 370 women patients aged 15 to 49 years who attended the Out Patient Department at Hospital Pontian, Johor. The study's aim was to identify the prevalence of domestic violence and its associated factors. The results from this study showed that the prevalence rate of domestic violence was 35.1 per cent. This study also concluded that factors contributing to domestic violence were early marriage and lack of social supports (Norasikin, 2002). The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women in Malaysia, however, was recorded as low as 4.5 per cent (Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007). The comparison results from the 1995 study and the 2002 study shows that the prevalence rate of domestic violence in Malaysia is almost unchanged. Despite various actions taken to combat this problem, the prevalence rate has remained the same. Thus, it is suggested that those approaches taken and strategies implemented in attempting to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence in Malaysia should be re-evaluated.

On the other hand, positive improvement has been indicated on reporting cases of domestic violence. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, The Royal Malaysian Police had received an average of 3000 reports concerning domestic violence cases every year since 2000 (WAO, 2009). The reported cases of women being abused have shown an incremental yearly rise which illustrates a greater awareness among the women victims in Malaysia. The provision in terms of the legal enactments, for example the enactment of Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994), has given an impetus to Malaysian people in general and women victims of domestic violence in particular. The Act has been seen as the starting point, especially for non-governmental organizations, in providing services for domestic violence victims.

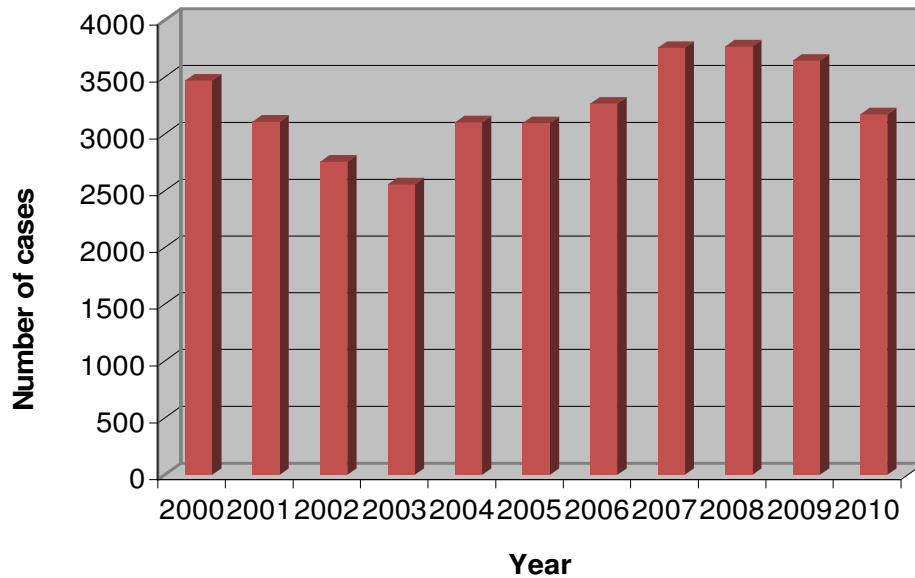


Figure 2.2: Number of domestic violence cases that have been reported from year 2000 to 2010.

Nevertheless, the country is still missing comprehensive data on domestic violence. This claim is supported by the World Health Organization's statement in the National Report on Violence and Health [Malaysia], (2006). As WHO states: "Malaysia has a dearth of comparable data on the prevalence, nature, causes and consequences of violence" (WHO, 2005: 3). This may due to a lack of empirical research done in this area as limited financial means is the biggest constraint in carrying out research, along with the absence of a 'data bank' in which there is no integration of data sharing among organizations who work with abused women in Malaysia.

Significant events

In Malaysia, the issue of domestic violence has been regarded as vital and very important by the government (Jonit, 2006). Since the country's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, Malaysia has developed a variety of strategies and plans to combat any form of violence against women.

The first Malaysian refuge center was opened in 1982 by the Women's Aid Organization with the objective of providing shelter to women victims who seek refuge because of domestic violence. As an independent agency liaising with the

government, WAO had started with basic facilities such as providing face-to-face counseling for emotional support, a safe house (shelter) and also assisting the victims to access other social and welfare services provided by government agencies, namely the Social Welfare Department and the Royal Malaysian Police and courts (WAO, 2009). The idea of setting up a refuge for domestic violence victims was largely inspired by the example of western countries, for instance in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Since the establishment of 'refuges', people have started to recognise and become more aware of the domestic violence problem. In 1985, the Malaysian women's movement began when various non-government organizations and individuals anonymously agreed to collaborate under the name of the Joint Action Group (JAG). After four years of speaking out on domestic violence issues at the national level, a committee was finally formed by the government to revise the memorandum submitted by JAG. The members of the committee included representatives of the Association of Women Lawyers, the Women's Aid Organization of Malaysia (WAO), the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) and other government agencies. Their aimed was to discuss and propose new legislation on domestic violence in Malaysia (Amirthalingam, 2003).

After much debate and lobbying, the Domestic Violence Act 521 was successfully enacted in 1994. This was seen as a positive development in terms of legislation by the women's groups because the Act provided legal protection for domestic violence victims (WAO, 2009). Long before the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) was enacted, domestic violence prosecutions were only available through criminal proceedings and injunctions under the penal code. As these incidents were regarded more as a private and family matter, the police as well as the courts were generally unwilling to take any action against the perpetrators (WAO, 2009). Thus, the 1994 Act actually conveyed a meaningful message to the whole nation that combating the domestic violence problem was a serious matter.

The implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) was, however, postponed for two years due to concerns over its application to Muslims as in Malaysia a dual justice system is practiced, namely the Criminal and Civil Law and

Islamic Family Law. The first is administered under Federal Government jurisdiction and is applicable to all Malaysians, while the latter (called *Sharia* Law) is a matter for state law which is only applicable to Muslims and has jurisdiction over family and personal law matters such as marriage, inheritance and apostasy. After a series of revisions, the Act was eventually implemented in 1996 after *Pusat Islam* (the Islamic Centre) declared that the Act did not conflict with *Sharia* Law (Amirthalingam, 2005).

Undoubtedly the Act has been of huge significance in terms of service provision for domestic violence victims in Malaysia. One of the most massive changes is the establishment of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in order to manage and resolve issues concerning women, families and children. The focus of this ministry is in emphasizing women's development, protection and rights (Jonit, 2006). The Social Welfare Department had been reshuffled into this new ministry and works closely with the Women's Development Department established in 1999. The services provided by the ministry include individual as well as marriage counseling, providing temporary shelters or safe houses (in collaboration with the non-government organizations such as WAO and WCC (Women Centre for Change or formerly known as Women Crisis Centre) and establishing a helpline called '*Talian Nur*' (Nur Helpline) in an effort to provide domestic violence victims with immediate round-the-clock assistance and support (Hernandez, 2007).

In addition to a particular ministry that bears responsibility for assisting domestic violence victims, the Ministry of Health also puts its efforts into medical and health services. To date, almost 90 per cent of the primary hospitals in Malaysia are equipped with a One-Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC). These centres are based at the emergency departments of most government hospitals with the purpose of providing medical treatment and other forms of assistance necessary for women victims (AWAM, 2009). However, the efficiency of these centres is still debateable as many healthcare professionals are not very keen on screening patients for domestic violence. This is because of the time pressure that may restrict the time available to spend with women and a lack of awareness of wider domestic violence procedures in terms of legal issues and referral (Colombini, 2007). A recent study conducted with 61 clinicians and 47 nursing staff from hospitals in Kuala Lumpur showed 68.9 per cent

of the clinicians admitted that they ask their patients about domestic violence only 'at times' and 26.2 per cent never asked their patients about it at all (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008). In contrast the findings from another study (investigating the patient perspective) shows 92.4 per cent of the patients reported that the doctor had never asked them about the abuse while 67.3 per cent stated that they had voluntarily told the medical staff that they were abused by their husbands (Wong & Othman, 2008).

The Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994)

Combating domestic violence is a huge challenge in Malaysia. The influence of many factors such as the patriarchal society, religious matters, the cultural dimension and political issues needs to be considered while dealing with this problem. In order to put an end to domestic violence, efficient strategies and plans must be drafted together with utmost co-operation and collaboration from various parties such as the police, medical teams, government agencies, women's groups and so forth.

On a positive note, new developments regarding this issue show that violence against women has attracted considerable attention from government agencies, non-government organizations and human rights activist groups in Malaysia. But the question remains; 'why does the issue of domestic violence remain as a social problem notwithstanding the numerous support mechanisms that have been established?' The answer may lie with the weaknesses in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) itself. The definition of domestic violence in the Act means the commission of any of the following acts (Domestic Violence Act 521, 1994: 6):

- a) willfully or knowingly placing, or attempting to place, the victim in fear of physical injury;
- b) causing physical injury to the victim by such act which is known or, ought to have been known would result in physical injury;
- c) compelling the victim by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the victim has a right to abstain;
- d) confining or detaining the victim against the victim's will; or

- e) causing mischief or destruction or damage to property with intent to cause, or knowing that it is likely to cause distress or annoyance to the victim, by a person against
 - i. his or her spouse;
 - ii. his or her former spouse;
 - iii. a child
 - iv. an incapacitated adult; or
 - v. any other member of the family

Section 2 under Laws of Malaysia: Domestic Violence Act 1994, Act (521), (1996) refers to the term *spouse* as a person who has gone through a form of ceremony which is recognized as a marriage ceremony according to the religion or custom of the parties concerned, notwithstanding that such a ceremony is not registered.

Section 1 under Laws of Malaysia: Domestic Violence Act 1994, Act (521), (1996) defines *child* as a person below the age of eighteen years who is living as a member of the offender's family or of the family of the offender's spouse or former spouse, as the case may be.

Incapacitated adult means a person who is wholly or partially incapacitated or infirm, by reason of physical or mental disability or ill-health or old age, who is living as a member of the offender's family. [Section 2, Laws of Malaysia: Domestic Violence Act 1994, Act (521)], (1996).

The definition of this Act in the first place is problematic. Firstly, the legal enforcement of the Act focuses more on physical injury rather than non-physical forms of violence, for example, psychological and emotional abuse. Secondly, despite the Act's interpretation to include sexual and psychological abuse, the powers of arrest are still based on any physical injury caused by the perpetrator as stated in article 7(1):

“where the court is satisfied that the person against whom a protection order or interim protection order is made is likely to cause actual physical injury to the protected person or persons, the court may attach a power of arrest to such

protection order or interim protection order, as the case may be” (Domestic Violence Act, 1994: 10).

Hence, victims who suffer all other forms of abuse may find this difficult to prove since only physical evidence is considered by the court. Thirdly, domestic violence which occurs between non-married couples or those in a dating relationship is also not recognised. If there are any cases being reported, they will be handled under the criminal proceedings (assault) legislation and not under the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) as Malaysia is firm in not recognising any intimate relationships outside the institution of marriage.

Latest update, there has been amendments made to the present Act, the Domestic Violence Act A1414 (2012) in regards to the issue mentioned above related to psychological form of abuse. Nonetheless, other debateable issues such as marital rape and violence in dating relationship/cohabitation (for non-Muslim) are still pending. Adding to such flaws, it is believed that many of the abused women in Malaysia are not fully aware of such an Act as well as not being well informed on how to seek protection under the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994). This excerpt is from one long-time patient survivor of domestic violence (WAO, 2009):

“Please inform us of police procedure with regards to what happens from the time we file a police report, to the time when and if a case is called to court. Please inform us of any conditions that might disqualify us from filing a case under the DVA or cause a delay in the proceedings. Please educate us on how to apply directly for a quick restraining order that can protect us while the police may require a long time to complete investigations and paper work. Please educate the police and hospitals that the psychological fear, shame and trauma that a human being experiences when she is repeatedly beaten may not be visible but is much more damaging than the visible injuries she may sustain.”

In reference to the above statement, the importance of educating as well as raising awareness among society at large is paramount. Without these two vital elements, the possible risks of women being ‘trapped’ in the violent relationship are still high

because many of them are not knowledgeable about the provision of domestic violence services and the support systems available.

The efforts to include civil reforms in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) also raised controversy when it was believed that this conflicted with *Sharia* Law. Islamic authorities have proclaimed that Islamic Family Law provides adequate protection for the victims; however, women's groups believed that the Act would be vulnerable to loopholes if the laws were applicable to certain groups and not to the others.

As Women's Aid Organization (2009) states:

“Although *Sharia* Law has jurisdiction over all family matters for Muslims, criminal matters fall under the Federal Government and Criminal and Civil Law apply equally to Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, attaching domestic violence to the Criminal Procedure and Penal Code enabled domestic violence to be classified as ‘criminal behaviour’ and ensures its applicability to all Malaysians”.

At present, the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) is officially applicable to all Malaysians regardless of their religion. However, in the matter of divorce petition related to partner violence, Muslims are bound to file the case via the Islamic Religious Affairs Department (for *Sharia* Law) whereas non-Muslims need to seek advice from the National Registration Department (for Family Law).

Nonetheless, for whatever reasons, the cultural perception that urged Malaysian women to tolerate the violence and accept their situation within an abusive marriage needs to be changed. Traditionally, men appear to be the breadwinner and head of the family in Malaysian society. These days, however, the opportunity for women to have better education has gradually increased and women have started to become financially independent from their husbands/partners. Hence, there is a possibility that men may feel their ‘position’ has been challenged (male ego) and this circumstance may contribute to some kind of dissatisfactions which later on triggers the violent behaviour towards their female counterparts. Below is one example of a situation where the religious officer advised a woman client in a case of spousal abuse (Asiaweek, 1991 cited in Amirthalingam, 2003: 9):

“Be patient”, the religious officer told the battered wife. “Pray for change. As a woman, that’s your role.” So Hasnah (not a real name), a 26-year old Malaysian executive, went home and heeded the *Kadi’s* advice. The abuse continued. One day her husband broke her leg. On crutches, she went to see the *qadi* again. This time the *qadi* helped her to get a divorce.

Support system for abused women

The management of domestic violence in Malaysia is still developing. To date, there has been little discussion about what is on offer for abused women as many of the services provided are non-integrated in nature. It is hoped that in the near future there will be more integration among the agencies in terms of services as well as data sharing which is believed may enhance the reporting level of domestic violence incidents among the Malaysian abused women. For the time being, there are a number of organizations involved in providing assistance to the abused women. These organizations include government and non-government agencies.

Domestic violence resources

The following is the currently existing formal support system for abused women in Malaysia:

- **Non-governmental organizations (women’s groups)**

At the moment, there are a number of non-government organizations (NGOs) that dedicate themselves to working for abused women in Malaysia. Examples of these are Women Centre for Change (WCC), All Women’s Action Society (AWAM), Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO), Pertubuhan Kesedaran Wanita Kedah (PKWK), Sarawak Women for Women Society (SWWS) and the Sabah Women Action Resource Group (SAWO). These women NGOs provide advice and information on counselling services, assistance for getting protection or dealing with other agencies such as the police, hospitals, the Social Welfare Department and courts. Nonetheless, out of these NGOs, only few are providing refuges for abused women due to numerous constraints.

- **Accident and emergency departments of government hospitals**

A 'One Stop Crisis Centre' (OSCC) was established in all 94 general hospitals countrywide in 1996 to offer immediate medical treatment as well as to provide a safe environment for abused women prior to the process of referral to other related agencies. Abused women will be given privileged status in terms of immediate treatment by a doctor in a private room as well as speedy issuance of a medical report as evidence of a crime. The visit to the hospital is essential if the victim was injured or has been injured in the past but had not been medically treated. The units also provide temporary shelter for the women and their children (with a maximum of two days overnight stay). With the consent of the victim, the OSCC team may refer the victim to the counselling unit and/or for psychiatric assessment if necessary as well as to the refuge managed by NGOs for longer term accommodation.

- **Royal Malaysian Police Force**

The police are the only authority figure with the power of arrest for domestic abuse cases in Malaysia. The police statement is one of the most important documents to validate the violence as evidence of a crime. The role of the police in domestic violence cases is as follows (Kandiah, 2003):

- 1) The police will carry out an investigation as provided in the Criminal Procedure Code.
- 2) The police on sufficient grounds shall remand the abuser in their custody for 24 hours.
- 3) The police shall produce the abuser before the Magistrate.
- 4) The police have the power to remand the abuser longer than 24 hours but not more than 14 days. However, approval by the Magistrate is required.

The complaint regarding the abuse can be lodged by the victim themselves, the parents or a relative of the victim. Other people, for instance friends or neighbours, may give information to an enforcement officer should they have reason to believe that an offence involving domestic violence is being or has been committed. Nevertheless, only the victim has the right to decide what further action is required from the police to resolve the case. As for now, cases pertaining to domestic violence

in all Malaysian states are dealt with by the Police Criminal Investigation Division under the Sexual Assault Unit.

- **Department of Social Welfare**

A Social Welfare department officer may accompany the victim to a hospital and police station if the victim has not already gone there for the medical report and police statement. The department's officer will then assist the victim to apply to the Court for an Interim Protection Order (IPO) as well as in some cases, the Protection Order (PO). The protection order issued by the court will prohibit the abuser from continuously using violence against the victim. In addition, the protection order may also cover other family members including the children. Possible routes in seeking the Interim Protection Order and Protection Order are illustrated in Figure 2.3.

- **Legal aid bureau**

The bureau provides free legal aid and advice concerning all issues in regard to domestic violence, assaults and civil matters such as rights in marriage, child custody and maintenance claims. This service is offered to victims who face financial difficulties and are without funds to use for legal fees. If required, the victim will be assisted in obtaining a court order, a protection order as well as helping the victim to deal with the police.

- **Islamic Religious Affairs Department**

For Muslims, dissolution of marriage may only be permitted by the court under *Sharia* Law. In the case of domestic violence, abused women may be granted a divorce under the circumstances of ill-treatment of the wife. Sections 127 and 128 of Act 303 provide significant protection to wives whose husbands committed matrimonial offence such as violence in the relationship. The conditions for dissolution of marriage (and marriage itself) vary slightly within the states in Malaysia. Information on *Sharia* Law and *Sharia* courts was fully presented under Section 2 in this chapter (Marriage, divorce and family matters).

- **National Registration Department**

For non-Muslims, a divorce in marriage may only be granted by the family court; through a petition under the Marriage and Divorce Division. In terms of domestic violence cases, the victim may apply to the court for special permission if in the circumstances the spouse has behaved in such a way that the victim cannot reasonably be expected to live with him [Sections 2.1.1 (d)]. Hence, the reference to a conciliatory body is not required [Section 2.2.2]. The discussion of Family Law in Malaysia can be perused under the Marriage, divorce and family matters heading.

Options in seeking assistance

The organisations mentioned above currently serve as the professionals who provide assistance to abused women in Malaysia. Each and every single one of these agencies has similar roles in helping the abused women, however, from diverse aspects of the service. Therefore, it is believed that integration between these organizations is vital in order to avoid the overlapping of roles and this ultimately may improve the services offered to domestic violence victims/survivors in the nation.

As is currently practised, the domestic violence victim has a number of options in seeking the assistance provided. Figure 2.3 on page 56 illustrates a model for the routes and possible options for the women in accessing the help available around them. In brief, the flow chart shows possible routes for domestic violence victims (abused women) in order to disclose the violent incidents as well as accessing the support system networks. The routes however are outlined as suggestions and more likely to interchange in consideration of the present circumstances of the violence.

After leaving the house (with or without the husband's knowledge), the woman (and their children) may straight away approach the refuge centre (if they know of any) for accommodation. Otherwise, she may also ask for assistance from family and friends for a temporary place to stay. Next, the woman is advised to lodge a police statement for further investigation of the case against the abuser. The woman is also advised to undergo a medical examination in order to get a medical report from the hospital (preferably from a public hospital) to support the case. These supporting documents play a crucial role in all domestic violence cases because this evidence is considered

as proof of the crime perpetrated by the abuser. Then, the process continues depending on the route taken by the women as illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Route 1: The woman may decide to pursue charges under the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) and proceed with a trial of the abuser. In the meantime, while the case is proceeding, the woman is advised to apply for a protection order for security purposes. The woman may also refuse to press any charges against the abuser but still using the same documents may apply for a protection order (Interim Protection Order – temporary injunction and/or Protection Order – permanent injunction) from the civil courts. The application for the protection order is made through officers in the Social Welfare Department. The application may take from 24 hours to three months (or more) to be granted according to the credibility of the proof of evidence presented in supporting the case.

Route 2: If the woman chooses not to press any charges against the abuser or applies for a protection order, the same documents may be used in the future as a historical record regarding the abuser's act or acts of violence towards the woman. The professionals in the organizations function as an advisor though the final decision is in the woman's hands; even in the situation where the woman has decided to go back to the abuser. The woman has an absolute right to withdraw herself at any point of the process if she decides to do so; nevertheless she must be well informed regarding the consequences of her actions.

Route 3: The woman also may decide to proceed with the dissolution of the marriage on the grounds of ill-treatment and violence experienced in the relationship. The petition of divorce may only be granted by a family court for non-Muslims and by the *Sharia* court for Muslims. Similar procedures and supporting documents as above are required by both courts. The woman may seek legal assistance from the Legal Aid Bureau (financial evidence required) or may opt for her own private legal team. Counselling services are also available throughout the stages during the divorce process because in Malaysian culture divorce is the last resort in regards to terminating a relationship. Hence, in many circumstances, the couple may not be offered the process leading to a divorce unless the relationship can no longer be reconciled. The process of divorce usually takes a few months (even years) to be

settled. However, in the case of marital violence, usually a longer time is needed by the court as there are many additional issues to be considered, for instance the absence of a witness during the violent incidents, or a contested petition made by the husband using '*nusyuz*' for Muslims (refer page 39 for details) and lack of credible evidence pertaining to the violence perpetrated by the abuser.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of Malaysia's demographics and has also introduced the lifestyle of the Malaysian community. The discussion about marriage and the laws in the country pertaining to marriage gives insights to the reader on how women are being oppressed by religious myth and a patriarchal system prevalent in society. Moreover, the chapter uncovers the shortcomings in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) and discusses the debates regarding its implementation and the view that it is believed to be gender insensitive as well as very much affected by the influence of culture.

Domestic violence prevalence and its significant manifestations in the Malaysian context were also presented in order to provide a comprehensive understanding pertaining to the issues discussed. As the discussion resumes, the study then outlines the existing support systems and networking for management of domestic violence in Malaysia. Finally, possible routes and options for abused women in seeking assistance from available services were discussed with the objective of establishing an understanding among readers in reference to the current options and procedures for seeking help for domestic violence cases in Malaysia.

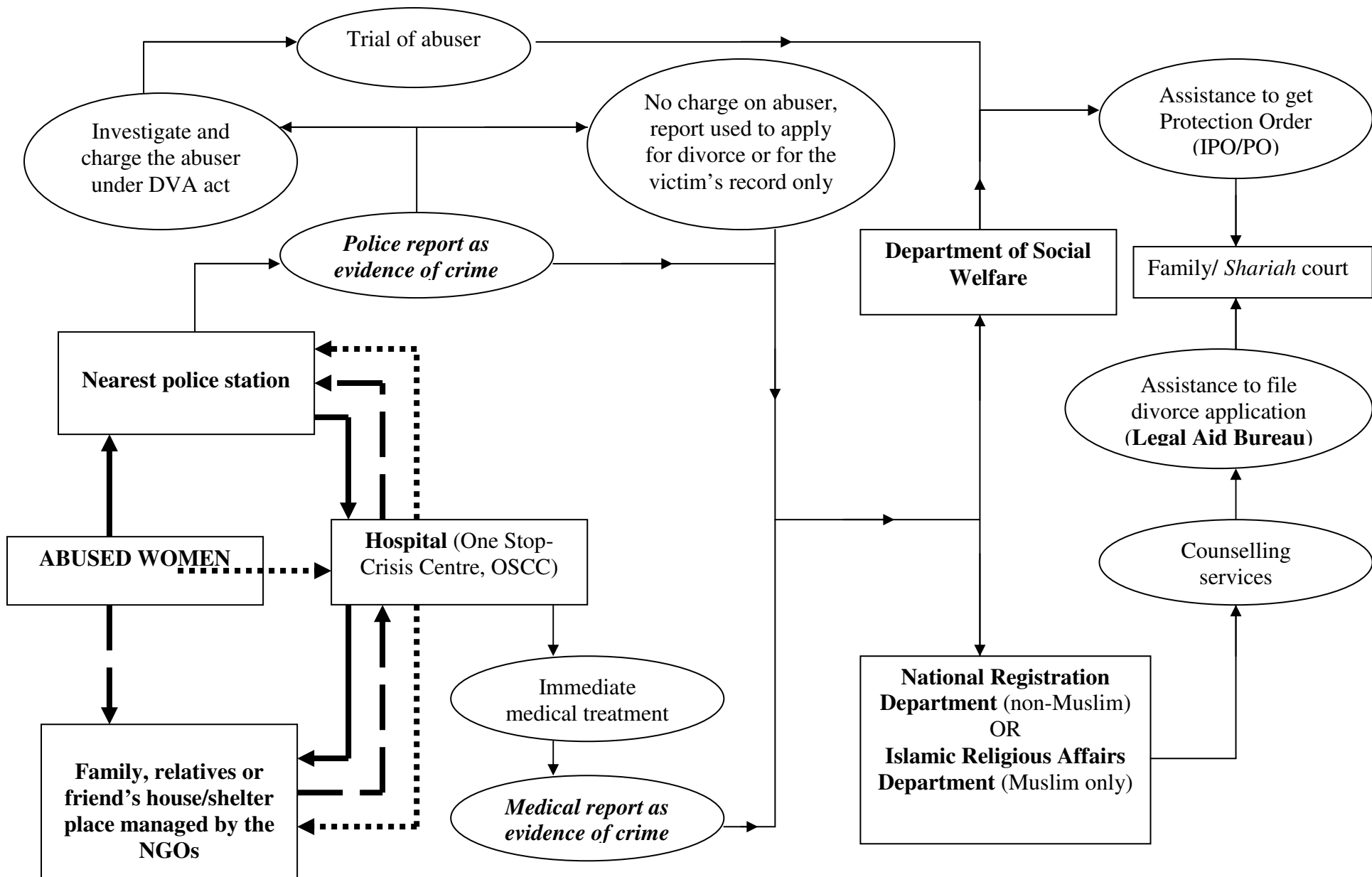


Figure 2.3: Flow chart of domestic violence victim/survivor's options

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature on issues of domestic violence pertinent to the present study's quests. Overall, it comprises three sections. The first section focuses on the issue of women and violence from the perspective of Islam. It discusses the rights and position of Muslim women, with further clarification on wife abuse concepts according to the Islamic religion. Subsequently, the theoretical explanations, which consist of two conceptual frameworks, namely the feminist and the psychological perspective, are presented. The third and final section of this chapter reviews the available studies on domestic violence in Malaysia. Further, previous research on the impacts of domestic violence, violence disclosure and resources for support of domestic violence cases are also included.

Islam and Violence against Women

Rights and position of Muslim women

The study of women in Islam has demonstrated the complexity of the women's role within this religion. According to the *Qur'an*, both men and women are equal, and this has been emphasized in respect to their duties, rights, virtues and merits. They are also promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct:

“Whoever commits a sin is requited for just that, and whoever works righteousness - male or female - while believing, these will enter Paradise wherein they receive provisions without any limits.” (*Qur'an* 40:40)

The concept of equality in the Muslim woman's life is well preserved by *Sharia* law. This concept provides the women with equitable rights in terms of marriage, divorce and the inheritance of property. Even though in a Muslim society the man has full responsibility for the maintenance of his family, the women on the other hand may

also contribute anything that she earns if she wishes. Thus, the rights of the women encompass economic, educational, political as well legal aspects of life.

Nevertheless, Muslim women are expected to obey their husband in his role as the head of the family. This is the meaning of obedience in the context of marriage in Islam. As the *Qur'an* states:

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in absence what Allah would have them guard." (*Qur'an* 4:34)

In line with this, Islam also has attached a very high status to Muslim women. This can be seen in their important role as a wife and a mother. A few sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are also cited about the honour of being a mother:

"Your heaven lies under the feet of your mother." (Ahmad, Nasai)

"Verily, God forbade for you, rudeness to mothers." (Muslim)

A man asked the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to whom he should show kindness and he replied: "Your mother". He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your mother". He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your mother". He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your father, then your relatives in order of relationship." (Tarmizi, Abu Da'ud)

"Do not leave your mother unless she gives permission or death takes her, because that is the greatest (deed) for your rewards." (Al-Kabir)

In conclusion, it was stated in the *Qur'an* that Muslim women are granted certain privileges over men, for instance in relation to their religious duties, financial liabilities, inheritance of property. Further, significantly the women enjoy higher recognition in the sight of the Islamic religion by virtue of being a mother. Although men are given the role as 'the protectors and maintainers of women' in verse (4:34),

this circumstance does not indicate in any sense that women are inferior to men. In many instances, the verses of the *Qur'an* emphasize the element of equality between men and women incorporating a wide range of various aspects of life. Nonetheless, it is believed that there is a strong necessity for Muslim women to be well informed in regards to their rights and obligations according to the *Sharia* because the demands as well as the challenges of modern day living has increasingly put pressure on Muslim women worldwide.

Concepts pertaining to wife abuse in Islam

As discussed in the earlier chapter, Malaysia is an Islamic country with more than half of its population embracing the religion of Islam. Therefore, the requirement of understanding the Islamic approach on various aspects of its people lives is pivotal. This includes the teachings on the structure of the Muslim family. In Islam, domestic violence can be seen as *nusyuz* or a careless attitude towards responsibilities between husband and wife, without any unlawful reasons which are solemnized by the *Hukum Shara'* (*Sharia* Law).

According to the Islamic view, marriage entails certain obligations, rights and duties between a husband and wife. These foundations have been laid for the couples to achieve a happy marriage as well as to enjoy a stable married life equally. Both man and woman should be learning the responsibility of becoming a proper husband and wife for each other. The structure of Islamic family life rests on the following four pillars (Lemu & Heeren, 2007: 36):

1. Home and encouragement - family life as a cradle of human society providing a secure, healthy and encouraging home for parents and the growing children.
2. Eros and children - family life as a guardian of the natural erotic desires of men and women, leading this powerful urge into wholesome channels.
3. Sympathetic virtues - family life as the very breeding-place for human virtues like love, kindness, mercy.
4. Refuge - family life as the most secure refuge against inward and outward troubles.

The Noble *Qur'an*, the holy book of Islam, indicates that both men and women have similar rights and shared duties in a marriage. As the *Qur'an* says:

"And among His signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect." (*Qur'an* 30:21).

"...Your wives are your garments, and you are their garments." (*Qur'an* 2:187)

Furthermore, Islam stresses the importance of the men understanding their responsibilities as leaders (*caliphs*) in a family unit. Although the man is considered as a head of the family as well as the 'breadwinner', the role of women is not to be neglected. Muslim women have equal rights in terms of strengthening the home and supporting the family well-being. The *Qur'an* thus states:

"And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, and men are a degree above them." (*Qur'an* 2:228).

In respect to marital violence *per se*, Islam prohibits the husband to use any form of violence against the wife when disagreements arise. There are three stages to be followed in order when the arguments worsen. For whatever reason, wife abuse is not allowed although the *Qur'an* acknowledges the light battering of a wife for the purpose of disciplining. The husband must avoid severe and harsh punishment in his treatment of his wife. The *Qur'an* states about such circumstances:

".....As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance)." (*Qur'an* 4:34)

The verse stated above does not portray that Islam belittles women. The striking in particular served as the last resort and also as a curative measure. The husband, in any

situation, may not beat his wife in wild or savage manner. In fact, he must avoid attacking her in the face at all times. Only a '*siwak*' (a tiny stick that is used for cleaning teeth) can be used for the hitting with the condition that no damage is done to the wife's body and no mark is left on her. Thus, the description mentioned in the *Qur'an* in relation to beating the wives is obvious. It is believed that the husband's ignorance of the basic teachings of Islam may best explain the circumstances of marital violence as well as other related factors such as economic issues, external love affairs and substance abuse. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also forbade wife beating,

“Give her (your wife) food when you take food, clothe when you clothe yourself, do not revile her face, and do not beat her.” (Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 11, Marriage (Kitab Al-Nikah), Number 2139)

The laws of Islam provide the woman her right to seek an end to a marriage if the husband has ill-treated his wife, for example in domestic violence cases. Initially, the reconciliation procedure may be introduced with the couple in order to attempt to save the marriage. However, if the relationship is no longer reconcilable, the wife may proceed with the process of divorce. Allah says in the Holy *Qur'an* Chapter 4, Surah Nissa verses 128 and 129:

"If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if you do good and practice self-restraint Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do."

“You are never able to be fair and just as between women even if it is your ardent desire: but turn not away (from a woman) altogether so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If you come to a friendly understanding and practice self-restraint Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.”

The dissolution of marriage or divorce is the final termination of a marital union between men and women. In Islamic law, divorce is referred to as *talaq*. Although Islam promises women protection from a husband's propensity to violence for example, the reality in some Muslim women's lives is different. Nevertheless, no one

has to remain in those abusive conditions. Thus, divorce is permitted. As Muslim women cannot verbally divorce their husband (unlike the men), they are granted the right to terminate their relationships through the divorce process in the court.

To summarize, even though the light beating of the wife is permissible in Islam if the husband may refrain from it that would be a much better option. When reflecting on the wife abuse situation, typically none of the conditions above are met. Therefore, the beatings perpetrated by the husband in these circumstances are not considered as permissible in accordance to the *Sharia*. The word 'beat' in the verse (4:43) does not convey the meaning of batter or abuse. In short, the Islamic religion does not condone any forms of violence against women. Therefore, in due course divorce is allowed for Muslim women as stated in the Holy *Qur'an* in order for them to seek constructive change in their future lives.

Domestic Violence in Muslim Societies

Domestic violence is a global issue that affects the lives of millions of women worldwide. The problem cuts across cultural and religious barriers and can impact people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, education levels as well as socio-economic groups. This section attempts to create links to relevant literature on violence against women conducted within Islamic countries and in Muslim societies around the world. The association of these studies with domestic violence (in particular) may contribute to a greater understanding of the issue that makes the study comprehensive. The discussion about abusive relationships in Muslim societies is very much related with this qualitative study of abused women's experiences in Malaysia.

The prevalence of domestic violence in Muslim societies is comparable to that of Western countries. In the Sivas Province of Turkey, for example, the study found that 52 per cent of 583 women were exposed to at least one type of violence. In terms of type of violence, more than half of the participants reported being verbally abused by their partners (Kocacik & Dogan, 2006). Similarly with Khosravizadegan *et al.* (2008) research, the prevalence of violence in a sample of 100 female adults showed that the majority of the respondents experienced symptoms of physical, behavioural, social and psychological abuse. This cross sectional study also described the resistance of

abused women in Iran to disclosing their violence incidents to others, due to matters including shame and embarrassment as well as a lack of knowledge about getting appropriate assistance from service providers.

Soltanifar and his colleagues (2008) found the highest rate of any form of violence against pregnant women in Iran was sexual abuse. This quantitative study used the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) version to determine the frequency and intensity of intimate partner violence in their sample. There was also a significant correlation between the occurrence of violence and low birth weight (infant) recorded for mothers with domestic abuse experiences. Prior to the above mentioned study, the same instrument was used by Albrithen (2006) to investigate the association between alcoholism and domestic violence in Saudi society. Apart from the Conflict Tactics Scale, the author also employed the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST) to determine its relationship. The results showed that a higher level of aggression was evident in husbands with an alcohol problem and several types of abuse were reported to be involved during the violent incidents. It was found that domestic violence among women in Saudi communities was mostly perpetrated by male partners rather than other family members.

Recently, the role of religion on domestic violence was identified by Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Hogberg and Emmelin (2013). In their study, spiritual framing as well as positive diversion of the self were among coping strategies indicated by women in Indonesia. The results of the study showed that the Javanese women's coping dynamics were multifaceted, in which they struggled against the violence in a spiritual way. The in-depth interviews in rural Purworejo District also found that most women preferred to keep silent about the violence and decided to stay in the relationships because of the difficulty in mobilizing internal and external support to end the abuse. In a similar respect, Hassouneh-Phillips (2001) suggests that women's faith has occasionally been manipulated by the abusers as a result of the silence. The purpose of manipulation is to maintain power and control over the wives. Thus, eventually these women will gradually lack self-confidence and would rather undertake a spiritual form of coping mechanism to deal with the abuse. The same author found that the results of the examination of American Muslim women's experiences can be divided into four stages, namely "reaching the point of saturation",

“initiating the divorce process”, “facing family and/or community disapproval” and “reclaiming the self” (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001).

In Arab countries such as Egypt, Palestine and Tunisia, the data shows that the occurrence of domestic violence is 1 in 3 women. This problem is largely considered as a private matter and ‘punishment’ for ‘misbehaviour’ on the part of the wife. Despite the increasing frequency and its damaging impacts, this social issue is not a matter of major concern (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker & Ghachem, 2003). This is because abusers attempt to justify their actions through the verses from *Qur’an* regarding permission to engage in wife beating. In the Arab societies, concealing the offences will preserve the honour of the husband as well as for the rest of the family. Actually, this misleading concept was a result of influence on cultural norms and perceptions. In general, these related literatures showed a significant link between women battering with spiritual coping strategies, a high prevalence of violence as well as undisclosed abuse among victims of domestic violence in Muslim societies.

Theoretical Explanations

Domestic violence has been approached within various frameworks and viewpoints. These frameworks provide knowledge as well as understanding regarding family violence problems. There are two general theoretical levels of analysis that underpinned this study; the first is the psychological and psychiatric factors (intra-individual level) and the second is from the perspective of feminist theory (socio-cultural level).

Psychological perspective

The psychological framework of domestic violence mainly focuses on the offender’s behavioral problems such as deviant characteristics that create a propensity to the violent act. Nevertheless, some concepts focus on the individual personality characteristics of the victims. Overall, the psychological perspective concentrates on the personality deficiencies in a person, as well as losing self-control, which is viewed as “...an excessive drive for aggressive behavior” (Lorenz, 1966 cited in Browne &

Herbert, 1997: 28). The theory that perpetrators are mentally ill has been proven to be wrong as many domestic violence offenders were tested as 'normal' through psychological testing. It is believed that the behavioral attacks of domestic violence perpetrators are usually targeted towards their intimate partner, in comparison to individuals who suffer from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and who generally do not have this sort of attack behavior. Therefore, a variety of coercive control tactics (i.e. several forms of abuse) are used by the offender in order to exercise complete control over the partner.

The psychological source of 'beating' may well be a history of parental abuse along with rejection from others. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that violent behaviour can be learned by watching the behaviour of others. This learning process is called modelling. The central thesis is that children who either experienced violence in their childhood or who witness violence occurring in the family have a greater tendency to use violence when they grow up. In line with this theory, Mihalic and Elliot state:

During childhood and adolescence, observations of how parents and significant others behave in intimate relationships provide an initial learning of behavioural alternatives which are 'appropriate' for these relationships. If the family of origin handled stresses and frustrations with anger and aggression, the child who has grown up in such an environment is at greater risk for exhibiting those same behaviours, witnessed or experienced, as an adult (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997: 21).

Likewise, people who commit domestic violence may have an association with witnessing abusive behaviour in their earlier lives (O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001). Jasinski, Williams and Finkelhor (1998) propose that the observation of aggressive role models and exposure to violence at home can result in similar learned behaviour. Similarly, Ronald Aker's social learning theory proposes that violent experiences are initiated from behavioural processes that are captured by learning, instead of putting the blame on various external associations for abusive behaviour, for example substance abuse and depression. There are four concepts outlined in the theory (Rahmatian, 2009).

- 1) Differential association which identifies interactional and normative behaviour that is rooted from the abuser's past experiences.

- 2) The abuser develops personal understanding toward a specific behaviour that he or she engaged in.
- 3) Differential reinforcement that explains balance anticipation of the cause and effects of such behaviour committed by the abuser.
- 4) Principle of imitation which defines how the abuser repeats his or her observation of similar behaviours committed by other people.

In an attempt to grasp the reasons for wife battering behaviour another analysis of violence looked at a cyclic phase of violent experiences that can occur in a relationship. The cycle of violence theory (Walker, 1979) suggests four stages of the violence experiences that explain patterns of an abusive relationship. The cycle involved tensions building with usually minor battering incidents take place. As the tension grows, the abuser lost control and channelled his anger through the act of violence. After the tension was released, the couple reconciled because the abuser remorsefully apologizes and displays his sense of love to keep the women with him. This “honeymoon” period lasts for some time until the episodes of battering reoccur and become routine in that marriage. The figure below illustrates the cycle of violence in domestic violence relationship.

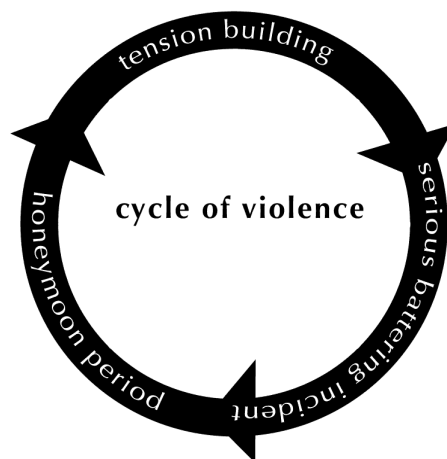


Figure 3.1: The cycle of violence in domestic violence relationship

Closely related to the previous theory’s assumptions, the family/relationship conflict model explains that it is the couple themselves who actually cause the abusive behaviour as they mutually contribute to the violent incidents (Paymar, 1994).

According to this model, women generally are the ones who provoke the men (usually in verbal form) and the situation becomes worse since the husband acts violently as a consequence of the provocation. In other words, the model suggests 'harassment' on the women's part has contributed to the tension building phase for the men as referred to in the cycle of violence theory. Therefore, the use of violence is accepted as a consequence of the victim's actions. This 'mutual' violence-based theory, however, is incapable of explaining violent behaviour committed by the husband without provocation, for instance while the wife is asleep. For that reason, 'provocation' is viewed as another way for the abuser to justify violent incidents in an intimate relationship. Nevertheless, these psychological explanations appear to have their own limitations as the framework is unable to address all issues regarding the domestic violence phenomenon, particularly in respect to power and gender matters (Yllo, 1993 cited in Gelles, 1997).

Feminist perspective

Theories are important in order to explain phenomenon such as violence against women because the theories offer clearer implications in each approach that can be useful for understanding, responding and undertaking interventions to overcome the problem. With the issue of domestic violence, it is important to be aware of the challenges related to gender inequality, cultural beliefs and religious notions that underpin the real problem. Therefore, a broader explanation utilising the power of feminist theories brings an advantage in providing different perspectives on this issue. In this particular study, the basis and justification for domestic violence can be best explained through the theory from the feminist perspective. In general, the theory emphasizes the gender and power imbalance in heterosexual relationships.

According to Yllo (2005), feminist theory originates from a sociological perspective which focuses on the social interpretation of violence and aggression perpetrated by men in an intimate relationship. The essence of the theory is proposing equality in the gender roles within a marriage (and other intimate relationships modeled on marriage). Feminist theory also proscribes male power and control over females and condemns the subordinate position of women in society. Therefore, this theory is critical of male domination (inside and outside of marriage) which is seen as leading to the

subordination of women. Masculine domination over females is further existent as a consequence of this in the home setting (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

In the context of violence against women, this approach uses the issue of power imbalances between the two genders as a core explanation of the situation. Similarly, Dobash and Dobash (1979) in their book 'Violence Against Wives' state that the coercive control of power exerted by a man over his female partner perpetuates violent behavior in their intimate relationship. Elsewhere, Dutton (1994) claimed that feminism highlights a number of socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal structure values, to the exclusion of individual characteristics corresponding to the abuse. According to Yllo and Bograd (1988), feminist perspective is described by four major dimensions:

- 1) The explanatory utility of the constructs of gender and power – men in general have power over women and can potentially use violence to subordinate them. This patriarchy system is structured along a dimension which devalues women as secondary and inferior. As Yllo and Bograd (1988: 14) states: "Wife abuse or battering reinforces women's passivity and dependence as men exert their rights to authority and control".
- 2) The analysis of the family as a historically rooted social institution – wife abuse is not the result of family functional breakdown, but is like other common dimensions of normal family life. Therefore, this problem must be examined according to the socio-historical context (functions, structures and processes).
- 3) The crucial importance of understanding and validating women's experiences—"The basic step toward understanding the factors contributing to wife abuse is illuminating the experiences of women from their own frames of reference" (Yllo & Bograd, 1988: 15). Hence, the experiences of women which are often defined as distorted can be reshaped.
- 4) Employing scholarship for women – feminist scholarship is dedicated to advocacy for women with women's experiences as a centre point for developing theories and models that encompass paradigms of human behavior (Eichler, 1983 cited in Yllo and Bograd, 1988).

Power imbalances exist largely in patriarchal societies such as in many Asian countries including Malaysia. Feminist theorists summarize the patriarchy system as a historical pattern of systematic violence directed against women in respect to social, economical as well as political imbalances. In tradition, the social system has defined men's role as the breadwinner for the family with masculine traits, and as being active and dominant over women's 'soft' personalities characterized as dependent, passive and 'motherly'. Therefore, women are likely to stay and take on responsibilities at home with child rearing and house chores whereas men are expected to leave the home for work as the main provider of the family. In this way, men and women are socially segregate which subsequently affects their sense of self. Within the discourse, financial dependencies among women become fundamental. Smith (2009) states financial dependency among women may create a number of psychological issues such as low self-confidence to live independently and this often leads to isolation.

Yllo (2005) asserted that the traditional structure of a patriarchal society enables unequal participation for women in respect to social, economic and political systems. In the context of marriage and family, a historically male-dominated social structure has contributed to the excessive power and control of husbands (as perpetrator) over wives. Thus, domestic violence occurs within the home. The feminists also argue that it is common for batterers to take charge of the family in terms of decision making, setting up the rules, disciplining disobedient wives and children as well as correcting unsatisfactory performance of duties (Browne & Herbert, 1997). Consequently, men will hold positions of respect including more power which clearly is disadvantageous to the women. This view is further supported by Jasinski *et al.* (1998) who write about contributions to violence between men and women that were based upon gender-specific roles plus the male-dominated social structure of the past.

Domestic violence from a feminist perspective concurs that a sense of control is the key to the perpetration of violence. The majority of feminist approaches concur on seeing the exercise of male power and control towards the female in all domains of the relationship which involves verbal and psychological abuse, social isolation, the undermining of the victim's self-confidence and sexual coercion (Healey *et al.*, 1998). As Gelles (1997: 41) states: "Feminist perspectives are now becoming the dominant explanation model for understanding domestic violence against women because of its

major strength in the proxies and advocacy approach”. In hindsight, the theory views domestic violence as a systemic issue that would require the empowerment of women in order to achieve gender equality. McCue (2008:16) states: “As long as women are not equal to men in all ways, domestic violence will continue to be a problem in our society”.

In a book entitled “Home truths about domestic violence: Feminist influences on policy and practice – A reader”, Dobash and Dobash (2001) suggest a transformation of the social change process in the political system. The authors also indicated that the policies and practices of the past partly contributed to the ineffectiveness in solving this problem. In regard to the national social agenda, the concerns of governments are highly relevant to this process. Nowadays, the mixture of challenges and possibilities appearing since the years of the 1970s, in terms of exposure and knowledge, influence the latest developments around the issue of the abuse of women together with gender inequality. Hence, traditional forms of male domination as well as female subordination are the key subjects to be discussed and should be reformed by altering the existing policies, practices and legislation in order to provide useful insights for the future modification of interventions.

As the theory offers different explanations for the phenomenon, an examination of violence against women also penetrates and allows exploration within the diverse communities, and into the context of legal provisions. For example, in the UK alone, minority ethnic groups grew to almost five millions people and the impact of these demographic changes is massive. The growth of communities brings together social predicaments that need modification of interventions with cultural sensitivity. Therefore, an integrated approach to eradicate violence against women is suggested in delivering services to Black as well as other Minority ethnic groups within the UK. Renowned activists who have vast experience of working on violence against women such as Liz Kelly, Yasmin Rehman and Hanna Siddiqui attempt to explore this challenging issue through “Moving in the shadows: Violence in the lives of minority women and children” (2013). The book discusses various perspectives on domestic violence in diverse communities in the country as well as the forms and contexts of violence Minority women experience. In addition, the authors make an important contribution to the body of knowledge. They provide arguments on responses and

interventions, which are aimed at enhancing the reader's understanding of creating justice and providing efficient provisions to improve the lives of Minority women and children in the UK.

Gendered violence within South Asian communities is frequently associated with forced marriage and 'honour' killing issues (Thiara & Gill, 2009). In recent years, the debates on 'honour'-based violence have been addressed openly in many societies around the world. In tackling such issues, it is important to recognize the cultures connected to it, as well as how these cultures are crisscrossed with gender discrimination and inequality. Gill and Brah (2013) describe the socio-cultural principles behind 'honour'-based violence (HBV) behaviors. It can be seen as a form of domestic violence committed by family members to restore pride and avoid shameful behavior in the maintenance of honour. In the context of South Asian communities, the people are distinguished by several factors such as class, lineage, language, region and caste. The society emphasizes conformity with the social norms and traditions, particularly in the aspect of women's sexuality (i.e. pregnancy out of wedlock, adultery and incest etc). The most common perpetrators of HBV are among the male relatives of the victim, namely their father, brother(s), uncle(s) and also with 'a little help' from women in the family. The situation is most likely contributed to by patriarchal practices that are particularly prevalent in the South Asian communities.

In response to legislation, policies and practices pertinent to the violence against women issue, Gill (2009) outlines a number of possible ways to improve the support interventions that subsequently may result in a better response to the needs of victims/survivors (and their children) as well as the professionals who work with this vulnerable group. Among the suggestions made are enhancing women protection provisions under the legal system, exploiting the potential for informal assistance, designing diverse strategies of prevention as well as utilizing research to obtain firsthand information and guidance from the victims/survivors on how to develop effective policy and practice in order to meet their needs.

Turning to legal matters, Bano (2007) discusses reflection on *Sharia* Law proposed by Muslim communities in Britain. The background of cultural and religious differences instigated the crisis of multiculturalism, which divided the western and Muslim

societies in the country. Almost 40 per cent of Muslims in Britain are in favour of separate personal systems of law rather than engaging with English Law as it is now. Nonetheless, there are conflicts concerning this approach as the principles of Islamic law might be contradictory to some issues which are not recognized under existing English law. To sum up the idea, despite the fact that religious arbitration bodies (i.e. *Sharia* Councils) attempt to resolve marital problems such as disputes and divorce currently, the study found little evidence that suggests the development of any statutory authority of Muslim law in Britain.

Although the tenets of feminist theory are applicable to a broad range of issues pertinent to culture, legal context and gender power in abusive relationships, the limitations incorporated in the feminist approach, however, have been widely stated. Firstly, the approach demonstrates that feminist perspective is unable to explain violence experiences in same-sex couples, for example in lesbian and gay relationships (Lawson, 2003). This is because the issue of gender and power inequality is overemphasized in the theory. The assumption that women are oppressed and subordinate to men in a society is condemned by researchers who have dismissed feminist perspectives on domestic violence (Dutton & Bodnarchuk, 2005). Secondly, feminist theory is incapable of explaining violence perpetrated by women in marriage. The sensible explanation of women's abusive behaviour is related to self-defense and retaliation, although this does not explain why women perpetrate violence outside their intimate relationships, for instance at the work place.

The application of feminist perspectives in this particular study is aimed at highlighting an equal relationship in the research process and encourages participation of the women as the study sample. Yllo and Bograd (1988) suggest that feminist principles require rapport building as well as a reciprocal relationship during the research process due to the fact that the basis of feminist perspective emerges from a social movement. In the study, the core principle of this theory is applied where female perspectives and the life experiences of women were included. Hence, the study attempts to combine theory with practice in order to better understand and establish realistic solutions for the problem.

Conceptual framework

Figure 3.2 in the next page is presented as the basis of a conceptual framework in this study. It essentially examines the following linkages among variables such as barriers to disclosure, domestic violence resources as well as the impacts of an abusive relationship regarding women's personal experiences of violence. Several research questions were formulated from this model.

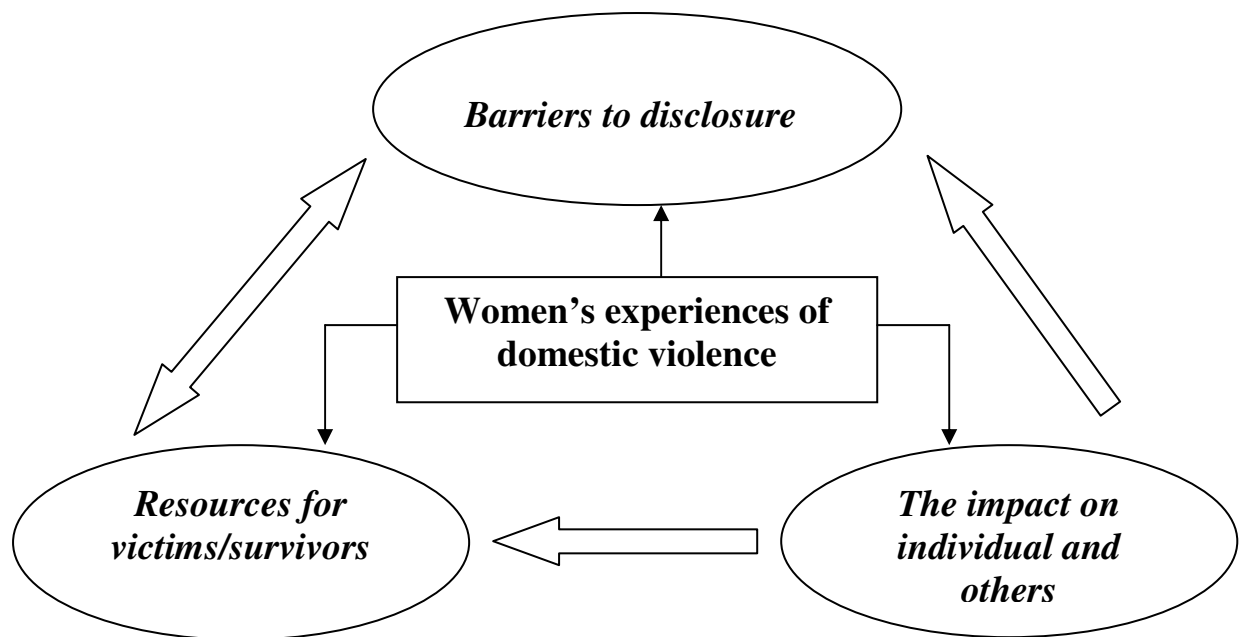


Figure 3.2: A conceptual framework for understanding attributes of violence experiences on abused women

Previous Studies of Domestic Violence

Globally, domestic violence has existed for centuries but it is only in the past few decades that domestic violence has been recognized as a real problem (Mears & Visser, 2005). Since then, much empirical research has been conducted to gain a proper understanding and to attempt to resolve this matter. "Domestic violence is understood to be a critical problem-one that occurs along many dimensions, takes many forms, and arises under a range of different conditions" (Mears & Visser, 2005: 250). In this particular study, several endeavours of empirical research have been highlighted below in order to offer explanation on domestic violence issues (for

example Davhana-Meselesele, 2011; Khosravizadegan *et al.*, 2008; Lanthier, 2008; Payne & Wermeling, 2009; Pilar Matud, 2005; Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Lee, 2007; Catalano, 2007; Sarkar, 2010).

This section reviews the literature associated with the main areas of interest in this study. The areas include understanding the impacts of domestic violence on abused women, barriers to the disclosing of domestic violence and support systems for domestic violence victims and survivors.

Understanding the impacts of domestic violence

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the consequences of domestic violence to the individual who is abused, the people surrounding them, as well as the community as a whole. It was found that negative impacts of abusive relationships range from physical impairments to social isolation as well as the deterioration of psychological well-being (Dutton *et al.*, 2003; Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Pilar Matud, 2005; Levendosky *et al.*, 2004).

In 2005, a multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women was conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO). The study collected a huge data set from 10 countries with over 24,000 women participants involved. The mixture of diverse cultural settings as well as religious beliefs upheld by the participants has made this project remarkable in its own way. This international-scale research aimed to estimate the prevalence of various types of violence perpetrated by male partners such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse with reference to the women's health outcomes. The study questionnaire was developed by the experts, translated into 14 languages, pre-tested and then retested to ensure its consistency which allows comparisons among different settings. In the authors' investigation of linkages between intimate partner violence and health problems, Ellsberg *et al.* (2008) indicate that women who had experienced domestic violence were more likely to claim their general health as being poor or very poor. In fact, the pooled logistic regression analysis showed that 6.7 per cent of women surveyed reported suicidal thoughts as well as having attempted to end their lives following the abuse experiences by a partner. The research also suggests that the

impact of intimate partner violence may not only be in the short term (i.e. injuries and bruises) but prolonged, even after the violence relationship has ended. Although the study has been supported with a large data set coming from various countries, the main weakness of the study is the failure to study male partners' accounts of violence in particular. It is believed that the exploration from the men's perspective (i.e. the perpetrator) might offer a better understanding of the possible causes of abuse, the men's beliefs, as well as their attitudes regarding violence against women.

A considerable amount of literature has been published regarding the impacts of domestic violence on the psychological and emotional aspects of health. Previous studies have reported the effects of mental health problems including anxiety disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as suicidal thoughts and attempts (Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Phillips *et al.*, 2006; Hill *et al.*, 2007). Dorahy *et al.* (2007) analysed the data from 33 women victims of domestic violence together with 33 non-abused women in Northern Ireland and concluded that women from comparison group reported less psychological distress than the abused women sample. The study also found that many of the women in the domestic violence sample had experienced child abuse in their earlier lives compared to the women from the general population. This finding is supported by Pilar Matud (2005) who examined the psychological impact of partner violence on Spanish women. Both studies identified similarities regarding abused women samples in terms of the women's severe depression and anxiety levels. Based on a survey of more than 450 women (i.e. abused and non-abused), Pilar Matud's conclusions would have been much more original had the author had adopted a number of qualitative interviews with the women. This in order to explain further their personal violence experiences particularly in regard to their psychological health.

A study by Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani and Hill (2009) explored domestic violence victims' experiences using a grounded theory approach in the West Midlands, United Kingdom. Eight participants included in the research were mothers aged over 18 years, with at least one child and who were no longer in an abusive relationship. Importantly, for this type of research, informed consent from the participants had to be obtained prior to the interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted to address research questions regarding the women's experiences of violence. The most striking result to

emerge from the data was that women in this study perceived their identity and sense of self as associated with the influences of their culture and society. Subsequent to this perspective, the feelings of being ashamed, self-blame, guilt and being silent had affected the women's decision regarding the help seeking process. Hence, this study indicated significant effects of domestic violence on the women victims' sense of self. In addition, according to Pilar Matud (2005), battered women are more likely to have a lower sense of self-esteem as compared to women who did not experience domestic violence. It is believed that living in an abusive relationship has gradually undermined the women's ability to feel confident particularly about coming forward as well as dealing the violent situation with appropriate assistance.

The social networks of women experiencing domestic violence were addressed in a study by Levendosky *et al.* (2004). Their subjects were expecting women and consisted of 145 abused women and 58 non-abused women recruited from the mid-Michigan area. Pregnant women in the research were asked to complete a self-reported survey using six different sets of questionnaires (for example Brief Symptom Inventory – Anxiety Subscale, BSIA and Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire, NSSQ). The study assessed the amount, frequency and quality of the support received by the participants. The findings in this study highlight the connection between disclosure of abuse and quality of support received by those women. Overall, this study supports Dunham and Senn's (2000) finding that battered women usually keep the abuse a secret from their friends and family. Similar results were also found in some other studies such as Bowker (1984) and El-Bassel, Gilbert, Rajah, Folleno and Frye (2001). Besides this, Awusi, Okelele and Ayanwu (2009) found 77 per cent of respondents in Oleh, Nigeria reported that they were being secretive about their violence experiences during pregnancy. A total of 400 women had participated in the study and 36 per cent of them claimed to be abused (i.e. physically, sexually and verbally) while pregnant. Abused women in Awusi's study indicated confiding in informal supportive network such as family, in-laws and close friends rather than formal supporters like local authorities and clergy. Although the finding appears to be important for service providers, the research however does not take into account domestic violence resources availability which provide for abused women in the community.

A number of studies have found that children who are involved in abusive relationships may also directly be abused (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008; Jarvis, Gordon & Novaco, 2005) and exhibit behavioural problems in their lives, such as in the social and emotional aspects of their functioning (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). According to the National Report of Health and Violence (Malaysia) 2006, children who are exposed to an abusive relationship are more likely to be aggressive and show higher risks of psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, as well as low self-esteem. Cummings *et al.* (1999) examined the patterns of family aggression and behaviour problems in children exposed to domestic violence. Primarily, the study was focusing on gender differences in children who were exposed to family violence. The study involved 242 mothers and 378 children recruited from shelters for battered women from a few cities in Canada. Participants were compared between a violent family and a non-violent family. For the latter group, there were three sub-categories involved, namely a homeless group, a single-mother group and a two-parent group. As hypothesised, the study confirmed that children from the shelter category were rated as having higher levels of behaviour problems than other comparison groups. It was clear from the findings that girls from a violent family had shown greater maladjustment problems and required more clinical interventions rather than the boys from the same group. This result was rated by the mothers within the shelter families in which parenting practices may also be affected due to the battering situation.

In line with the above review, previous studies have reported that families with domestic violence are prone to have problems in parenting (Holden, 2003; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). Evidently, the work of Flach, Leese, Heron, Evans, Feder, Sharp and Howard (2011) concludes that women who had violence experiences during pregnancy were more likely to have children with behavioural issues. Their subjects were 13,617 women in the United Kingdom. Taken together, this study placed significance on the effect of domestic violence on child behaviour. What is surprising is that the study found that behavioural problems among children can be evident as young as 42 months old of age. Closely linked to this issue, it is believed that parent-child bonding may be impaired owing to the frequent arguments, disputes as well as conflicts occurring within the family. Abused mothers often find it difficult and challenging to provide supports and a sense of security to their children

in the event of violence. Jarvis *et al.* (2005) point out that the relationship between the mother and their children was significantly associated with maternal depression. Children, on the other hand, may intervene and take responsibility to protect their victimized parent (Jones, 2008). In the article titled 'Parenting in battered women: The effects of domestic violence on women and their children', Levendosky and Graham-Bermann conclude:

“Perhaps even if the mother is able to maintain adequate parenting, the changes in her affect and mood could have deleterious effects on her children’s emotional well-being. For example, the child may worry more about the mother.” (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001: 184)

What we know about the role of religion on domestic violence is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how religious coping correlates with symptoms related to depression and abusive relationships among victims and survivors of domestic violence (Watlington & Murphy, 2006; Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Hogberg & Emmelin, 2013). Hayati *et al.* (2013) identify the coping strategies used by abused Javanese women, which occurred through spiritual framing as well as positive diversion of the self. In their analysis, using a phenomenological approach, Hayati and her colleagues found that while the women surrendered and remained in the relationships, they were reported to keep silent and ignore the violence behaviours perpetrated by the husband. It was shown that the coping dynamics in this study were multifaceted, where these Javanese women were struggling against the violence in a spiritual way. The accounts of these women were collected via in-depth interviews with seven abused women in rural Purworejo, Republic of Indonesia. Elsewhere, Hassouneh-Phillips (2001) has pointed out that women’s faith has occasionally been manipulated by the abusers in order to maintain power and control over them. As a long term measure, abused women were seen to be unable of defending themselves and would rather suffer with this spiritual form of abuse for the rest of their lives.

Barriers to disclosing domestic violence

The issue of domestic violence and the patriarchal culture among Malaysian families has been a controversial and much disputed subject for the last 20 years. Nonetheless, little is known about the reasons that inhibit the women victims from disclosing the violent incidents and subsequently seeking appropriate help from others. Elsewhere, a number of studies have found that barriers of disclosure include economic reasons, lack of supporters, considering it a family affair, transportation problems, shortages of service providers, fear of losing the children, shame and embarrassment as well as self-blaming attributes (Sricamsuk, 2006; Izzidien 2008; Khosravizadegan *et al.*, 2008; Randa, 2005).

An exploratory research of domestic violence among Thai women was conducted by Sricamsuk (2006). In her major study, Sricamsuk (2006) suggests improvements in terms of emotional support, socio legal assistance and community healthcare provision to encourage violence disclosure and help seeking attempts among domestic violence victims. As the Thais live in a male dominated community, the traditional belief that women are a family breaker (in the case of divorce) is immensely painful for the women to bear alone. Therefore, many would prefer to keep silent about those incidents. Overall, the study had identified four reasons of not disclosing the violence, namely lack of support (4.2%), feelings of shame (7.0%), the abuse is not serious enough (28.2%) and the problem is a private matter (60.5%). This finding is supported by Arisi and Oromareghake (2011) who point out that 64.3 per cent of Nigerian women consider wife battering is an acceptable behaviour and many of the abuse cases went unreported due to fear of stigmatisation from the society. Hence, by keeping the problem to themselves, women have reverted to saving their husband's honour. One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether it is the women who come to terms with and accept the culture, or if it is the men who in fact manipulate the tradition according to their preferences?

A study by Davhana-Meselesele (2011) examined the stages of coping for domestic violence victims. The sample was 18 women who met the criteria of experiencing domestic violence, married or unmarried and importantly agreed to be involved as the participants in this research. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to explore the women's violence experiences. The researcher found there were several stages

that the victim lived in and these stages were unique to each woman according to their situation as well as the surroundings. In one of the stages of violence, many women claimed to be guilty and blamed themselves as being provocative towards the abuser. The study concludes that this denial phase has unconsciously held up these women from disclosing the violence to anyone and seeking appropriate assistance sooner. From another perspective, self blaming among victims of domestic violence was found to be associated with symptoms of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). A recent study conducted by Che Din, Soo, Subramaniam and Ng (2010) used the Post-Traumatic Cognition Inventory to measure negative cognitions about the self, the world and self blame for the trauma. A total of 40 participants were recruited from two shelters for abused women in Petaling Jaya and Penang, Malaysia. The result confirmed a significant and positive correlation between self blame attributions and PTSD symptoms. The authors' findings would have been far more useful if they considered comparing the sense of self blame among battered women with the same attributions indicated by the general population.

An investigation by McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano and Green (2006) which involved 1,615 married and cohabiting couples for a face-to-face interview, aimed to estimate the number of American children living in partner-violent families. The sample was 555 Caucasian couples, three hundreds-fifty seven Black couples, five hundreds-twenty seven Hispanic couples and 176 couples from mixed ethnicity. In their analyses, the researcher found that almost 60 per cent of couples who reported domestic violence had children in the household. Of concern was that the findings obtained in the study showed that an estimation of the numbers of children living in partner-violent homes was significantly increased over time compared to other research conducted earlier (Spaccarelli, Sandler & Rossa, 1994; Straus, 1992; Carlson, 1984). The reports from Homicide, Firearms Offences and Intimate violence 2007/2008 also suggest that there was a strong correlation between household type and domestic abuse among women. Their results showed that the presence of children in households had increased the risk of victimization for women by as high as 18% compared to those without children which were reported to be only less than 5% (Povey *et al.*, 2009).

In a cross sectional study on Iranian women who were victims and survivors of domestic violence, Khosravizadegan and colleagues (2008) attempted to examine the prevalence of physical, emotional as well as ethical violence in a sample of 100 female adults. Alongside the prevalence, the researchers were also interested in investigating the effects of intimate partner violence on the person, the family and the society as a whole. The findings showed that all respondents had experienced symptoms of physical, behavioural, personal, social and psychological abuse. In regard to the mother's relationship with the children, 39 per cent admitted to experiencing misbehaviour towards the children (i.e. channelling their anger to the children by hitting, scolding and imposing physical punishment on the children). The common reasons that make them not disclose the violence incidents involved fear of losing the custody of the children (23%), the feelings of shame (19%) and lack of knowledge to seek help (17%). Overall, the study might have been far more interesting if the researcher had included the children's perspective in this study so as to understand the children's needs in relation to disclosing abuse. Similarly, in light of evidence that the presence of children may contribute to unreported cases of domestic abuse, Walby and Allen (2004) in their research study's reports to The Home Office (Findings from the British Crime Survey) state that it is typical for the female parent to keep the violence problem to themselves for the reason of safeguarding the youngsters' interests, particularly because the women were economically unviable.

The other barriers that inhibit women from disclosing abuse indicated in the previous study was lack of awareness of domestic violence resources amongst the women (Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission against Domestic Violence, 2002). Similarly, the result was replicated in other studies such as Peckover (2003) and Fugate *et al.* (2005). In the year 2002, a survey project was conducted to promote knowledge enhancement about the fears, barriers and the experiences of disclosing violence among domestic violence victims in Minnesota. The responses were from 422 battered women who were in the Current Abuse group. The findings showed that almost 50 per cent of the group avoided disclosure because they were lacking in knowledge regarding this issue. Some of them were even unsure whether they were qualified in getting help as an abuse victim. Discouragement to disclosure was also initiated by incorrect perception regarding the service provisions. As many interventions were involved in the help seeking process, women sometimes had

misinterpreted the assistance. For example, the study found a startling response from a woman who indicated that “I did not want the service provider to cause problems for myself and my children when trying to help”.

However, Peckover (2003) found that the protection issue was the main intervention suggested by abused women in her study. The accounts from 16 women indicated that they wanted to be informed of access to a variety of sources of protection as in this way they could increase intimate partner violence disclosure in the future. A similar study by Fugate *et al.* (2005) found 82 per cent of the abused women did not contact an agency or a counselor for assistance. Meanwhile, 62 per cent did not call the police or seek medical care (74%). The women believed that the violence incidents were not serious enough to get help. In fact, for a few women, interventional programs such as counselling sessions could not be of much of help to them. Hence, recommendations such as information about domestic violence, supportive networking and provision of services should be made available for the women (Peckover, 2003).

The resources of support for domestic violence

What we know about domestic violence resources for battered women is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how the assistance and support mechanisms can be of help to this vulnerable group. In spite of that, regular review on such provisions of service for domestic violence victims and survivors should be undertaken in order to ensure its effectiveness as well as suitability for use in different settings (i.e. based on a variation of cultures, ethnicity and religious beliefs). In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on formal and informal supportive networking for domestic abuse victims, such as research conducted by Senturia *et al.* (2000), Payne and Wermeling (2009), Poole, Beran and Thurston (2008), Krugman *et al.* (2004) as well as a cross-sectional study by Lee (2007).

A study entitled ‘cultural issues affecting domestic violence service utilization in ethnic and hard to reach populations’ aimed to examine the battered women’s satisfaction with domestic violence services they engaged with and the cultural experience of domestic violence from different ethnic backgrounds. Women from eight ethnic minority communities were interviewed in order to understand the

complexity of their violence experiences and personal struggles living in an abusive relationship. Derived from the participants' accounts, a variety of services were stated to be effective such as community-based services; although legal provisions were seen to be problematic for some of those women. The issue of language barriers was also identified as a contributing factor to their negative experiences with social services (Senturia *et al.*, 2000). Meanwhile, another qualitative study conducted by Dunlop *et al.* (2005) examined the impact of the justice system response to abused women. In their analysis, there were two important themes that emerged, namely 'expect help from the justice system' and 'ways to improve justice system'. The themes reflect that the justice system plays a major role in providing good experiences to women victims and survivors of domestic violence. Furthermore, the single most striking result to emerge from the data was that the participants urged the justice system to make the public aware of the service provisions and assistance offered, so as to encourage disclosing abuse and help-seeking attempts among victims with domestic violence problems.

In relation to women's experiences while dealing with domestic violence service providers, previous studies have shown that victims of domestic violence often express their frustration with the health care providers who were described as insensitive, unhelpful, blaming and unsupportive towards them (Bowker & Maurer, 1987; Krugman *et al.*, 2004). Elsewhere, Catalano (2007) investigates the reasons of not reporting the cases of domestic violence to the police among couples in the United States and found that 12 per cent of the abused women had not reported the incidents to the police because they were afraid the abusers might retaliate. Fourteen per cent of the women wanted to protect the abuser and 8 per cent of the female respondents claimed that they did not bother to report because they believed that the actions taken by the police were considered unhelpful and ineffective in resolving their problems. Subsequent to the Catalano's study, police officers in Toronto received mixed reviews on their services. In 56 cases, forty six per cent identified Toronto police officers as helpful while another 32 per cent of the women had negatively reviewed the police as not being helpful enough towards them. The officers were described as unhelpful when they failed to provide sufficient information needed by those women, treated the violence cases as not a serious matter and took no appropriate action towards the abuser (i.e. did not hold the abuser in custody for investigation, laid no charges

against the abuser and did not remove the abuser from the premises where the victim was staying). In an interview with one participant who had interactions with the Toronto Police Service, she stated that “I would rather die before I would call the police again” in which this statement reflects her disappointment and frustration against this service provider (Lanthier, 2008). Hence, it is believed that more effort should be put in by domestic violence resources, particularly with formal support systems, in order to meet the needs of battered women (and their children).

The occurrence of communication problems during help seeking attempts among abused women are largely associated with the series of procedures the women need to follow. Adding to the above complexities, a number of studies have found that women with poor educational backgrounds and who were economically unviable were at risk for domestic violence (Kocacik & Dogan, 2006; Sarkar, 2010; Salthouse & Frohmader, 2004). Therefore, exposure regarding domestic violence as well as close monitoring from service providers are demanded so as to cater to battered women’s limitations and providing them with hassle-free measures of assistance.

In the context of Malaysia, supporting women by aiming at the enabling of disclosure of domestic violence is paramount. A local study by Ismail *et al.* (2011) evaluated the delays in divorce case management in *Sharia* courts and the contributing factors to this. In accordance with the *Sharia* Court’s Client’s Charter, all marital dispute cases filed in court must be settled within 360 days in order to consider ‘case settlement in time’. From the researchers’ proceeding observations, it was found that the cases filed in Lower *Sharia* Courts throughout Malaysia have clearly showed an incremental of at least 1000 cases each year within the five-year period (between 2005 and 2010). Furthermore, there was also an increasing trend of *fasakh* cases compared to *ta’liq* cases (refer to page 36). In the case of domestic violence, a *fasakh* case is more favourable to women as no agreement to divorce is required from the abuser (i.e. the court may grant the divorce after reviewing related evidence). Overall, the authors’ findings showed that various procedures to adhere to for the proceedings, as well as poor management systems in court, had contributed to delays and the dragging out of cases which will be very challenging for the couples (and their families), particularly in domestic violence cases.

Tackling the protection issue for domestic violence victims, the problems highlighted by abused women centre largely on how to go through the police procedures, filing a case under the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994), applying for a quick restraining order from the court as well as procedures in getting help that the women need (i.e. shelter, monetary and children custody). From the WAO of Malaysia website, it was found that some abused women in the country are still struggling to seek appropriate protection for themselves and their children. This situation is due to lack of knowledge and information regarding procedural issue in obtaining assistance from domestic violence resources such as the police, the health care system and legal service providers (WAO, 2011).

If we now turn to the central issues in providing and utilizing domestic violence resources, the main point regarding this is what women find helpful in dealing with abusive relationships. The Women's Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] in 2006 listed a range of actions taken by abused women in response to violence incidents, for instance contacting domestic violence service providers such as the police, physicians, counsellors and clergy; seeking help from the crisis centres or disclosing the abuse to family and friends. With about 6,300 women completing the survey, more than seven per cent of the women had experienced an incident of violence. The survey found that reports of incidents of assault were more likely to be made if the perpetrator was a stranger to the victim. The results seem to be consistent with the Jones' study where the Native American community claims that domestic violence victims were reluctant to disclose the violence because they do not want to break off the relationship (Jones, 2008). As Gartner and Macmillan (1995: 398) states: "The more intimate the relationship between a victim of violence and her offender, the less likely the criminal justice system will learn about the violence". However, no attempt was made to assess the association between victim-abuser relationship and the provision of protection for the victim (and their children) while making the violence incidents visible to others.

An article by Payne and Wermeling (2009) indicates some recommendations in respect to social services and legal assistance for domestic violence resources. In their analysis, they found that battered women and their children were mostly at risk of harm due to poor law enforcement, ineffectiveness of social services as well as further

harassment and intimidation from the perpetrators. Therefore, their suggestions were put forward as follows:

- 1) The legal system must show more sensitivity toward the victims because the reality of pursuing prosecution of their male abuser is not an easy solution for them to undertake. In parallel, safety requirements as well as information about help options are crucial in order to provide security to the victims.
- 2) The police officers' job descriptions must go beyond the temporary protection where they are able to assist the victims after the case is disposed of in court. Close networking with other forms of service providers is essential.
- 3) Long-term and short-term periods of assistance are necessary for the victims to 'move on'. Thus, social services can be of much help to the victims, particularly in the matters of financial assistance and accommodation.

In line with the above suggestions, a study by Yun, Swindell and Kercher (2009) compared the victim services delivery between rural and urban communities in Texas, USA. The sample was 1,421 directors of victim service programmes and they were asked to complete a questionnaire survey, followed by an in-depth interview at a later stage for a group of 18 service providers. The study found more challenges were indicated by rural service programmes, such as funding and staffing issues. As hypothesized, the provision of victim services in urban communities is significantly better than rural service providers. This result replicates some other studies' findings such as Peckover (2003) and Poole *et al.* (2008).

Recent evidence suggests that most women find the screening approach is helpful and acceptable (Colombini, 2007; Ramsay, Richardson, Carter, Davidson & Feder, 2002). This view is supported by the findings from a study conducted by Webster, Stratigos and Grimes (2001) which revealed that 98 per cent of 1,263 women in Brisbane reported that screening for domestic violence is a good approach. In many countries, screening for domestic violence has been practised as routine protocols for medical and health treatments. In line with the global development on domestic violence, Malaysia is also progressing well into implementing a domestic violence screening approach in all of the OSCC's (One Stop Crisis Centre) of its primary hospitals (Colombini, 2007). It is recommended that early detection of domestic violence incidents will help in providing effective interventions and supports to decrease

harmful consequences for domestic violence victims (Ramsay *et al.*, 2002). Regrettably, some of the professionals in health care setting have found it difficult to screen the patients because of time limitations, low self-confidence as well as a lack of awareness of the procedures for further referral responses (Colombini, 2007; Webster *et al.*, 2001).

Gaps in the Literature

From a review of the literature, it is evident that there is a paucity of research on domestic violence in Malaysia, particularly investigating the experiences of the abused women. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand these women's experiences living in the domestic violence relationships. This current research sets out to explore the impacts of domestic violence on the abused women as well as barriers that inhibit the violence disclosure. In addition, the study also aims to discover issues in relation to the women's needs and the support of domestic violence service providers in Malaysia. The employment of qualitative interviews in the study may enable the researcher to obtain an in-depth exploration of the experiences of abused women as well as the professionals (i.e. counsellors, social workers, directors of the shelter homes and refuge managers) who work with these women victims and survivors of domestic violence in this country in which the research took place.

Secondly, it was found that studies of similar topics within the Malaysian context is significantly lacking. Predominantly, there is a huge gap in domestic violence research between eastern countries such as Malaysia and the western countries, for instance studies conducted in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and a few others. Domestic violence has been recognized as a worldwide problem affecting all ages, ethnicities, religions as well as the economic classes (Pyles & Postmus, 2004). Thus, there is a possibility that abused women in Malaysia also face similar experiences pertinent to the domestic violence exposure in their relationships. This present study seeks to explore such possibilities. The findings from the study may well be applicable in describing domestic violence situations in the Malaysian context.

Thirdly, many of the areas regarding domestic violence in Malaysia are still under-researched. Several of the Malaysian studies have investigated the issues of women's

health outcomes and well-being (Shuib *et al.*, In press; Phillips *et al.*, 2006; Mohd. Hashim & Endut, 2005); domestic violence management in health care settings (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008; Wong & Othman, 2008; Colombini, 2007); the prevalence of domestic violence (WAO of Malaysia, 1995; Norasikin, 2002; Jamayah *et al.*, 2005; Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007); cross-cultural and religion issues pertinent to domestic violence (Abdul Halim, 2010; Bagshaw, 2008; Abdul Majid, 2004); legal provision of domestic violence (Abdullah, 2007; Amirthalingam (2005); housing needs for abused women (WAO of Malaysia, 2000; Mohd. Yusoff, 2002) and the provision of refuge services (Putit, 2008; Ivy, 2001). However, there is no specific research about the experiences of living in the domestic violence relationships that was successfully located at present in the context of abused women in Malaysia.

Fourthly, there was definitely a lack of access to resources on Malaysia such as dissertations, journals and reports. The researcher was aware of such problem when attempting to search the local literature. There was very limited resources available online and being published by researchers. In fact, some of the materials only can be retrieved physically (only available as hard copy) which disadvantages the overseas student such as the researcher. It is believed that there may be more significant resources out there investigating the domestic violence situation in Malaysia, however, those were left unexplored because of the access issues as well as those that were not getting published. Inevitably, the lack of domestic violence research in the Malaysian context is obviously a frustrating situation for any researcher.

To conclude, it could be argued that very little information is known about the experiences of Malaysian women living in domestic violence relationships. Although studies investigating the impact of domestic violence against women (and children) have been conducted in many other countries such as the United States and Australia, Malaysian studies that relate to this and similar areas are still lacking. Thus, it is suggested that great effort from researchers is needed to expand such research in this context. Without empirical evidence presented, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the findings and this often leads to confusion in understanding the real circumstances of the problem. It is believed that the current study in this particular area may produce useful information for the support of domestic violence provisions in Malaysia so as to improve the quality of existing service delivery.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter describes the methodology used to carry out the research. The discussion starts with the study aims, the research approach and details of the data collection stage. In relation to data collection, the samples, issues in sampling, as well as the interview method are presented. Additionally, ethical issues and considerations in this study are discussed. Towards the end of the chapter, the approach to data analysis (i.e. qualitative data) is also outlined.

Introduction

Aims of the study

The central aim of this study is to explore the experiences of women in Malaysia who are living in an abusive relationship. The study expects to be useful in terms of forming part of the emerging literature on this subject and to add to the growing body of knowledge on domestic violence against Malaysian women. In fact, the outcomes from this research endeavour to contribute to knowledge enhancement, raising awareness along with the policy developments and practices concerning the problem of domestic violence in Malaysia. In particular, the key objectives of the study to be addressed are as follows:

- 1) To investigate the impact on abused women who experience domestic violence relationships.

What aspects of the abused women's lives have been affected due to the experiences of violence? What impact do abusive relationships have on others?

- 2) To identify the barrier that inhibits abused women from disclosing and seeking assistance from formal and informal supportive networks.

What obstacles restrain abused women from disclosing the violence incidents? How can the under-reporting of cases of domestic violence be overcome?

- 3) To explore underlying issues faced by abused women in relation to their needs and the support of domestic violence service providers.

What are the issues highlighted by abused women pertaining to local support systems? What are the women's suggestions in terms of improving the provision of services?

Research approach

The present research is exploratory and descriptive in nature. This design is appropriate because in Malaysia the issue of domestic violence is under-researched. According to Marican (2006), an exploratory study is undertaken when little is known about an issue or situation. Similarly, Polit and Hungler (1999) suggest an exploratory study approach for investigating new topic areas. In view of the fact that there has been very little discussion about Malaysian women's accounts of the experiences of living in domestic violence relationships the researcher has decided to undertake an exploratory investigation using qualitative research methodology as the main approach utilised for this study.

Based on the review of literature in Malaysia, it was believed that studies pertaining to domestic violence against Malaysian women are limited in number and only covered specific fields of investigation. For example, in the area of healthcare (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008; Wong & Othman, 2008 and Shuib *et al.*, In press), legal provisions (Endut *et al.*, In press) and refuge support systems (Putit, 2008; Phillips *et al.*, 2006) as well as domestic violence prevalence (Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007; Norasikin, 2002; WAO of Malaysia, 1995). However, far too little attention has been paid to the abused women's subjective experiences, which this research concerns itself with. What is sought is an understanding of the impact of domestic violence, women's experiences of disclosing the violent

incidents, and further to clarify what factors inhibit Malaysian women from seeking assistance in order to deal with their traumatic episodes.

As aforementioned in the earlier chapter, this study is underpinned by a feminist approach focusing on women as a subject. The feminist principle suggests the equality of the power relationship between the researcher and the participant. According to Duffy (1985) these principles are described as the following criteria:

- The purpose of the investigation is to study women.
- The research is focused on the experience of the woman (defined as having to do with how a woman lives through the topic of the research).
- The study has the potential to help participants, as well as researchers.
- The principal investigator is a woman.
- The word “feminist” or “feminism” is used in the report.
- Feminist methodology is used (defined as a research approach characterized by one or more of the following: interaction between the researcher and participant, non-hierarchical relation between the researcher and participant, expression of feelings and concern for values).
- Non-sexist language is used.
- Bibliographic references to feminist literature are included.

The application of these feminist principles into the context of the study was considered appropriate as a patriarchal structure is inherent in Malaysian society. Putit (2008) argues that Malaysian women are socially and politically controlled by men, thus leaving them oppressed. Hence, the researcher believes that these principles are very much relevant to the present study as a means of challenging domestic violence against women in Malaysian culture.

Different authors have measured the domestic violence phenomenon in a variety of ways (Felson & Pare, 2008; Khosravizadegan *et al.*, 2008; Putit, 2008; Soltanifar, Behnam & Moghadam Hoseini, 2008; Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Etter & Birzer, 2007; Joan Hanley, 2004) [see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2]. The researcher decided the qualitative method is one of the

more practical ways of exploring the living experiences of abused women in Malaysia rather than quantitative measures. The design of a qualitative approach was based on the women's accounts as the primary source of the research data. According to Osborne (1990), the domestic violence problem is a phenomenon that is not straightforwardly quantified. Likewise, Griffin and Phoenix (1994) suggest qualitative methodology for an in-depth analysis. It was suggested that this approach has the capability to draw upon the depth and also the richness of the women's responses. Although some studies on domestic abuse have been conducted using a quantitative approach, in this particular study the quantitative methodology may limit the researcher from focusing on an understanding as well as the meaning of the issue under investigation. Qualitative research is an approach which generates findings by meanings rather than quantifiable statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In regards to the nature of this study, Eagle (2010) noted that qualitative research is regarded as superior to quantitative methods when researching sensitive situations such as personal experiences of domestic violence and abuse.

Several previous studies have employed a quantitative approach in their analysis of data (Ozgenturk, 2009; Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008; Soltanifar *et al.*, 2008; Wong & Othman, 2008; Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Etter & Birzer, 2007; Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007; Lee, 2007; Albrithen, 2006; Phillips *et al.*, 2006; Sricamsuk, 2006; Norasikin, 2002) [as in Table 4.1]. These attempts have been made to investigate objectives that are 'quantifiable' and 'tangible' such as the type and frequency of violence, describing victims-perpetrators' characteristics, determining the prevalence of domestic violence in a population as well as identifying mental health problems, for example such syndromes as post-traumatic stress disorder, (also known by the acronym of PTSD), and depression.

Table 4.1: Measurements used for quantitative method in previous research on domestic violence

Researcher	Year	Objective(s)	Measurement Tool(s)	Sample	Findings
Albrithen	2006	To investigate the correlation or relationship between alcoholism and domestic violence in Saudi society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapted version of Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) - Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST) 	25 women married to alcoholic men, 25 women married to drug user men and 25 women married to 'ordinary' men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A married woman was most likely to be the victim of male violence in comparison to other family members - Many types of violence reported such as verbal, psychological, physical and sexual abuse - It was found that high levels as well as frequency of aggression was committed by alcoholic men
Dorahy <i>et al.</i>	2007	Examine the behavioural and psychological problems in victims of domestic violence in Northern Ireland - Risk factor for emotional difficulties - Depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES) and PDEQ - Guilt Inventory (GI) - Brief Symptoms Inventory (BSI) - General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ) - Traumatic Experiences Checklist (TEC) 	33 adult females with a history of domestic violence where they resided at Women's Aids Centres for victims of domestic violence and 33 adult females from a community (the general population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences of domestic violence increased the levels of psychological distress among the victims in comparison to the general population - History of child abuse has a significant prevalence in the domestic violence sample - Women residing in a sheltered place tend to experience more severe physical and psychological abuse

Jahanfar <i>et al.</i>	2007	Determine the prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women and the risk factors associated with domestic violence during pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modified version of Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS) - A checklist containing medical records of the participants 	134 pregnant women who attended the prenatal clinic or post partum ward of Ipoh General Hospital, Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women was reported as low as 4.5% - There was no significant difference between pregnant women with/without domestic violence in terms of the pregnancy outcomes
Etter & Birzer	2007	Describe the characteristics of alleged domestic violence abusers	Demographical questionnaires	1515 males and 358 females, alleged perpetrators of domestic violence in Sedgwick County, Kansas, the United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typical abuser gender is male and the race is African American - Male abusers are more likely to have past misdemeanour and felony arrests than female - Abusers had a significant number of past criminal arrests - Criminal justice system often treats domestic violence offenders in a fairly uniform manners
Soltanifar <i>et al.</i>	2008	Determine the frequency and intensity of intimate partner violence against Iranian pregnant women	Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) version	40 in-patient mothers in post-delivery sections in educational hospitals in Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a significant correlation with violence and infants' low birth weight - Majority of women had very mild experiences to moderate in partner' violence - The highest rate of form of abuse is the sexual violence

Lee	2007	Describing domestic violence from the context of Korean immigrant women - Type and frequency of violence - Predictive factors of the violence	- Shin Stress Scale - The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) - Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (CTSPC)	136 Korean immigrant women aged 21-63 years from the Texas area, United States of America	- Significant association between the experience of physical assault in childhood and encountering domestic violence in adulthood - Alcohol dependence among the partners is significant predictors of physical violence
Norasikin	2002	Measure the prevalence and the factors associated with domestic violence	Self-reported questionnaires related to attitudes, knowledge and action to be taken toward domestic violence	370 women aged between 15 to 49 years from the Out Patient Department, Hospital Pontian, Malaysia	- The findings showed that lack of positive action in dealing with violence and lack of moral support from husband and family were reported to be factors that contribute significantly toward domestic violence
Ozgenturk	2009	Investigate the interaction between the likelihood of aggravated assault, victimization and/or arrest in domestic violence incidents with individual variables	Data is based on reported domestic violence incidents provided by the Louisville Metro Police Data Record Management System, Kentucky, US	The data set consists of 3555 domestic violence incidents	- Race and gender of domestic violence victims and suspects were related to aggravated assault - Poor white males were more likely to be victimized by their female counterparts - People who were married were less likely to experience aggravated assault than people in other categories of relationships such as former spouse and cohabiting partners

Othman & Mat Adenan	2008	To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of primary health care providers regarding the identification and management of domestic violence in a hospital based primary health care setting, Malaysia	Questionnaires pertaining to six main categories: - Frequency of domestic violence screening - Provider self-efficacy - Safety concerns - Blaming the abused person - Concern of offending the patients - Perceived system support	108 hospital staff involving the clinicians and nursing staff of the out patient department, casualty as well as antenatal clinics	- In relation to barriers in asking for domestic violence help, the results showed the limitation on time factor (66%), concern about offending the patient (52.5%) and unsure of how to ask (32.8%) - Only 20% of the clinicians and 6.8% of the nursing staff had ever attended any educational program related to domestic violence
Sricamsuk	2006	Investigate the prevalence of domestic violence during pregnancy and the immediate postpartum period among Thai women	Three standardized instruments were used: - The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) - The Severity of Violence against Women Scale (SVAW) - The SF-12 Health Survey	A cohort of 421 women in their third trimester of pregnancy was recruited from two tertiary public hospitals in Khon Kaen Province, North Eastern Thailand	- More than 50% of women reported psychological abuse and seven per cent experienced threats and/or acts of physical abuse - Women who were abused during pregnancy showed significantly poorer health status compared to non-abused women - No statistical differences were found between abuse status and neonatal outcomes

Phillips <i>et al.</i>	2006	To compare the experiences of partner abuse between Malaysian women and US women in terms of post trauma morbidity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severity of Violence against Women Scales (SVAWS) - PTSD Symptom Scale-Self-Report (PSS-SR) - Revised Impact of Events Scale (RIES) 	A group of 17 women in Malaysia and 17 women in the US who had experienced partner abuse at some point in their relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both groups reported severe levels of distress and met criteria for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - Similar psychological problems were faced by the Malaysian women as well as the United States women
Wong & Othman	2008	To determine the relationship between social correlates of adult patients and domestic violence screening test in primary health care clinics	Adaptation of the validated 8-item of Women Abuse Screening Tool (WAST)	710 female adult patients from eight health centres in Selangor, Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Among those patients screened positive for domestic violence, 92.5% were abused emotionally, 62.5% were abused physically and 32.5% told that they were sexually abused by their husbands - More than 90% reported that during consultations, doctors had never asked them whether they were abused by their husband/partner

Although many researchers consider that quantitative measures can usefully supplement and extend the qualitative analysis (Marican, 2006), this particular study found the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approach was inappropriate because the research intends to understand the complex deliberations of abused women concerning the impact of partner abuse and disclosing the violence, as opposed to measuring the variables. Due to practical constraints, this study was unable to administer a quantitative survey because the sample size is small due to the impenetrability of accessing this group of participants. Therefore, the primary quantitative design principle, which is the requirement of a large sample size in order to make generalization to the whole population, may not be fulfilled (Marican, 2006).

In a qualitative approach, the semi-structured interview is one of the methods that is frequently used in many of the studies on domestic violence (Crawford *et al.*, 2009; Aymer, 2008; Kachaeva, Dmitrieva, Rumantseva & Drikina, 2008; Khosravizadegan *et al.*, 2008; Felson & Pare 2008; Putit, 2008; Wellock, 2008; Lapierre, 2007; Mendis, 2006; Saengkhiew, 2006; Goddard, 2004; Joan Hanley, 2004) [as in Table 4.2]. According to Honey (1987), the semi-structured interview is the appropriate tool to capture the participant's thinking about a particular topic or domain where the answers given by the participant may induce the interviewer to move forward for in-depth questioning. Furthermore, respondents' understanding toward their experiences may be hindered if a quantitative approach were adopted as quantitative methods have their own limitations in providing insights into those experiences (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994).

This method, however, requires longer period of time for data collection and analysis because the approach may be labour intensive and time-consuming. Morse and Field (1995) suggest no more than two interviews per day should be conducted because data collection can be an intense experience, especially if it involves sensitive topics or any stressful human experiences. The strength of the qualitative interview (i.e. semi-structured interview) has enabled the researcher to address the research questions thoroughly and gain a rich and in-depth insight into many aspects of women's domestic violence experiences.

The decision of whether or not to combine both qualitative and quantitative design really depends on the problem that is being studied. According to Spicer (2004), triangulation is only applicable if it is aimed at re-examining data or for further investigation of the research problem when one approach is not sufficiently capable of explaining the research problem.

The semi-structured approach was chosen in this study because it provides interactive communication between the researcher and the participant. In addition, the use of prompts during the interviews was found to be a very useful aid in clarifying certain enquiries and in contributing new knowledge about the issues discussed. The flexibility to change in response to issues that emerge from the interviews is what the study is designed for. Therefore, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate method to employ in this research. Qualitative method enables the researcher to better understand a complex issue such as the domestic violence problem. In addition, the experiences of abused women were captured in this approach in order to identify to what extent these experiences are unique in the context of Malaysia, and what similarities as well as differences these revealed from abused women in other settings. Somehow, the drawbacks of this approach mainly lie upon the technical parts of the interview, such as its time-consuming nature and a lower rate of participation. A further explanation on the semi-structured interview method is discussed in a later section.

Table 4.2: Previous research on domestic violence that utilized qualitative interview method

Researcher	Year	Objective(s)	Sample	Findings
Aymer	2008	Explore the coping strategies of adolescent males who were exposed to domestic violence perpetrated by a male partner in terms of: - Behavioural difficulties - Roles of environment and family	Ten adolescent males (aged 14 to 17 years) who had been exposed to domestic violence in the United States	- Involved in substance and/or drug abuse - Concerned of socio-demographical issues such as safety of the victims - Typical characteristics of the victims; young male and Latino/African American - Having problems with parental attachments
Crawford <i>et al.</i>	2009	Investigate how women who have experienced domestic abuse perceived their identity, sense of self and resilience using grounded theory methodology	Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight mothers of children who attended a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, in Warwickshire, United Kingdom	- Domestic abuse had a significant impact on the ongoing relationship with the abusive partner in relation to contact with the children - Women were able to utilise resources that increased their resilience - Reconstructing the women's own identity through the assumption of new roles (i.e. single mother, unmarried woman)
Felson & Pare	2008	Examine domestic violence victims' dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system: - The police/courts treatment - The police insensitivity - The leniency to the offenders	Participants consisted of men and women from the United States National Violence against Women Survey	- Women feel more dissatisfied than men with the criminal justice system - Respondents satisfied when: * Restraining orders were issued * Longer sentence to the offender - Complaints on leniency, scepticism, insufficient investigation and insensitivity by the police

Goddard	2004	Explore the experiences of domestic violence from the perspective of male domestic violence perpetrators	Three in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted with two male perpetrators of domestic violence from the health visitor caseload records in Manchester, UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both perpetrators had a significant history of substance misuse - Poor emotional attachments in adulthood were reported by the male perpetrators
Joan Hanley	2004	Explore the women's accounts of their experiences of disclosing partner violence to members of informal and formal networks of support	18 women who self-identified as having experienced violence in adulthood from an intimate partner in a past relationship in New Brunswick, Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women had not immediately disclosed the violence when the first incident had occurred - Women were cautious about who they told about the abuse and the extent of their disclosure - Women's accounts revealed the influence of the discourse of femininity in governing the women's actions and their sense of self to be 'better' women - The victim identity discourse focuses attention on the actions of abused women rather than on the partners
Kachaeva <i>et al.</i>	2008	Investigate the origins of crimes of violence in women who commit the murder of their husbands/partners	25 females who now are institutionalized for committing murders of their husbands/partners in Moscow, Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeated and long history of violence perpetrated by the husbands/partners - Majority of the participants admitted that they suffered psychological disturbance and drug abuse during living in the relationships

Khosravizadegan <i>et al.</i>	2008	Examine the severity of victims' experiences of domestic violence	100 women who had domestic violence experiences in Bushehr Province, Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Victims experienced a long duration of abuse in the relationships - High rates of severe lifetime violence among the participants were recorded
Lapierre	2007	Explore the women's experiences of mothering through domestic violence as well as the mothering experiences during and after the separation process	Five group interviews along with 20 individual interviews of women in the UK who experienced domestic violence in their relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women who have experienced domestic violence strived to be good mothers - They developed a range of strategies in order to meet the standards of 'good mothering' - Women are also able to identify positive supports available around them
Mendis	2006	Examine the specific impact of childhood exposure to family violence in terms of the women's experiences of mothering	Nine women participants who had been exposed to family violence in childhood were recruited from Victorian Family Violence Services, Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three broad themes emerged: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Direct consequences of exposure to family violence in childhood 2) Development of concepts in light of childhood exposure to family violence 3) Engaging in mothering
Putit	2008	Explore domestic violence service provisions as the support systems for abused women experiencing violence from their husbands	Ten residents and 15 ex-residents from two refuges, along with 10 social workers from the service providers of the two refuges in Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The violence against women was kept silent in the name of 'the family privacy' - The changing nature of Malaysian culture from a community based society to individualism affects the women's desire to disclose the violence - Help and intervention for abused women should be extended beyond the crisis to include on-going support

Saengkhiew	2006	Describe domestic violence issues from the perspective of Southeast Asian immigrant women who live in the United States of America	Fourteen Thai women who lived in the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the state of California in the US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Six emerging themes were described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Life as a Thai wife * Ability to perform duties as a woman * The experience of domestic violence * The existence of domestic violence among Thai women * Factors considered to be violence-protective * Knowledge about domestic violence and sources of information
Wellock	2008	Explore the perception of domestic violence among Black and minority-ethnic women	Six domestic violence victims in the UK who originated from four different countries (two Bangladeshi, two Pakistani, as well as one Sudanese and Somali respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marriage arrangement issues such as arranged marriage, forced marriage and acculturation - High influence of in-laws and family - Gossiping within the community may inhibit the victims from disclosing the incidents

Data Collection

Participants and Recruitment

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. In Malaysia, many issues regarding domestic violence are still under-researched; including the experiences of abused women. It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was to employ qualitative methodology. This method was used in order to obtain new insights into Malaysian women's experiences of living in abusive relationships. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), by using qualitative research as an approach a better understanding can be acquired about the phenomenon studied. Owing to the sensitivity of the issue, the context of the research, as well as a number of practical constraints that lay in the study non-probability sampling method with a purposive sample type has been employed. Purposive sampling was chosen as the sampling framework in the study because this strategy is often used on interviews with specific groups of people in applied social research. In addition, purposive sampling provides the researcher with more opportunity to fully understand the participants (Polit & Beck, 2004).

The participants were recruited from a number of resources within five different states in Malaysia, namely the states of Kedah, Pulau Pinang, the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. The technique of recruiting participants was by approaching the agencies and professionals who work with abused women who were thus intermediary persons between the researcher and the participants. This strategy was to ensure success in terms of abused women's participations as well as gaining entry to the research site. The sensitive nature of the research as well as the cultural standpoint had almost made this research impossible because disclosing marital problems to other people was still considered as improper in Malaysian society. Although the participation of women in this study was on a voluntary basis, approval from the "gatekeeper" has helped the researcher with access to many potential participants and has certainly contributed to their involvement in the study.

After ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Advisory Sub-Committee of Loughborough University, contacts through emails, official letters as well as telephone calls were made to the identified domestic violence agencies in Malaysia. Between April and June 2010, women were invited to participate in the study with assistance from the professionals at the agencies. Upon the approval of the agencies, posters with tear-off tags describing the study and recruitment advertisement were posted in common areas of the refuges. These areas included laundry rooms, reading corners, bulletin boards and also over the reception counters at the offices [an example of an advertisement poster is in Appendix 1]. During the initial visit to the agencies, the researcher also distributed flyers giving the telephone number for those interested in participating to call for further information [see Appendix 2]. The flyers were given individually to the women as the researcher approached them during the visit. The researcher also took this 'golden opportunity' to built rapport with them and utilized this occasion for recruitment purposes.

Overall, the response rate for the sampling recruitment was satisfactory (more than 80%). There were 29 women altogether who expressed interest in the study and 25 of them were actually involved as participants. Three women had initially expressed their interests but had withdrawn themselves after the researcher's subsequent visits to the refuges. Another woman client asked to reschedule the interview date, however, changed her mind when the researcher called for confirmation nearer the time. It is assumed that women who are open-minded about sharing their personal abusive experiences were likely to be found participating in the study as opposed to those who declined to participate. Some women displayed introverted types of personality and were reluctant to engage in conversation with the researcher (including small talk) during the initial visit. Conversely, it was found that some of those who participated genuinely wanted their stories to be heard and wished these experience-sharing sessions may benefit others (i.e. women in particular) in the future. In summary, the participation of the research sample was drawn from the following resources:

- 1) Six residents and three ex-residents from all three refuges (non-government organisations).
- 2) Nine clients from the women associations (organizations who work with domestic violence victims).

- 3) Seven clients from the counselling centres of the Islamic Religious Affairs Department.

In general, a total number of 25 Malaysian women aged between 19 and 65 years were recruited ($n_1 = 25$). The main inclusion criterion required by the study was the participants' experiences of living in domestic violence relationships at some point in their marriages. The criterion was made to ensure the women's accounts of domestic violence experiences were obtained from a primary source. Streubert Speziale and Carpenter (2003) suggest a sample size of 5 to 50 participants in obtaining data saturation for qualitative research. Meanwhile Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed a range of 12 to 20 respondents which may be considered as an adequate sample for qualitative researchers. The concept of saturation refers to continuous sampling until no new information is found in the data set. Strauss and Corbin (1990), in their book entitled 'Basics of Qualitative Research', argued that saturation comes with a series of constraints to many researchers. In particular this relates to the issue of saturation in PhD research with limitations such as time, energy, availability of the participants, and access to a larger pool of sample. Further the experience of the researcher plays an important role in achieving saturated data from qualitative interviews. The twenty-five interviews employed in the study as the sample size is considered appropriate as there is no rule of thumb in deciding the number of people required in order to fully understand the area of investigation. Furthermore, in this research context, thematic saturation point relates to the sample homogeneity whereby the participants were chosen according to some common criteria. As similar violence experiences were shared by these women, the data were expected to reach saturation. After a series of face-to-face interviews, the researcher encountered dimensions of understanding of the participants' abusive experiences. This situation occurred when the interviewees' responses were somehow repeating the answers given by previous participants.

Along with women's viewpoints as the main part of data collection, eleven additional interviews were successfully conducted with workers from the organizations ($n_2 = 11$). The initial contacts with related organizations started in October 2009, through various emails, letters and telephone conversations. After a few rounds of contacts, the final interviews that were included in the study had involved directors at the refuges, counsellors as well as senior social workers. The objective of the interview

was to increase the knowledge and understanding of present research in relation to the policy and practice of domestic violence service providers locally, and also about the broader perspective of domestic violence developments in countries outside Malaysia.

Methods

The Interviews

In this study, twenty five women were consented to be interviewed. Overall, six residents and three ex-residents from the three refuges and shelter homes were interviewed, and there were also another seven interviews respectively from the clients in counselling centres (nominated by the Islamic Religious Affairs Department) as well as nine respondents from the women's associations (organizations who work with the domestic violence victim/survivor). The purpose of the interview was to accumulate valuable data in order to investigate domestic violence experiences among battered women in Malaysia. The interview also sought some clarification for a better understanding of the context of the women's abusive relationships. The approach to data collection, however, took into consideration that some women may have possible feelings of distress due to their recollection of domestic violence life experiences. Hence, support systems such as counselling services were made available to the participants (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002). This was to safeguard the participant's well being and ensure their emotional stability particularly after the interview. In brief, the procedure of data collection in the study consists of two parts, namely completing the structured question form and also conducting a face-to-face interview with the participant.

Before the interview began, the woman was asked for her consent verbally as well as in written form. Furthermore, the participant was also reminded that she could withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain the reason for withdrawing. The first part of the data collection stage involved asking the participant to complete her biographical details on the paper-based structured question form. A set of structured questions was divided into three sections, namely personal details, family details as well as an open-ended question regarding contributing factors to the domestic violence. An example can be found in Appendix 5. The function of the questionnaire in this study is to gather some demographical characteristics about the participants. It was believed that information obtained from the mixture of structured

questions as well as in the semi-structured interview at a later stage may generate rich and in-depth data for the study.

The second part concerned on how the semi-structured interviews were conducted. The majority of the participants ($n = 20$) were interviewed in the designated rooms suggested by the refugees and the organizations involved. For three women, the interview was held in their home, while the remaining two interviews were conducted in commercial buildings. Before the interviews started, the first few minutes were used to discuss the issues of confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's involvement. As part of the procedure, the informed consent form was read through with each participant and afterwards the participant was invited to print her name and sign at the end of the document as a confirmation of consent. Each participant was asked for permission for her interview to be audio-tape recorded. The participant also had been given a brief explanation on transcription of the interview as well as the absolute right to have access to her own interview and a complementary copy of the final report. In addition, participants were assured that their true identities would remain anonymous by identifying their interview transcripts as well as the excerpts included in the written reports with a pseudonym.

Interview sessions were organised and scheduled at a time convenient for each participant. In general, the interviews lasted between 25 and 80 minutes, with the average interview length being 50 minutes. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, all interviews were conducted by the researcher as it entails greater understanding regarding the participant's state. Besides, first hand information can be obtained and non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions and other signs like 'silence' and tears may also be observed. All participants consented for their interviews to be audio tape recorded. This enables the researcher to give the participant full attention and avoid the need for the researcher to constantly scribble notes during the interview. At the very beginning of the interview, the women were made aware of, and acknowledged, their rights as a participant. They were informed that they may refuse to respond to any particular questions during the interview or they may discontinue the interview at any time for whatever reason, should they wish to do so. The researcher was very fortunate because all the interviews went smoothly and with great co-operations from the participants.

Semi-structured depth interviewing was chosen as a key method in the study because it offers the researcher an interactive approach as well as providing in depth research data (Wengraf, 2004). Wengraf (2004) also points out that the implementation of semi-structured interviews is designed to have several pre-determined questions in which the questions are prepared in advance and later then improvised accordingly to the interviewee's responses. This interview method was believed to be appropriate to the nature of the present research. "Semi-structured interview is where the interviewee is asked to tell a story, produce a narrative of some sort regarding all or part of their own life experience" (Wengraf, 2004: 5). Although a set of questions was prepared prior to the interview, these questions were served as a form of framework for focusing on the topics discussed and as guidance for the interview process. Changes were made as the interview progressed based on the participant's responses. Kvale (1996) suggested the interviewing stage as one of the seven stages in an interview investigation. The stage recommends the researcher to conduct the interview based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought. The interview guide was developed by the researcher based on a review of the literature. In this interview guide, several questions were developed to be close-ended at the beginning, with the aim of putting respondents at ease and to keep them interested in continuing the conversation. The questions, however, marked with an asterisk (*) as the follow up questions were inserted accordingly based on the participant's feedback. Considering the sensitivity of the issues discussed as well as the cultural barrier that opposed revealing marriage matters to others, this strategy seems to be advantageous because participant's engagement in the conversation became more fluent after a series of follow up questions were made. Explanations regarding this particular matter are discussed under the topic of the pilot study on page 123. An example of an interview guide can be seen in Appendix 6.

In an attempt to make each participant feel as comfortable as possible, the researcher began the interview with greetings and general conversation by asking them to introduce themselves. The purpose of this strategy was to establish rapport as well as create a relaxed atmosphere between the researcher and the participant. As the interview progressed, subsequent questions were gradually directed towards them seeking their description of their domestic violence relationships. Upon completion of the interview, participants were given an opportunity to address any questions or

concerns that may have arisen. Before the interview ended, each participant was asked for agreement to be contacted again in the future (if necessary) in relation to the present study.

Apart from the above mentioned interviews, there were also interviews conducted with the organizations' staff, such as with the refuge directors, senior social workers, as well as counsellors from the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. The interviews were intended to seek knowledge about existing services provided for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia. Their viewpoints about the key issues were discussed, for example the level of reporting cases, barriers that inhibit women from seeking outside help and obstacles in providing services and protection to domestic violence victims. Input from the organizations was believed to be essential in order to conclude the perspectives from both parties; the abused women and the related agencies (organizations who work with domestic violence victims). An example of the interview guide with the organization's staff can be found in Appendix 7.

To sum up the research procedure, below is the flow chart describing steps that were undertaken in this study:

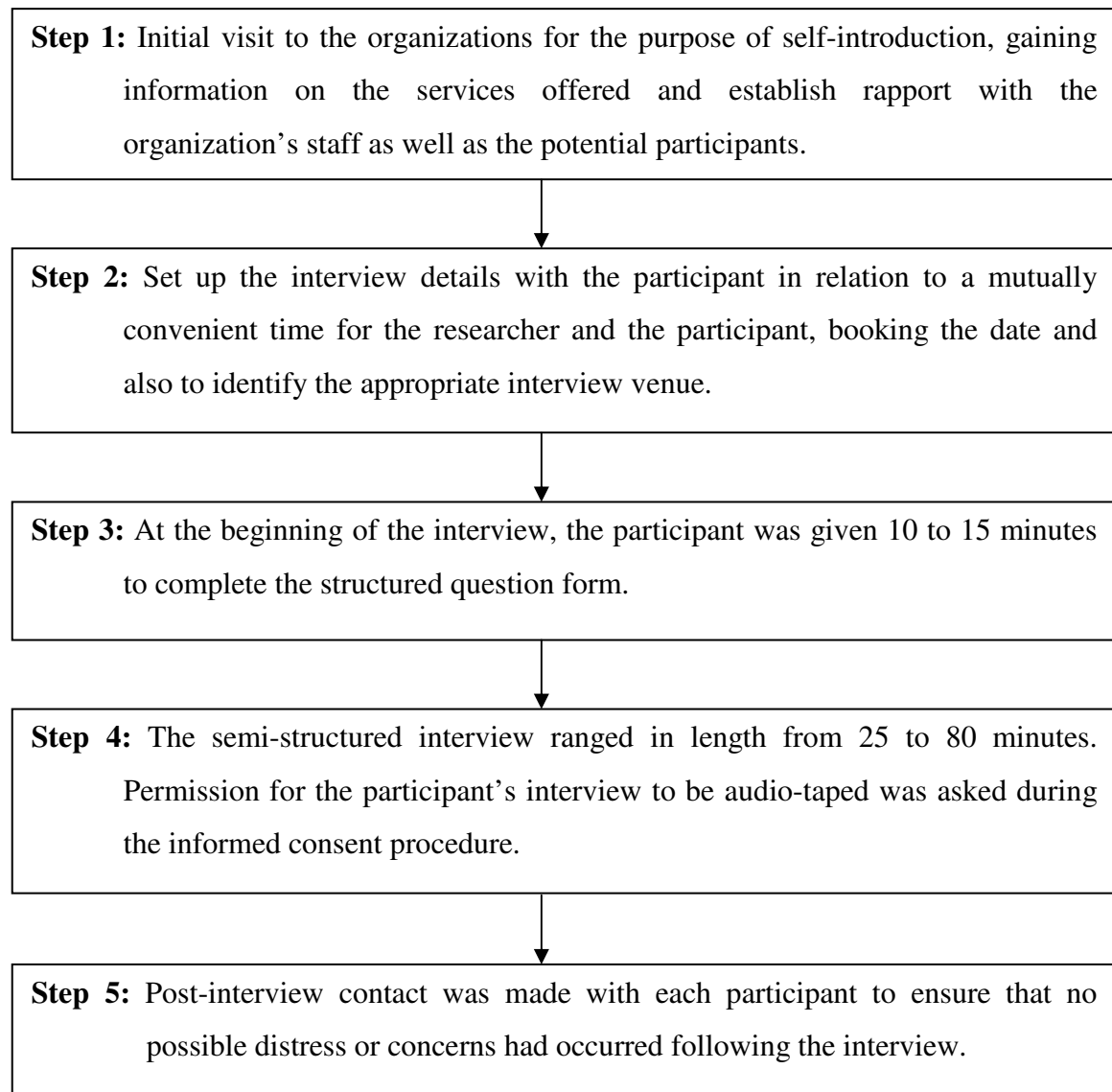


Figure 4.1: Flow chart of the research procedures

The use of language

Language can be a tool that either facilitates or complicates the communication between people. Thus, it is important to use plain language, jargon-free as well as avoiding technical terms and acronyms, while dealing with people in empirical research. This sub-section highlights the importance of language when the researcher works with the abused women and the organizations' staff. One of the challenges in conducting research with battered women was the need to exercise extra caution in

terms of wording because sometimes the statement or question asked can be very judgemental as well as offensive. It is highly important to note that a possible cause of distress may arise due to this issue; hence, it can affect the participant's psychological well being. In order to avoid such an event, repeated assessment of the interview guide was made to ensure the aptness of the questions.

Elmesky (2005) recommended that access to a common language and practices would assist in terms of sharing the viewpoints as well as the interpretations. Thus, the researcher's ability to interact with the women in their own language, *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language), had been a great advantage. Since the present study was conducted in Malaysia by a Malaysian researcher with the Malaysian women, the significant problem of a language barrier which may affect the research findings can be avoided. Van de Ven and Delbecq (1972) claim that a language barrier between researcher and important groups of participants impedes investigation. Nevertheless, an option was still being given to the participants and to staff in the organizations whether to be interviewed in Malay or in the English language. For most Malaysians, Malay and the English language are widely spoken in the country. Therefore, it was believed that limiting the use of language into either Malay or English may affect the collected research data.

The familiarity with the language also may enhance the participant's fluency in their responses. In other words, the participants may feel it more natural to express their experiences and feelings if the interviewer is able to understand and communicate with them in their preferred language. Although there was a number of local accents and dialects uttered by the participants (i.e. from the east coast, northern and southern states), they however were reasonably comprehensible to the researcher. The use of a tape-recorder during the interview also provided assistance in this regard. In total, all participants elected to have the interviews conducted in Malay, while four out of eleven agencies preferred to be interviewed in the English language.

As the original interview guide and the demographical questionnaire were prepared in English those questions were required to be translated into Malay. In relation to evaluating the translation quality of all items into the Malay language, back-to-back translation was employed. The benefits of processing a back translation are to help in

validating the quality of a translation as well as to provide a translation that closely resembles the original text. Back translation technique requires the researcher to ask a bilingual Malaysian to translate the questions from the original language (English) to the target language (Malay) and then call for another bilingual Malaysian to translate them back into English (Sinaiko & Brislin, 1973). Original and back translated research instruments were then compared. In short, the process of back translation entails retranslating the translated text back to the original. There was no consultation between the translators. The two translators were paid for their services. The diagram below illustrates how the back translation works.

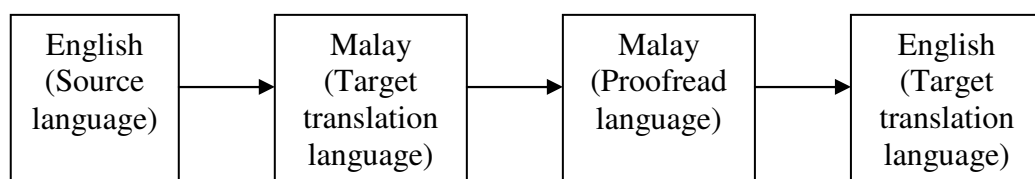


Figure 4.2: The process of back translation

The translation process was conducted prior to the commencing of the fieldwork phase and the translated interview guide and structured question form had been pre-tested in the pilot study. During the pilot study, no issue was identified regarding the translation matter. In addition to the translation of the research instruments, documents such as the informed consent form and the participant information sheet were also translated into Malay (target version) by the researcher. The significance of the language assessment method employed in the study was not only to provide a literal translation from one language to another, but to also promote conceptual equivalence of the assessment tools in order to improve the reliability and validity of the research data.

Pilot study

A procedural pilot study was undertaken with the purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses of the research plan. In line with the idea of research simulation prior to the real study, Marican (2006) suggests that the pilot study is used to discover potential problems or issues that may be encountered by the researcher in the actual research. The pilot study allows the researcher to assess a number of issues including

the sufficiency of the research design, the appropriateness of the study method, and the scope of questions in the interview guide and also, more importantly, the feasibility of the main study. Other procedural issues also may be addressed during the pilot study such as length of interview time, the suitability of the interview venue, and the effects of a recording instrument during the interview as well as recruitment matters.

Interviews with a sample of three women were conducted prior to the initiation of this research. Subsequent to the outcomes of the pilot study, the researcher was required to make little refinement in terms of wording. There was some clarification of meaning on the research tool and the pattern of the overall interview guide however. These minor alterations were found to be very useful during the actual data collection stage. Overall, the refinements made were as follows:

- 1) The researcher learned from this procedural pilot study that the participants were not familiar with the terms “formal and informal supports” but they were more likely to understand the examples of such supports (i.e. shelter home, counselling centre, family and friends). Therefore, related questions regarding formal and informal supportive networks were clarified using such examples: “what informal support networks do you receive (i.e. your family, friends etc)?” and “what formal support services do you receive (i.e. counselling centre, shelter home etc)?”
- 2) Questions about sexual abuse in the relationship were asked in a very cautious manner as these may offend or intimidate the participants. From a Malaysian cultural point of view, discussing one’s sexual life with other people is inappropriate and seen to ‘invade’ what is considered to be an individual private matter. Two out of three women seemed to be a little bit surprised with such questioning. They obviously looked quite uncomfortable and hesitated to answer. As a result, the researcher decided to make the participant aware of the nature of that issue and sought the participant’s permission prior to raising the question in the actual study. The researcher also found that the use of a prompt for this type of question was very helpful in order to encourage further discussion on that particular matter.

- 3) Initially, loosely semi-structured questions were utilised in order to obtain the women's experience of violence in their marriages. Nonetheless, all three women were unable to start up the conversation freely (i.e. they seemed inhibited in initiating their responses) after the questions. The researcher found that these women had mixed feelings about telling their stories but they were able to speak more fluently when they were assisted in a straightforward manner together with closed questions at the beginning of the interview. Therefore, amendments were made in order to overcome this kind of situation prior to the actual interview process.
- 4) During the pilot study, the women had shown much interest in the question "do you have any other things you might want to share with me?" This question allowed the participant to discuss freely any topic that they felt to be important and issues that may or may not have been covered during the interview. A repetition of information as well as a new perspective on many issues was obtained from this single question which has contributed to the richness of the research data.
- 5) After completion of the pilot study, the researcher observed that there was a gap of knowledge regarding the participant's awareness of the provision of laws, the existence of the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994), as well as current services that are provided for abused women in Malaysia. Hence, three additional questions were formulated in the finalised interview guide. The purpose of these questions was to reflect the participant's level of awareness towards legal provisions, regulations and also the available services provided for domestic violence victims/survivors in Malaysia.

Ethical Issues and Considerations

Carrying out research with vulnerable populations, such as women victims of domestic violence, is invariably fraught with ethical considerations as it concerns personal aspects of the participant's life. Nickel (2006) suggests that researchers should provide extra care and attention while conducting research with vulnerable groups such as domestic violence victims. The definition of those who are vulnerable is: "People who lack the ability to make personal life choices, to make personal decisions, to maintain independence and to self-determine. Therefore, vulnerable individuals may experience real or potential harm and require special safeguards to ensure that their welfare and rights are protected" (Liamputtong, 2007: 2).

Conducting research involving women victims of domestic violence requires sensitivity and attention to both safety and privacy matters. Thus, guidelines for addressing ethical and safety issues in domestic violence research have been published by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999: 13). The recommendations are as follows:

- The safety of respondents and the research team is paramount, and should infuse all project decisions.
- Protecting confidentiality is essential to ensure both women's safety and data quality.
- The study design must include a number of actions aimed at reducing any possible distress caused to the participants by the research.
- All research team members should be carefully selected and receive specialised training and ongoing support.
- Prevalence studies need to be methodologically sound and build upon current research experience about how to minimise the under-reporting of abuse.
- Researchers and donors have an ethical obligation to help ensure that their findings are properly interpreted and used to advance policy and intervention development.
- Fieldworkers should be trained to refer women requesting assistance to available sources of support. Where few resources exist, it may be necessary for the study to create short-term support mechanisms.

Numerous issues were raised in carrying out research with participants from vulnerable groups like women experiencing domestic violence situations. The issues include accessing the participants and building rapport as well as trust. In addition, the issues of confidentiality, problems of disclosure, and informed consent also need to be addressed clearly (Ryan, 1995). Details of those issues in relation to the study are discussed in the following sections. To sum up, conducting research with vulnerable people may present unique opportunities to the researcher whilst requiring greater consideration in terms of the ethical issues.

Ethics and confidentiality issues

Prior to commencing the study, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Ethical Advisory Sub-Committee of Loughborough University. All data for this study were gathered between April 2010 and June 2010 (approximately three months). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with two groups; the abused women and the agencies.

Amongst the most important ethical considerations for this type of research are confidentiality and anonymity. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. All respondents recruited were clearly assured that their participation was confidential and that they had the option to be involved in the study or not. They were fully informed regarding the research procedures and the measures taken to ensure that their participation was kept anonymous at all times. A Participant Information Sheet, which consists of a complete explanation regarding the study, was provided to the respondents [see Appendix 3]. Besides, details of the research procedures and the true nature of the questions in the interview were described in plain language to them. Thus, there was no deception used in the present study.

Prior to agreeing to participate, the researcher acknowledged with respondents their right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain their reasons for withdrawing. This information was clearly stated in the Informed Consent Form, which was given to the participants after they confirmed that they totally understood the requirements of the research and agreed to be involved [see Appendix 4]. In addition, each participant was asked for permission for the interview to be audio-taped.

Participants were then invited to provide their signatures as an indication that they understood and agreed to participate in the study.

A reference number was assigned for each interview (i.e. interviews with the respondents and staff from the agencies) in order to ensure complete privacy and anonymity of the data. Real names or other identities were not used in any documentation in order to maintain confidentiality. In the data analysis stage, identification of the participants in the interview transcripts would occur by use of pseudonyms. All information given during the interviews and in the structured question forms were treated as strictly confidential materials and were stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (Data Collection & Storage). The audio recordings, interview notes, structured question forms and transcripts of those interviews are stored in a locked safe and can only be accessed by the researcher. The materials will be securely kept in their original forms and will be destroyed after ten years upon completion of this study.

Privacy and safety matters

In the present study, the researcher adhered strictly to the agencies adopted policies and practices regarding the safety of the respondents. The interviews were conducted in a safe and private place within the agencies' compound, such as in the interview or counselling room and with the consent of the participant. Potential participants were recruited by the agencies. After the agencies had consulted them, the researcher was finally informed of the participants' agreement to take part in the study. In fact, three women refused to participate and one woman withdrew herself a day before the interview date was scheduled.

In an attempt to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible, the researcher had visited the agencies and the participants (for those who stay in shelter homes/refuges) before holding the interview sessions. The visits were planned in accordance with the given date by the agencies. The date and time of the interview for the participants, however, was based on the participant's preference. The researcher's presence during the visit may reduce their uncomfortable feelings (i.e. the participant may feel vulnerable if the interview session is the first meeting with the researcher).

Therefore, the interviews became more relaxed as the respondents and the researcher became familiar with each other.

There were also a few interviews that were conducted in public places due to a request from the participants (i.e. commercial buildings) or at their homes. The reasons include that they were not living in shelter homes as well as it was inconvenient for them to attend the meeting in the agencies' place. The researcher, however, consulted the agency before making any decision regarding the requests. For safety purposes during outside meetings with the respondents, details regarding date, time and venue of the meetings were given to the agencies beforehand. Nevertheless, no proper protocols on outside meetings were given by the agencies to the researcher for ensuring the safety of their clients (ex-residents of the refuges/shelter homes).

Availability of support systems and services

Prior to the interviews, the researcher ensured that appropriate support systems, for instance counselling services, were made available to the respondents, in line with the suggestion by Ellsberg and Heise (2002: 40). As they stated: "As a minimum standard, researchers have an ethical obligation to provide respondents with information or services that can respond to their situations". Participants were encouraged to discuss any possible causes of distress or concern that arose during the course of the interview or aftermath (i.e. having nightmares as a result of their participation) with the researcher or staff of the agencies. These issues were guaranteed to be dealt with in an appropriate manner and with complete privacy. During the interviews, no situations arose where mandatory referral for additional support was required. As well, none of the participants had expressed any concerns during or after the interviews (reported during post-interview calls).

While no additional support referrals were required, a few women became a little tearful while discussing the issue. In this circumstance, the participants were offered a time break or even suspension of the interview. Those participants, however, wished to continue their conversations until end of the sessions. The researcher felt highly motivated when four of the respondents expressed their huge appreciation for the opportunity to talk about their experiences. They were thankful to the researcher as they felt a sense of relief when their stories were heard. The researcher was touched

by the participants trust as well as their hope that this study would be beneficial and helpful to others.

In an attempt to ensure the respondents' sense of well-being was intact after the interview, the researcher completed a post-interview call to the participants. The purpose of the call was to check on their current condition and if necessary offer the supports they might need, for example counselling sessions. None of the respondents expressed any concerns or possible distress as a result of their participation in this research when they were contacted by telephone. Contact numbers for post-interview calls were given by the participant voluntarily at the end of the interview. The cards containing the participants' contact details were stored in a locked safe (together with other related research materials) and will only be used for follow-up call purposes.

Each participant also received a pamphlet containing the list of the support agencies, shelters or safe houses and other resources for domestic violence assistance before leaving the interview venue [see Appendix 8]. However, the women were asked if the pamphlet offered would be safe for them to receive (especially to non-resident participants). As recommended by Veena and Chandra (2007), researchers are suggested to provide information about local services, generating awareness about help lines and identifying other possible interventions offered for the researched populations. The contact details of the researcher were also given to the respondents for their future use if necessary.

Approach to Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important step in the research process, which is conducted after the completion of data collection from the fieldwork. As Miles and Huberman (1994: 9) state: "Data is not usually immediately accessible for analysis, but require some processing". Therefore, the purpose of data analysis in this study is to transform raw data into more meaningful information which includes the interpretation, analysis and the discussion.

In general, data can be classified into two types, namely, primary data and secondary data. Primary data, sometimes known as raw data (Burning & Kintz, 1987), is the

information collected by researchers from various types of research methods such as experiment, survey, interview or observation. The primary data for this study was obtained via the qualitative interview and structured questions.

On the other hand, the source of secondary data was drawn from journals, seminar/conference proceedings, books, websites, databases and publications from related agencies, for instance the World Health Organization (WHO), Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO), Women's Centre for Change (WCC), Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) and government agencies under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia (KPWKM) such as the Social Welfare Department (JKM) and the Women's Development Department (JPW).

Demographical data

Descriptive statistics such as percentages were used to explain the basic features of the participants' biographical details as well as numbers of spousal abuse elements in this study. The 'PASW Statistics 18 Advanced Statistical Procedure' was used to analyze the data gathered from the structured question forms. Data was presented to provide a better understanding about demographical characteristics of the sample recruited (i.e. abused women in Malaysia) and a clearer picture of abuse related aspects found in this research.

Qualitative analysis

In the present study, a thematic approach was used to provide structure for describing the impact of domestic violence, factors that inhibit the women from seeking outside help, as well as the needs and supports that would be helpful to abused women in dealing with domestic violence situations. Hence, the main resources of data needed were the interviews with abused women and also the interviews with staff from domestic violence service providers in Malaysia.

Thematic analysis is used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (usually known as themes) within qualitative data (Lyons & Coyle, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). As Braun and Clarke (2006: 78) state: "The thematic analysis provides a

flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data”. There are two levels of analysis in the thematic method; firstly there is the semantic or explicit level and secondly, the latent or interpretive level (Willig, 2008). Both levels are essential in order to make a comprehensive and accurate analysis. The analysis enables researchers to identify and report respondents’ experiences, thoughts and meanings as themes and sub-themes and then represent them in similar inputs called clusters. The six phases of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006: 87) are as follows:

Table 4.3: Phases of thematic analysis

	Phase	Description of the process
1.	Familiarizing with own data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2.	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5.	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6.	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Coding procedures

To summarize, at the beginning of data analysis, qualitative interviews collected from the fieldwork were transcribed into written form. Although the process was laborious and lengthy, the researcher found it very useful in terms of self-familiarization with own data. “The process of transcription, while it may seem time-consuming, frustrating and at times boring, can be an excellent way to start familiarizing yourself with the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87).

In spite of the fact that the interview data was not in the same language as the research to be reported, the researcher believed that there was no necessity of translating these qualitative interviews into one language, for the reason of preserving its originality and the precision of the linguistic data. It was found that several words used by the participants in this study convey subtle differences of meaning for example “*masalah rumah tangga*” (marriage matters), “*taat*” (obedience) and “*kewajiban*” (obligation). The meaning of these words in their context was significantly influenced by Malaysian culture as well as the religion of Islam.

The next process after transcribing the qualitative interviews is coding. In coding, similar patterns of behaviour or account were stored in ‘nodes’. Nodes become points at which concepts potentially branch out into a network of sub-concepts or dimensions (Bazeley, 2007). In the study, nodes are developed within and across transcripts which can then be grouped, categorised and recorded as generating potential themes and sub-themes. This data analysis stage was another lengthy process, like the process of transcribing the interviews, because it was a cyclical, ongoing process since new themes developed alongside the emergence of new understandings gained from the research data.

The open coding procedures started when the researcher summarized the statements, phrases and words derived from the interview into elements (initial concepts). There was also a concept coded as ‘miscellaneous’ to identify other unrelated topics in the discussion. A set of initial coding frameworks were established after the coding process had finished with all participants’ responses. Selected examples of initial code are shown in Table 4.4. Backman and Kyngas (1999) suggest that the open coding stage involves a situation where the researcher and the research data are

interconnected with each other. In reflection of this researcher's personal experience, identifying codes at this stage in fact demanded significant amounts of concentration as well as motivation to continue this laborious work.

In total, there were 156 open codes established. Then, these codes were accumulated and became a shorter list of 82 categories for further review. The compiled categories were then re-examined until the relations between sub-categories developed from this procedure. After continuing such a lengthy process of reviewing, comparing, contrasting and clustering a final set of 15 themes emerged, together with 46 sub-themes as the core findings in the study. Table 4.5 shows an example of the final coding framework after the reduction of categories in the initial coding framework.

Table 4.4: An example of an initial coding framework

Interview transcript	Initial coding framework
<p>Researcher: <i>"How do you describe the psychological effects of the abuse on you?"</i></p> <p>Joyah: <i>"I was traumatized by the violent incidents. I can't bear to see any man beating up his wife, even if it is in a television drama or in a movie. I can't stand it. I screamed hysterically to the extent that my son switched the television off because of my reactions."</i></p>	<p>Psychological trauma</p> <p>Flashback, enrage</p> <p>Role-play</p> <p>Reaction because of trauma</p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"What do you think was the cause of your husband's violence toward you?"</i></p> <p>Ikin: <i>"I keep nagging all the time, moaning, and I noticed when I can't control myself I might challenge him as well. He is a very egotistical man....but I deserve the pain."</i></p>	<p>Cause of violence</p> <p>Retaliation, guilty</p> <p>Abuser personality</p> <p>Self-blame</p>

Table 4.5: A set of the final coding framework (selected examples)

Selective coding framework	Final coding framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of guidance • Non-integrated services • Enforcement matter 	The problems with procedures in disclosing and in the help-seeking process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social stigma in the community • Maintaining a father-figure in the family • Safety issues 	Safeguarding the children's interests

Data analysis was performed by software called *NVIVO* version 8.0. This computer package assists in data management and organization while dealing with large volumes of qualitative data. Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) consider computer programmes as useful tools in managing large qualitative datasets during the coding process. Therefore, although 'technical' assistance was obtained via a computer software package, there was still a significant need for the researcher to seek meaning underlying the women's accounts. Furthermore, the researcher also compared volumes of 'observational data' sourced from the interview notes with the actual interview transcriptions during this coding process. Observational data includes participants' non-verbal signs, researcher's reflections as well as observations at the time of the interviews. This type of information is useful to generate in-depth descriptions and thorough analysis of the research data.

Reliability and validity

The concept of reliability and validity in qualitative research is naturalistic in nature. These concepts are viewed differently to quantitative studies in which there is no statistical procedure involved and there is no generalization of findings sought by the researchers. As Morse and his colleagues stated:

“Challenges to rigor in qualitative inquiry interestingly paralleled the blossoming of statistical packages and the development of computing

systems in quantitative research” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002: 2).

Therefore, although engaging in qualitative research, the criterion for establishing the scientific rigour of a study is essential. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the equivalence of reliability and validity concepts introduced in qualitative research are credibility, transferability as well as trustworthiness. The term ‘credibility’ however is shared by both quantitative and qualitative researchers as empirical studies are bound to be credible in their particular context. Words such as ‘credibility’ and ‘transferability’ are in fact referred to by the term ‘internal validity’ as well as ‘external validity’ respectively in quantitative studies. The concept of trustworthiness or rigour, on the other hand, is described by Yin (1994) as a criterion to test the quality of research design.

Primarily, the present study was conducted to represent the researcher’s reflectivity and interpretations of abused women’s experiences firsthand from the women’s accounts. Therefore, the central concern of the researcher’s study is the validity of questions asked. It was believed that standardisation of some of the questions in the interview may increase the reliability of the data, as a greater possibility of similar responses may be captured from the conversations. The researcher also ensured that the research approach chosen was coherent with that of the method employed. This was in line with the argument from Morse *et al.* (2002) in which they state that strategies for ensuring rigour (trustworthiness) do include methodological coherence. A number of interview transcriptions as well as data analysis in the study were verified by a few participants in order to obtain rigour regarding the researcher’s interpretation of data. No modifications were suggested by the participants in relation to their opinions on the interpretation of the findings.

In relation to the above context, the face-to-face interview method can also offer additional advantages because it provides various means of collecting the data, for instance through the interview itself as well as from the researcher’s observations. The researcher’s reflections on the nature of the study were mainly addressed in a brief written record of the field notes throughout the research process. The field notes contained the researcher’s thoughts and feelings, impressions, as well as the

interpretation of interviewees' non-verbal cues and body language. Hence, the validation process of the research data can also be performed through various data that had been collected by the researcher during the course of the fieldwork phase.

Conclusions

In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the methods used in detail, along with the methodological considerations for the data collection phase of this research. As the aim of the study was to explore the abused women's experiences while living in abusive relationships, qualitative research was chosen although it is a time-consuming approach. The 'hard work' at the stage of data collection as well as data analysis, however, paid off when a richness of data was obtained and a thorough analysis of the issue studied was presented. The researcher also addressed the challenges as well as the importance of the ethical considerations in working with vulnerable groups such as abused women.

Next, the following two chapters present the findings of the study and attempt to provide an in-depth understanding of the domestic violence problem from the standpoint of the abused women themselves in the context of this research.

CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of living in abusive relationships from the perspective of abused women in Malaysia. The study includes investigating the impacts of domestic violence on women in terms of various dimensions (i.e. physical health and also the social, psychological and emotional aspects) and what the reasons are those make some women reluctant to disclose the abuse. In addition, the study aims to identify the needs and supports that would be helpful to the women in dealing with these traumatic episodes. This chapter presents the analysis of results using descriptive data along with the demographical characteristics of the women and their partners. It also discusses the nature of the organisations that are involved in this research as the service providers for abused women in the country.

As this is a qualitative study and was small-scale in nature, some readers may question whether it is appropriate to describe the results quantitatively. Aware of such an issue, the researcher believes that it is most probably useful to present those findings in the thesis, even though the sample size was not representative of the population as a whole. The discussions were essentially meant to describe circumstances of this particular research within the context of the study. Therefore, the results of the research were not used in making generalizations about the violence experiences of Malaysian women as a whole. Hancock (1998) argues that there is a cooperative venture between the researcher and the reader regarding the decision about representative samples in a qualitative study. This is where the reader may reflect the similarities as well as differences of the researcher's viewpoint into his or her own perspective.

Demographical Characteristics

The women

The participants for this study were 25 married women who volunteered to discuss their experiences of living in domestic violence relationships. The sample age was between 19 and 65 years, most were in their 30s and early 40s (mean age of 42.72 years). On the whole, the women in the study had been married for between two to 39 years. The majority of the women had met their partners in the workplace ($n = 16$). Only three women disclosed that they were couples since school whilst six marriages were arranged by close families. Among them, over half ($n = 15$) were no longer currently involved in a relationship with the abusive partner. Four of the husbands passed away while the women were still in the relationships, whereas the remaining 11 women were divorced (with the abusive partner) by the time of the interview. Out of this, three women had been remarried. Marital status for the remaining 10 women were married; where four of them decided to continue living with the husbands as married couples and the remaining women are still waiting for a divorce to be granted by the court ($n = 6$). Those women had left the marriage from one to 17 years previously. Generally, the women who reported leaving their partners stated the reason was due to violence and abuse.

In terms of the length of abusive relationships, the findings showed the below five years category was recorded as the highest ($n = 13$), followed by category of 11 years and more ($n = 8$) and four women reported that the relationships had lasted between a six to 10 years period. Many women reported that they had experienced abuse within their initial years of marriage. Some women indicated that the violence had actually started as early as on day three after the wedding. The length of time women had suffered domestic violence ranged from one to 21 years, with the average of 7.72 years.

The twenty-three women that make up the narrative of this research were Malay-Muslims, in addition to one Chinese woman (Buddhist religion) and one Muslim who had converted to Islam with Chinese ethnicity respectively. The majority of the women had one to three children ($n = 16$); six women had four to six children and two

women had more children than the others (seven and ten children, respectively). One of them had no children at all after almost three years of marriage. Most of the women completed their upper secondary school education ($n = 18$), one having a diploma in Electrical and Electronics Engineering and one a bachelor degree in Mass Communication studies. Two women attended lower secondary school while the remaining three had finished the primary school level.

During the occurrence of the violent relationships, more than half ($n = 13$) of the women identified their occupation as home makers ('housewife' is used as a Malaysian term), then followed by government and private employees ($n = 8$). One woman reported working as a domestic cleaner (labourer) while the remaining three had their own businesses set up, for example selling foods, food catering for special events like weddings as well as being a tailor. In relevance to the occupation reported by the women, all the housewives reported not having any source of income and they also admitted being financially dependant on their partners. Over thirty per cent ($n = 8$) of women reported having a monthly income of between RM 501 and RM 2000 (exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report). Three women were receiving under RM 500 per month and a woman was getting irregular pay according to her hours of working on daily basis.

The results indicated that eight women had lived in an extended family arrangement such as with parent in-law or relatives while the rest of them lived in a nuclear family ($n = 17$). A few reported they were staying together with as many as nine other extended family members in a household. Nonetheless, all of the violent incidents were reported to be perpetrated by the husbands only. The women claimed that parents' in-law and other family members acted as a 'bystander' who sometimes verbally encouraged the situation to become more violent, without displaying any desire to help them. Overall, less than one third of the women ($n = 6$) were involved in arranged marriages, however the majority of them reported they knew their male partners well before they made the decision to enter the marriage.

The partners

The term 'partner' as used throughout this study is referring to the women's husband. In Malaysia, cohabitation and same sex relationships are unacceptable and regarded as illegal. Therefore, men and women who wish to live in a relationship need to be married and must be registered; otherwise they have no right to claim that they have relationship. All of the women who participated identified the abusive relationship as heterosexual with the male abusers being either the husbands or ex-husbands.

The mean age of the women's partners was 44.05 years (range 27 to 63 years). The majority of partners completed their upper secondary school education (n = 10) followed by lower secondary school (n = 6) and first degree/diploma (n = 2). Four of them stopped at primary school, while three women did not know about their husbands' education. Almost all of the husbands were Muslims with Malay ethnicity (n = 24), and a Buddhist (Chinese by ethnic origin).

There was an even distribution of the partner's occupation with three each who were government employees, owned private businesses and were unemployed respectively. Private sector workers contributed the highest number with 15 people. In regards to the income of partners, seven had a monthly income of between RM 501 and RM 2000, three received more than RM 2001, while seven received under RM 500 per month (exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report). The remaining two of the partners who were employed as a labourer and a domestic cleaner were reported to receive irregular pay. Three of the women's partners were recorded as having no steady income because they were unemployed and the other three women reported they did not know at all about their husbands' pay.

The service providers

In addition to the demographical features of abused women and their current husbands, or former husbands, the study also gathered some data on service provision for domestic violence victims and survivors. The information was supplied by the staff in the organizations who worked with abused women in Malaysia. This study found that many of these organisation were non-governmental (donation based), established

within the last two decades and that the organizations were fairly well distributed in terms of their location. Some of these agencies provide residential supports and others focus on the women's self-development through activities such as counselling, motivational talks and awareness programmes.

In Malaysia, many of the service providers who work with abused women are run by non-governmental (NGO), non-profit organisations. The establishment of these agencies is intended mainly to provide immediate and on-going supports, generate greater awareness within the public concerning elimination of violence against women (and children) as well as promoting gender equality in the country.

There were 11 organisations involved in the study. A few of them served as refuges for the abused women while the remaining are organisations like Islamic Religious Affairs Department, independent women's associations and counselling centres of the state Islamic Religious Affairs Council. These organisations were established as early as 1985 with many of them having been founded in the 1990s. Government organisations such as the Islamic Religious Affairs Department and Council are responsible to help overcome social problems faced by Muslims. Most of the NGOs, however, cater to every one including foreigners. In terms of their financial means, they are highly dependent on the donations of corporate bodies, government agencies and individual contributions in running their activities.

A refuge is believed to be important as an immediate support to abused women. The study discovered that the location of these shelter places is fairly widespread (i.e. Perak, Pulau Pinang, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor). The geographical location of these refuges conveys that help is available throughout the country and this may increase the chances of abused women disclosing and seeking assistance. The main objectives in many refuges in Malaysia are more physical; basically to provide safety and temporary shelter. Therefore, at the moment these refuges also serve as a home for other needy people such as orphans, the homeless elderly, disabled individuals as well as unwed mothers (and their babies). Besides residential support, other service provisions in the refuge include motivational talks, counselling and legal advice in order to develop awareness and the

building of self-esteem and confidence in the women themselves. An open door policy is practiced for almost all of these organizations.

The number of agencies involved in this present study were almost evenly balanced between the non-governmental organizations (n = 6) and government agencies (n = 5). The majority of the professionals interviewed were counsellors (n = 5) whereas three of the interviewees were respectively known as the director and manager of the refuge/shelter place centre as well as the senior social workers. All five government agencies were funded by the government and only two non-government organizations confirmed that they gained annual monetary allocation from the Welfare Department of Malaysia to support their programmes and activities pertinent to victims and survivors of domestic violence in the country. Others (n = 4) identified themselves to be self-funded via individual as well as corporate donations to sustain their operations. Besides donations, some of these organizations were also involved in the small and medium entrepreneurship scheme (SME) to train and self-empower the women through skills courses; for instance producing and selling biscuits, cakes, snacks, crisps, pickles and handicrafts items in order to generate extra income for the organizations.

In relation to the services offered to abused women (and their children), all of the organizations stated that the key services available for the abused women were consultation and advice in terms of legal provisions of domestic violence in Malaysia, as well as providing the counselling services for immediate crisis and follow-up sessions. Nonetheless, only five organizations from all 11 organizations served as the refuge centre for the women. Apart from the consultation and providing shelter, most of the organizations also aimed to provide moral support for abused women, for example regarding transportation issues; escorting the women to make the police statement and obtain the medical check-up, accompany the women to apply for the Interim Protection Order or Protection Order at the Welfare Department, and even attending the court hearing together with the abused women. In principle, activities such as motivational talks, exhibitions, conferences and seminars were included in the organization's calendar with the purpose of raising and enhancing awareness about the existence of the domestic violence problem within the minds of the general public.

The table below summarises the characteristics of the researched organizations. Pseudonyms were use to ensure the complete privacy and confidentiality of those agencies involved.

Table 5.1: Summarization on sample of organizations involved in this study

Organisation Code	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11
Category:											
- Government organisation (GO)			•	•			•		•	•	
- Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	•	•			•	•		•			•
Financial source:											
- Government allocation		•	•	•		•	•		•	•	
- Self-funding (donations based)	•	•			•	•		•			•
Key services offered:											
- Police report	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
- Medical treatment	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
- Counselling	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
- Legal advice (Sharia and Family Law)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
- Shelter home/refuge centre	√	√			√	√					√
- Follow up assistance	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
- Outreach programmes (seminars/motivational talks/exhibitions)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Descriptive Results

Forms of abuse

Domestic violence is defined as any incident of violence or abuse between adults who are engaged in an intimate relationship, or between members of the family. The incidents of violence can include physical, psychological and emotional, sexual, financial and/or social behaviours. On the whole, it is an abuse of power with the intent to control and dominate one person by another through one or various forms of violence. This study recounts the experiences of the Malaysian abused women regarding the types of violence perpetrated by their current or former husbands.

The research found that physical battering was the most frequent form of domestic violence committed against these women. More than two thirds of the women ($n = 20$) reported that they experienced continuous physical assaults from their partners. They reported being slapped, hit, shoved, kicked, punched and choked. Throwing things as well as burning also caused some of them injury and physical pain. In the analysis, it was found that out of these 25 women, six were kicked, fifteen were slapped, ten were hit and nine were choked. The husbands/ex-husbands were also reported committing such abuse like shoving ($n = 6$), punching ($n = 3$), hair pulling and burning ($n = 2$) respectively. Similar to findings of numerous research studies conducted worldwide, these physical acts are the most common type of violent crime committed in non-fatal partner abuse incidents.

In terms of social abuse, seventeen in the study who were actually exposed to social abuse which includes stalking, social isolation and controlling behaviours of the partners (dominance). Another 14 women reported that their current or former husbands kept the families, friends and neighbours apart from them. Ten of the women revealed that they had very few or no close friends at all since the relationships started. The women's time and whereabouts were occasionally being monitored ($n = 8$). In addition, they had been restricted regarding any outside home activities ($n = 5$) and the partners allowed no visitors at home ($n = 4$). Relatively few women were locked in their own house ($n = 2$) as well as exposed to stalking ($n = 3$). These abused women had reported that they had been constantly harassed at work by

their spouses.

Sexual abuse in marriage is a taboo in the Malaysian context. The culture inhibits women and men broaching their sexual life outside the marriage. Hence, sexual abuse is still being treated as personal and private matters within society. Correspondingly, interviewing abused women in regard to their sexual issues was a challenge. Nonetheless, sixteen women out of the total participants reported they had experienced this form of abuse in their relationships. Eleven out of 16 women had responded very well to the issue raised whereas a group of five women did admit to being sexually abused at least once during the relationships (including marital rape) but they refused to elaborate more on such incidents. For the time being in Malaysia, this kind of violent act is recognised in the federation as valid, not rape. Six women did not identify any form of sexual violence perpetrated by their partners. The remaining three of the abused women opted not to answer that particular question. They indicated the matter was 'private and personal', a 'sensitive issue' as well as 'inappropriate to share'. Those women also preferred not to discuss the issue further.

Turning to financial abuse experienced by the Malaysian abused women; it was found that 19 out of 25 women interviewed were exposed to financial abuse at some point in their relationships. The majority of them were denied sufficient household expenses ($n = 14$) which involves withholding money and being 'forced' to support jobless partners. The remaining four women reported that the husbands/ex-husbands demanded their salary for taking full responsibility for the household expenditures (i.e. rents, bills, groceries and children's expenses). One woman reported that the husband prevented her from working but did nothing to financially support the whole family. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, almost half of the women in the study ($n = 13$) were housewives. Hence, many of them had no access to money resources, leaving them financially dependent on their partners. The dependency makes the women vulnerable to their partner's acts of violence. In fact, some of them no longer believed they could change their situation nor leave the abusive relationship.

The findings showed almost the entire number of respondents in the study reporting psychological and emotional abuse by their male counterparts ($n = 23$). Only a small number of women interviewed noted conversely ($n = 2$) with brief responses like 'I

don't know' and *I don't think so*'. Some of the abused women, however, did not recognise or even feel that they had suffered such abuse all this time as this kind of abuse can be very subtle. Furthermore, abuse in terms of psychological and emotional behaviours are regarded as non-physical and are often overlooked by people. During the interviews, women were asked: *"Did you ever experience such abuse as being called names, or receiving threatening or insulting comments or criticism of your physical appearance?"* Shockingly, the women's answers were all down to 'yes' with false accusations made towards them being rated as the highest among all. Twelve women reported that the husbands/ex-husbands accused them of having an affair with another man, committing adultery as well as being a prostitute. The name calling, such as '*stupid*' and '*bitch*', had caused them to feel embarrassed as well as demeaned in front of their children.

Threats were also used to intimidate those women (n = 10). The women were clearly vulnerable as they were financially unviable, thus incapable of looking after themselves and the children (n = 9). The partners often wore down the women's sense of self-image and confidence by consistently saying they were worthless (n = 8), an unfit mother and unwanted wife (n = 5). The men also relentlessly criticised and blamed them for the violence perpetrated (n = 4). It is believed that the impact of psychological and emotional abuse is severe. It may have longer lasting effects than physical abuse and can cause enduring damage to the sense of well-being of the abused women (and children).

Weapons used

The next important subject related to spousal abuse is the presence of a weapon in domestic violence incidents. The data revealed that during the time violence is perpetrated, the husbands or former husbands had used their body parts or weapons to threaten or cause physical pain to the women. There were only four women indicated that their abusive incidents did not involve a hand-held weapon. The perpetrators were reported to use physical force such as bare hands, fists and feet to harm their wives (i.e. slapping, punching, kicking, choking and shoving them). The remaining 16

women experienced violent incidents involving weapons. Another five women said that the abuse was perpetrated by a mixture of both.

Overall, seven partners had used weapons such as a knife, stick and/or sports equipment like a baseball bat, hockey stick, golf club and badminton racket. Interestingly, a motorcycle helmet was also among the common type of weapon used for inflicting harm on these women ($n = 4$). In similar cases during the violent incidents, a few other items were indicated as more likely to be the instruments, for instance bottles, furniture (i.e. chairs, coffee table and small shelves), crockery and electrical appliances (i.e. television and table fan). Two women experienced hazardous attempts of burning where kerosene was used by the abusers. The presence of this kind of 'dangerous weapon' in domestic violence events may result in serious injuries and most likely require immediate police intervention.

Factors contributing to domestic violence

To determine the factors associated with domestic violence, the women were asked to complete a structured questions form as well as verbally respond in the interview regarding the causes of domestic abuse in their relationships. In addition, the study also includes similar views from the service providers who work with abused women in the nation. The results discovered a number of risk factors that may help to understand the attributes of spousal abuse occurrences among Malaysian women.

Nearly half of the total number of abused women in this study ($n = 11$) indicated having constant arguments about financial matters. Although economic issues may be one of many underlying roots of domestic violence, it can also exacerbate recurrent interpersonal conflict as well as induce stress among the couples (and their families). The example of economic distress includes being unable to provide enough money to meet the family needs, long term unemployment and money spending associated with substance abuse, such as for drugs and alcohol. Similar findings in the study were obtained through interviews with some of the managers and social workers of the agencies ($n = 5$).

Most of the women noticed that many of domestic violence incidents actually started when their husbands/ex-husbands were involved in love affairs with other women. This factor, however, was recorded to be rated slightly lower than financial problems (n = 10). Four of the women's partners were engaged in extra marital relationships, leaving the rest of them in dating relationships (n = 6). An external affair is believed to be a common reason for either separation or divorce among the couples in the nation. From the agencies' perspective, affairs with the third person in a triangle was not as notable as from the women's viewpoint (n = 3).

Both interviews conducted with the women and the organizations reported similar results in relation to the association of domestic violence and substance abuse (i.e. drugs and alcohol) as well as gambling habits. Ten women and eight workers from the agencies unanimously reported that addiction to drugs, drinking habits and gambling issues had a massive influence in contributing to the partner's acts of violence. Furthermore, a small number of women reported other reasons for domestic violence; hot-tempered manner (n = 6), family interference (n = 5), jealousy (n = 3), women's self blame and guilt (n = 3) as well as mental health problems (n = 2).

It can be concluded that numerous factors contributing to domestic violence were found in the study. The list of reasons mentioned by the abused women as well as staff in the agencies showed the complexity of abusive relationships in the context of Malaysia. It is essential to remember that acts of violence may be influenced by more than a single factor and they usually escalate over time. Thus, without proper professional help to break the cycle of abuse, the women may have a greater tendency to remain trapped in the relationships.

Domestic violence impacts on abused women

The effects of domestic violence are massive. They range from the physical health impacts to psychological and emotional problems. Battered women are not the only persons who suffer the damage wrought by domestic violence. In most cases, children are found to be very vulnerable to the long term effects of family violence, just like the mothers themselves. Sixteen women reported that domestic violence problems in

their marriages have had some negative impacts on the children. The children were found to be depressive, problematic, as well as having attitude and behavioural issues.

It was found from the study that most of the women reported having experienced psychological and emotional effects due to the partner violence. Fifteen women from the total of 25 admitted facing a great deal of stress and depression during the relationships. Many of the women (n = 15) also claimed that their lives were full of sadness and constant despair. As well, these violent occurrences have made them feel traumatized (n = 11). Some had blamed themselves as the source of the violence (nagging; n = 3 and talking back; n = 4). The women also noted that their children were less bonded with the father and developed feelings of hate toward the abusers (n = 16). Furthermore, twelve women said that the battering frequently escalates during pregnancy. Other psychological and emotional effects reported by the women in the study include a sense of regret regarding the marriages (n = 5), fear of the abuser (n = 8), a sense of hatred and revenge (n = 10), sleeping problems with nightmares (n = 3), feelings of isolation from social networks (n = 7) as well as suffering from low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence (n = 4). In addition, the impact of domestic violence reached the extent of making the women feel 'crazy' (n = 5) and result in suicide attempts (n = 2).

The ramifications of spousal abuse in terms of physical health were also reported in the interviews with the abused women. Many stated they suffered migraines and frequent headaches (n = 8) as a result of long-term physical health effects of domestic violence. Five women recounted about their back/abdominal pain, chronic neck pain (n = 3) and vivid external physical marks due to burning injuries (n = 1). Other impacts to physical health narrated by these women encompass the experiences of respiratory system problems such as severe coughs and shortness of breath (n = 2) as well as having asthma symptoms (n = 1). One woman (n = 1) was medically reported to suffer permanent visual impairment as she lost her left eye as a consequence of partner violence in the relationship. Spiritually, the women interviewees felt closer to the god as they coming to accept their fate and build connection to god through prayers (n = 12).

Disclosing the violence and seeking help

Disclosing partner violence as well as seeking outside help are the major steps in changing the situation of abusive relationships. It takes a great deal of courage for the abused women to come forward and disclose such abuses. It was believed that some of the women had acknowledged the problem but kept the violent incidents unreported. At the time the interviews took place, it was found that few women still had not reported the abuse to the police ($n = 16$). In fact, only nine of them lodged a report to the police. A high level of under-reporting of cases of domestic violence is caused by a several reasons. This may include the negative social stigmas of society, unwillingness to disclose 'private family matters', shame as well as the fear of rejection (feelings of being disbelieved). Shockingly, out of nine cases reported to the police, only two women claimed that their partners were detained by the police for investigation. Later, however, the cases were considered closed due to the reason of insufficient proof and evidence from the complainant and were classified as family disputes. The remaining seven women stated that no action was taken in whatever way toward their husband/ex-husbands even though the incident of violence had been reported. The accounts of all of the women's experiences confirmed that there was neither criminal prosecution nor legal action taken against the abusers.

Domestic violence is a major cause of physical injuries and mental health problems, therefore the health care system may become a perfect medium of contact between professional help and battered women. In this study, the results show that more than half of the women ($n = 14$) did not seek medical attention after the incidents. This was because many of them considered the abuse as 'not bad enough', or they had limited access to seek medical treatment, and also some were thinking that it was best not to drag the issue any further for the sake of the family. On the other hand, eleven women did go to clinics or hospitals to obtain medical assistance. Four women were admitted to the hospitals due to severe injuries while seven underwent outpatient treatment. A variety of injuries were suffered by these women including bruises, lacerations, black eyes, abrasions, body burns and also blindness in one eye.

The present study is also aimed at investigating the barriers which inhibit abused women in Malaysia from disclosing the violence incidents and from seeking the

assistance that is available. The results found that the reasons for not disclosing the violence include preserving a 'father-figure' for the children (n = 20), spousal abuse was a private family problem (n = 15), shame (n = 9), negative social stigma attached to the abused women in the community (n = 7), lack of knowledge on needs and supports available (n = 6), feelings of being disbelieved (n = 6) and fear of retaliation from the partner (n = 5). Some women reported they did not tell anyone about the abuse mainly because they thought they should honour the men's pride as head of the family as well as giving the partner another opportunity to change (n = 4). They also feared that the husbands/ex-husbands might have been arrested by the police due to the disclosure (n = 4). It was highlighted that many of the women remained with their abusive partners for the reason that the family unit would be incomplete without a father for the children. In Malaysian society, the family unit is essential. In most circumstances women will always be blamed for the break up of the family (regardless of the reason), causing the children to have no male parent. The pressure of being labelled as problematic women in society had caused many of them to endure the consequences of living in the violent relationships.

Resources regarding the women's help seeking options were explored in two categories, namely formal supports and informal supportive networks. The formal supports consist of government and private organizations that provide services to assist abused women in dealing with the violent situations. The organizations include Islamic authorities, government agencies as well as women's associations. A variety of sources of aid were offered to the women in terms of practical and emotional supports. On the other hand, the availability of family, relatives, friends and neighbours can be an option for some of the abused women. These informal supportive networks can be of much help, however bounded by some limitations. These types of resources are usually in the form of providing immediate practical supports such as accommodation, transportation as well as monetary aid. During the interviews, the women were asked about helpful resources that they received during these traumatic episodes (i.e. formal and informal supportive networks). The findings conclude that five women received help from family, friends, relatives and neighbours as well as their employers. Thirteen women claimed they received no support from members of informal networks. Based on the interviews, it was found that some of the women purposely did not want to disclose the matter to any member of their family

for various reasons including shame, fear of being disbelieved as well as to avoid the involvement of the family.

In contrast, some had chosen to tell people closest to them about the violent incidents in the relationships yet received no help in return. Twenty women were reported to have asked for professional assistance from those who work with domestic violence victim/survivors, for example Islamic Religious Affairs Department (n = 4) and women's associations (n = 8). Others sought residential supports (n = 8). Out of 20 women who reported to seek outside help, some were very fortunate as they were helped by both; the formal and informal supportive networks while dealing with these traumatic events (n = 7). Figure 5.1 shows the composition of helpful resources sought by 25 abused women in this research.

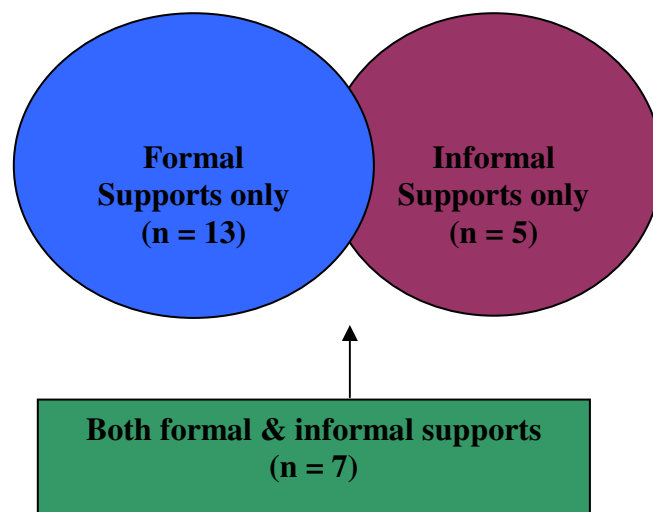


Figure 5.1: Composition of help-seeking resources

Women's knowledge and awareness of domestic violence service provisions

Knowing the variety of services available and how accessible they are can make a great deal of difference for the abused women (and their children). Firstly, the synergy between various helping agencies should be improved in order to offer more effective service provisions for this group of women. Although it is a real challenge, the culture of considering domestic violence as a mere family matter demands change because partner violence is a serious crime. As well, the accomplishment of educating the public on such matters is also a key component of such efforts.

From the interviews conducted with the abused women, it was found that the majority of the women were not aware of such laws and the legal provisions available for them. Surprisingly, out of 25 women interviewed, only two reported that they already knew about the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) in Malaysia before the violence took place in their marriages. Fortunately with that sort of knowledge, they were able to seek immediate assistance at the police station and got into contact with the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. They have reported that magazines as well as television programme like “*Dari Kamar Mahkamah Shariah*” (From the *Sharia* Court’s Chamber) have exposed them to many issues concerning family affairs.

Eight women said they did not know anything about legal protection towards them until they were told by the agency’s staff, such as from the social workers and the counsellors. Many of them argue that the enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) is ineffective as no criminal penalties are imposed on their male partners. However, some women revealed they chose not to proceed with legal action in spite of the fact that they were fully informed about their rights. Four out of these eight women said they wanted to make their divorce process less complicated, three women were concerned about preserving the partner’s honour in the eyes of the family and the remaining one woman refused to discuss the issue further.

Likewise, even some of the abused women who obtained assistance from domestic violence service providers were still clueless about what legal protection may offer them a long term solution. Ten of the women interviewed claimed not to fully understand the advantages of the laws and the legal provisions for domestic violence cases. The fact that they had been informed by the agencies seemed insufficient because the women felt that the process is time consuming as well as the procedure being confusing. As the interview went in-depth around this topic, many interviewees revealed that they were actually afraid of going through the exhausting ‘court’ experience and yet at the end the abusers remain unpunished. Another five women said they were unsure about the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) as well as legal provisions available for abused women in Malaysia because they have had limited access to relevant knowledge due to a number of reasons. The answers given were, for example: “*I have no access to television or radio at home*”, “*My life is around my kids and family 24/7*”, “*I have no time because I was so busy with the household*

chores". "I can't afford to buy newspapers or magazines" and "I don't do much reading".

In terms of women's knowledge and awareness regarding the provisions of service as well as the organizations who work with abused women in Malaysia, the women have been asked questions about domestic violence service providers. At the time of the interview, most women had acknowledged that the presence of the police (n = 15), women's groups (n = 15), courts (n = 13), religious authorities (n = 10) and medical teams (n = 7) can be great sources of assistance while dealing with these traumatic episodes. The women also confirmed that television, radio, the internet, magazines, newspapers as well as exhibitions and seminars are the best mediums of communication to educate, promote and raise the awareness about domestic violence for them as well as the public in general. However, many of the women interviewed (n = 14) have suggested the importance of integration between the related agencies and effective implementation of the services in order to facilitate disclosing and seeking help for women (and children) who experience partner violence. The idea was to avoid confusion and to assist women in getting the appropriate help depending on their individual needs. In addition, mutual co-operation between relevant agencies may well enhance the reporting level of domestic violence cases and may provide a smooth, non-bureaucratic and hassle-free experience for these battered women in the future.

Viewpoints from the service providers

The data collection phase of the study had also included 11 interviews with the organizations who work with domestic violence victims and survivors. Specifically, the interviews were conducted with the person in-charge of domestic violence cases at that particular organization, for example directors, social workers, and counsellors. A set of guided questions had been asked during the interview because the researcher believed that inputs, thoughts and viewpoints from the organizations were very important to supplement the women's perspectives on the issue of spousal abuse in Malaysia. The findings showed some similarities with the women's accounts and as well there was some new knowledge also gathered through the discussions.

Mainly the agencies key persons had agreed that there were a number of explanations regarding barriers to disclosing and reporting the abuse among Malaysian women. One of the highest reasons given was that the woman wants to protect the privacy and sanctity of her family affairs (n = 8). In the Malaysian context, family matters are strictly private and should be kept within the home. Furthermore, the women are obliged to preserve their partner's honour as sign of a 'good' wife (n = 5). Safeguarding the children's welfare was another significant reason (n = 7) along with feelings of embarrassment or being ashamed of the situation (n = 5). According to the agencies, battered women are commonly in fear of retaliation by the husbands (n = 6) if they went public about the violent relationship. They were believed to be financially dependant on the husband (n = 4) with many of them lacking knowledge concerning domestic violence awareness (n = 5). Other reported barriers that may inhibit disclosing partner violence were avoiding allegation of *nusyuz* in court and some stating they still loved their partners regardless of the abuse. From the professionals' experience they have identified several reasons why the women finally disclose the violence. It was found that most women come and seek help with the intention of filing for a divorce from the partner (n = 9), asking assistance in terms of monetary and financial aid (n = 5) as well as seeking shelter and refuge (n = 4). Very few women wanted to file charges against the perpetrators.

Turning to the organizations' perspectives on the contributing factors of domestic violence, eight out of 11 stated that spousal abuse was mainly due to financial difficulties faced by the family. These professionals also noticed that substance abuse, such as drugs and gambling habits, were among the significant causes of violence mentioned by their clients (n = 6). Moreover, some male partners were described as hot tempered and aggressive (n = 4) and involved in a love affair with another woman (n = 3). From the interviews with officers at the Islamic authorities, they have concluded that the occurrences of domestic violence was in all likelihood because of not fully practising religious teachings (n = 4). Women's faults like nagging and a talk-back attitude were also enlisted by the officers as one of the many causes of domestic violence (n = 2). However, it cannot change the fact that male violence against women is a serious crime and this sort of behaviour is unacceptable for whatever reason. Consistent with the women's accounts, it was found that

psychological and emotional impacts (i.e. stress, depression and trauma) were the highest recorded answers with eight professionals. Next, the professionals mentioned the effects of family violence on children's well-being; in terms of attitude and behaviour problems (n = 9), traumatized experience (n = 3) and decrease in academic performance (n = 4). Five of the officers stated that the abused women were prone to show lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem as a result of partner violence.

One of the important questions directed to the organizations was: "*Can you describe the reporting level of domestic violence in your organization?*" The answers given however were very vague as most of these organizations do not keep statistical data on domestic violence cases reported to them. Most of the women's association agencies (n = 5) reported that they do not have proper data in place regarding numbers of domestic violence cases, whereas six organizations, mainly Islamic authorities, based their data on cases of marriage disputes. All agencies have responded to this question with approximate figures. According to the discussion, the researcher has concluded the reporting level at the agencies involved in the study was as follows:

- Daily reported cases are between none to two incidents (n = 4)
- Monthly reported cases are between three to five incidents (n = 2)
- Annually reported cases are between 30 to 40 incidents (n = 5)

The absence of properly recorded data on partner violence cases at the organizations who work with abused women was seen to be inappropriate because these agencies are believed to be the frontline people in helping domestic violence victims and survivors in the country. The success of the services delivered to abused women may be greatly affected if important elements such as the facts and figures of domestic violence cases are missing. Furthermore, the public may be significantly misinformed about the real magnitude of the problem of domestic violence.

As the professionals of the organizations are aware of the issue of the under reporting of cases, they have suggested a number of strategies in order to encourage women to come forward and disclose their abusive relationships. The majority of agencies realized that enhancing woman's knowledge and awareness, or in short that educating women, is the key (n = 8). This education can occur by various means such as through

workshops, seminars, exhibitions and broadcast on television, radio as well as through other mass media. The agencies also have opinions on providing proper training for officers, for instance the police, nurses, doctors and other supporting staff working in the organizations in order to handle domestic violence cases appropriately (n = 3). In addition, the professionals thought that integration between agencies should be improved to avoid redundancy of roles (n = 5) along with strengthening the laws of enforcement for spousal abuse crimes (n = 6).

The organizations were also asked regarding their resources to publicise and enhance awareness of domestic violence issues among Malaysian society. Almost all of the agencies noted that organising workshops, seminars and exhibitions to the public is a fruitful strategy (n = 9). Besides raising awareness about the issue, the events can be of great help in educating the public in general on their rights concerning the laws and legal provisions, as well as the availability of support systems for abused women (and their children). The events may also be a platform in promoting the organization's work as a service provider for domestic violence victims and survivors. Other established facilities provided by the agencies include individual, family and group counselling (n = 10), peer-support groups (n = 5), self-empowerment courses, for example cake and baking classes, handicraft courses, sewing lessons, child development courses, parenting courses and basic computer classes (n = 4). Additionally, the organizations also organized activities for outreach programmes such as visits to primary schools, secondary schools, higher learning institutions, FELDA communities (The Federal Land Development Authority) and also visits to many small villages and rural areas (n = 4).

The above mentioned services however can easily be affected due to a number of limitations faced by the agencies. Many professionals at non-governmental organizations revealed staffing issues in relation to financial constraints (n = 6). It was believed that a lack of volunteering culture among Malaysian people has worsened this problem. Furthermore, the agencies felt that poor linkages with other service providers had restricted the helping process in running smoothly (n = 4). Adding to the list was government bureaucracy issues (n = 3). Over and above that, the professionals often faced difficulties regarding the women themselves (n = 5). The long process of making spousal abuse official has actually demanded a lot of courage

from battered women. The women were 'forced' to be involved in laborious procedures and uncertain situations. Consequently, many of them have opted to withdraw the cases, giving up and starting to believe that 'no one is helping'.

As the discussions resumed, the researcher continued with questions about the organizations' knowledge; particularly regarding their broader understanding of domestic violence developments in other countries. The findings showed that the majority of the agencies, specifically eight of them, have no connections or liaisons with international organizations. The agencies however admitted that they have established rapports with several well known local organizations such as WAO (Women's Aid Organisation), WCC (Women's Centre for Change), AWAM (All Women's Action Society), the Islamic Religious Affairs Department authorities, *TENAGANITA*, *Pusat Urus Zakat* (Alms Centre) and the Department of Social Welfare. Three agencies stated that they had mutual friendly visits with overseas organizations based in Singapore, the United States and Japan. The professionals confirmed the good benefits of the information exchanged. Although most of these organizations were locally-based associations, the efforts of library searches as well as reviewing the literature on domestic violence have kept the agencies up to date with the developments of domestic violence issues in other countries around the world.

Discussion and Conclusion

Demographical characteristics

The interview evidence from the Malaysian abused women as well as from the agencies' staff has made interesting findings for this study. It was found that there were variations to the attributes of abused women and their husbands/ex-husbands. The majority of the women and their partners were in their 30s and 40s. They were believed to be married for between two to 39 years, with the average length of the abusive relationship lasting for almost eight years. Some of the women were still married to the partner and some of them had decided to leave with a divorce. The majority of the abused women and their spouses/ex-spouses were Malay-Muslims. Similar levels of education were found between the women and their male

counterparts where more than half of them had finished up to secondary school level. Many of these women interviewed were housewives and reported to be financially dependant to the men's income. Over half of the male partners were getting less than RM 2000 per month (exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report) working as private employees, government servants as well as engaged in other kinds of occupation. Individual profiles for the women and their partners were displayed in Appendix 8.

Overall, the results of this study show that perpetrators in this present study were identified as the women's former or current male spouses. In details, the ex-husbands had accounted for more than half of the total percentages while a number of women were separated from their husbands at the time of the interview. As Walby and Allen (2004: 57) state: "The worst incidents suffered in the previous year were from current partners/spouses and former partner/spouses". Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in all 25 cases of this study, none was reported with other kind of perpetrators such as parents' in-laws, siblings or relatives, although some women were actually living together with extended-family members. This study has been unable to demonstrate the involvement of significant others in the violent relationships. Although this result differs from some published studies mostly in South East Asian communities (Dhakal, 2008; Kumar, Jeyaseelan, Suresh & Chandra Ahuja, 2005), the finding is consistent with those findings by Sarkar (2010) who found that 72.73 per cent out of 141 female respondents in West Bengal were exposed to domestic violence where their husbands acted as the perpetrators. Similarly, it was reported that more than 45 per cent of domestic violence incidents in India were inflicted by male spouses (UNICEF, 2000). The difference between the present study and the previous studies by Dhakal (2008) and Kumar *et al.* (2005) may be related to cultural variations. It is believe that the involvement of family in-laws was very much apparent among the Indian culture due to dowry related violence. Nonetheless, this explanation is largely speculative and needs further examination from various stances.

Previous studies conclude no specific pattern regarding the age of victims as well as perpetrators of domestic violence (Catalano, 2007; Kernic & Bonomi, 2007; Chen & White, 2004). The present study found a similar age category of 30 – 40 years between the female victims and male perpetrators together with their average age of

early 40s for the respective groups. This finding is in agreement with Catalano's (2007) findings which showed that similar age was reported between the victims and offenders of intimate partner violence from 2001 to 2005 in the US Bureau of Justice Statistics. In relation to duration of the violence relationship, the current study found that for some women their marriages had even lasted for more than 15 years. In line with the subject, the mean duration of living in the violence relationship was reported as 11.5 years in the research conducted by Dutton and Painter (1993). Nevertheless, the abuse was reported to have started at various points for different women. The present sample therefore reflects a high number of middle-age couples with prolonged episodes of violence. The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with the establishment of romantic bonding within the length of relationship. It is believed that the longer a woman remains in a violence relationship, the more they become attached in that relationship and the woman may consider that the abuse is not escapable due to the emotional bonding developed between themselves and their male abuser.

Another important finding was that the majority of the abused women in the study were low-academic achievers, unemployed and highly dependent on their husbands' income. As illustrated in most transcriptions, these women were reported to be financially incapable of sustaining themselves, let alone provide for the children. This finding supports previous research into this area which links economic dependency and reasons of staying in the abusive relationship. The Sarkar's study (2010) found that female respondents in his study who were exposed to domestic violence were in fact not economically independent. Likewise, other prior studies have also noted the importance of financial viability in families with domestic violence (Collins & O'Rourke, 2012; Adams, 2011; O'Rourke, 2010). A possible explanation for this might be that many victims believe they should remain in the abusive relationship because primarily they are highly dependent on their husband's source of income. Indeed, some women may also have feelings of incompetence, lower self-esteem and lack of confidence to start hunting for a job. The strategy in which the abuser's power and control to some extent has successfully undermined the women's sense of identity to survive on their own. The findings of this current study suggest that women who are unemployed and uneducated are also at risk of domestic violence.

Descriptive findings

The following in Table 5.2 is a summary of the key findings of the study on overall prevalence of domestic violence according to type of violence, weapons used and domestic violence causes. As well, the results on disclosure and help-seeking in the aftermath of abusive experiences are also presented in this summary.

Table 5.2: The summary of descriptive findings

Characteristic	Frequency (out of 25 women)	Description
Types of abuse		
Psychological	23	Name calling/ accusation/ threat/ criticism
Physical	20	Slapping/ kicking/ punching/ choking/ burning
Financial	19	Withholding money/ demanding the salary of the women for household expenditures
Social	17	Social isolation/ stalking/ male dominance
Sexual	16	Forced sexual intercourse (marital rape)/ sodomy
Types of weapon used		
Unarmed	4	Hands/ fists/ elbow/ feet
Armed	16	Knife/ stick/ helmet/ sports equipments (i.e. badminton racket, baseball bat)
Factors contributing to domestic violence		
Financial problem	11	Not providing enough money for the family/ supporting jobless male partner
Love affair	10	Polygamy/ in a dating relationship with another woman
Substance abuse/ gambling habits	10	Addiction to drugs/ alcohol drinking habits/ a high level of debt due to gambling behaviour
Negative personalities	9	Hot-tempered attitude of the men/ feelings of exaggerated jealousy
Miscellaneous	10	Women's self-blame and guilt/ family interference/ mental health problems

The table above shows that almost all of the women interviewed reported that they were abused psychologically by their partners. Many of them were also sexually abused, or in other words, raped by their husbands. In most cases, weapons such as a knife and helmet were used during their torture. The results found that the contributing factors to domestic violence had varied from financial problems, substance abuse to feelings of jealousy and family interference.

On the question of factors that contribute to domestic violence in the women's relationships, this study found that partner's substance abuse, in particular drugs and excessive alcohol consumption together with gambling habits were significantly associated with domestic violence occurrences examined in the study. These present findings seem to be consistent with other research which found 38 per cent of domestic violence perpetrators were drunk, whereas another 11 per cent were under the influence of drugs during the violence incidents (Povey *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, Lee (2007) found that drinking habits significantly impacted the type and level of abuse perpetrated by the domestic violence offenders. The Lee study also reported that almost 70 per cent of the male partners in his study were alcoholics. This quantitative study was conducted using 136 Korean immigrant women who live in Texas, USA.

Another interesting finding was that the women concurred about their partner's affair with other women including polygamy (as legally practised among Muslim men) as a reason for domestic violence. It was evident that many of the present samples had reported to be abused in several forms of violence due to arguments, disputes and disapproval over their husband's extra marital affairs. This result is in agreement with preliminary findings from the Sister in Islam (SIS) research project which suggested that stress, quarrels and neglect are 'normal' occurrences within the polygamous family in Malaysia. Furthermore, the study found that 53 per cent of the first wives reported that their multi-marriage circumstances had increased the incidents of domestic violence (Boo, 2010). The main objective of the above study was to investigate the impact of polygamy on Muslim women and children in the country. The research considered participants from across all 12 states of Peninsular Malaysia. A possible explanation for the result might be related to religious factors which are

interconnected with the idea of male privilege in a polygamous community (Shurtleff & Goddard, 2005).

In relation to male partner attitudes, negative personality traits such as exaggerated jealousy, bad temper and aggressive behaviour were linked to psychological and physical abuse. The results of this study did not show that conflicts with in-laws were the common cause of violence among the Malaysian married couples as was reported in the National Report on Violence and Health, Malaysia (2006). This result may be explained by the fact that no violence had been perpetrated by the family in-laws in the study. Although a number of women had been staying with their husband's family for quite some time, only their male partners were reported to be responsible for the abuse. However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research.

The qualitative study conducted by Keenan, El-Hadad and Balian (1998) found that abused women in Lebanon had described conflicts with their husband's relatives (i.e. in-laws and other family members) as one of the factors associated with domestic violence. This cultural perspective study also identified three variables of stressors which played a significant role within Middle Eastern families, namely work, emotional and financial stress. Likewise, Tse (2007) who conducted qualitative interviews with 56 participants (i.e. China, South Asia and South East Asia migrants), found that a number of issues were reported in relation to abusive in-laws, for instance absolute control over financial matters, domestic slavery and isolation from social networking by the victims. On the other hand, findings from the current study support the view that a family's economy instability is also major risk factor contributing to abusive relationships in which a poor financial situation may create interpersonal conflict within the couple themselves. This present finding seems to be consistent with previous work elsewhere by, White and Postl (2010), Morgan and Chadwick (2009) as well as Bell and Kober (2008).

The impact of this problem has ranged from the physical to the psychological and emotional dimensions of someone's life. From the study, it was found that most women admitted that they have faced a great many stressful experiences, suffered depression and felt greatly traumatized by living in these kinds of relationships. Additionally, the women also reported suffering long-term effects on their physical

health due to domestic violence. These problems include migraines, abdominal pain and permanent body scars.

The findings of the current study confirmed that most of the women respondents in the study experienced at least one form of abuse. The violence reported includes physical, psychological and emotional, sexual, financial as well as social abuse. The most interesting finding was that psychological and emotional abuse had been reported by 23 out of 25 women and followed by violence in physical terms. On the other hand, even though sexual violence was reported by the women, the study encountered difficulties in discussing the issue further due to the barrier of culture in the society. The results of this study indicate that social abuse as well as financial deprivation also occurred in the women's relationships for more than half of them. Therefore, the present study clearly demonstrates that Malaysian women are exposed to not only physical and psychological violence, but also sexual, social and financial abuse.

Previous studies suggest that sexual violence and non-sexual abuse such as financial deprivation, threats, physical force, stalking and intimidation precipitate comparable damage to the victims (Povey *et al.*, 2009; Kershaw *et al.*, 2008; Walby & Allen, 2004). On the same subject, Povey *et al.* (2009) reported that more than a quarter of women victims (27%) had experienced two types of intimate violence (any two combinations of non-sexual family abuse, non-sexual partner abuse or sexual assault) whereas another six per cent had recorded an experience of all three types of violence mentioned above. According to the 2007/2008 British Crime Survey [BCS], the classification in regards to types of violence is based on the relationship between the victim and the offender (Kershaw *et al.*, 2008).

The result of the present study also indicates that a majority of the violence incidents reported by the respondents were subject to weaponry. There were several household items as well as sport equipment that had been used in those incidents including a knife, hockey stick, chair and table fan. Amongst all, many cases in fact involved motorcycle helmets. It seems possible that this result is due to high rates of motorcycle use in Malaysia. As an affordable and convenient mode of transport motorcycles are widely used among low-and middle-income earners. Therefore, the

possibility of the perpetrator using a motorcycle helmet as a domestic violence weapon in many abuse cases can not be ruled out. However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between motorcycle helmet as an opportunistic weapon and the occurrence of domestic violence incidents is more clearly understood.

The findings from the present study showed that 16 out of 25 women reported experiencing sexual violence in the relationships. Hence, this result revealed that sexual abuse was in reality experienced by the majority of abused women in Malaysia. The prevalence of sexual violence found in the present study is rather interesting. Relatively few women cautiously discussed their sexual relationships and mostly the topic was down to marital rape. Nonetheless, not much information was gathered around this issue because these women appeared to be uncomfortable for a lengthy talk regarding this matter. One possible explanation may relate to the shortcoming in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) where marital rape is not recognized as a crime by Malaysian Law. Therefore, no legal provisions for such an offence are allocated, leaving the women in a helpless situation. On top of that, the misuse of a key tenet in Islamic *Sharia* (i.e. Islam forbids wives to refuse sex) also has worsened the problem. Examples of the Qur'an verses which mention sexual relations in marriage are presented as the following:

"If a husband calls his wife to his bed (i.e. to have sexual relations) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels will curse her till morning". (Muslim)

"When a man calls his wife to satisfy his desire, she must go to him even if she is occupied at the oven". (Ibn Ma'jah)

"...Your wives are your garments, and you are their garments." (Qur'an 2:187)

"Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how you will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear God. And

know that you are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings to those who believe. (Qur'an 2:223)

When referring to the above statements, although the *Qu'ran* has given the right for Muslim men to engage in sexual intercourse with their wives whenever they please, mutual agreement as well as understanding must be established between the men and their female partners (as illustrated in the *Qur'an* verses 2:187 and 2:223). Conversely, in many circumstances, Muslim women have been manipulated with such verses (as narrated in the *hadith* by Muslims and Ibn Ma'jah) to make them believe that sexual relations is a compulsory duty for a wife and women are forced to accept the unwanted or coercive sexual acts without protest. The present finding seems to be consistent with other research which found the prevalence of sexual violence in Australia was recorded as one to five women (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2006) meanwhile in the UK statistics, there were over a million incidents of sexual assault against women that had been reported through self-completion module of the 2001 British Crime Survey [BCS] (Walby & Allen, 2004).

Turning to the issue of disclosing partner violence and the seeking of outside help, many Malaysian women are believed to remain silent in the abusive relationship. They were found to keep the violent incidents unreported and refrained from using the assistance provided for them. This was highlighted by the results of the study. It was identified that their children were the highest priority overriding the women's concerns for themselves. The following is a list of barriers that inhibit abused women from making a disclosure regarding their violent relationships:

- 1) Protecting the children from having no father
- 2) Internal family affairs
- 3) Shame and embarrassment
- 4) Social stigma within society
- 5) Lack of knowledge on needs and supports available
- 6) Feelings of guilt and self-blame
- 7) Preserving the men's honour and being an obedient wife

The findings obtained were very much consistent with the professionals' accounts. The agencies agreed that barriers of disclosing and reporting the abuse among Malaysian women mainly lie in concealing the marriage matters from others. In many cases, the women themselves feel embarrassed and afraid of the partner's reactions as a result of the disclosure including being labelled as a *nusyuz* wife. Moreover, as most of the abused women were having financial difficulties, this situation has been manipulated by the abusers to their advantage. The professionals at the organizations also conclude that reporting partner violence was really a challenge which involves a huge decision for the women (and the family) in order to survive the abusive relationships.

By standard norms, as Malaysian society perceives it, women were more likely to be blamed as incompetent or 'not a good wife' if the family structure is ruined. Therefore, these cultural values have contributed to the under-reporting of cases of domestic violence in the country. The study found some women interviewed had actually reported the violence incidents to the police authorities. Further results showed although various professional resources were on offer, some of the abused women chose to seek informal supportive networks such as the family, relatives and friends as an alternative approach to deal with the problem. Very few of them had fully utilised both the formal and informal resources around them ($n = 7$). Lack of knowledge pertaining to needs and the supports provided for abused women (and their children) may be hindering this group from disclosing and seeking professional help. In regards to this, the majority of the women interviewed wish for greater integration and strong relationships between the related organizations in order to provide better services for abused women in Malaysia in the future.

CHAPTER 6

IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON ABUSED WOMEN

In this chapter, answers for the first research question were presented, namely the impacts of domestic violence on abused women in Malaysia. Based on information provided by the participants during the interviews, domestic violence impacts are divided into six subcategories, namely, *physical injuries*, *mental disturbances*, *the exclusion from social networking*, *effects on children*, *self-faith* and *adverse effects on women's sense of self*.

Table 6.1 provides a detailed description of the finalized themes mentioned and their emergent sub-themes such as *permanent damage*, *nightmare occurrences*, *unsympathetic community attitudes*, *juvenile delinquency*, *inability to be independent* and *a desire to be closer to God*.

Table 6.1: Impacts of domestic violence on abused women

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Impacts of domestic violence	Physical injuries	- Minor wounds - Permanent damage
	Mental disturbances	- Psychological trauma - Feelings of disgrace - Nightmare occurrences - Ineffective parents
	The exclusion from social networking	- Isolation - Restricted communication - Unsympathetic community attitudes
	Effects on children	- Loose bonding - Feelings of hatred - Dangerous complication during pregnancy - Being protective

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglected children - Juvenile delinquency
	Adverse effects on women's sense of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low self esteem - Inability to be independent - Being manipulated
	Self-faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire to be closer to God - Accepting <i>Qadr</i> (fate)

Key Findings and Discussion

Physical injuries

The majority of the women interviewed in the study had confirmed that they had been physically abused by their husbands/ex-husbands. Some women reported minor injuries, for instance cuts and bruises, and some indicated long term physical health problems such as migraine and backache due to partner violence. Rosy, Ain and Arni shared their experiences:

"I was physically abused. But I never lodged a police report. When my mum asked, I just said I fell down in the bathroom. He even hit my head with a wooden stick, yet I still said that I fell down. Why did I say so? I don't want to disclose my husband's bad. Over time, it became worse. At one time, I couldn't stand to it anymore, and then I told my family the truth". (Rosy)

"Usually just a small wound...nobody noticed...until the final stage, at the end of 2008. I considered it was the last..., he hit me until my right hand badly bruised...yes this hand...bruised. In the left and right part of my legs, all became bruised. Severely bruised, then I determined to leave for the shelter place". (Ain)

"It was started with the kickings...then sometimes if he was not using his leg, he hit me using the hands. He was a bully...he works as a bouncer. He frequently hit me until swollen. At one point, I couldn't even eat. Just able to drink. That is what I considered as the worst I have experienced". (Arni)

Likewise, several women reported that they were having frequent headaches as the effect of the prolonged violence, while others described back pain, breathing problem, gynaecological symptoms. Further there was permanent body damage due to extreme violence, such as the arson attack and being punched on the eye that led to blindness. The following are excerpts of statements given by those women:

“One of the impacts (of domestic violence) is that I am having frequent headaches. It was my biggest concern now, my headache. If I started to have the headache, I don’t even care about the children. What they want to do, where they want to go. I just lay down on bed all day long”. (Zara)

“Don’t know how to say it...but the dizziness is obvious. Another thing, I did not know whether this has anything to do with the beatings. I noticed that I always have heavy bleeding during my menstrual period. My cycle was also haywire. When I was single, I didn’t have these kinds of problems. It’s difficult to say when the headache and the period pain started. Only God knows that. I didn’t want to lodge a report earlier because I was hoping that he can change”. (Yan)

“At times, I suffered from back pain but I can’t afford to buy medicines from the pharmacy. Sometimes I found cheaper medicines or balms, which I bought. I used those medicines even though I realised that they were not giving me as much effect as I wanted. Sometimes I gave myself my own massage. I don’t have money to buy good medicines. That’s what I did”. (Siti)

“My health is worrying me. I suffered asthma since school. Sometimes after I was beaten, I went to the nearby clinic for check-ups. The doctor said my respiratory system is getting worse. I coughed everyday. And I am having headaches....migraine I guess...more frequently than before”. (Ikin)

Zulikha and Tina’s experiences were even worse:

“I got a burnt face, really black isn’t it? As for now, I put some body lotions given free by neighbours and friends. They gave me because they feel pity on me as my face is somehow like ‘the bottom of a frying pan’. I know, my looks now are terrible. My right hand was severely burnt...my ears. Until now, I’ve got scars on half of my right side of the body”. (Zulikha)

“My husband is a jealous man and he is jealous of me. He accused me of having an affair with a carpenter. He took a large stick and hit me hard on the head. That was still not enough. After that, he punched me on my left eye. The doctor told me that the veins of my left eye are seriously damaged because of it. I have lost my eye vision until today”. (Tina)

With the overview of the women's stories above, the researcher found that spousal abuse escalates and worsens over period of time. The abuse was initially started with small cuts and bruises and then escalates to more severe injuries. Thus, the effects of domestic violence to the women's physical health can be seen in short-term and long term damage. It is believed that minor injuries usually can be healed by themselves within a short period of time. Therefore, many women do not feel the necessity of disclosing the abuse as the disclosure itself may make the situation even worse. However, most of the interviewees also reported that the decision of disclosing partner violence was very much dependant on the severity of the violence perpetrated by the abuser regardless of the duration they remained in that abusive relationship.

The results of the study indicate that women had reported that they were abused physically by their husbands/ex-husbands. The most common type of injuries reported included bruises, cuts and scratches, followed by long term physical health and gynaecological problems such as severe migraine, backache and vaginal bleeding. Although 'very rare' cases of permanent body damage were reported in the study as the consequence of prolonged abusive relationships, extreme brutality such as a case of arson attack (had caused the body to be burnt) and one tragic incident of punching on the eye (had caused blindness) demonstrated that the levels of severity of the violent behaviour commenced with small wounds and gradually escalated over time. Apart from discovering common immediate injuries reported by these women, the effects of domestic violence can occur even after the abuse had ended. It is believed that long term consequences of abuse may well limit the physical functioning of the women.

A strong relationship between violence against women and the risk of physical health problems has been reported in the literature (Dutton *et al.*, 2003; Campbell *et al.*, 2002; Richardson, Coid, Petruckevitch, Wai, Moorey & Feder, 2002; Resnick, Acierno & Kilpatrick, 1997; Golding, 1996). According to Krug (1999), injury is the leading cause of death around the world. The current study showed that the cumulative effect of domestic abuse can be manifested in short term as well as long term damage. This study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous studies in this field. Research by Richardson and her research teams (2002) found that based on responses from 1040 women in London, twenty-one

per cent of the women had suffered injuries, including bruises or more serious harm from intimate partner violence. Another study has found that victims of interpersonal violence usually suffered poor general health and specific health problems due to repeated victimization. This included gynaecologic symptoms such as chronic pelvic pain, premenstrual disturbance and other symptoms such as headaches (Golding, 1996).

There are similarities between poor physical health outcomes expressed by the respondents in this study and those described by Campbell *et al.*, (2002) as well as Coker, Sanderson, Fadden and Pirisi (2000). Both studies had compared health impacts between non-abused women and abused women who experienced physical and sexual abuse within their intimate relationships. Campbell *et al.*, (2002) found that the impacts of violence on women's health manifested in three areas, namely chronic stress-related problems (i.e. appetite loss, gastrointestinal disorders), central nervous system problems (i.e. back pain, headaches) as well as gynaecological problems (i.e. pelvic pain, vaginal bleeding). Likewise, an exploratory study by Coker *et al.*, (2000) found that long term abusive relationships may have increased the risk of developing cervical neoplasia (cervical epithelium abnormalities) among abused women.

A possible explanation for this result is that it might be that women in abusive relationships gradually become resilient to the 'light' incidents and are exposed to more severe violent behaviours over a period of time. Therefore, minor injuries inflicted by the husbands/ex-husbands reported in the study turn out to be 'routine' for these women as they unwittingly in due course exposed themselves to more dangerous and aggressive behaviours from their male partners. Additionally, the possible factor of a lack of useful information in preventive health measures such as screening tests within this vulnerable group can not be ruled out. The absence of knowledge of the benefits to abused women of such tests may have increased the risk factors for these women's health and exposed them to a higher risk of morbidity and mortality.

Mental disturbances

Abused women who participated in this study talked about how the violence experience affected them not only in physical term but also emotionally and psychologically. For many of the women, it was a long period of time that they tried to endure their husband's abuse. More than half of the women interviewed admitted to facing a great deal of stressful experiences and feeling depressed following years living in the abusive relationship. It is believed that emotional disturbance is greatly associated with the exposure of domestic violence. For example Junaidah claimed that,

"I feel abused... my dignity as a woman has been badly affected. I am extremely sad and angry when I think about it. This feeling will not easily subside. I probably will, just before I die. I will always remember it until the day I go. I have been suffering for many years... he abused me. It will always remain in my memory... even though he is no longer here. I am so stressed. I am traumatised when I hear someone shout". (Junaidah)

Joyah also accounted how the abusive relationship has impacted her. The excerpt reflects that she was severely disturbed by the past experiences. It has been years but Joyah is still psychologically traumatized and associated other violence incidents to her own experience. In Joyah's excerpt, she said:

"I was traumatized by the violent incidents. I can't bear to see any man beating up his wife, even if it is in a television drama or in a movie. I can't stand it. I screamed hysterically to the extent that my son switched the television off because of my reactions. I still can't manage to forget things in the past. I was so terrified. If I encountered situations where people are yelling angrily, my body started shaking as like they will come to me and beat me up. Yes, to that extent". (Joyah)

Two respondents described similar experiences. In the words of Halimah and Rizi:

"I also felt disappointed. I was angry and frustrated. At one time, I felt like I've lost my mind... I felt like scalding him with hot water. I prayed to Allah to strengthen my iman. It was in the middle of the night after he hit me. I was feeling extremely upset. I stared looking at the hot water... I wanted to pour it on to him while he was asleep. But I just let him be asleep. The thought came across my mind, what if I really did it. What if he dies... What is going to happen to me and my children? I decided not to do it". (Halimah)

"He has been abusing me since early years of our marriage...he even accused me of having an affair with another man until he chased me out of the house. I was so heart- broken...I was so devastated. The scar is still there. I am so

traumatised. I have no one else in my life other than him. I am sad for what he did to me and for my children". (Rizi)

Referring to the psychological consequences, Izhan and Halimah also added:

I always see him in my dreams. In those dreams, I was with him....he tried to do something bad to me. It was like real. He punched me on the face, pulled my hair. Just like when we were still together. I am so afraid of him. When I woke up, I wondered to myself.....why would I have such dream of him?" (Izhan)

"At times I am having nightmares when I sleep. I dreamt that he chased me...he wants to beat me again. That's what always happened in my dream. I don't know...but that's how. Some of my friends suggested that I see a shaman for a cure". (Halimah)

Additionally, some of the women claimed that they sometimes lose control of their emotional feelings towards the children as the tension piles up. The following excerpts from Ain, Ikin, Zawiyah and Rita stated:

"Whenever I got into a fight with my husband and kept the anger inside me, I ended up scolding my children. I cursed them. I know I shouldn't do that, but I lost control of myself whenever I got frustrated by him. I simply can't control myself. I later apologised to them". (Ain)

"There have been many occasions whereby I've vented my anger on my children. Sometimes I feel that I've abused them. I've hit them before. I can't stand it and I hit them". (Ikin)

"When I get so stressed out, I really don't care about my children and my grandchildren. I don't want to know. I was never like this before". (Zawiyah)

"It has been a routine for my children and me to get caught up in fights. My children are aware of my bad moods after I get into a fight with my husband. Sometimes I take it on them to let go of my anger". (Rita)

The corresponding ideas of domestic violence impacts were also shared by the professionals (the organizations who work with domestic violence victims/survivors) in the study, as described in the following quotes:

"Mental stress experienced by wives would be the main effect of domestic violence. Continuous mental abuse could cause depression and sometimes it could go beyond control such as suicide or similar". (Mrs. Ros, the counsellor)

“We have cases where the woman was badly beaten and hospitalized. Every time she saw the husband, she’s shivering because even though she tried to escape many times, the husband still knows where to find her. So these sorts of cases are emotional abuse and become mental problem when they are too depressed”. (Miss Ann, the social worker)

“From my experience, the victim will get traumatised. She wouldn’t know what to do. We do have cases whereby the victim had reached the maximum level of stress. Whenever we have cases like these we will refer them to the psychiatrist at the nearest hospital”. (Mrs. Emma, the counsellor)

From the above women’s experiences and the professionals’ views, it is evident that living in the relationship with a violent partner has made the women psychologically traumatized as well as having developed stress-related symptoms even years after the abuse. Thus, such violent experiences have led to deterioration in the women’s mental health and well-being. Additionally, those excerpts presented above also explain how spousal abuse had psychologically affected those women in the long term. The psychological and emotional impacts on abused women due to domestic violence were believed to be associated with social isolation as well as erosion of the women’s identity, which is discussed further later in this chapter.

A number of participants in the study expressed a great deal of emotional disturbance and frustration as they were not only in a stressful situation due to the violent relationships, but further they also struggled with parenting at the very same time. It is interesting to note that 23 out of 25 women’s cases of this study reported that they had been abused psychologically by their men. Some have been threatened verbally and physically, while the others experienced name calling and swearing. Another important finding was that the respondents as well as the professionals highlighted domestic violence impacts (on women) in a variety of mental health outcomes.

Similar effects have been raised in numerous other studies such as Ellsberg *et al.* (2008), Dorahy *et al.* (2007), Phillips *et al.* (2006), Pilar Matud (2005) as well as Levendosky and Graham-Bermann (2001). Further investigation revealed that there were high rates of major depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, ‘killings’ and suicidal thoughts, nightmares, as well as feelings of despair described by the women examined in this present research. These results seem to be consistent with other research conducted in Spain which found that Spanish women

who were identified as abused had suffered from severe depression, anxiety and insomnia as well as somatic symptoms (for instance fatigue, weight loss and abdominal pain) compared to non-abused women (Pilar Matud, 2005). In parallel, a study by Dorahy and colleagues also indicated that victims of domestic violence in a Northern Ireland sample had displayed higher levels of psychological distress as compared to non-abused women in a comparative group (Dorahy *et al.*, 2007).

This relatively good correlation between domestic violence and mental health issues may be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, domestic violence is culturally perceived as a 'private matter' in Malaysian society. So, women are expected to keep their *hal rumahtangga* (marital affairs) within the family circle. The disclosure of such abuse may lead to shame as well as to feelings of embarrassment. Hence, these feelings and emotional reactions are suppressed and eventually may perhaps contribute to PTSD symptoms as well as depressive episodes in the women's lives. Secondly, many of these women victims in this study were reported to be disconnected to some extent with their social networks and received less human support. Therefore, over a period of time they tended to believe that they were left alone without appropriate help. Thirdly, almost all of the women in this study were financially unviable, so the economic background may play a role in believing there is no exit from these violent relationships. Further research among a Malaysian sample is needed to elucidate the reasons for this economical factor.

Some women stressed the problems they encountered as a parent following the domestic violence situation in their relationships, particularly when they were unable to control their anger due to arguments with their partners. Several of them also responded to abuse by attacking their children verbally as well as in physical terms. The finding is in agreement with Mohr, Fantuzzo and Abdul-Kabir (2001) where this qualitative study had showed that mothers sometimes displaced their anger onto their children when they felt angry as a result of their partner's abusive behaviours. In line with the above study, Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001) claimed that family violence negatively impacts parenting. Also, Coohey (2004) suggests that abused women responded to their being battered by in turn hitting their children. The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with the changes of the mother's affect and mood following violence in the home. Perhaps, the mothers felt dissatisfied

with their marital conflicts (mainly with the abusive partners) and channelled their rage towards the children. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to all mothers who experienced domestic violence. This is an important issue for future research regarding parenting among battered women in Malaysia.

The exclusion from social networking

The women described the experience of being isolated from their social networks as a medium of the abuser's power and control. The husband used this kind of social abuse towards the women in order to make them feel disconnected from their surroundings. Prolonged abuse of this nature resulted in the women feeling estranged, alienated, as well as separated from their outside world. Thus, without strong human relationships around, abused women may easily feel 'trapped' in that relationship. By losing out on the social contacts, less communication and interaction can occur between the women and other people. This is depicted in Rita's description of her husband's controlling behaviour. She explained,

"When we moved into our new house, my husband forbade me from mixing with the neighbours. He wouldn't allow me to chat with them. He neither allows me to hang my laundry outside the house nor sweep the lawn. I can only slightly open the house window if I want to view outside. It gets so stuffy when there's no fresh air inside the house. He told me not to go anywhere outside". (Rita)

Besides Rita, four other women shared the similar experiences:

"I cannot go out of the house.... I cannot make friends. All those are forbidden. My husband doesn't like me to mix with other people. He doesn't even like it when neighbours come by to make friends with me. He doesn't want me to socialise". (Baizura)

"I don't have time to communicate with family and friends. I work from morning until evening. At night, I still have housework to do and take care of my children when I get back home. I seldom go back to my hometown. If I do, it will be with him. I am being watched like a hawk and locked inside".
(Raihana)

"After I moved to Penang with my husband, he didn't allow me to visit my mother. I didn't get to go back for quite some time. It was about five years

from 2003 until 2008. I never go back home and seldom call back. I felt as if all my siblings had cut off relationships with me and disowned me". (Ain)

"My husband doesn't allow me to go back to my hometown... he doesn't allow me to visit my family. I made so many sacrifices in this matter ever since I got married. My mother and my brother once came up to fetch me home for festive celebration. It was only for two days. I couldn't even visit my friends. I can only go out with him". (Aton)

Conflicts in the relationship such as in spousal abuse circumstances can cause disconnection in respect to physical and emotional attachments. Many of the women have reported being gradually alienated from their family, friends and community during this traumatic episode. The separation for abused women may finally lead to losing contact with other people; result in a lot of stress in family and friends, as well as making the women become more vulnerable to the violence in the relationship. In these significant remarks, the professionals also offered similar view concerning social abuse among the Malaysian women:

"Most women who are abused have no one to tell to. It's either because their family have disowned them, or some would set their family aside in order to abide by their husband's wishes, or they regard their husband as their 'world'. When there are no family and friend relationships outside their small circle...they became lonely and isolated". (Mr. Azhar, the counsellor)

"Abused women isolated from others (either from family, friends or the community) make it easier for the abuser to control and have a grip on all her movements because their domestic problems are made unknown to others".
(Miss Cathy, the social worker)

Helping victims of domestic violence under the capacity of a neighbour (i.e. community) requires awareness as well as alertness to domestic violence signs. Although many people are vaguely aware of domestic violence when it comes to people that are close to us, neighbours can be of much of help in this particular situation. Nonetheless, it is saddening to accept the truth that some neighbours still chose the safest path, or in other words, 'doing nothing', in order to avoid supporting the abused women. The abused women interviewees shared their stories:

"When I was abused, I sought help from a man who was my flat neighbour. He often hears our fights. I was yelling for help, he took a peek but didn't help me at all. The spirit of caring for community is slowly growing thin. Everyone

cares less for anyone else. Finally, I walked out of the house with my children. I took a taxi. Even after all that, they just stood and watched". (Ain)

"It's like my neighbour when I was staying with my husband. They didn't help much. Some of them took pity on me, but that's all they can do. They sympathise with us. They dare not get themselves involved with someone else's marital problems". (Nuri)

"I do have neighbours. But they always stay away from us. They know I have domestic problems. They prefer to be at the side line. There is nothing that they could do. I was in pain at home and could not come out". (Tina)

Joyah's experience was no better:

"My neighbours are of no help at all. My husband once got very angry at me and he hit me badly. He pulled me by my hair and dragged me out of the house. Can you imagine that? I ran towards my neighbour for help and all he could do was watch. My other neighbour immediately shut his door. They didn't want to get involved. They are afraid of my husband. They could have helped me by calling the police instead. None of them did the right thing". (Joyah)

The professionals, Miss Husni and Mr. Azhar advised neighbours to help each other in their daily lives regardless of their differences. They urged:

"Although we live in a multi-racial, multi-religion and multi-cultural community, the true spirit of helping one and another must always shine in each and every one of us. We should not ignore the person who sits next to us. When cases like domestic violence occur, the nearest person to contact for help is our neighbour". (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

"When domestic violence happens in our neighbourhood, we should act by helping the victim. We should not have the 'care less' attitude. Imagine if the same thing happens to our sister or to us, how would it be then? (Mr. Azhar, the counsellor)

Discussion regarding lack of social support networking reported by the interviewees was another impact of partner violence in their abusive relationships. The result of cumulative domestic violence has been to make the women feel disconnected with their surroundings because the husbands/ex-husbands purposely tried to isolate the women in order to maintain power and control over them. Many of these women reported that they were not allowed to contact their families or friends as well as being forbidden to mix with the neighbours. Hence, in the longer term, this controlling behaviour by the abusers may limit the women's access to various

resources, for instance economic as well as social supports, thus making the decision of leaving the relationships even harder. As Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001: 187) state: “Many women in battering relationships have few social supports due to the controlling aspect of the battering relationship”.

The present findings further support the idea that informal supportive networks, such as that offered by family and friends, was among helpful resources reported by abused women in the shelter home (Bowker, 1984). As well, a recent quantitative study on the influence of informal support on domestic violence victims pertinent to formal service engagement had suggested that informal supportive networks were the key factor that influence the use of social supports provided for abused women (and their children). The study also found a significant impact on the use of formal services with positive informal support such as families, friends and co-workers (Shin, Park & Edleson, 2010).

The basis for the lack of support among battered women has been addressed in the literature (El-Bassel *et al.*, 2001; Dunham & Senn, 2000; Curry & Harvey, 1998). Another possible reason for diminished social contact among women who experienced domestic violence is that women attempt to distant themselves from other people as they do not want to disclose the abuse to their families and friends. Eventually, this seclusion strategy may deter the supporters from acknowledging the real circumstances as well as them being unaware of any assistance that might be of help to the abused women. It is encouraging to compare the findings from the current study with those found by Dunham and Senn (2000) who found that abused women were often reluctant to discuss the violence experiences with their families and friends. The effect, however, may lead to long term abuse and delayed disclosure among the women. Similarly, El-Bassel *et al.* (2001) explained the association between informal supportive networks and poor quality support. The team found that assistance from informal supporters appeared to be ‘unwanted’ because the women would have felt so embarrassed in disclosing such abuse. As a result, they did not ask for any help. In fact, the women believed that no one was helping and they would not receive what they needed even if they had asked.

Interestingly, the professionals also noted that social abuse in violent homes can cause physical and emotional detachment between the women and their ‘significant others’ which includes parents, siblings, relatives, colleagues, friends and neighbours. In reality, neighbours are the closest social entity to everyone. For that reason, the professionals urged the informal supportive members, the neighbour in particular, to be of assistance to abused women. A number of respondents in this study raised their concerns over a lack of support from the neighbours following the violence incidents. Many of them agreed that the cultural perspective regarding the domestic violence issue in Malaysia has contributed to a lower awareness among the community members. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to it being a ‘personal matter’ as perceived by the people in relation to domestic violence. Although wife battering has been considered as a social problem, nonetheless the context of the crime is within the family domain. Therefore, many people have assumed that those arguments, disputes and conflicts among husband and wife should be settled by the couple themselves. The worse part is that any form of mediation from external sources is still considered ‘inappropriate’ in the eyes of certain societies, such as for Malaysians. These data, however, must be interpreted with caution because the cases reported by the women in the study cannot be extrapolated to all domestic violence victims within Malaysia.

Effects on children

The experience of domestic violence is believed to negatively affect the children. As a matter of fact, children involved in the violent relationships may also be directly and indirectly abused. Therefore, incidents of child abuse among families with domestic violence are a common subject and many behavioural problems have been evident among the children who are exposed to the abusive relationship. The women in the study explained the reactions of the children towards their abusive father. The women said:

“I pity my children. They lack of their father’s love. They have been staying with someone outside the family. Of course things are not the same. My eldest child is grown up but simply refuses his father, whereas the second child never knew the father”. (Aton)

“My children neither bothered to ask about their father nor grumbled about wanting to see him. They don’t have that feeling of love towards their father although I’ve never talked bad about him. Anyway, they are all grown up now and they know how to judge him for themselves”. (Raihana)

“My children still remember until today of how my husband used to beat me. He told me not to retaliate or else I’ll get a swollen face and bleeding lips. It makes no difference to my children whether he is around or not”. (Junaidah)

“Both of my daughters hated their father because of the abuse. They refuse to go to their father’s house although he came to fetch them. I guess that’s the effect”. (Patimah)

The bonding between the father and the children should have been established at the point of the pregnancy itself. However, in most domestic violence relationship, this would not be the case. In fact, for some women the violence escalates over the period of the pregnancy trimesters. Arni and Rita argue that the husbands were insensitive towards the hormonal changes and seemed like not bother at all about their current situation. The beatings continue as they said below:

“Two months after my pregnancy was confirmed, I suffered nausea and vomiting quite badly. He didn’t try to understand my condition and still wanted me to do normal house chores and to please him as usual. He easily got irritated when I was pregnant. He would just beat me for even small mistakes”. (Arni)

“When I was pregnant with my second child, he often came back home with a bad temper. Our financial status was very critical at that time. We had to think about the child we already had and the unborn child, at that time. He always beats me. There was one time when we had a fight and he choked me until I couldn’t breathe. I was very scared at that time if anything should happen to my unborn child”. (Rita)

As for Nor, her husband’s drug habit had made her expecting period awful:

“He was addicted back to drugs. We were penniless. He had no job. I think that was the main reason. He always come back home ‘high’ and started to talk nonsense and behave aggressively. He still beat me up although I was 8 months pregnant. I felt horrible during my pregnancy period”. (Nor)

Ikin recalled her tragic story:

“I had two miscarriages in my early years of marriage because of the beatings from my husband. My family- in-law knew what happened but they tried to pacify me. They said it’s probably not our turn yet to have a child. During my third pregnancy, I was more careful and spent most of my time with my mother

in-law. Even though, the same thing happened again. As a result, my child was born premature but I am happy the child is safe". (Ikin)

As the women struggle to deal with the situation at home, the children on the other hand may worry and feel responsible to protect their mother. Yusnah and Tina revealed:

"My children remember about the abuse until today. My eldest child who was eight years old at that time told me not to go against my husband or else my face will get swollen again. He said that my husband will beat me even harder if I retaliate. He was afraid that I might die. My face was always swollen at that time because of the beatings". (Yusnah)

"Even though my child is still small, he understands what's happening around him. There was one time when my husband was beating me, my child bit his leg and told him to let go of me. I was so touched. Thereafter, whenever my husband wanted to let go of his anger, he would break all the things in the house. He seldom beats me anymore nowadays". (Tina)

A similar view obtained from the professional on this subject matter:

"Basically the abuser is the father, the father hit them a lot, hit the mother, and maybe they are trying to defend themselves but in terms of their physical capacity, they are not able. They felt like "Oh my mother has suffered a lot, I should help my mother, I should know how to care for others and I should learn how to protect my mother. This is from how the mother reacts". (Miss Ann, the social worker)

In fact, parenting issues are likely to take place in families with domestic violence. The quality time that the family is supposed to spend is often limited by disputes, arguments as well as quarrels. Joyah regretted her negligence:

"Nowadays, I give priority to my children because I had often neglected them due to my marital problems. If I had not neglected them in the past, they too can become successful like others. I regretted what happened". (Joyah)

As well, Rosy felt the same way:

"I have not found peace inside me due to many fights I had with my husband. I admit that I have neglected my children's education. I cannot control my daughter's behaviour anymore. She is wild and has ill feelings towards men. My children follow their own path". (Rosy)

Yuna, on the other hand felt some kind of relief as she has no children with the abusive husband. She uttered:

“When I was in Penang, I took him to see a psychiatrist. I think that’s the effect of the accident. I try my best to look after him. He was on epilepsy medication. Unfortunately, he didn’t want to continue to take his medicine. Then he started to loose control of himself. He beat me up everyday. Luckily I had no children with him. I can’t imagine having kids in this sort of unhealthy relationship”. (Yuna)

Domestic violence may cause the retaliation by the children. Many abused women in the study perceived there is a strong linkage between the children and negative behaviours such as physical aggression, delinquency and verbal abuse. Furthermore, the children also reported being involved in school truancy and cigarette smoking at a very young age. The following quotations are used as evidence to describe the circumstances:

“Angah is my second child. He watches his father doing the beatings. He follows suit and does it to his youngest sibling, my fourth child. He kicks and beats his siblings. He is just like his father. I always scold him because I don’t want him to follow his father’s footsteps. He is a hot-tempered man”. (Siti)

“When we opted for the divorce, we had to go to court several times. I didn’t know that my child was often absent from school. There was once when she was absent for almost two weeks... and the teacher called home. I was so angry when I found out the truth. She said that she was so tensed up and that was why she didn’t go to school”. (Raihana)

“A teacher came and complained to me that my child likes to talk rudely to his friends. That’s the problem, because his father does the same at home when we get into a fight. All sorts of bad words will come out of his mouth. I often advise my children to mind their words when talking. Not to start cursing their siblings. It’s a sinful thing. I don’t know what happens when I’m not watching”. (Ain)

“My eldest and my fifth child are very stubborn. I don’t have any problem with the rest because they listen to what I say. My eldest child likes to get into a fight in school. When his teacher reported this to us, my husband got angry at me. The same goes with my fifth child. He was caught smoking in the school’s toilet. At that time he was only in Form one (13 years old). Now, he is in Tunas Bakti School (juvenile rehabilitation centre). I hope he changes when he is released later on”. (Halimah)

Likewise, a number of professionals at the organizations also noted how the children are impacted by the domestic violence relationship. Their excerpts explain:

“The impact will be...you see she will decide to go for divorce, the children have problems, and they become a broken family. You know that...a broken family. And then sometimes, the children can’t accept it. They also become very sad and traumatised. But if the wives don’t decide to get out of it (the relationship); the children also become abusive when they grow up. Because they growing up in this kind of environment. That is also unacceptable. So, you are bringing up the children in abusive manner also. They will beat their wives because their father did (for boys) it or hate men for the rest of their life (for girls)”. (Madam Soraya, the social worker)

“We have seen children become very difficult, especially falling back into violence situations, where they “ponteng sekolah” (play truant), you know they run away from home, and we also see children create problems in school, seeking attention because basically the violence happening at home has actually impacted on them a lot”. (Miss Ann, the social worker)

Further, the professionals elaborated on a sense of insecurity, confusion and bewildering attitudes among the children from spousal abuse family backgrounds:

“Children are also affected by the violence. Children are also very fearful, affecting their studies, the great sense of insecurity “whether the mom will go back to dad, what will happen next?” They might have experienced hiding in their room, see the beating going on, they also may live with the fear that “my dad would someday find me, who’s going to protect me?” (Sister Holly, the manager)

“The children are confused. They lose focus in school. Those are the normal processes that happen. Many of them are problematic during study, problems in school. I am involved directly in the school’s PTA. I’ve seen so many cases”.
(Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

“Children become the victim. Children who are the victims of domestic violence will end up like this. When the children realise that their parents are having problems, their behaviours will go beyond the boundary. They become wild and befriend themselves with problem kids”. (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

In relation to the outcomes of domestic violence on children, it was believed that the abusers used violence to control their female partners at every point in their marital relationships. There were no exceptions for the women, not even with the presence of the children in the households. Unfortunately, the children may also be at risk of harm since in the mother’s womb. In this study, the abused women felt themselves to be powerless in protecting their unborn child.

Subsequently, the women's sense of powerlessness continually hampers the attempts to safeguard the children from the abuser. As the children grow up with the exposure to violence at home, many of those children have reflected their dissatisfaction, retaliation as well as self-rebelliousness in terms of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Therefore, young children living with domestic violence should benefit from the professionals and informal supports in the community so as to help families and children deal with these negative situations.

Several participants highlighted the negative effects of domestic violence on their children, particularly the young children. The mothers claimed to suffer a sense of powerlessness and feelings of being overwhelmed which had contributed to their inability to respond appropriately to their children's needs. The results of this study indicate that domestic violence affects paternal-child bonding. During the interviews, a number of negative reactions regarding the child-father relationships were described. Firstly, the children did not bother to ask about their father's whereabouts although the father was not around for quite some time. Secondly, the children just refused to have contact with the father. And thirdly, the relationships were lacking in feelings of love as a result of the children's hatred and anger. However, these results have not previously been described. In Guille's (2004) paper, a comprehensive review of the literature found that there has been a lack of attention to the issue of father-child relationships in domestically violent families. Similarly, the researcher also found no research discussing this negative bonding issue directly from the (abusive) father-child perspective. The closest related issue concerned the significance of the father (perpetrator) in the children's lives (Peled, 2000; Bunston & Crean, 1999), the quality of parenting (Mullender *et al.*, 2002; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001) and parenting by abusers (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). It was demonstrated in a quite revealing finding from Mullender *et al.* (2002) which demonstrated that paternal-child interaction experiences were described by the children as being characterised by feelings of fear, confusion, sadness as well as disappointment.

In relation to unborn children, the prevalence of domestic violence during pregnancy was further recorded in the study. The correlation between domestic violence and pregnancy is interesting because for some women participants the abuse was in fact initiated, and further escalated, over the period of their pregnancy. Almost half of

those who were interviewed reported that they had been exposed to various kinds of violence including physical abuse during pregnancy. This finding supports previous research into this area which links domestic violence and pregnant women. (Flach *et al.*, 2011; Kratochvil, 2010; Sricamsuk, 2006; Gazmararian, 1996). Although a Malaysian study found the prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women was low in percentage (Jahanfar *et al.*, 2007), other studies showed that this vulnerable 'mother-to-be' group somehow face violence with higher risks in comparison to the general female population (Awusi *et al.*, 2009; Sricamsuk, 2006). Failure to report the incidents of domestic violence hampers data collection on the number of pregnant intimate partner violence victims (Rodriguez, Bauer, McLoughlin & Grumbach, 1999).

Jasinski (2004) in the article entitled 'Pregnancy and domestic violence: A review of the literature' discusses the interdisciplinary empirical research on pregnancy-related violence. The review of the studies indicated that prevalence rates of pregnancy-related violent victimization vary due to variables such as research designs, the violence measurements used and differences in the populations sampled. Further results demonstrated that the association between direct effects of violence on the health and well-being of both mother and the unborn child were negatively correlated. The result of this current study may be explained by a number of different factors. These include the possibility of the abuser's increased stress over the impending birth of the unborn child due to financial difficulties, or the hormonal and physical changes of the women being unfavourable to men, and the decreased capacity to self defence due to the physical discomfort of carrying a child, which makes the women become vulnerable to such abuse perpetrated by their male partners.

A few women commented on how much they regretted their 'negligence' regarding these young children. The women admitted to not paying attention to the emotional needs of the children as well as losing their authority and control over them. This may become another potential issue within the parenting context in domestic violence families that is worth investigating. In this study, a household plagued by domestic violence was found to foster negligence towards the children. The mothers reported that the marital conflicts had affected their parenting capability since they failed to utilise any quality time together with the children, as well as the distraction caused by

the fights. In particular, the women acknowledged the importance of their children's education where they thought this should be their main concern for the youngsters' future. It is encouraging to compare this finding with that by Holden (2003) who found that maternal stress and depression among mothers may severely compromise their emotional energy and the time they had available for their children. Other studies highlighted that abused women may be unable to encourage their children's normal developmental transitions, and their sense of basic trust and security in contrast to non-abused mothers due to the 'nature' of the violent relationships they live in (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001).

In contrast, one unanticipated finding was that some of the children had expressed their sense of insecurity by protecting the mother as an alternative. A few women participants recalled some 'touching moments' regarding how their children act in response to the father's violent behaviour. This result may be explained by the fact that some children may feel very worried and frightened of what may happen to their mother if the violence is continually repeated. This often means that the children's sense of safety and security is undermined. The consequences of mediation, however, probably led to the experience of child abuse and maltreatment. It is believed that children intervening between the parents reflected a strategy of the children attempting to safeguard their mother's safety. Edleson, Mbilinyi, Beeman and Hagemester (2003) research found that the frequency of children intervening in the conflict was between 10 and 30 per cent. Meanwhile the Jarvis *et al.* (2005) study showed that 70 per cent of abused mothers reported child intervention in violent incidents. Indeed, there is a similarity between the attitudes expressed by the children who grew up in abusive homes in this study and those described by Goldblatt (2003). Goldblatt (2003) proposed that children and young people describe different ambivalent thoughts towards their father and their mother respectively. As opposed to the fearfulness notion for their male parent, a sense of obligation to protect was established for the mother. Furthermore, the views regarding children interfering in regards to protecting the abused mothers in this study is similar to the previous literature, which suggests that children intervening to defend their mother may often result in child battering (Hilberman & Munson, 1978).

A strong relationship between the impact on children's attitudes and domestic violence has been reported in the literature. Much empirical evidence suggests that growing up in an abusive home environment can contribute to behavioural and social problems among the children (Bauer, Herrenkohl, Lozano, Rivara, Hill & Hawkins, 2006; Lundy & Grossman, 2005; Cunningham & Baker, 2004; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003; Laing, 2000; Edleson, 1999). Comparable findings were reported by most of the women participants in this study wherein the association involving domestic violence and children's negative behaviours was noticeably linked. The current study found that the negative behaviours in children as described by the mothers included physical aggression, delinquency, verbal assault, smoking and habitual truancy. Further, professional participants who worked with domestic violence victims and survivors in the agencies also believed that conflicts in an abusive home may have a direct impact on the children's developmental aspects. This study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field. Concerns over the domestic violence effects on the children's behavioural and emotional problems has also been expressed in other research on young children by Kitzmann *et al.*, (2003), Jarvis *et al.*, (2005) as well as in Lundy and Grossman (2005).

The findings of the Kitzmann *et al.*'s study in 2003 found that children who are affected by domestic violence experiences are likely to demonstrate negative attitude problems, academic impairment as well as problems with temperament. Jarvis *et al.* (2005) on the other hand concluded that children's post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms were found to be associated with the frequency of physical violence incidents whilst the behavioural problems were related to maternal psychological functioning factors (i.e. depression, anxiety and anger). This also accords with our earlier observations, which showed that almost 20 per cent of the sample of the US children who were exposed to domestic violence was identified as 'troubled' children. At school for example they were reported as not complying with the rules of the school, being delinquent, frequently acting in an aggressive manner, as well as displaying emotional dysfunction such as sadness and symptoms of depression (Lundy & Grossman, 2005).

A possible explanation for this might be that the retaliation of the children outside the house, in school for instance, demonstrates how children attempt to cope during domestic violence episodes. The exposure to an abusive environment at home may also internalize the children's violent behaviour as acceptable techniques for them to use in interaction and socialization with others. Due to the fact that this is a small study with the abused mother (only) perspective, these results therefore need to be interpreted with caution. It is believed that every child will respond differently to inter-adult physical aggression and the responses may vary according to numerous factors such as age, sex, ethnic group, religion as well as the family dynamics. The findings obtained in the study may be served as suggestive but not definite explanations because further inquiry is warranted for this particular issue of behavioural adjustment among children from violent families in the context of Malaysia.

Adverse effects on women's sense of self

Women linked the exposure of domestic violence in their relationship with a negative impact on their sense of identity through feelings of low self-esteem and lack of self-worth. Junaidah said:

"Each time he comes home after losing in a gambling bet, he would call me a 'jinx woman'. He said that ever since we got married, he has been so unlucky. Sometimes I wonder if I really am a jinx because I have been so unlucky since childhood until I got married". (Junaidah)

Rizi and Zulikha talked about the same matter:

"My husband chides me as he pleases no matter where we are. He sometimes yells at me in public places or in front of our children. I am very disappointed because he often humiliates me. I have my dignity. If I retaliate against him, he will get angrier. To save me all that trouble, I'll just accept his ways".

(Rizi)

"I felt heavenly happy in marriage only in my first year. After that, my husband changed. He looks down on my parents, family and me. My ancestors are not spared. He calls me a slut. My child asked me the meaning of 'slut'. How can anyone imagine me trying to explain that to my child? My husband belittles me about me being overweight in front of his friends. He doesn't care about my dignity". (Zulaikha)

Aton described her feelings:

“I am embarrassed of myself and towards my children. I feel very useless. He never appreciates me. I have sacrificed a lot all this while. I was almost disowned by my family because of him. It has never been enough for him. I am truly sad about it”. (Aton)

Over a period of time, the women’s sense of self was progressively undermined by the abuser using aggressive behaviour as well as verbal comments. Abusive behaviours such as constant criticisms, humiliation, belittling and name calling were deliberately used to weaken the women’s confidence, which leads to the women believing themselves to be worthless.

In the present study, many of the abused women related that they feared leaving the husband as they were not financially independent. They were not confident about getting a job and unable to live the rest of their lives without ‘a man’ called husband and father to their children. The quotations from the women portrayed their worries:

“I think about the children’s future especially. How am I going to bring them up without their father? I am not working and I don’t have any income. How am I going to clothe, feed and school my children? I am not confident that I can do it all alone”. (Wan)

“My family lives within our means. He is lazy to work but we all have to depend on him. Before I was married, I used to work as an assistant at a food stall. The pay was not so big. It would probably be enough for me alone but not for my children. Nowadays, it’s hard to find jobs in Malaysia”. (Zara)

“I regret for not doing well in education. I have no academic qualification, without a job... what am I going to do? My needs are being taken care of by other people. I am not sure how I will end up when the court makes its decision about my divorce case”. (Rita)

As a matter fact, the abusive partner may as have used intimidation and threats in order to control and manipulate the women. The excerpts below from Arni, Zawiyah and Junaidah demonstrated their real experiences:

“He always blackmails me. He said ‘I know what you’ve been doing and I am watching you every second. I have spies everywhere’. Ever since then, I’ve been more afraid to do anything because his words echo in my mind”. (Arni)

“One night, he beat me quite bad because I was complaining to him for giving more attention towards his second wife. After he beat me but before he left that night, he dared me to lodge a complaint if I am bold enough to do so. He told me to complain to our children if I want the whole world to know and to put more shame on the family. I felt so ashamed and can’t bear to confront my children and their spouses should they know about it. How would they perceive my husband and I because they have much respect towards us all this while”? (Zawiyah)

“Normally, when we get into a fight he would throw me out of the house. He knows my weaknesses. He threatened not to allow me to bring my children along. He wants to take care of them. If he does that, it will turn into a nightmare. It’s because I know that he is not a responsible father. Furthermore, the children don’t want him at all. I will not allow that to happen as long as I live. He often threatens me like that”. (Junaidah)

In this study, domestic violence experience was found to cause adverse effects on the women’s sense of self. Many women respondents in the study considered that their sense of identity was affected due to the exposure to violent experiences in the relationships. The accounts from the interviews conducted demonstrate the women’s personality was gradually undermined by the abuser’s controlling as well as aggressive behaviours. Another important finding was that the feelings of low self-esteem as well as lack of self-worth were clearly portrayed within the women’s transcriptions. It was a surprise that on the question of experiencing abuse such as name calling, threatening and criticism, the current study found that there were similarities in the entire interviewees’ responses. Those women had reported feeling embarrassed, let alone undignified, whenever they were cursed, especially when the incidents happened in front of their children and other people in public places. Damage to the women’s sense of self in this study corroborates these earlier findings.

Hague and Mullender (2006) via their qualitative interviews with abused women participants have suggested that domestic abuse affects the women’s self-esteem. Further, they claimed, in due course women who experience domestic violence may establish a sense of vulnerable self when seeking professional assistance. In line with the above mentioned subject, Crawford *et al.*, (2009) investigated the effect of domestic abuse on the women’s identity, sense of self as well as the aspect of resilience using grounded theory approach. The authors found that the outcomes of the psychological abuse in the women’s relationships included feelings of

worthlessness and having a low sense of self-esteem. Their analysis of interviews also suggested that there were cultural and societal influences that have eroded the women's identity and sense of self. Moreover, the present findings seem to be consistent with previous research elsewhere by Ellsberg and Heise (2005), Pilar Matud (2005) as well as Leye, Githhaiga and Temmerman (2003).

The findings also showed that a majority of the women had identified themselves as dependent to the abusive husband's source of income. Although for some of the working women, they too showed lack of self confidence to move on with their life without the husband's financial supports. For those who were stay-at-home wives with no particular income, the decision of leaving the abusive relationship may become harder. A few women described numerous disadvantages they were facing in order to be self funded. The reasons centre on a low prevalence of academic qualifications, lack of working experience, being out of the job market for quite some time and the present factor of lower employment rates. These responses however illustrated that domestic abuse undermines self-confidence among the women. It is believed that their economic dependence on the abuser impaired their capacity to be independent as well as assertive in order to access financial resources. These findings further support the idea of Canavire-Baccarreza and Avila (2010) which found an association between women's experience of domestic violence and decisions regarding employment. The authors also concluded that violence, for instance psychological and physical abuse, had impacted the women's decision to participate in the job market. Correspondingly, Collins and O'Rourke (2012: 1) states: "Women who are economically dependent on their abusers are less able to leave and more likely to return to abusive partners".

It seems possible that these results are due to the influence of the patriarchal ideology submerged in Malaysian culture. The idea of male dominance in society has been very much accepted and not only prevails in the family system, but also extends to certain professions, the labour market, as well as other aspects of people's lives. Hence, men in general gain a significant level of respect as the breadwinner as well as head of the family. Furthermore, the possible interference of a religious point of view can not be ruled out. Misinterpretation of Islamic teaching regarding subordination of women,

which contributes to gender inequality between the male and female gender, should be redressed by the community in Malaysia.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the abused women's perceptions towards the financial support they had received in particular, the current results shed light on economical resources available to women victims and survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia that may hinder their decision of staying and/or leaving the abuser. This may subsequently impact on the resolve to end the abusive relationship. This finding has important implications for developing a re-training scheme for domestic violence victims and survivors in relations to the labour market, education as well as self-employment programmes. The scheme in fact may be of assistance to the professionals who work with abused women in Malaysia in order to empower this vulnerable group to obtain a fresh start.

Self-faith

A few participants revealed that they searched for meaning of the problem through their religious beliefs. It was found that the women grew in faith as they responded to the violence experiences. Many of them engaged in spiritual practices to channel their suffering as well as seeking God's help. For instance, Yan and Siti expressed their feelings to God to seek emotional comfort and inner strength:

"It's hard for others to see me like this but can't compare to what I actually had gone through. All I could do is to turn to Allah Almighty and seek Allah's help. If I tell to people, they will only spread the story to others. But if I tell to Allah no one will know. Allah will surely help me". (Yan)

"Whenever I perform 'Solat', I will ask from Allah and sometimes do Zikr, 'Oh! Allah Almighty, help me to remain in composure and let no worries come to me. My children are all that I care most. Give me the strength to get through it all. Oh! Allah". That is all that I wish for at the end of each prayer". (Siti)

Domestic violence also impacted the women's lives in terms of the way they perceived personal experiences of violence and benefited from religious faith. Overall, the women thought that these depressing experiences somehow had a positive side to them.

“Ustaz advised me to go back to the teachings of Islam. All this while I was far deviated and this maybe the consequence. I willingly accept my fate that we will end up in divorce. That would be best for me and my children. Allah will help us through if Allah is willing. I felt so much composure when I perform Solah and read the Quran”. (Junaidah)

“At first I thought this world had been unfair to me. I have a husband who is a wife-beater and a drunkard. As days goes by, I’ve learned to accept my fate and face the fact. Allah had bestowed long lasting strength upon me. I do a lot of prayers”. (Baizura)

“Alhamdulillah, there is a reason why all these had happened to me. It made me drew closer to Allah. Now, I would never neglect to perform my prayers five times a day. I also perform ‘Solat Hajat’ to seek Allah’s guidance and pray for the safety of my children”. (Ikin)

In addition, Patimah asserted that prayer helped her to be stronger, more devoted and continue steadfastly in spite of difficulties in her marital life. A similar account was narrated by Rizzi who is *mualaf*, a new Muslim convert, (Buddhist by birth). As explained by them:

“I do a lot of prayers and those are the reasons behind the strength that I have now. If not because of it I would have mentally gone out of my mind. Let Allah know it all because only Allah can help us. Alhamdulillah, I am stronger now”. (Patimah)

“Our daily lives should be guided by the rules according to Islam. We have to fully observe it. Although I am a new Islam converter but I learned how to perform prayers read the Quran and recite ‘doa’. I have learned more about Islam”. (Rizzi)

Also, spirituality and religious beliefs had given these women a sense of accepting their fate in life. Accepting *qadr*, an Islamic term meaning one should accept God’s decree with an open heart, and being patient regarding such tests. Being *Muslimah*, participants in the study demonstrated how they accepted destiny and believed in the provisions of God.

“No one would want to have problems like this, but it is our destiny. The ‘Qada’ and ‘Qadar’ had been determined. I submit myself to Allah. Let Allah do all the punishment that he deserved. If it is not in this world, let it be in the world after”. (Nuri)

“You are right. We cannot regret to what had happened to us. Those are Allah’s ‘Qada’ and ‘Qadar’. I submit myself entirely to Allah. I accept all the tests given by Allah to me”. (Nor)

*“I had neither put the blame on my children nor my grandchildren. Nor had I put the blame on anyone else. This is Allah’s ‘Qada’ and ‘Qadar’. I tried to accept it all although it’s bitter. There is always a blessing in disguise”.
(Zawiyah)*

From the perspective of battered Muslim women, living in an abusive relationship has made them search deeper into their inner-self, their beliefs and their faith. The research findings showed that many of these abused women participants had subjected themselves to religious observance in order to ease stress as well as to find inner peace. This brought back the motivation to continue with their daily lives through a spiritual connection with God.

In summary, the study found that domestic violence had created various impacts on the abused women’s life. Ultimately, those impacts were very much associated with feelings of worthlessness as well as damaging the self-esteem of the abused women as a wife and a mother. Furthermore, it was believed that the women’s sense of self-independence may also be affected by the experience of violence in their relationships. Despite the fact that physical brutality might seem worse, the end result of emotional abuse is also the same. Therefore, it can be concluded that the destructive effects of the violence may gradually erode the overall sense of identity of women who are experiencing domestic violence at some point in their marital life. From the perspective of battered Muslim women, living in an abusive relationship has made them searching deeper into their inner self-belief and faith. The research findings showed that many of these abused women participants had reflected themselves to religious observance in order to ease stress as well as to find inner peace and brought back motivation to continue their daily lives through spiritual connection with god.

The findings of this study indicate that participants perceived the situation of domestic violence as strengthening their self-faith. *Desire to be closer to God* emerged as an important element in the way these women believed their faith was growing. The participants utilised religious practices such as prayers, *dhikr* (chanting the greatness

of God), perform '*solat*' and reciting the *Quran* to establish connections with God. At a personal level, women highlighted the significance of seeking spiritual resources for emotional comfort and inner self-resilience subsequent to accepting their *Qadr* (fate).

Faith in pre-destination or also known as *Qadr wa Qadar* is one of the most important beliefs for Muslims. In fact according to Islam religion, '*Qadr* and *Qadar*' are considered as the sixth pillar from the Pillars of *Iman*. Principally, pre-destiny is divided into two types, named the *Qadr* as well as the *Qadar*. *Qadr* means destiny that can be changed (with God's permission) through (*du'a*) prayers, *solat* and efforts. The example of *Qadr* is *rizk* (sustenance) where Muslims are urged to be hardworking and industrious in order to gain a comfortable life (i.e. money, wealth, influence) and the hereafter (i.e. reward of heaven). To force the *Qadr* concept in Islam, God had explicitly stated in verses of *Surah Ar-Ra'd*:

“For each one are successive (angels) before and behind him who protect by the decree of God. Indeed, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when God intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron”. (*Qur'an* 13:11)

On the other hand, *Qadar* is defined as the faith that cannot be changed (definite). The occurrence of this type of pre-destiny must be accepted by Muslims with an open heart, for instance a death. It is a *fitra* (constitution) that each and every one will die sooner or later because death is certain in human life. Both types of this pre-destination should be clearly understood by all Muslims in order for them to be motivated in their lives and not to blame the *qadr*; as this pre-destination can be changed following the efforts put in by a person towards resolving their problems.

In the context of abusive relationships, Muslim women should attempt to change their current situation by getting help from others. Although it seems that they may accept their *qadr* of marrying an abusive husband, they should also move their lives towards better conditions. Besides resolving the problem through prayers and *solat*, efforts should be made in order to create an 'abuse-free home' for instance by disclosing the

violence for further assistance. Equally, God also prohibits humans from so-called ‘not doing anything’ towards the matter that can harm (*mudharat*) them in one way or another. This prohibition is most appropriate under domestic violence circumstances where reluctance in disclosing the abuse may cause great danger, for example in suicide or thoughts of suicide cases.

As shown in a Malaysian movie entitled ‘Mualaf’, this film brings the messages of religion, morality, family love and forgiveness into its characters. In this movie, two young girls are saved by their mother from an abusive father. In the beginning, they intended to make their escape from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore (for a fresh start) but end up finding refuge in a small town in Ipoh. The death of their mother had made these sisters live independently, become mature and more appreciative about the value of their past. Above all, this ‘Mualaf’ film depicts the importance of one’s self-faith in religion (no matter what religion they embraced) when facing life issues such as marital violence in a family.

Somehow, it is interesting to note that many of women participants in this study had reflected these depressing experiences in a positive manner. For some, they perceived that such tests have brought back their motivation to surrender to God’s providence. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that for a few abused women interviewed, it was a long process until they finally accepted their unfortunate fate within their marriage. Another important finding was that some of the participants reported consulting with experts for religious advice (with or without disclosing the abuse) whilst some women learned the Islamic teachings on their own through books and so forth. This finding of the current study is consistent with those of McIntosh, Silver and Wortman (1993) as well as Drescher (2013), who suggested the utilization of spirituality for improving individual health and psychological well-being.

In a study by McIntosh *et al.* (1993), the authors found that religious participation was significantly related to perceived social support of parents who had lost a child. More to the point, it was demonstrated that religious participation has also been associated with finding the meaning of the child’s death among the respondents. There were 124 parents who had lost a child due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome included as a sample within the study. Taken as a whole, the research concluded that religious

participation together with religious importance felt by the participants was in some way related to an individual's well-being, where these parent's distress levels showed a gradual reduction over a period of time following the bereavement. Similarly, Watlington and Murphy (2006) found that there was a significant correlation between religious involvement, religious coping as well as spiritual experiences with symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress among battered African American women in the US. It was reported that high spirituality was associated with less depression in battered women. The study also concludes that the black church in general has played an important role in the lives of African American women.

A direct comparison between the findings obtained in other cultures such as the African American community and this particular study in Malaysia showed that abused Muslim women in the study search for the meaning of such 'tests' to build their self-confidence in relation to God's power. One unanticipated finding was that many participants in the study considered the abusive relationship as one of *qadr* (fate) which is destined to cause their journey back to God. Participants also believed that there are always blessings in disguise for what has happened in their lives. As with the African American community, the women turn to spirituality in their search for finding strength to cope with the situation, as well as healing, and taking an exit from abusive relationships. In other words, the African American survivors seek the religion and the church for strength, solace, support and assistance (Gillum, 2009). In a qualitative study by Potter (2007) it was found that spiritual practices among 40 African American domestic violence survivors was utilized in their efforts to cope with and/or getting out of violent relationships, whereas Gillum's study in 2008 showed spirituality as a healing process utilised in order to overcome and cope with the abuse experience. The current study findings in regards to the notion of accepting one's *qadr* is an important issue for future study. Therefore, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between domestic violence impacts and self-faith from the Islamic perspective can be clearly understood.

Conclusions

This dissertation has investigated the perspective of abused women in Malaysia pertinent to their true essence of living in domestic violence relationships. In this investigation, the aim was to assess the participants' experiences of violence particularly with reference to the impacts, the barriers of disclosing abuse and issues faced by abused women about current domestic violence supports in the country. The findings of this study highlighted that the impacts of domestic violence on abused women range from physical harm to isolation and emotional disturbance (Ellsberg *et al.*, 2008; Dorahy *et al.*, 2007; Pilar Matud, 2005; Dutton *et al.*, 2003; Campbell, Jones, Dienemann, Kub, Schollenberger, O'Campo, Gielen & Wynne, 2002).

Indeed, the damage wrought by this social problem extends far beyond the women themselves. Perhaps the most affected individuals, besides the women themselves, is the children who grow up in abusive homes. The exposure of children to domestic violence, stated by some authors as the 'witnessing' of the assaults, involves seeing physical injuries, broken furniture as well as overhearing arguments (Cunningham & Baker, 2004; Mullender, Hague, Iman, Kelly, Malos & Regan, 2002). Further, the results also found a link that existed between domestic violence and a detrimental impact on women's self identity (Crawford *et al.*, 2009; Hague & Mullender, 2006; Pilar Matud, 2005). The particular negative effects observed as a result of the impact of violence include a lack of confidence, a reduced sense of self-worth as well as lower self-esteem among the women. This study adds new understanding in regard to the women's faith where the concepts of *qadr* and *qadar* had played a major role in how the victims/survivor of domestic violence in Malaysia acknowledged their abuse experiences. Thus, based on the evidence revealed, it can be concluded that violence in relationships frequently contribute to several forms of adverse outcomes in the women victims (as well as to their children).

CHAPTER 7

BARRIERS TO DISCLOSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In a previous chapter, the impacts of domestic violence on abused women were thoroughly discussed. Data analysis identified a number of subcategories under the domestic violence impacts, including its effect on other people such as the children. This chapter conversely focuses on barriers that inhibit abused women from disclosing the violence and seeking appropriate assistance from their surroundings.

The thematic findings in this study indicated that women's accounts pertinent to barriers of disclosing domestic violence incidents have a mixture of premises and these include cultural issues, the understanding of religious tenets as well as obstacles rooted in the women themselves. In the interviews with the participants, it was clear that women were inhibited in disclosing their violence experiences for many reasons. Table 7.1 provides a list of codes of barriers in the domestic violence disclosure category.

Table 7.1: Barriers to disclosing violence experiences to others

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Barriers to disclosing domestic violence and seeking outside help	Women's understanding on Islamic concepts about being 'a good wife'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The idea of being faithful and obedient wife- <i>Nusyuz</i> allegations
	Safeguarding the children's interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social stigma in the community- Maintaining a father-figure in the family- Safety issues
	Self-blame and guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Depth of love- Being provocative- Feelings of imperfection- Contradictory of interest

	'Local people' perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The concept of '<i>sembunyi hal rumahtangga</i>' (concealing marital affairs) - Shame and embarrassment
	Women's lack of knowledge regarding domestic violence resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low level of education - Physical constraints - Unaware of domestic violence rights and laws

Key Findings and Discussion

Women's understanding on Islamic concepts about being 'a good wife'

Almost all of the participants in the study were *Muslimah* (Muslim women). According to Islam, there is a significant principal that associates the husband and wife relationship. For the Muslims, it is thought that 'a woman's heaven is beneath her husband's feet' in which this belief in fact has made disclosing partner violence even more complicated among Muslim women. Many interviewees in this study concurred that they have to be patient while enduring the partner's abusive behaviours. It was because of their goal to be a good and obedient wife towards the husband. The examples herewith of the excerpts from the women interviewed:

"I do not have the strength to fight him. If I do that, he is going to say that I am an un-loyal wife. I can never get the taste of paradise. He reminds me quite often that a wife's paradise depends on the husband's blessing... I became weak. He knows how to play around with words". (Rosy)

"I kept my patience throughout the time I was abused. It was patience...and more patience. I had to bear with my husband's attitude for many years. I am unable to fight him back. I had to follow his ways. Sometimes I nag at him. If I fight him back, I will have to endure his beating". (Aton)

"I want to be a good wife... loyal to my husband. I sincerely want to be a good wife to him and a good mother to my children. However, it didn't turn out to be as such. I tried to be patience hoping that someday he will change and be a better person. That is why I have hold on to this marriage relationship for so long". (Izhan)

Wan and Patimah added:

“Each time I was beaten, it hurts so much. He went out of his mind when he was angry. I told my children to stay inside the room. I am used to his behaviour now, that I take no notice of him. My mother advised me not to go against my husband if I want to be in paradise. That is the only reason that made me stay on with him for many years”. (Wan)

“If I object him, he would say that I have been rebellious towards him. When I kept quiet, he would say that I am like a log. It made me confused. As women, our paradise lies with our husbands. The thought of making a police report when he abused me had often occurred in my mind. But it is so difficult for me to talk about things like that”. (Patimah)

Besides trying to be obedient wives to their husbands, these women also imagined the problems they may create if they choose to report the incidents to the authorities (i.e. Islamic Religious Affairs Department). It refers to a *nusyuz* allegation (refer page 39). The term *nusyuz* means the inability to obey the wishes or commands of the husband and that includes when she leaves home without the husband's permission. Therefore, with many occasions of domestic violence cases in *Sharia* court, the husband in fact files a petition of *nusyuz* against the wife.

“Another reason why we hesitate to come forward and ask for help is because we are afraid that our husbands would declare us as disobedient wife. Leaving our home without permission would lead to being disobedient. In a court of law, if a woman has been proven to be disobedient, she has to return and obey her husband. Our problems will not get solved”. (Ikin)

“Like what I've said before, the officers at the Religious Department more often side with men. There was an ustazah at the Religious Department who told me about the issue of 'nusyuz' (disobedient wife). She said that if we do not obey our husband we will be in the category of 'nusyuz' “. (Zara)

A story from an interviewee called Ain:

“There are many issues that are brought up when we get into a fight. He said that I was a slut who works in night clubs and things like that. At that time I was not married. I cease to work there anymore after I got married. He threatened me by saying that I was a bad woman and that no one will ever believe me. He said that I was 'nusyuz'. When I asked Puan Tisha (a social worker at the shelter home) she said that 'nusyuz' is applicable on matters that are against the teaching of Islam. It doesn't cover all matters. I am confused about it because I do not have a strong religious understanding”. (Ain)

The question remains: to what extent will the husband's abusive behaviour be safely hidden by the view of domestic violence as a marital affair? Furthermore, Islamic teaching does not condone any form of violence against women. Misapprehension regarding concepts where women have to be obedient to their husbands is clearly visible in the context of this research. Thus, external factors such as the intervention by professionals may play a major part in encouraging abused women to overcome the issue of unreported cases of domestic violence in Malaysia.

“The only way we could increase the rate of reports on domestic violence in Malaysia is through courses such as parenting and household management. The public should be informed about it and also encourage them to seek advice from the Islamic Religion Affair Department, which has relevancy is not solely related to divorce. Apart from that, we should also spread awareness about it through a pre-marital course which is made compulsory for all Muslim men and women who want to get married. The co-operation from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and other bodies could contribute towards this effort”. (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

“As a Counsellor at the Religious Department, I had seen many couples who were lack of religious knowledge. They did not understand about family responsibility, marriage in Islam and many neglected their prayers. We need to rectify these problems in order to form a strong base for family formation as preached in Islam. (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

During the interviews, the women expressed their frustration regarding negative stereotypes together with social stigma that was attached to abusive relationships disclosure. Due to the influence of cultural perceptions in the societal context, women generally do not dare to speak against domestic violence. They feared that others would not believe their stories, discredit them as being a “disobedient wife”, labelled by others as “*nusyuz*” (refer to page 39), not to mention that the women certainly would be very worried if the others blamed them for causing their husband's violence. The results of this study did not show that the thought of approaching supportive networking mechanisms (i.e. formal and informal supportive networks) was very much established inside the women's mind. It was found that the women's sense of confidence was undermined, as the stigma around revealing the abuse will result on the focus being on her disclosure rather than the male partner's violence behaviour.

Describing on the Malaysian context, apart from living in a male dominated society, the Malay ethnic in particular views their cultural perspective in association with Islamic religion (Che Soh, 2010). In Islam, marriage is seen as a sacred covenant with certain obligations to fulfil between husband and wife so as to achieve balance and harmony within the family. Nonetheless, the misuse of the revelation from some verses in the Holy Qur'an had justified irresponsible Muslim men to cause violence to their wives. As for the women, they sometimes were manipulated and believed that the disclosure of private marital matters is inappropriate as well as a sign of disobedience towards the husband. The related verses stated in the Qur'an and *hadith* (a saying or act ascribed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad) that are usually misinterpreted by people include:

- The husband has absolute rights over the wife:

"...And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise" (Qur'an 2:228)

"Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth..." (Qur'an 4:34)

"Their (husbands') rights over you (wives) is that you do not allow anyone whom they dislike onto your bedding and you do not allow anyone whom they dislike into your house." (At-Tirmithi)

- The wife must obey and being respectful to the husband:

"A wife is not allowed to observe fast (other than fasting in the month of Ramadan, the prescribed) unless she has his permission. She may not allow any one to come into his house, unless he permits." (At-Tirmithi)

"If I were to command a single person to bow in prostration to another person, I could have commanded a woman to bow down (in obedience and respect, not in worship) to her husband." (Abu Daawood)

“When a woman observes the five times prayer, fasts during Ramadan, preserves her chastity and obeys her husband, she may enter by any of the gates of Paradise she wishes”. (At-Tirmithi)

- The husband’s honour should be preserved at all time:

“Any woman whose husband dies while he is pleased, happy and satisfied with her (acts, attitudes and behaviour) will enter Jannah (Paradise).” (At-Tirmithi)

“...So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard...” (Qur’an 4:34)

“The best woman is the one who when you look at her, you are pleased; when you order her, she obeys; if you are absent from her, she guards herself and your property.” (At-Tabarani)

Although some South Asian studies had mentioned perceptions of being a ‘good’ wife (Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Axemo, 2011; Zakar, Zakar & Kraemer, 2013), refusing to disclose abuse because of *nusyuz* allegations has not previously been described. The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with Islamic family laws enforced in the country. Within this legal provision, a husband may file a *nusyuz* petition over the wife’s divorce’s application. It is a common circumstance for the defendant (the husband) to counter-petition the plaintiff’s (the wife’s) application when a domestic violence case is initiated. If the domestic violence case has been proven, the wife may then be granted with the divorce by the *Sharia* court. Otherwise, a *nusyuz* petition may overrule the divorce petition and the court may ask the women to obey the husband’s command (called ‘*perintah kembali taat*’). As a result, many women are reluctant to be involved in such stressful and tedious proceedings. This particular finding is somewhat mechanistic and in fact depends on the provision of services offered by legal institutions for family laws in Malaysia.

Safeguarding the children’s interests

Domestic violence victims and survivors face many barriers when they are making up their minds to leave an abusive relationship. Like most of the people in all societies,

the women too have a sense of family responsibility to hold the family together for the sake of the children. Besides, being a divorcee and a single-mother has been unfairly stigmatized in the Malaysian culture. Raihana and Nuri explained:

“The community looks down on women like me because I am divorced. I cannot help it. Thanks to Allah, at least I am free from my husband. A divorced woman is always linked to being a flirt and runs off with another woman’s husband. As if there is nothing better for me to do. Our culture makes it easy for more women to be ill-treated and afraid to face reality. I am more at peace now”. (Raihana)

“No woman out there either a divorcee or a single mother who wants to feel that way. Not all are lucky to get good husbands. We live in a community and it’s impossible to avoid neighbours who think of us in a cynical way. It was a big decision for me in life when I decided to leave the house with my child. There were times when I felt pity for my child, but he took it well. He is a grown up now”. (Nuri)

Via the interviews, the researcher acknowledged the women’s strong feelings of parental responsibility towards their offspring. The norms and values inculcated in the communities have made the abused women believe that the children’s interests should be put above all other matters. Rita, Baizura and Yusnah told the researcher about their fear of losing their husbands; not for them but for their children’s well-being:

“I just have to be patient. From one child and now I have two. I don’t need much money. It is enough for me that he treats me well. I need to think about my children’s future if I opt for divorce. I have small children and they don’t regard their father as how they should. A mother’s love is not the same as a father’s love. My children are my world”. (Rita)

“Ever since I got married, my husband only knows how to make children. He never helps me to do the dishes, wash the clothes... it’s all on me. I am always sad when he shows his bad temper on me but I want my children to have a father. I told myself that I will shoulder it all as long as my children’s wellbeing is secured. I come from a divorced family and I know how it feels”. (Baizura)

“I am afraid to report it to the police because I don’t want to get him arrested. My children will be the victim. Their friends will tease them... and a lot more. I think of my children always. I am scared if they don’t have a father. If my husband doesn’t come back for several days, my children will start asking for him. If I opt for divorce, how am I going to face all these?” (Yusnah)

On the other hand, professionals expressed the view that children are one of the contributing factors to the barrier of disclosing and seeking help. The excerpts

illustrated the professionals' experiences when handling domestic abuse cases. Mrs. Piah said:

"It normally happens that the husband doesn't allow wife to take the children fearing for their safety. Husband knows that the children are the wife's main weakness. The wife will stay together just to be with the children". (Mrs. Piah, the director)

The other professionals also added:

"There are cases which I'd handled where the husband beat the children when the wife made a report to the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. When that happened, the wife did not show up at our office for the next session. When the husband beat the children, it served as a warning to the wife not to reveal marital matters to anyone else. The wife got her fair share of beatings from the husband, it's even worse than the children". (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

"When women get entangled in children's matters, it gets complicated. They think of their children's future and wellbeing. They are bound to their respective husbands due to this factor, and it can drag on for many years. Some say due to financial factors. They believed they are unable to take care of their family by themselves. I always question them back whether the husband has been the one supporting the family 100%. There had been many cases whereby the husband was the abuser and they don't provide financial support. That is a reality". (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

It is believed that the women in the study have a very deep hope for the family to be kept united. Many of these women were hoping the abusers will change and they may 'work it out' for the sake of everyone in the family, especially the youngsters. Thus, the women decided to stay silent about their violence experiences in order not to be stigmatized by the community. The women's taciturnity, however, would not keep the family structure intact and safe for longer term because violence incidents are a cyclic process and they are more likely to happen again in the future.

Overall, the findings in the study showed that protecting the children's interests was among the barriers that inhibit the abused women from disclosing and seeking the professional help available in Malaysia. The presence of a father figure in a family was believed to be imperative for the abused women regardless of the violent situation in that relationship. Furthermore, the feelings of fear, shame and helplessness due to the social stigma as the 'family breaker' demand a great deal of the women's self-patience. Nevertheless, those thoughts were very much associated with the cultural

point of view which created obstacles when it comes to spousal abuse disclosure and seeking assistance from the support networks.

One of the many reasons why abused women were unable to disclose their violent relationship is that they are trying their very best to protect the children's best interests. The current study found that the women typically fear that such disclosure could turn the situation worse especially in relation to the children's well-being. For instance the children may be taken into care (under informal/formal support custody), the husband will be detained, leaving the children with no father-figure in the house, social stigma present in society concerning children from a broken-family background and financial survival for the children (i.e. basic needs, schooling, accommodation). The results of this study show that the children's safety was a main concern and prominent in the thoughts of many abused women because they fear losing custody of the children to the husband if they revealed the real situation. A few women identified their male partner as being irresponsible, aggressive and an unreliable type of personality.

From the third person point of view, the professionals too had considered that the children were the women's biggest weakness. Therefore, it is believed that this will make it easier for the husbands to manipulate the wives in their favour. It seems possible that these results are due to the family's dependency on the male parent in regards to financial issues, affection, the belief in the patriarchal system as well as acceptance in the wider community. In the Iranian setting, the Khosravizadegan *et al.* (2008) study found that 23 out of 100 women who had domestic violence experiences in Bushehr Province, reported that they had remained in the abusive relationship because they were fearful of losing of their children. Results from the current study also further support the idea of children as a barrier in disclosing the violence and getting assistances. As stated by Walby and Allen (2004: 87):

“Women are reluctant to save themselves by breaking-up a home if there are children and it is more difficult for women to establish a home of their own if they have children for economic reasons, that is, it is harder to earn sufficient income to establish and maintain a new home if there are dependent children to support”.

In line with the above findings, some of the abused women in the current study reported that they continued to stay in the marriage because, as Muslim women, they believed the traditional Islamic saying that a woman's heaven (in the hereafter) lies underneath the husband's feet. Consequently, they attempted to endure the violence no matter what in order to become an obedient wife and a good mother for the sake of their youngsters. This finding is rather disappointing as these women were unable to exercise their rights according to Islamic tenets. In point of fact, Islam has a high place with respect and honour for Muslim women in relation to their status. As Islam also forbids wife beating, abused women should not be influenced by such doctrine in a way that can be harmful to them as well as affecting the children. This finding has important implications for developing informative programmes to educate female adults in particular, and the rest of the society in general, concerning issues that relate to comprehension of these religious principles. Such a strategy may well offer significant exposure to the disclosing of domestic abuse among the children from the viewpoint of religious concepts.

Demographically, it was indicated that 24 out of 25 women participants in the present study were described as mothers. Overall, there was an average of three or four children in a household ranging from one to 10 children altogether. As mentioned in many previous works, the presence of children in the household had increased the risk of domestic violence among women (Walby & Allen, 2004). The study found that women with children had recorded a higher rate of domestic violence occurrences (5.6%) compared to women without children (3.1%). Furthermore, the authors also suggest that the children's presence enhances the risk of domestic violence in a relationship. The findings from the above study were largely based on the statistics produced in the British Crime Survey (BCS) 2001. This also accords with our earlier observation, which showed that higher rates of intimate partner violence were recorded for families with children than those without children (McDonald *et al.*, 2006) and the risk of women victimization was increased to as high as nearly 18 per cent for those with children (Povey *et al.*, 2009).

Self blame and guilt

The transcriptions from the women's accounts revealed that for some abused women they believed that they were partly responsible for their male partner's violence behaviours. In other words, they were blaming themselves for causing such abuse. This circumstance has made disclosing partner violence even more complicated. Below are the fragments of quotations from the women in which explained why the women connected the violence events as their fault:

"It is my fault for not listening to my parent's advice when I wanted to marry him. I envy my friends when I see them so happily married. But what can I do. It is my fault because I was the one who chose the wrong partner for life".
(Aton)

"Our life became upside down when he turned to drugs again. He began beating me. The problem is that I can't sit quietly and ignore it. I always fight back and that is why things turn for worse now". (Nor)

"My biggest mistake is I love him so dearly. Although he treated me badly, I can't change this feeling towards him. Once, I ran away from him and stayed in a shelter home. He came and persuaded me to go back with him promising that he would change. I dropped the case because I don't want to lose him".
(Ain)

The abused women somehow perceived the perpetrator's violence behaviours as acceptable. For instance, Baizura felt that she may also be blamed for the violence because she fails to act as her husband demands. Meanwhile, Ikin considered her negative attitudes had provoked the beatings. For others, the abuse was seen as a punishment for being 'disobedient' towards their male partners. Baizura and Ikin stated:

"He is a very demanding person. I did the laundry, ironing his uniforms, polishing his shoes, including his uniform buttons. I suppose I am guilty because what I did wasn't good enough to satisfy him". (Baizura)

"I feel that he was not the only one to be blamed. Not him entirely. I think I have done many things wrong. I keep nagging all the time, moaning, and I noticed when I can't control myself I might challenge him as well. He is a very egotistical man....but I deserve the pain". (Ikin)

The other abused women felt alike:

"I am working and sometimes I am busy at work. Sometimes my office mate sends me home after work. My husband got very angry when he found out. I had to put on my 'hijab' when I run down to the shop nearby my flat to buy

food. I like to wear sexy clothes at that time. He likes to control me. I know that he is that sort of a person but I am a stubborn kind and would go against him. Most of the time it's my fault". (Izhan)

"My husband doesn't like it when I bring up the matter about his second wife, whenever he is at my house. I am totally not satisfied of the way he treats me. He is with that woman when it is my turn to be with him. That woman calls him or sends messages to him when he is at my house. I am in a dilemma. If I don't mention it to him, I get very frustrated. But if I mention it to him, he will definitely hit me. It has always been like that. It is difficult for me to explain". (Zawiyah)

The feelings of guilt and self blame are commonly experienced by women living in a domestic violence relationship. The interviews with the abused women in the study confirmed that with many women they accept the fact that such violence committed by the abuser was considered 'a lesson' and in a way a message for the women to behave obediently in accordance to the husband's demands. It is believed that this kind of 'distorted thinking' was very much associated with the adverse effect on the sense of self worth among women victims and survivors of domestic violence.

Some women participants described their experience of being abused as justified. Since their sense of self-esteem and self-worth were progressively undermined, the women believed that they were partly responsible for provoking as well as challenging the partner's ego. Participants reported that they were 'guilty' for various reasons. The most common type of responses reported included nagging habits, talk-back, being disobedient and a failure to respond to the husband's demands. For some women, they fault themselves because their marriage was actually opposed by the family in the first instance. Nevertheless, the women decided to continue with the relationships and were forced to tolerate the consequences of their choice.

According to Janoff-Bulman (1979), there are two types of self-blame, namely behavioural and characterological self-blame. It was identified that a few participants in the study felt that they were accountable for the abuse because they realized that they should have taken the family advice of not marrying the partner (i.e. behavioural self-blame) whereas for some women, they feel that they were not doing enough to satisfy the husband's demands (i.e. characterological self-blame). Although these women perceived their erroneous decision as well as negative attitudes, for instance

nagging and disobedience, as provoking violence the fact that no one deserves to be battered should remain intact at all costs. Despite any factors that may cause the husband to feel agitated, angry or annoyed it is believed that there are always other alternatives to violence.

As mentioned in the literature review, feeling guilty is a self-destructive expression with an inner clash inside an individual (Hansen & Elklit, 1993); self blame is described as one of the characteristics of a victim of domestic violence (Davhana-Maselesele, 2011; Randa, 2005; New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, 2003) and used as a coping strategy in the abusive relationships (Davhana-Meselesele, 2011; Che Din *et al.*, 2010). As stated in a domestic violence sermon in Washington, self-blame has been considered as the greatest barrier in seeking help for abused victims (Bochonok, 2001). The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Randa (2005) who concluded that self-blame attributions were commonly found among battered women as well as rape victims in North Carolina. Further, Randa's study also found a positive link between characterological self-blame and the sense of self-esteem in domestic violence victims. In contrast to earlier findings, however, different outcomes relating to self-blame attributions were obtained in the previous study of Janoff-Bulman (1979). Participants in her study had demonstrated greater behavioural self-blame attributions rather than characterological self-blame. In addition, similar to the prior author's results, the research claimed that blaming oneself was reported to be the most common response in violence incidents amongst women victims.

There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, the women's depressive symptoms may have influenced this 'distorted thinking' of blaming themselves for causing their partner's violence. Secondly, the adverse effects found on the women's sense of self-esteem and their self-worthiness are associated with the feelings of self-blame and guilt. Thirdly, the possible influence of the 'Stockholm Syndrome' in the abusive relationships can not be ruled out. It is believed that abused women are emotionally bonded with their partner and developed negative feelings towards other people such as family, friends and neighbours. As the women were generally exposed to the abuse for a length of time and certainly in a romantic relationship with the abuser, it was difficult for the women to escape the situation, let alone to press

charges and prosecute the abuser. As Gartner and Macmillan (1995: 398) state: “The more intimate the relationship between a victim of violence and her offender, the less likely the criminal justice system will learn about the violence”. Therefore, many domestic violence victims attempt to relate the feelings of guilt and self-blaming as a barrier that inhibits their disclosure of violent incidents to others.

‘Local people’ perceptions

The concept of ‘*sembunyi hal rumahtangga*’ (concealing marital affairs) was a significant cultural belief among Malaysian women. Contextually, this notion refers to the protection of marriage matters with the intention that the husband’s honour and pride remain intact in the eyes of the community. This scenario is largely associated with the practice of the patriarchal system in Malaysia; particularly within the structure of family and marriage. The interviews with the abused women as well as with the professionals who work with domestic violence victims and survivors in Malaysia revealed that spousal abuse is considered within the domain of a family matter. Thus, many of the participants thought that the issue should stay undisclosed and be kept private within the home. They said:

In our community, men are always right. There is no need to tell other people about it. Everyone should know how to keep their own secrets. It is especially so when it involves our sexual lives. Just imagine how you are going to tell”.
(Nuri)

“Malaysian community especially the Malays held on to these principles, ‘not to do their dirty laundry in public’ when it comes to marital issues. Marital problems automatically become an issue between the husband and wife alone”.
(Mrs. Piah, the director)

“There are many women out there who find it difficult to talk about domestic violence because it is a sensitive issue in a marriage. We often come across many obstacles when we want to help solve these problems because husbands who comes and see us would scold us for sticking our noses in their marriage affairs. This kind of perception in our community has got to change”. (Sister Holly, the manager)

Unfortunately for some women, they too believed that no-one could and would help thus leaving them in a very shameful situation. These quotes were given by the women and the professionals in the study:

“I don’t want my domestic problems to be known to others. I want to hide it from my family and friends. As for my neighbours, it’s hard to say because

they can hear it for themselves. I don't want it to be spread to others. I am embarrassed by it". (Aton)

"I don't go and tell others because as a married woman I want to be a good and a pious wife. I still have my patience for whatever happens. Our marital problems are not for others to share". (Zara)

"I endure these whole problems all by myself. It's my marital problems. I prefer it to be a secret within our family alone. Outsiders only know when to chide rather than helping us solve the problem. We suffer in the end". (Rosy)

"I keep it inside me. I don't tell others about it. Why should I tell to other people? It's between me and my husband. Everyone will start spreading the news around. In the end I will get blamed for not knowing of how to take care of my husband and my marriage". (Patimah)

The situation becomes worse as the local culture also downgrades those who are disclosing their '*hal rumahtangga*' to others (particularly about the couple's negative experiences and sexual life). Given that it is a widespread consideration in the lives of married couples in Malaysia, the professionals shared their experiences when it comes to the disclosure of domestic violence.

"It all started from our parents. They would not talk about their marriage problems to anyone. We protect our husband's and family's dignity in this way. Most people who come and tell us about their problems are those who have reached to a level that they can no longer bear the sufferings. Even though so, there are still stories un-told. That's our people". (Mrs. Ros, the counsellor)

"Domestic violence in a marriage can no longer be perceived as a matter within its circle. It is more than that. If we don't pour it out this problem may escalate. There are reasons why many choose not to come forward and tell. They feel ashamed, afraid of their husbands and to protect their marriage from being judged by others". (Miss Ann, the social worker)

"I feel that cultural factor is the bottom line. 'Must protect the husband's pride', 'don't do your dirty laundry in public', 'don't be a thorn in the flesh', all these proverbs are intended to discourage people from telling others about their marriage life. Our culture emphasises this matter very seriously. When stories are told, the feeling of ashamed, un-loyal and guilty will emerge from oneself. I have seen many times whereby the confidence level diminishes when they feel that no one will help them". (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

"In my opinion, one of the reasons why so many women are ill-treated is because domestic violence cases are not reported. It is a norm whereby we are not encouraged to discuss marital issues. There was one case whereby a woman confided her mother about the problem she had in her marriage. However, the mother discouraged her from telling her problems and advised

her to settle it with the husband. It is very difficult if we have this kind of mind set". (Madam Thivy, the director)

Based on the above excerpts from the women and the professionals interviewed in the study, the researcher can conclude that the cultural perspective among the Malaysians in relation to protecting the husband's honour and being secretive about their marriage affairs are interdependent with barriers to disclosing violence. The participants' accounts also revealed that wife abuse is somehow not to be discussed openly in public. It was mainly due to men's dignity as well as not daring to take the risk of being judged by the community. The women's avoidance is very much associated with feelings of shame and embarrassment as a result of the violence disclosure.

Initially, this research set out with the aim of discovering barriers that inhibit abused women in Malaysia from disclosing the violence and seeking assistance. The results of this study indicate that issues of disclosure of the abuse was intricately intertwined with the cultural perception of '*sembunyi hal rumahtangga*' or concealing marriage matters as marital secret. Women participants reported that they were mostly unable to discuss their relationship problems with others because collectively in Malaysian society domestic violence is considered as a private, personal matter and should be kept within the home. Similar accounts of this perception were also obtained during the discussions with the counsellors, social workers and other professionals who participated in the study. The participants identified a number of explanatory factors including stigma in society that may cause to shame and embarrassment following the abuse disclosure.

The literature on barriers of disclosing is more likely to focus on sexual victimization. In the Malaysian context, non-sexual violence such as domestic violence (with and without sexual abuse) is also under-reported. The 2006 Australian Crime and Safety Survey found women's reasons for not reporting sexual abuse were because the matter was assumed not important (21%) and victims prefer to handle the situation themselves (16%). Further, according to the same study, the decision in reporting violence incidents among battered women was largely dependant on the severity of abuse. In Sri Lanka, it was found that more than half of the abused women interviewed were secretive about their violence experiences. The women mentioned

several reasons for not disclosing such abuse, for instance preserving the family reputation (24%), embarrassment (48%) and fear of the husband's retaliation (12%). The study also demonstrated that Sri Lankan women believed that their disobedience toward the husband is the most prominent reason for accepting the violence behaviour; with more than 50% of the sample studied agreeing on such a notion (Jayasuriya *et al.*, 2011).

Prior researches have noted the significance of culture and religious belief in addressing domestic violence issues. The findings of the current study are consistent with those studies conducted by Sricamsuk (2006) and Izzidien (2008). According to Sricamsuk (2006), the domestic violence problem is perceived as a private family matter among the people in Thailand. The study found that instead of reporting the violent incidents, many abused women are keeping the problem to themselves. In fact, they attempted to endure the violence as long as they could just for the sake of the family. Meanwhile, the Izzidien (2008) study demonstrated that there was a lack of support from the extended family when abused women sought assistance. Thus, these negative responses from the family may hamper violence disclosure among domestic violence victims and survivors. Rather contradictory facets of this problem can be seen through a study conducted using the Tiv-speaking people of Benue State in Nigeria. This indicated that women accepted domestic violence as part and parcel of marriage in their society. Indeed, they also considered such abuse as a sign of love in the couple's relationship and therefore they decided to adapt to the situation (Odimegwu, 2001). As a result, disclosing violence together with seeking outside assistance was considered as a last resort for the women in solving abusive relationship problems.

Taken together, these findings in the study describe barriers and difficulties faced by abused women when it comes to disclosing violence and seeking help. It was found that the reasons why women did not report domestic violence incidents to others was intertwined with the cultural perceptions within society, and the women's judgement as to their roles as a wife in accordance with religious belief. A few sayings and proverbs are used in Malaysian society to symbolise that family issues should remain undisclosed matters; for instance, '*not to do your dirty laundry in public*', '*honour the husband's pride*' and '*do not be a thorn in the flesh*'. These proverbs, however, have

obviously discouraged women with domestic violence experience to step forward, disclose their stories to others, and finally get the help they need to obtain a better life.

Women's lack of knowledge regarding domestic violence resources

Leaving a violent relationship is not an easy matter. The phases involve a great deal of courage, sacrifice, as well as determinations inside a woman in order to keep on fighting for her life (and the children). The findings of the present study indicated that another barrier which inhibits the abused women from disclosing and seeking help was the issue of the lack of knowledge about availability of domestic violence resources among the Malaysian women. On many occasions, the women's thoughts of escaping the abusive relationships were always being hampered by a lack of information pertaining to assistance and support mechanisms available. Aton and Wan acknowledged their feebleness:

"It's because of my own stupidity. I was not able to think straight at that time. I just don't know what to do when this problem occurs. I don't know where to go or whom to tell to. Maybe if only I knew how to get help, all these problems wouldn't drag on this long". (Aton)

"I admit that I am not so highly educated. I seldom do any reading and I am not much aware of things like this. I am not aware that there are people who can help me on domestic violence cases. I only know one authority which is the police". (Wan)

From the interviews conducted, the researcher understood that some of the abused women were not capable of escaping and reported the violence incidents due constraints such as money, transportation and a place to stay during the aftermath. The women's excerpts from the transcriptions were as follows:

"I am penniless. I lead a very tough life. I have to borrow money from others if I want to go anywhere. If my child is sick, I put on a thick face and ask for money from my neighbour. All debts need to be repaid and it's only from the little money that I make from giving massages. The town is not near and I need to use a lot of money to travel. Where can I get money from?" (Siti)

"I have never walked from my house to the other side of the road. It's not very far, but my husband refuses to allow me. I don't even know where the police station is. The private clinic and the hospital are far away. I have a driving license, but my husband doesn't allow me to drive the car. I now have a fear of

driving. My husband does not give me any pocket money. I collect small changes from buying the groceries". (Rita)

"I don't have anywhere else to run to. When I got married, I only have my husband to turn to. Where can I go? I don't even have any money. I don't have anyone else in life". (Izhan)

"It is easy to tell me to go out and get help. But where can I go? Who can help me? All of it requires money. Where can I bring my children to? I do not have my parents anymore. I am poor and everyone looks at me like trash". (Rosy)

Adversely, Rizi's disclosure of her experiences demonstrated that sometimes the women's safety is more at risk if they want to break the silence of domestic violence. She told her story:

"Once I lodged a police report because my husband hit me very badly with a helmet and a hockey stick. My arms and legs were badly swollen. The police refused to take down any report and told me to go home. I was very scared at that time and don't know where to go. The police called my father –in-law to come and pick me up. My father-in-law's house is very near to my house. There was nowhere else I can go and so I had to return home. All back to square one". (Rizi)

This research also found an eye-opening discovery. The interviews confirmed that a number of abused women were completely unaware of the existence of legal provisions relating to domestic violence in Malaysia as well as the support system networks offered for them. In particular, the absence of real understanding towards the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994), the provision of Islamic Family Law (*Sharia* Law) concerning spousal abuse cases, penalties regarding domestic violence offences as well as the availability of community resources were very much apparent among those women. For example Baizura and Nuri claimed that,

"I don't know anything about the law. There are so many things that I do not know. I only manage to complete secondary school education. All I know is about shelter home. And it is far away in Kuala Lumpur. It's very far from my house. I don't know anything about legal Acts". (Baizura)

"All this while I have never known anything about the Domestic Violence Act in Malaysia. All I know is I wanted to get out get a divorce and start a new life. That is all I know". (Nuri)

Together, Nor and Siti respectively tell about the dissemination of information:

“Since I arrived here (Shelter home), I found out information about domestic violence. There are so many things that I hear but I don’t really understand. Luckily they (social workers) helped me a lot. Probably all this information has been made available all this time but we don’t know where to get it from and how to use it to our advantage”. (Nor)

“In my opinion, in Malaysia, we lack of awareness in such matters. If only we are working in an office, we are more exposed to sources of information. I don’t go out often therefore I don’t get much information. I don’t even have friends. When I went and made a report at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, I found out more about my rights. I never knew about that information”. (Siti)

Data gathered from the research fieldwork has shown the significance of improving women’s knowledge on issues related to domestic violence. Many abused women in the present study reported that they continue to remain in an abusive relationship because they were not well informed about how to get access to the variety of services available. In fact, the results also highlighted the issue of a lack of awareness regarding the current legal provisions in combating violence against women in the country.

To sum up, many participants in the study considered themselves as one of the main reasons as to why they fail to disclose the violence incidents and not use the support services provided as they should. Some of the interviewees regretted their ignorance towards many of the important issues around them and that included the subject of violence against women. For a few women, hesitant thoughts of leaving the abusive relationships were frequently overwhelmed by questions such as where to go, would others help, how to seek help and obviously about the children’s welfare and so on. Over and above this, limitations in regards to the need for money, transportation and accommodation were among the biggest challenges for the women to face on their own. These findings of the current study are consistent with those of the community survey project by Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission against Domestic Violence (2002) which found barriers to disclosure were mostly focused on the internal barriers such as women’s self-emotions, attitudes and also in relation to their knowledge and awareness of domestic violence issues. Even so, thirty per cent of the participants in the survey reported being discouraged from disclosure because of constraints pertinent to money and accommodation. In other respects, McEwin (1997)

in her review of the 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suggested that women who experienced domestic abuse were usually characterised with feelings of living in fear during the relationship and their willingness to make a police report about violent incidents was very much reliant on the seriousness of the events.

Some respondents commented on the way police authorities responded to their violence disclosure and therein putting their safety at risk because of the perpetrator's retaliation (i.e. further abuse and threats). Unfortunately, due to the women's absence of knowledge about legal protection, support services and a poor understanding of domestic violence in general, they seem to be unaware of what resources are available for battered women to deal with their domestic violence situation. Another important finding was that most of the participants were unacquainted with legal rights and options pertinent to the judicial system. It is worrisome to note that many interviews conducted with abused women in this study indicated a lack of understanding towards the Domestic violence Act 521 (1994), Islamic Family Law Enactments (*Sharia*) and the Criminal Procedure and Penal Code in respect of domestic violence. A possible explanation for this might be that Malaysian female adults in general are less exposed to the facts and knowledge about this particular subject because even though domestic violence is classified as a nation's social problem the cultivation of feminist philosophical thought within this male dominant society is certainly problematic. Besides, the current situation in the country shows that there is a huge gender imbalance in the female-to-male ratio (Hausman *et al.*, 2011); not only concerning the participation of women in parliament but also in the police force. This shortcoming may cause women's issues to receive less attention from male social policymakers.

Therefore, the present results are significant in at least two major respects. One, the lack of knowledge among female adults in Malaysia may perhaps act as barrier to disclosing the abuse. The lack of knowledge about appropriate resources such as socio-legal assistance, emotional support as well as healthcare services reflects a need for more publicity in the whole community. It is believed that by spreading such information, women may be enabled to utilize formal services and subsequently build up their confidence in relation to help seeking attempts with the domestic violence service providers. Secondly, the professionals on the other continuum should also be knowledgeable, empathic and sensitive towards the women's needs in order to cope

with domestic violence issues in a confidential manner and more effectively. It can also thus be suggested that resources for domestic violence victims/survivors should consider the matter of accessibility wherein at present most of the services are generally located at the city areas. An implication of this is the possibility that many crisis centres need to be established in order to cater for abused women in rural regions. The present findings seem to be consistent with those of other studies and suggest that additional barriers that inhibit women victims in disclosing the violent incidents include the lack of services from the formal supportive networks (Peckover, 2003; Sricamsuk, 2006).

These findings support previous research into this area which links barriers of disclosure and awareness of provisions of domestic violence. Fugate *et al.*, (2005) found there were several reasons indicated by abused women participants in their interviews. The reasons described include monetary and insurance issues, no access to communication devices (i.e. telephone) and logistical barriers, for example transportation. Interestingly, the research has produced similar results with the present study. Fugate and her colleagues found a large number of women reported a lack of knowledge regarding domestic violence resources available for women victims. Further, the participants identified that they did not know how to come into contact with the professionals as they were actually not aware of any support services available to them. As well, for some women, they admitted not knowing where to go and to whom they should seek for help. Similarly, Peckover (2003) found significant information lacking on domestic violence resources in her study regarding battered women in the United Kingdom. In relation to that, the author recommended that the issue of a lack of awareness of service provisions could be improved by promoting knowledge enhancement amongst women via the development of educational and training activities. Meanwhile, other barriers that inhibit women victims from disclosing abuse include a lack of access to support services provided for domestic violence victims and survivors in remote areas (Jones, 2008; Poole *et al.*, 2008; Sricamsuk, 2006).

Conclusions

To conclude, this investigation aims to assess the participants' experiences of violence particularly with reference to several issues faced by the abused women. A primary goal of the thematic analysis was to offer an explanation of the experiences of living in the abusive relationships among battered women in the country. Specifically, this topic focused on the barriers identified by the abused women that inhibited them from disclosing and seeking help.

A number of researchers have conducted studies related to disclosure of domestic violence from various aspects (Dhakal, 2008; Jones, 2008; Sricamsuk, 2006; Joan Hanley, 2004; Peckover, 2003). It appears from the current study that Malaysian women with domestic abuse experiences believed that there were at least four sound reasons which had restrained them from telling others of the abuse and violence. These emergent themes were very contextual to the Malaysian setting and this perhaps contributes new knowledge to the current literature locally as well as in global terms. Presumably, some of the issues emerging from the findings relate specifically to the cultural context, social norms as well as religious beliefs among the respondents involved in this particular study.

CHAPTER 8

NEEDS AND SUPPORTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVISIONS

The third question in this research related to asking for information regarding domestic violence service providers. This investigation was focused on battered women's personal experiences during their contact with local organizations who work with domestic violence victims and survivors. The service providers identified in the study include the courts, police officers, healthcare teams, welfare services and so forth. This chapter will firstly discuss the findings in relation to depressing incidents experienced by the women participants, followed by the problems with procedures during the help seeking process. Adding this together, the end of this chapter will highlight the women's suggestions regarding resources that they would find helpful in dealing with domestic violence situations.

Predominantly, this particular division provides useful discussion about existing formal supportive networks which aim at promoting better quality of services for abused women in Malaysia. Details of the themes and sub-themes in this category are illustrated in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Issues on domestic violence resources in Malaysia

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Issues on domestic violence service provisions	Unpleasant experiences when accessing the services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inaccessibility- Bureaucracy problems- Delay in services- Human factors
	The problems with procedures in disclosing and in help-seeking process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of guidance- Non-integrated services- Enforcement matter
	The usefulness of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Helpful services- Unhelpful services- Agencies limitations

	Women's needs and support mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving the existing domestic violence resources - Suggestions for future services
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Key Findings and Discussion

Unpleasant experiences when accessing the services

Getting out of an abusive or violent relationship is not easy. It is believed that the reassurance in relation to provision of support systems for the abused women is paramount. Based on the interviews conducted, many women reported encountering unpleasant experiences when they attempted to access some of the services provided. Regrettably, those experiences in due course may contribute to the low level of reporting partner violence and as well may hinder the women from seeking assistance via the professionals who work with victims and survivors of domestic violence in this country. Ikin, Joyah and Wan recalled their own personal experiences:

"I had once been to Legal Aid Bureau in Kuala Lumpur. But I feel there are a lot of bureaucratic problems. It's very difficult. They said that I can only approach them if my case has reached court level. They didn't even advise me on how to proceed with the case after that. At that time I didn't even know about the shelter home and so I went back to my house and the same problem repeated". (Ikin)

"I got fed-up of going to the Islamic Religious Affairs Department at Kepala Batas in Penang. Things have not changed. I lodged my reports several times but the situation remains the same. They didn't take any action against my husband. No benefit to me of doing so. It's not easy for me to travel there. It requires time and money. Don't those people at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department ever think of the difficulties I had to go through?" (Joyah)

"Do you know that I went to the local Pusat Perkhidmatan Wanita (Women Service Centre), twice? Not once, but twice. I really thought that they could help me. I pulled up my courage and went there in spite of feeling threatened that my husband would find out about it. The first time I went there, I told my story. They told me to come again on another day. So, I went there for the second time. This time I had to tell my story all over again because my case was referred to another officer-in-charge. I was so angry. They just want to know my story and they didn't take any action". (Wan)

Negative experiences with the organization's responses subsequently led to a decrease in the use of services and reflected the outcomes of unreported violent incidents in the future. The excerpts below represent the women's stories in relation to the critical comments when they attempted to access the services provided by the police authorities, the Islamic Religious Affairs Department as well as from the medical institutions.

"I went to the police station at Pokok Sena so that they could record down my statement. Instead, they refused to do so saying that 'its domestic issues... its marital issues... they can't interfere'. I got very angry at them and I told them to issue me letter as a record stating I had come to lodge a report. They told me that I was insane and asked me if I had understood what they had told me. They repeatedly said that it's marital issues and he is still my husband. They told me to go back and settle it with my husband. They didn't want to record my statement. After that I had to go all the way to a police station in Alor Star". (Rizi)

"The officers at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department were not very friendly at all. I felt ashamed when I first went there. The officer at the front office directly asked me about my purpose of visit. When I met the counsellor, he scolded me and gave me a long talk about the subject. He said that it's not wise to ask for a divorce and reminded me to think about my children. He went on saying that sometimes I can also be the main cause to my husband's current attitude. He pointed the fingers back at me. How could he say that?" (Baizura)

"At the time when I was at the hospital in HUKM, I told the doctor that my husband beat me. The doctor asked a few other questions. He then gave me a 'normal' medical report instead of a report on the abuse. He said, "Puan, I would prepare a normal medical report for you because if the case was categorised as an abuse, the procedures would be complicated....because the doctor would be required to be a witness in court". He didn't even refer me to any other authorities. At the hospital, I made a call directly to my sister for help". (Ikin)

In conjunction with the above discussion in regards to women's distressing experiences when seeking assistance from the formal support systems, the professionals in the organizations also believed there is still room for improvement in the existing services offered to the abused women in Malaysia. The professionals explained:

“I think, from my experience while dealing with the lady, they do not believe that they will be helped. That’s from my own experience. They think “if I go there, they don’t seem like they want to help me”. “They sound like they do not want to help me”. I think deep down, the women don’t believe that many people out there want to help them. That’s mostly coming from their past experiences themselves. In their mind, “when I go there, they tell me to come tomorrow....they tell me to do this, to do that....but they don’t believe something really happening to me.” (Sister Holly, the manager)

“From my opinion, I would say that bureaucracy plays a major part in this issue. So, this is the limitation for us to help those women out there. As a NGO (non-governmental organization), sometimes we ourselves encountered problems when dealing with the government agencies. I think that is why some women found it difficult when seeking assistance particularly from the government agencies like Islamic Religious Affairs Department”. (Mrs. Piah, the director)

“I would say that the quality of services that we provide at the moment needs a lot of improvement especially among these service providers. There is always the gap, the attitude of the enforcement officer at some point. We used to have problems like this enforcement officer don’t know about this Domestic Violence Act in this country, but they have the responsibility to educate the client. That’s ridiculous. We were surprised to know that investigation officer doesn’t know about the Act and doesn’t know where to refer the client to seek help. They just take down the client statement. That’s it. I think the client should be advised of a proper channel for subsequent help”. (Miss Ann, the social worker)

“It’s like what I’ve said just now. Whenever we make an appointment with the couple involved for counselling sessions, many did not turn up. It’s always the husband. We get blamed from the wife because of our inability to proceed with the case without the husband’s presence. We cannot force the husband to attend because there is no provision for us to act in that sense so that they are present at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department for counselling and other similar purposes”. (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

The results obtained from the present study indicated that some of the abused women have lost their faith in local authorities such as the police, the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, and other domestic violence service providers due to their negative experiences when seeking assistance. In addition, many of the interviewees reported their disappointment as well as frustration because what they have experienced was not what they expected from the agencies. Consequently, the abused women may consider not contacting those service providers again in the future. It is believed that this circumstance may lead to a significant disincentive regarding the disclosure of domestic violence cases among the abused women in the country.

The findings of this study indicate that women participants experienced various kinds of unpleasant incidents during their help seeking attempts with the support services. It was reported that these negative experiences had contributed to a decrease in the use of the interventions provided as well as making disclosing abuse even more challenging for battered women. One of the main issues raised by the women was bureaucratic problems when dealing with the service provider, particularly within civil service organizations, namely the *Sharia* court, the Islamic Religious Affairs Department and the Social Welfare Department. Together, there were some participants in the current study who encountered distressing situations while getting medical treatment as well as lodging a police report. These findings suggest that there is room for improvements in legal and welfare administration; principally by changing the way frontline personnel respond to each case as well as stripping out bureaucratic processes for a speedy resolution for these abused women.

Interestingly, one unanticipated finding was that the professional interviewees also agreed that bureaucracy plays a major part in this controversial matter. Furthermore, the professionals expressed their personal concern regarding the quality of services they offered at the moment with reference to facilitating the support and assistance that abused women needed. It appears that insufficient knowledge and the influence of cultural perceptions on domestic abuse problems are among the contributing factors to the professionals' poor response in handling violent relationship cases. It was evident in this present study that some local police authorities refused to take a statement from the victim on the grounds that domestic violence is a private marital affair. In another cases, medical staff seemed to be ignorant of the real situation faced by the victim and offered no help in return despite of their role as service providers.

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the professionals in this study and those described by Dunlop *et al.* (2005) and Senturia *et al.* (2000). For example, Dunlop *et al.* (2005) in their study on older women's understanding toward domestic violence issues concluded that respondents described negative feelings regarding police responses, explicitly with regard to insensitivity displayed by officers as well as an ignorance of effectively dealing with the victims. Meanwhile Senturia *et al.* (2000) found that some participants recruited in their study from eight ethnic minority communities in the United States reported being dissatisfied with the police

treatment during the help seeking process as the women's pleas for help were often ignored. In rather contrary results, key findings obtained from the community research project in Toronto which investigated women's experiences of the police response to domestic violence incidents recorded positive comments that were received from the women participants. The police officers in this survey were described as helpful in most of the domestic abuse cases and cared to provide information, resources, as well as making appropriate referrals for the women to obtain further assistance (Lanthier, 2008).

Although no local study could be found to support this particular finding, one Malaysian study has discovered that only a small number of medical staff (i.e. clinicians and nursing staff) was aware of the existence of written protocols for domestic violence management in a primary health care setting. Worryingly, almost 30 per cent of doctors surveyed in the same study reported that they had never asked their patients about domestic violence (Othman & Mat Adenan, 2008). The outcomes from the above study demonstrate unconstructive attitudes of some professionals while dealing with domestic violence cases. However, with less than 200 participants as the sample of the study, the authors' findings cannot be extrapolated to all medical staff who works with domestic violence victims/survivors in Malaysia. Some of the issues emerging from the findings of this current research relate specifically to information delivery, routine screening for abuse and referral pathways within domestic violence service providers. It is recommended that linkages among formal supportive networks for legal, health as well as welfare services should be upgraded in order to prevent a lengthy and fragmented process of resource deliverance. A further study with more focus on domestic violence support networks is therefore suggested.

The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with professional incompetence connected with the mishandling of domestic abuse cases. It is believed that battered women's personal experiences in help seeking attempts with support services may have created benchmarking aimed at further training for staff. In order to address officer's poor performance in most cases, the specialization as well as expertise of key individuals is crucial to improving the services. Not only in the matter of sensitivity towards the victims, professionals are advised to be aware of

domestic violence cases involving issues of substance abuse, gambling, mental health problems, abuse of children, polygamy and so on. In spite of everything, the role of the professional is essentially broad. Apart from serving as mediator, they should also be a good listener. Therefore, the professional should not at any cost impose their respective beliefs on cases of domestic abuse.

The problems with procedures in disclosing and in the help-seeking process

This present research aims to investigate the problems highlighted by abused women in relation to their needs and support offered by domestic violence service providers in Malaysia. Thus, the feedback given by the abused women from the interview conducted was highly valuable in order to identify those matters of concern. In addition to the unpleasant experiences when accessing the services, the women also claimed to face a number of procedural issues in relation to their help-seeking attempts with the formal supportive networks. Rita, Joyah and Ain explained about the necessity of specific guidance for them as the women were literally not well informed about their rights and possible options in order to take charge of the problem.

“I know that there are some form of aid given like in the form of monetary help by Baitulmal, and allowances by JKM (Social Welfare Department) for my autistic child. But, how do I get access to this aid? Where do I go? How do we know about our rights under the existing Act? Nobody tells us anything. We have to find out for ourselves”. (Rita)

“In my experience, I had to do all those things. I went to look for a lawyer. The lawyer was supposed to explain to me about the meaning of divorce through ‘fasakh’ and ‘ta’liq’. I should be told about what my rights are to demand if any. He should be explaining those things to me because I truly don’t understand them. Isn’t it?” (Joyah)

“I have never made a police report in my entire life. Honestly I have never made one. The police had never guided me or told me what to do after that. I just wrote there that I had made my decision for divorce. That’s all I wrote. No action was taken against my husband. If I want to make a report there should be someone to guide me. If there is a proper guide, then only actions can be taken against him because he harmed me”. (Ain)

Arni and Zara however, encountered slightly positive experiences:

“The police didn’t arrest him. I went to the Police Station at Tanjung Tokong and met Sarjan Salbiah. She referred me to the Social Welfare Department. There, I came to know about the processes of applying for IPO (Interim Protection Order)”. (Arni)

“With the help of WCC (Women Centre for Change), they assisted me by bringing me to see the Islamic Religious Affairs Department and to the Sharia Court. If not, I wouldn’t know where else to turn to. Sometimes it doesn’t help much, but this will do to keep my spirits high”. (Zara)

The following were the responses from the women in the study who talked about procedures in some of the organizations which appeared to be ineffective as well as ‘unhelpful’ to them during their experiences of the help-seeking process. These women stated the example of some procedural issues related to;

The police authorities:

“My husband has never been prosecuted and the police have never arrested him at home. They just sent an IPO (Interim Protection Order) to the house. He gave his statement and signed. There is no impact on him”. (Ain)

“After I was beaten, I thought of this one place, the police station. I made my report there. In my report, I mentioned about my husband’s beatings and how he broke all the things at home. When the report was completed, the police told me to go home. They didn’t arrest him or charge him with anything. The report I made was merely for records”. (Yusnah)

“After I made my report, my husband was remanded for 24 hours by the police for questioning. The case was classified as a marital case and no action was taken”. (Ikin)

The Social Welfare Department:

“It is very difficult to meet the officer- in-charge at the Social Welfare Department. When I went there, the officer was not available because he was away attending a course. The next time I went, he was on vacation. I asked them whether another officer could take over and handle my case. They said that it was not possible because other officers have other cases to handle. If that is the situation, when will it all end?” (Arni)

“He got a letter from the court saying that if he wants to visit us, he could only do so from the other side of our home fence. When I left WCC (Women Centre for Change), there was no more protection. The IPO (Interim Protection Order) that I requested from the Social Welfare Department was only valid for

a month. To request for another one takes a longer time, which is equal to length of protection period given”, (Ain)

The Sharia Court:

“If I add up all, it took me almost two years in total, to get the court to decide. It has been two odd years for it to end. There were so many problems in court. When I was there, he was not there. Sometimes, it was postponed because the lawyer was absent, or the judge was not around, or no specific documents. Court procedures require time”. (Raihana)

“There were so many times in and out of court because of court postponements. It was not that I didn’t want to go. If I didn’t go I get scolded. They said that they would send a warning letter or sue me. On the other hand, why don’t they just sue the absent lawyer or the judge to that same extent?” (Joyah)

“I don’t know what to say. I have been going to the Legal Aid Bureau from time to time. I enquired from them of the outcome, but there was no response. They told me to wait for a letter requesting me to be present in court. They give me the same excuse every time, which is to wait for the letter. Now, I no longer have to wait for the letter (husband had passed away)”. (Siti)

The Pusat Urus Zakat (Alms Centre):

“When I went to the Pusat Urus Zakat (Alms Centre) to collect my share of tithe money, the officer told me that since I have good health. I should work. They told me that I have children who are already working, therefore I am not eligible. I am a single mother and all of my children are working. But, the money they make is for their respective families. It will still be in sufficient for me even though they give for each month. The problem is others who are good in health, owns a car, and could still get that money. I don’t own a house or a car”. (Patimah)

“All this while, I’ve been receiving money from the Social Welfare Department because of my son, Zalif, is handicapped. I receive RM300 a month. Nowadays, what can I buy with just RM300. It’s not enough”. (Zulaikha)

The Islamic Religious Affairs Department:

“The authorities at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department know about my case (domestic violence). They said that it’s beyond their jurisdiction to arrest a husband who abuses his wife. They can’t do so. They can only give counselling up to three times. Now, the question is whether we attend that session or not. They will write a report to qadi about our complaints”. (Junaidah)

“My husband is a person who knows how to talk. He manipulates his story. In the end, the ustaz (male officer) would agree with him and I am on the wrong side. I am labelled as nusyuz, the disobedient wife. I don’t know how to communicate, but my husband knows how to talk. When he is at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department or at similar places, everyone will surely believe him. I feel that the Islamic Religious Affairs Department sides with the man more often. It’s only my opinion”. (Zara)

“Those ustaz (male officer) and ustazah (female officer) at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department often say that it’s marital issues, when it comes to our complaints. They can only offer counselling. It doesn’t really work. We keep on repeating the same story but the problem doesn’t get solved. When the man doesn’t come for the session, they said that there is nothing that they could do because there is no law provision. They make phone calls and issue warning letters. Our Islamic Religious Affairs Department is powerless and men are not afraid of them”. (Ikin)

The issues mentioned above by the abused women in the study reflected the necessity of reviewing the current services of social and legal remedies to domestic violence among the providers nationwide. Disparities of views exist between the abused women who engaged with such services and the professionals in the organizations who delivered the resources. Therefore, it is suggested that clear guidelines must be outlined along with mutual collaboration between the related parties. The professionals shared the explanations on the standard procedures and common practices when they handled spousal abuse cases at their agencies:

“First and foremost, we normally advise our clients to go and make the police report and then go to the nearest hospital for check-ups. The police report is for the client’s record keeping and it does not involve any action to be taken against the husband. A medical check-up will prove whether abuse has taken place if there are any visible bruises. Our abused clients would normally decline to make any police report because they fear that their husband would be arrested. That is why we need to make them understand clearly and encourage them to make the police report. This is a sharia court and not a civil court. The police may make an arrest if the court gives the order to do so. In actual fact, there are actions taken against the husband if the wife lodges a report to the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. We will guide the wife to make a decision for her own benefit and others”. (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

“This is our standard procedure: she will first make a report to the police, according to our procedure for cases like this. After that she will need to go to the hospital to obtain a medical report so long as there are visible bruises. After she has completed those two procedures, we will get her to decide whether she wants to continue the marriage or proceed to court (for divorce).

If she opts for the marriage to continue, we shall call the husband and advise him about his responsibilities and such things. If she opts for divorce, we shall open a file to proceed with the divorce in court. If it is a fasakh case, she will have to deal directly with the court. Bring all the necessary reports and witnesses. The husband will need to be present in court to defend himself. If he fails to show up, the court has the right to declare the marriage as void". (Mrs. Emma, the counsellor)

"On the financial aspects, if she has any financial difficulties, we shall channel her to the Pusat Urus Zakat (Alms Centre) for financial aid. The Social Welfare Department also gives financial assistance but it's mainly for single mothers and a few other criteria. Women who have been ill-treated but not officially divorced are not eligible for such aid". (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

"We have close contact with people in JKM (Social Welfare Department) and BBG (Legal Aid Bureau) here. So, I feel the procedure at JKM is very fast for us. For the IPO (Interim Protection Order) application, normally it just takes about two days. Let say today you lodge police report, tomorrow you go to see the welfare officer. Maybe two days later you will get the IPO providing you submit completed documents. It's actually dependant on the Social Welfare Department. So far, our experience is that the application is very fast. But it is different for the child custody because the procedure may take months. If the lawyer really helps, she can put the case as urgent as she can and within one month you can get it. But you know...sometimes the court just likes to have it longer". (Miss Ann, the social worker)

This study discovered that the service provision for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia is still developing. Nonetheless, at the current time, there are certain standard procedures as well as common practises that are exercised for domestic abuse cases. Disputes over the effectiveness of the services usually occur as the clients (the abused women) were not well informed about the working mechanisms of those resources. On the other hand, the organizations (i.e. Islamic Religious Affairs Department, Royal Malaysian Police, and Welfare Department) were also bound within their own limitations. It is a normal practise to handle spousal abuse case with several agencies involved and this may influence the effectiveness of the service delivery. Thus, based on the women's and the professional's accounts, the researcher believes that the difficulties and impediments in the procedures faced by abused women during the disclosure of partner violence should be minimized for future service enhancements in Malaysia.

From what has been suggested by women participants in this study, it appears that abused women are commonly in need of straightforward instructions, specific guidance, close monitoring as well as follow up care to ensure security (for victims and that of their children) in the aftermath of domestic violence incident disclosure. These sensible recommendations were found to be highlighted by battered women and stem from their individual experiences when they reach out for help. Primarily, this subsection aims to explore service provider's responses to domestic violence cases.

One of the most important facts to consider in the study was that the majority of the participants were identified as having a low level of education with only several of them being employed. Therefore, circumstances as such may enhance the risk factors for these women becoming the victim (Sarkar, 2010; White & Postl, 2010; Kocacik & Dogan, 2006). Many of the women interviewees in the study were reported to be lacking in understanding on domestic violence resources due to a limited exposure to this particular issue. Indeed, the current study found a great deal of procedural problems which interferes with victim's help-seeking attempts. In some cases, the social and legal assistance such as with the Welfare Department and the police authorities had not considered to offer specific consultation to individuals, including abused women cases. As described by the participants, they were literally not well informed about their options and how do they go about the procedures; particularly in relation to legal provisions and social support during the help-seeking process.

In line with the subject matter, abused women stated they often encountered procedural problems when seeking assistance with some of the service providers. For instance, although they had lodged a police report against the abusive husband, no further action was taken by the police (i.e. whether to arrest the abuser, place him on remand or interrogate the abuser for the offence). This situation happened because the women were not properly advised about the next possible step of the process. Common practice demonstrates that the police usually worked toward mediation to reconcile the couple since the case was culturally perceived as the issue of marital discord. In actual fact, the women have the right to press charges on the abuser providing they submitted relevant evidence such as medical reports and statements of claim to the Islamic Religious Affairs Department (for Muslim) or the National Registration Department (for non-Muslim) as well as the police report itself. At a later

stage, prosecution for a domestic abuse offence against the male partner may or may not be exercised for a legal separation petition if the woman decided to pursue divorce.

Another important finding was that for some women, their accounts showed that they had been left with no guidance for specific ‘material’ assistance. This includes the application for monetary aid, petitioning for an Interim Protection Order (IPO) and preparation of relevant divorce documents for the court hearing. Furthermore, the study found that time consuming procedures in family courts were obviously not favourable to many as there was much frustration felt by the women due to the chains of procedural requirements (i.e. witnesses, paperwork and supporting evidence). Nevertheless, it is believed that a shorter time for case settlement may be reached if there is close supervision by the professionals. This finding is in agreement with the study by Ismail *et al.* (2011) which found there were five factors that cause delay in Selangor’s *Sharia* courts. The study noted that procedural reasons and technical problems had brought about 30 per cent of the total complaints. The same study named the main contributor to this as the relevant parties themselves and a small portion of complaints was in regard to the judge, lawyers and also poor management of documents (i.e. the servicing of notices and summons).

It seems possible that these results are due to multi-disciplinary functioning and the overlap of areas that are involved in providing support services for domestic violence victims and survivors. Overcoming the problems of abused women demands partnership from various types of resources, namely socio-legal provision, healthcare services, emotional support and so on. Thus, effective collaboration and networking among these service providers are recommended in order to offer consistent, hassle-free procedural pathways for battered women. This finding has important implications for developing written protocols pertaining to related procedures and establishing specific guidelines for helping victims and survivors of domestic violence during their help-seeking process. It thus can be suggested that all procedures outlined must be implemented within a specific time frame to avoid domestic violence cases from dragging on for years. Worryingly, if the present situation continues, it is possible that problems with the procedures may eventually decrease the use of support services among abused women in Malaysia.

The usefulness of services

On the whole, the usefulness of support services offered by domestic violence resources in Malaysia was explored during the conversations with women participants as well as the professionals. The result of thematic analysis has identified various types of services available for abused women at present. The participants' accounts were clustered into sub-themes named 'helpful and unhelpful services' as well as shortcomings encountered by the agencies. The findings describe the women's preferences with resources that they found supportive while dealing with a domestic violence situation. These categories also include some of the professionals' point of view in relation to this subject matter. For example, some participants shared their experiences while staying at the shelter:

"When I was at the shelter home, I received few tips on women's rights. I received some other related information also. I like the motivational session because it keeps my spirits high". (Zara)

"They provide everything for us and that is good. For the time being, it would be good also if they could find us jobs. Get us jobs and places to stay so that it could be a stepping stone for us to be independent". (Nor)

The following is a fragment of excerpts from Siti:

"All I know is that the Islamic Religious Affairs Department offers counselling and advice for divorce in court. It is still relevant because divorce cases will have to go through them, mainly for Muslims. We still have to go through them whether we like it or not". (Siti)

Whereas manager of the shelter, Sister Holly, was hoping to empower the women;

"We hope we could grow more in giving them moral support, employment to the women and the financial independency as this is crucial for the recovery of the domestic violence". (Sister Holly, the manager)

Furthermore, some credits should be given to the organizations in regards to the emotional support resources provided for abused women. These include the counselling sessions, motivational talks as well as consultation services. Although some of the women thought that the facilities provided were unsupportive, the necessities of those services cannot be denied. Zawayah along with Zara expressed their personal views regarding this issue.

“They offered us suggestions during counselling. It’s like a talk. Previously, I was very sad and my mind was completely shut. I am much better now since I came for counselling. They taught me how to do zikir and prayers. After that, I began to be able to think much more clearly”. (Zawiyah)

“That is why I said there are benefits. At least it helps us. If there are things that need to be said, then say it out. If not, then there is no need to do so. I feel that it should be retained. It gives a lot of benefits to those who can gain something good from it”. (Zara)

Next, educational intervention was another helpful mechanism identified by the professionals as well as the abused women in this study. Such a strategy may enable information about violence against women to be shared and also disseminated widely within society. These fragments of quotes were obtained from the women who thought that agencies should educate and guide them with the procedural matters to make the help-seeking process goes smoothly:

“Others may not experience as how I did. I did not have high education. When I went to get help, I didn’t know the correct way. There were many mistakes in my form. In fact, a few times. They did not advise me on how to fill up the form and the documents required. I wasted a lot of time”. (Halimah)

“I was enlightened on the necessary steps required after I went to the Religious Department. I like to ask a lot of questions. Now I know more. I feel the officers there should offer more advise either to file for ‘Fasakh’, go to the shelter home and other kinds of assistance. I suggest that they do a programme on television about women’s rights and divorce cases. Also, they should get a lawyer to give all these talks. The society needs to know “. (Joyah)

In relation to the procedural issues as well as ineffective implementation of the services involving many of the organizations who work with domestic violence victims and survivors, the study found that the criticisms made by abused women were largely directed towards how time consuming the process could be. Most of the women interviewed were disappointed with the prolonged divorce process in the *Sharia* Court as well as endless waiting on the agencies’ approval upon applications for assistance, particularly in terms of monetary aid. The excerpts below were narrated by four out of seven women who have similar thoughts about the delays:

“Whatever process that is necessary for divorce, it should not take up so much time. It will be difficult for us to get on with our lives. If we need to ask for assistance, we need to have a divorce letter. Later we would want to claim for ‘harta sepencarian’ (jointly acquired property) and permanent child custody.

As long as the divorce is not made officially, so many matters will be left hanging". (Rita)

"I hope that the authorities will be more compassionate when dealing with people like us. For example the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, lawyers and the Social Welfare Department. They should be more serious. We have been long waiting for assistance. They are not experiencing the difficulty because they are not the ones who have been waiting. They repeatedly told us to wait. I don't want them to give more problems than I already have and so my advice to them is they should look for another career instead. They have chosen their current career because they want to help others, am I right?" (Joyah)

"My hope is for the government agencies to speed up their work. When I filed for divorce through fasakh, I waited for a month with no news at the shelter. The problem is it has been very slow. I quickly did the filing and after that it was beyond my control. We need to work and find income for food, it is all for the children". (Ain)

"I have nothing to suggest. I only wish that the divorce could be speedily processed. We need to apply for a house. Hoping that the process could be simplified for people like us. I see there are others who managed to have a house, financial aid and other types of assistance. So, I hope to get it fast and make it easy". (Junaidah)

The findings in the study showed that the majority of the abused women were not aware of the social and legal resources available around them. Additionally, many of them demanded step-by-step guidance and close monitoring from the organizations during the help-seeking process. In fact, domestic violence service providers should also be prepared in terms of their knowledge provision as well as updated information concerning the spousal abuse problem in Malaysia. They said:

"The police should give us more advice on what we should do. Information regarding where we should go after making report and whom to see were very important. But it is not happening as how it should be. I feel that the police must have received many reports. They probably took down the statement and kept it, that's all. The police should assist us better". (Tina)

"If we go to the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, they do give counselling to patch things up. That is okay. But they should also give advice on how to proceed with divorce. They have more knowledge about all these". (Yuna)

As well, the professional interviewees recommended some refinements in relation to enforcement of the existing laws concerning domestic violence. They conceded that there was leniency regarding the offender as well as local authorities' poor response towards the reporting of cases of violent incidents.

“Firstly, there is a need for refinement in the context of law enforcement itself. From my observation in court, the amount of penalty charged under the Islamic Family Law is insufficient. Currently, the maximum amount charged is RM1000 (equivalent to £200). Nowadays, that amount is not a burden for anyone to pay. Or else there will be the imprisonment charged of not more than 6 months and whipping of not more than 6 times. The Islamic Family Law itself must be further consolidated”. (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

“But I think that is important. We can have the most beautiful laws but if people don't believe that they will be helped when they go to the police that was it. Nothing is going to happen. And the problem remains in the cycle. It's important to the agencies to have some powers to help them as well. At least, the victim can feel the difference between before and after the reporting”. (Sister Holly, the manager)

In providing the services mentioned above by the professionals, the reality of the limitations faced by those organizations were apparent. Some of the professionals recalled the lack of manpower and funding as the major drawbacks in their services delivery. As Sister Holly and Miss Cathy described,

“Our biggest problem at this agency is that we are short of staff. I think we can deliver better if we have enough manpower and lots of volunteers. In Malaysia, volunteers are very hard to find. Many of them cannot commit and usually do not last very long. Of course one of the main reasons is the pay. As a volunteer, you don't get paid. We also hope that we can manage to hire more social workers and counsellors for our agency. But at this moment, we can't afford to have more”. (Sister Holly, the manager)

“We are planning to set up programmes, organize some motivational camps...things like that....also to the public. We want to involve more of the private sector and government agencies into our activities. The only problem we are facing now is about monetary constraints. We depend on donations to run our activities. Sometimes we get small amounts of money from the Kebajikan (Social Welfare Department). We hope to get contributions from this government consistently”. (Miss Cathy, the social worker)

In line with the above discussion, the importance of integration between relevant agencies in order to facilitate disclosing and the facilitation of providing help to women was also raised during the conversations. Miss Cathy and Mr. Azhar explained:

“I urged the Kebajikan (Social Welfare Department)...they should work more closely with us because the JKM has the power to control many things as it is one of the important government agencies in Malaysia”. (Miss Cathy, the social worker)

“Malaysian women need to be given the awareness. We have many agencies that have these obligations to do so like the Ministry of Women, Family & Community Development, Islamic Religious Affairs Department, National Unity, and Department of Social Welfare and we have yet to include youth. These agencies seem weak because they function individually. Each department with their own policies, budgets, own ways, programmes and targets. That is why it is difficult to give effective services to our clients”. (Mr. Azhar, the counsellor)

Indeed, formal supportive networks are in a key position to assist abused women in many respects including psychological and emotional aspects, legal consultation, accommodation and housing as well as health care resources. The study found that feedback from the women participants demonstrated that current facilities provided by organizations (who work with domestic violence victims/survivors) were rated as modest. However, drawing on these women's accounts, the results of this study also indicate that the usefulness of these support services for abused women cannot be denied. For instance, Muslim couples are compulsory to undergo counselling session held by the Islamic Religious Affairs Department prior to any divorce application for the purpose of reconciliation. The finding shows some women had different opinions regarding this type of support service and thought there was an element of sex-discrimination when referring to actions for divorce. Others claimed that current provisions were essential but suggest possible improvements to be made along the way in the near future.

On the same subject, the professionals had identified a number of domestic violence provisions which specifically allowed delivery of helpful resources to abused women. The services include in-house activities (i.e. motivational talks, religious education and vocational training) as well as outreach programmes such as workshops, conferences and exhibitions targeting the community at large. These activities aim at empowering women's sense of self and capabilities. Further, a more friendly approach was also established between the organizations and the people during home-visit projects, school tours as well as with drop-in centres that were set up to spread

information about the organizations' mission particularly with reference to violence against women in Malaysia.

The study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field. For instance, Nilsson, Brown, Russell and Khamphakdy-Brown (2008) claimed that outreach services were one of the key aspects in offering assistance for battered women. In their study, the authors suggest a number of strategies on working with women victims. Their recommendations include the service provider's direct involvement with women in low-income groups, spreading information through workshops/seminars in communal areas as well as utilizing radio and television broadcasting. On the other hand, a comparison study by Lee, Poomeroy and Bohman (2007) in the United States found that even though there were plenty of social supports made available for abused women, the fact that they themselves feel trapped in the violent relationships has resulted in the services becoming less efficient and underused. The same research also demonstrates that different ethnic groups may need a slightly different approach by services to recover from domestic abuse events.

Amongst the issues that emerge from these findings is the effectiveness and accessibility of support mechanisms for this vulnerable population. Despite the fact that plenty of resources were narrated in the participants' transcriptions (i.e. the agencies), these findings are rather disappointing because it appears that although a long list of service provisions were on offer many abused women in Malaysia are still struggling to receive the right support they needed. It seems possible that these results are due to several limitations encountered by the organizations, for example lack of manpower and financial constraints (particularly for the NGOs). Conceivably, in order to facilitate help seeking among the women victims, bureaucratic problems as well as stringent enforcement by relevant domestic violence service providers must also be addressed accordingly. Thus, administrative reforms are suggested in order to enhance the efficiency and performance of the public as well as private bureaucracies in Malaysia. Future studies on this current topic are therefore recommended.

Women's needs and support mechanisms

As elaborated earlier, the discussion concerning the needs and support mechanisms in this study were largely identified via face-to-face interviews conducted with the women as well as the professionals in the organizations. The participants highlighted the need for improving existing service provisions on offer together with establishing some new approach regarding resources. The key to success in order to implement these recommendations is effort and courage at all levels of people within society, from agencies to women in particular. The following are the excerpts from the professionals' point of view pertinent to the existing services available at the organizations:

"At this place, we provide them and their children a place to stay until they are able to stand on their own two feet. During this period, we will give them counselling, religious education and we get them to be involved in our business project so that their time is well spent on something that they are benefiting from. We provide food as what this place can afford to provide. Normally they are quick to adapt to this place because we provide them with 'homely' surroundings". (Mrs. Piah, the director)

"There were cases whereby we brought them to make police reports and check-ups at the hospital. If they require an IPO (Interim Protection Order), we refer them to the Social Welfare Department and then to court. We give them a place to stay. We would like to help all of them, but they also need to help themselves too". (Madam Thivy, the director)

"There is process called 'negotiation' at the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. During that process, there is counselling, advice and much more for the client. We also assist in divorce proceedings for those who opt for it, and also the peace process (sulh). We hold lectures at a congregation, programmes and much more. We play our part from the very beginning, before the couple get married actually. Not many realise that all these things have been mentioned in the pre-marital course which has been made compulsory to attend." (Mr. Azhar, the counsellor)

In addition to the services delivered by the professionals internally at the agencies, outreach programmes such as awareness campaigns, short course seminars, conferences and exhibitions were also organized; targeting the community at large. These kinds of activities were conducted in order to disseminate information regarding violence against women as well as to publicize the organization's functions in the eye of Malaysian society. For instance, the professionals replied:

“We named these programmes as ‘Developing an Islamic Family Programme’ and ‘Social Development Programme’. These are fixed programmes. They are held at every mosque in Penang. One facilitator is designated to be there on every weekend so that the public could consult them from 9a.m. until 1 o’clock in the afternoon. This person will be there to entertain any questions from the public or any information required about our Islamic Religious Affairs Department. If he is unable to provide an answer, he will refer to our office. This way, it will attract people from rural areas and advise them about information such as family issues and similar problems”. (Miss Husni, the counsellor)

“Other than just giving counselling in our office, we also travel to remote areas. It’s our ‘going- to- the- ground’ method. During our travel, we give counselling and we educate the public about our department. All our programmes are conducted nearby to them”. (Mrs. Emma, the counsellor)

Other professionals like Miss Ann, Mr. Najib and Madam Thivy also responded:

“We normally do a lot of seminars, workshops and lectures in schools. During these programmes, we distribute brochures, pamphlets about domestic violence, phone numbers to contact, types of assistance that we provide and the activities that we do”. (Miss Ann, the social worker)

“An example of the programme that we did recently was a seminar called ‘My Home is My Paradise’ held at the government departments. We give out relevant information about marriage. It is everybody’s responsibility, when it comes to divorce and it involves issues of domestic violence. We make our participants aware of the existing Sharia Laws and Acts”. (Mr. Najib, the counsellor)

“Normally there are home visits to remote areas, villages of the natives and FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority) settlers. However, it all depends on our budget. These programmes are good because we are being closer to the community and more approachable.” (Madam Thivy, the director)

The interview method chosen has appeared to be a successful strategy in collecting the qualitative data presented in this study. Via this method, the researcher was able to draw together plenty of suggestions and recommendations from the women’s perspective as well as from the domestic violence service provider’s standpoint. The propositions were made with the purpose of offering a smooth, non-bureaucratic and hassle-free experience for the battered women during the disclosure of the violence and assistance seeking support. Ikin and Nuri talked about of the importance of promoting the services so as more women out there may benefit the resources made available for them.

“For the time being in Malaysia, I feel that the service that is being provided is less promoted. I personally feel that there has been lack of exposure about the services and the assistance being offered by these agencies. Those who are educated could search about it on the internet for information. Those who are from the rural areas and illiterates wouldn’t know where to go. They will just keep their problems to themselves”. (Ikin)

“In my opinion, there are so many good things that our government has done for the country. However, sometimes it seems to be for certain quarters only. If we all want to know about the abuses that have been going on, we should publicise it through television or radio. When many people are aware about it, they will come forward to solicit for those services. We should let our community be more open-minded to important information like this. Information can quickly reach all levels of the community if we use television and radio”. (Nuri)

Some of the women suggested a peer support group as a means of establishing rapport among the abused women and also allowing experiences to be exchanged within the members. This supportive network was identified by abused women in the study for moral encouragement as well as for friendship building. In the words of Patimah, Arni and Raihana:

“If it is possible, we should also have associations for the ill-treated women and single mothers. Gatherings should be held in order for invited guests to give talks, seminars, and share experiences, tips, ideas and motivational talks. Mention also about ways of getting help. We could share our experiences among ourselves and provide moral supports”. (Patimah)

“I suggest that there should be a meeting near the place where we stay. It should not necessarily be held often, but at least we could share it out. We could share the news, experiences and give out advices, that sort of information. I think it would be good for us”. (Arni)

“I think there should be small groups of people who are in the same situation to set up meetings. By doing so, we could mix around a bit and know what’s going on outside. I also feel that by being in a group, it is much easier to get help rather than being alone”. (Raihana)

Other women such as Wan and Zulikha requested assistance in the form of housing, employment and business capital to enhance their self-independency in the long-term. Sister Holly, the manager in one of the involved agencies, also has a comparable thought about that matter:

“I feel that there should be allocation of housing for single mothers with such problems. There is no one else to turn to after divorce. We need a roof over our heads. A shelter home is only a temporary measure. The Town Council should assist us by simplifying the process of getting a house”. (Wan)

“Types of assistance that could be given to single mothers are like a sewing machine if she knows how to sew, an oven if she knows how to bake or it could be knitting or beadings. She could also sell banana fritters or sell nasi lemak. Capital would be a problem for beginners. It should be considered as hire purchase or small business loan as capital. I don’t see a solution for single mothers like me”. (Zulaikha)

“We hope we could grow more in giving them moral support, employment to the women and the financial independency as this is crucial for the recovery of the domestic violence”. (Sister Holly, the manager)

Adding to the recommendation’s list, two social workers talked on exposure as well as to build awareness and educating public about domestic violence.

“The main problem with housewives is they do not know their rights. Secondly, they don’t mix around; therefore they don’t know that women have rights, the Domestic Violence Act and other types of assistance. They need to be exposed and educated about these related matters”. (Madam Soraya, the social worker)

“In general I feel that we should push more awareness within the community in terms of domestic violence issues. Even though people know that domestic violence is something related to social problems but still somehow we feel that people are trying to look at it as a family problem. This is more than a family problem; it is a societal matter actually”. (Miss Ann, the social worker)

What is amazing about the study was that the research provides an opportunity for the abused women to express their feelings as well as sharing stories for people to better understand their needs. As the matter of fact, the study contributes first-hand information from the valid source. It was found that many respondents were happy to put forward a variety of suggestions that they would find helpful in dealing with these traumatic episodes.

Firstly, the women identified the importance of promoting the resources provided by the agencies in an attempt to encourage violence disclosure and help-seeking events among the victims. Women reported that lack of exposure on domestic violence provisions may hamper the process of getting professional help as they were unclear exactly where to go for appropriate assistance. However, this result has not previously

been described. According to Coumarelos and Allen (1999), the reasons for not reporting and not using domestic violence services among abused women remain uncertain due to lack of research worldwide. It is somewhat surprising that as stated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] report on Women's Safety Survey in 1996, approximately three per cent of abused women in the survey were not engaged in any of the available services because of a lack of knowledge regarding such provisions. Furthermore, almost 40 per cent of the participants reported that they were reluctant to obtain support services as they wanted to resolve the issue themselves (McEwin, 1997). Sricamsuk (2006) suggests that domestic violence resources should be well promoted to the public so as to raise awareness about the services. In the same study, it was found that many Thai women indicated problems about access to services (i.e. travelling issues in relation to distance and cost) and this should be considered by the providers.

Secondly, a majority of the interviewees concurred that it was problematic for them during the waiting period for divorce because their cases had actually took between one to three years on average. This finding is in agreement with Abdullah's (2001) finding which showed that it was typical in Malaysian family courts for divorce cases to require several years to settle. Factors for the delay were reported to be absence from the court hearings, emergency leave taken by the lawyer/judge as well as technical problems with the application for divorce. As a conclusion, Ismail *et al.* (2011) suggest good management systems in court together with high commitment from all parties namely the plaintiff, the defendant and the lawyer to avoid unnecessary delays for the case. It is difficult to explain this result, but it may be related to a lack of understanding among the women/the partner in terms of procedures in legal provisions. This particular matter needs to be addressed appropriately.

Adding to the list, the women urged financial support in relation to long-term housing needs, education and job training assistance as well as resources for business start-ups from the service providers. This finding has important implications for developing a multi-disciplinary team that comprises of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Ministry of Human Resources as well as the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development of Malaysia. It seems possible that this

result is due to how women perceive their self-independence following the abuse. As described in the previous chapter, the majority of the participants were reported to be housewives. It can therefore be assumed that many of these women are desperate to gain access to their own economic resources which will lead to self-control over their personal lives. This finding further supports the idea that financial problems have been one of the biggest challenges to the survival of domestic violence victims, as stated by Payne and Wermeling (2009). Even though several numbers of recommendation on domestic violence provisions were proposed in this current study on the bright side praise should also be given to the existing domestic violence service providers for making such significant efforts at present to assist women (and the children) in abusive relationships reach for a better quality of life in the future.

Conclusions

This chapter discusses issues voiced by the participants in regards to the existing domestic violence service provisions in the country. The participants in the study highlighted some shortcomings within service provisions; which is based on their personal experiences during help-seeking events. On a positive note, discussion of emergent themes in this chapter was converted into recommendations at the end of the thesis. Overall, most participants talked about their unpleasant experiences with such services, the problems with procedures outlined by the agencies, helpful and unhelpful services offered, as well as the women's needs and support mechanism that they perceived useful while dealing with a domestic violence situation.

Firstly, data collected has shown that abused women often experience difficulties when accessing the services available. Their experience of disclosing and seeking assistance may become unpleasant due to destructive comments as well as the procedural impediments that they were subjected to follow; in most cases with poor monitoring by the agencies. Secondly, the urgency to resolve domestic violence cases was also frequently overlooked by the legal provisions. The limitations encountered by the organizations were addressed accordingly in the section. Interestingly, the study attempts to differentiate between helpful and unhelpful services offered to women in Malaysia pertinent to handling domestic violence situation. In the end, a

number of suggestions were proposed by abused women and the professionals as the outcomes of this research. The propositions include peer group support, integration between agencies, as well as educational intervention to facilitate service improvements in the future. These mechanistic issues are unique and localized in nature, and appear to be a worthy area of investigation which will definitely enhance the expansion of existing literature on the domestic violence problem.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the research recommendations, the implications of this study from various standpoints as well as the overview of this investigation. Along with the main contributions that this thesis, the study attempts to discuss the outcomes of the research in relation to its significance for practice, for education on domestic violence, and additionally the development of social policy pertinent to violence against women in Malaysia. Subsequently, the following section addresses the strengths and limitations of this study. In view of the strong points as well as the weaknesses of the study, suggestions for future research are outlined. Towards the end, the concluding remarks are presented in the closing section of this dissertation.

Overview of the Thesis Investigation

The current study presents an exploration of Malaysian women's experiences living in domestic violence relationships. Twenty-five women were interviewed and their accounts were analysed qualitatively to uncover their experiences of domestic violence in the context of their lives. This study, guided by principles of feminist research, aimed to identify the themes demonstrating the impacts, the barriers to the disclosing of violence, as well as the underlying issues pertinent to domestic violence resources in Malaysia. In parallel, the data set was enhanced by eleven interviews with professionals (i.e. counsellors, social workers and refuge administrators) to gain further insights and present the professionals' experiences of working with domestic violence victims and survivors.

Although Western studies on domestic violence experiences among women are considerable, Malaysia's literature is sparse. The strength of this research is in its investigation of domestic violence that included cultural perceptions and religious beliefs within Malaysian society. Moreover, the approach of qualitative interviews employed in the study enabled the researcher to seek out the views of abused women in a deeper manner as well as to allow flexibility within the interview.

The results of this investigation show that the impacts of domestic violence include a deterioration of mental health well-being, physical impairment as well as social isolation of the victims. On a positive note, the consequence of violence experiences has grown in faith among those women interviewed. Further, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that domestic violence not only affects the women who are abused, but also imposes negative effects on the growing children. This study has found that generally there were several reasons why Malaysian women were reluctant to disclose and seek external assistance. These findings suggest that additional barriers of cultural beliefs and religious values also play an important role in influencing the women's decisions. The conclusion that can be drawn from the present study was that there was room for improvements within the system as well as the facilities provided by current supportive networks in general.

The novel contribution of the thesis is clear where the use of services in the Malaysian domestic violence provision institutions is somewhat a mechanistic approach to explore. The evidence from this study recommends that bureaucratic responses and administrative structures need to be improved in order for the professionals to deliver the services more efficiently. Taken together, these results suggest that educating the community, especially female adults, as well as establishing specific guideline is among the various strategic plans proposed in the study. These findings enhance our understanding of the Malaysian women who experienced domestic violence and subsequently add to a growing body of literature in Malaysia about this particular subject matter. Nonetheless, a number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present research. The most important limitation lies in the fact that abused women are not easily recruited and it is a common attitude within society that marital affairs should be treated as a private issue. On this basis, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to all domestic violence victims and survivors in the country.

In conclusion, it can be said that this research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. It would be interesting to assess the perpetrator's point of view pertinent to this matter and future research might explore the efficiency of interventional programmes in the current situation, so as to align with such programmes with the customs of its people. A reasonable approach to tackle the

domestic violence issue in Malaysia could be through the upgrading of social policy development as well as involving education and information to address issues of violence against women; in particular the cases of domestic violence.

Recommendations for change

Contributions of this thesis

This research principally concerns itself with the issue of violence against women in Malaysia specific to the area of domestic violence research. The primary objective of this study was to explore the experiences of abusive relationships from the perspective of abused women in Malaysia. The findings from this research add to the growing body of knowledge relating to abused women, which will influence future research and underline implications for practice, for education and for policy development. The current study also highlights how the women's disclosure of domestic violence was significantly influenced by complexity of the cultural matrix within the society in which they live and religious they embraced. The research has no capacity to resolve the culture problems or beliefs that act as a barrier in disclosing abuse; rather the study was attempting to understand the abused women's perspective regarding their experiences of violence. Subsequently the aim is to promote effective methods of violence prevention, provide a strong framework for efficient response to domestic violence, as well as making an effort to influence legislation and policy that affect domestic violence victims and survivors (and their children) in the country.

Implications for domestic violence service providers

Some of the issues emerging from the research findings relate specifically to the current practices of domestic violence service providers in Malaysia. Conclusions pertaining to this study indicate that women had experienced unpleasant situations when accessing the services and faced a number of procedural issues in relation to their help-seeking attempts within the formal supportive networks. Principally problems regarding extensive periods waiting to apply for divorce, lack of advice and guidance from the professionals, lack of enforcement, non-integration of services

within the organizations and bureaucracy are matters that need to be addressed and overcome in an effective way in order to assist abused women in receiving a better quality service.

Firstly, there should be an increase in the number of organizations (i.e. governmental and non-governmental) providing a wider range of appropriate services to women with domestic violence experiences. The services could include counselling based intervention, for example individual counselling, family and marriage counselling, career coaching, religious and spiritual guidance as well as crisis counselling. In addition, such services should focus on emergency responses that involved a healthcare team (medical aspect), social care professionals (psychological support and safe accommodation options) and legal experts including the police force for legal aid provisions. In terms of availability of the resources, equal distribution of service centre locations should be planned strategically to facilitate access for women especially in small towns and rural areas. More importantly, agencies which are involved with domestic violence cases should establish effective networking along with the exchange of information so as to develop systematic coordination arrangements particularly in regards to confidential referrals and follow up support.

Secondly, professionals who work with domestic violence victims and survivors should be equipped with knowledge relating to recent developments on domestic violence locally as well as at an international level, and be familiar with domestic violence information including policy reviews, legislative changes and the debate pertaining to the key problems of this subject. They should be trained with effective communication skills as well as attending training and cross-training between organizations for knowledge advancement on a periodic basis. These strategies will improve human capital competency among the professionals in order to more effectively advocate for victims of domestic violence. As well, updated standardized guidelines or written protocols and policies about domestic violence should be outlined by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development with the purpose of disseminating specific domestic violence procedures to all related organizations that have a direct and/or indirect involvement with cases of domestic violence. This would include for instance the police, healthcare settings and the Islamic Religious Affairs Department. These frontline workers carry the heavy

responsibility of ensuring the safety of the victims as well as guiding them to further appropriate services according to the victim's needs. Therefore, the generic protocols function as a practical tool to help the professionals respond and effectively intervene in each domestic violence case within their respective jurisdictions.

Thirdly, the use of early interventions such as a domestic violence screening test and mandatory reporting following the screening cannot be ruled out. The implementation of routine screening for domestic violence in primary health care settings will help to detect a history of domestic violence among adult women and identify women who are at risk of domestic violence. Subsequent to the screening, mandatory reporting as well as referral to appropriate resources should be made to prevent the dangerous consequences for the women who are subject to domestic violence. In parallel, psychological support systems must also be available to resolve any possible causes of distress or concern that arise following the screening. In the Malaysian context, it is vital to establish informed service provisions networking prior to the implementation of routine screening for domestic violence to all primary health care providers in the country.

Finally, findings from the present study have important implications for developing rehabilitation and treatment services for male perpetrators. As noted from the accounts of some women substance abuse problems, behavioural issues as well as excessive gambling habits were reported as factors that contribute to the violence within their relationships. This proposed programme requires effective coordination between the court system and other service providers such as the Islamic Religious Affairs Department, the Social Welfare Department and the police authorities. In fact, inter-agency collaboration with the National Anti-Drugs Agency for example will establish good practices and allow various kinds of interventions to take place within the programme. Nonetheless, despite focusing on providing rehabilitation for the offenders, the programme should also primarily remain accountable for the safety of battered women and their children.

Implications for education on violence against women

The results of this study indicate that most of the abused women interviewed admitted that they lacked knowledge about domestic violence resources, help-seeking procedures as well as options pertinent to legislation, social welfare and supportive network mechanisms available for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia. Due to these limitations, many of the abused women seem to be trapped in abusive relationships and feel unable to escape. Therefore, it is vital to educate adult women in general about the seriousness of this crime through various means. Society as a whole also needs to be aware of how unacceptable domestic violence is and adopt a zero tolerance policy toward this matter.

There are several mediums of communication which can be used in order to disseminate domestic violence knowledge, to women specifically and to the community at large. Knowledge education about women's rights, gender equality, religious concepts pertinent to violence behaviour, male-female role attitudes as well as the availability and access to domestic violence service provisions would be beneficial to all women. The education programs should include advertising campaigns via electronic media such as television and radio networks, internet access as well as through the print media, for instance newspapers, magazines, books, posters, pamphlet and brochures. These public campaigns will help to raise awareness on domestic violence among the community and subsequently act as a preventive measure to combat the problem. This strategy may also contribute to the education of informal supportive networks, such as family, friends and neighbours, to effect appropriate intervention and facilitate the victims (and their children) in getting assistance according to their needs in relation to abuse disclosure, reporting the violence and seeking professional help. Furthermore, the contents of the pre-nuptial course organized by the Islamic Religious Affairs Department for Muslim couples must be reviewed to include related knowledge about domestic violence because this issue has been one of the prevalent within marriages. As for non-Muslim couples, although such courses are not legally required for them, respective religious organizations should provide essential knowledge on domestic violence to the couples during their family and marriage counselling sessions.

Apart from providing education for women and the public, frontline workers and domestic violence service providers' staff should also undergo professional training and programmes to enhance their capability and keep their knowledge updated about domestic violence developments. This group of personnel includes namely the law experts (e.g. the police, lawyers, magistrate/*qadi*), medical staff (e.g. physicians, nurses), social welfare staff (e.g. social workers, counsellors, therapists) and not to mention the support staff (e.g. receptionists, clerks and security officers). In regards to the administrative workers, the importance of effective communication in delivering services is paramount. This is to build up the trust of the women that they will be helped accordingly and their case will be handled in a confidential manner. For career proficiency among the professionals, education can also be encouraged through continuous learning, for example undertaking further study (i.e. graduate studies, certificate programmes) in related fields to improve staff competency and professionalism. This strategy it is believed will boost the skills base of professionals and associates and make improvements in term of staff proficiencies.

In addition to ongoing professional development matters, domestic violence as a subject should be incorporated into the curricula at university level for a number of related disciplines such as counselling, social work, psychology, education, law, nursing, medicine, law enforcement study (the police force) and other fields that are more likely to deal with domestic violence cases. The subject specific curricula would serve as a foundation to prepare the students with such knowledge and expose them to the experience of effectively dealing with the victims of violence. Within the nature of this humanistic area, a sense of volunteerism should also be inculcated among the students because there is an urgent need of manpower as cited by many agencies during the interviews. For the time being, the culture of volunteerism does not flourish greatly among the Malaysians. Therefore, many of service providers, particularly the non-government organizations and privately funded agencies, encounter constraints in staffing that seriously affect the quality of services provided. Volunteers are welcome in many areas of assistance, for example in counselling and social work, legal advice and consultations, mental health therapies as well as nursing and medical interventions.

Last but not least, some of the issues emerging from the findings of the study relate specifically to the integration of multidisciplinary agencies in relation to the exchange of information, knowledge, resources and expertise. Integration between domestic violence service providers should improve the quality of the services because inefficiencies are present due to roles overlapping, the limitation of resources and case workloads. These inefficiencies can be reduced significantly through effective collaboration. Domestic violence case conferences must be scheduled on a regular basis in order to allow continuous discussion on related issues around domestic violence cases from different perspectives. Via the conferences, the professionals will be able to respond effectively based on the dialogues with other professionals from various settings. Indeed, this case conference strategy can also be a platform for the professionals to establish their networking and collaborate further with one another, not only in terms of practice but also in academic research and publications for the benefit of society in general.

Implications for social policy development

Malaysia has regarded violence against women as one of the national social problems since 1979 under the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Alongside the patriarchal system maintained within society, male dominance as a tradition is widely practiced especially in relation to marriage and family matters. Even after 56 years of independence, women's rights and inequality issues are still debatable in Malaysian society. The findings of this study have a number of important implications for both government and non-government organizations who work with domestic violence victims and survivors in Malaysia.

First and foremost, serious consideration needs to be given to law reform and enforcement regarding domestic violence in order to reduce and prevent the problem. The improvements in social and policy making should signal positive changes regarding domestic violence developments within the nation. Importantly, the implementation of *Sharia* Law between various states in Malaysia must be uniform in order to reduce discrepancies and the misuse of such legislations. Likewise, apparent

shortcomings in the Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) regarding issues such as marital rape, sexual violence perpetrated by husband as well as violence in dating relationship and cohabitation also need to be resolved through the policy making process as soon as possible.

Secondly, the findings of the present study highlight the lack of law enforcement within some of the service providers such as the police and Islamic Religious Affairs Officers (for Muslims) pertinent to domestic violence cases. As noted in the discussion with the representatives from Islamic Religious Affairs Department, the enforcement officers in the department have actually no capacity to take legal action against the offender (i.e. interrogate, arrest, etc) in many circumstances including acting on such matters as negligence relating to financial maintenance during the marriage, a lack of co-operation to attend marital counselling sessions, refusal to divorce the wife voluntarily and absence during divorce case hearings in the courts. Similarly, the accounts from the abused women mostly identified that the police have been insensitive, unsympathetic and non-informative when the women reported the abuse incidents. In fact, in a few cases reported in the current study, the police have classified the case of domestic violence as a family affair and it has not been treated as criminal offence. Therefore, it is suggested that domestic and family violence legislation, particularly within *Sharia* Law, should be reviewed and reformed to ensure future improvements regarding policies and the prosecution of domestic violence cases in Malaysia.

Finally, a reasonable approach to tackle domestic violence issues could be to draw more attention to it from all levels within Malaysian society. Public campaigns which aim to increase community awareness of this social problem, as well as disseminating knowledge about violence against women to the general public, particularly to female adults, will help to eliminate the cultural stigma experienced by victims of violence. It will hopefully also subsequently change the social attitudes of the general public regarding domestic violence in the country. This approach will be more effective with the harnessing of political efforts in addressing issues on sex-based discrimination, women's rights and gender equality as well as violence against Malaysian women in general. Over and above this, existing domestic violence resources available in the

country should be empowered and improved in order to benefit the service providers and create better facilities for battered women.

Agenda for Future Research

Strengths and limitations of the study

Underpinned by feminist principles, the current study offers descriptions of women's experiences of domestic violence in the context of Malaysia. This was a primary strength of the present study as the principles emphasize a reciprocal as well as a balance of power in the relationship between researcher and participant (Kralik, Koch & Brady, 2000). Another major strength of this study is related to its data collection approach. In spite of the fact that the qualitative interview employed was a time-consuming method, the approach provides flexibility of expression for the women as well as an opportunity for further investigation for the researcher. As can be seen in the final outcome, this semi-structured interview approach has produced richer data and a depth of insight into the women's experiences of violence for the study. The discussions with the professionals (i.e. counsellors, social workers and administrators) also has contributed valuable information. Moreover, the use of various resources for data collection has improved the validity and reliability of the study.

Thirdly, since the participation of abused women was otherwise inaccessible, the study chose to recruit the targeted sample through the agencies who work with domestic violence victims and survivors in Malaysia. It was demonstrated that this recruitment strategy was highly recommended for vulnerable groups of people such as victims of violence. Although the sample size of the study was relatively small, the 'gate-keeper' method certainly increased the number of participants. A further strength was the ability of the researcher to communicate in the spoken language of the participant. As a result, no language barrier issues arose, the nuances were preserved and this has kept the accuracy of the qualitative data collected intact.

On the other hand, there are several limitations of this study. Firstly, there was a problem in getting the targeted participants (i.e. women with domestic violence experiences). Recruitment issues play a major role that contributes to restricted access to abused women. In Malaysian society, sensitive issues such as marriage disputes and abusive relationship are not commonly brought into open discussion. Therefore, it is difficult for the researcher to recruit women participants with domestic violence experiences at random. Even though the study received some assistance from the agencies, the ultimate decision of taking part was solely the decision of the women themselves. This led to the problem of wider access and decreased the number of participant included in the study. Some women had been concerned that they would recall bad memories of the past and also few of them thought that there was no necessity of bringing the issue to the attention of a total stranger. In spite of the fact that the findings might not be generalized to the general population, this small scale qualitative study certainly offers a better understanding of abused women's experiences in the nation in relation to the impacts on them and the disclosure of domestic violence.

Secondly, it would have been ideal for this research if there was a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative data in the study. The utilization of inferential analysis (i.e. comparison and correlation investigations) would have made the findings more meaningful with a larger sample group of abused women. Thirdly, another potential limitation of the present study is that the majority of the women interviewees had a homogeneous background due to recruitment constraints. This homogeneous sample included variables such as ethnic grouping, religion and level of education. Therefore, there may be some important distinctions in this heterogeneous sample that cannot be reflected in the findings of this study. Fourthly, the study did not examine other related issues concerning women's violence experiences, for instance the impact of disclosing the abuse to others and the coping mechanisms employed by domestic violence victims/survivors. It was not feasible to include such issues in the present research as there are time and resource constraints within the limits of a doctoral study.

Directions for future research

As derived from the findings and the issues raised in the course of the study, the following suggestions are outlined for future research:

- 1) Upcoming research could further explore such issues as battered women parenting, male perspectives of domestic violence and the influence of economic elements in abusive relationships within the Malaysian context.
- 2) The replication of this study is proposed with a larger number of participants from the abused women population to enhance the credibility of the data, particularly in determining the knowledge awareness and the effectiveness of the service provisions offered by the professionals in Malaysia.
- 3) Mixed method approaches are suggested for future studies, namely triangulation research focusing on different types of data collection methods and dimensional analysis. Such a study would benefit from data diversity to better understand the perpetrator's violent behaviour and subsequently propose effective intervention strategies in combating the domestic violence problem.
- 4) This study proves that domestic violence does exist among Malaysian women. Therefore, additional research that focuses on the socio-cultural variables such as ethnic groupings, religious beliefs as well as other crucial information related to the unique characteristics of the community needs to be taken into account in order to provide helpful insights into the country's profile of domestic violence.
- 5) Studies to describe the experiences of professionals (i.e. counsellors, physicians, nurses, social workers, police, lawyers etc) working with domestic violence victims and survivors need to be undertaken. Such research would be useful in discussing the issues and challenges faced by the professionals so as to improve formal supportive mechanisms and service delivery to women victims.

- 6) Malaysian culture desperately needs serious research in order to design appropriate therapies and interventional programmes for domestic violence which align themselves with the customs of its people. By establishing such mechanisms, issues in respect to social, psychological and health problems may effectively be resolved.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation has investigated women's experiences of domestic violence in Malaysia. Returning to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the impacts of domestic violence include physical injuries, mental health problems, social exclusion, grow in self-faith, erosion of self-identity and self-esteem as well as having adverse effects on the children involved. The second major finding was that there were a number of barriers that inhibit women victims/survivors from disclosing the abuse. The study has found that generally violence disclosure was discouraged by the cultural belief of concealing their marriage matters at all cost, by thoughts of safeguarding the children's interests, by disadvantage of women's misapprehension about Islamic tenets on their husband's cruelty, by feelings of self-blame and guilt as well as the women's lack of knowledge on domestic violence resources in the country. It is also shown in the study that four major issues were identified by the women in relation to the effectiveness of the current service provisions relating to domestic violence. Firstly, the unpleasant experiences when the women accessed the services. Secondly, the struggle of overcoming the procedural hassles during the disclosing and help-seeking process, third about the usefulness of services and fourthly the needs and support mechanisms which those women perceived as helpful in dealing with their violence experiences.

The evidence from this study highlights the value of research that provides an opportunity for abused women to express their feelings as well as sharing their stories with the purpose of making other people better understand their violence experiences. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the experiences of abused women in Malaysia. It is clear from this research that the context of culture and religious beliefs among Malaysian society play an important role in determining how

these women perceived their experiences of violence, as well as the challenges they are facing pertinent to this matter. However, with a relatively small sample size caution must be applied, as the findings may not be transferable to the general population of domestic violence victims and survivors in the country. As a final remark, it should be stressed that it is paramount to integrate interventional strategies, increased public awareness and the formulation of national policy with the aim of preventing and combating domestic violence in Malaysian society.

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APPENDICES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY FROM THE WOMEN VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVE

This is a PhD research and the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of living in abusive relationships among the Malaysian women victims

This study is looking for the participant's criteria as follows:

- *Malaysian women who are experiencing and/or had the experiences of victimization by husband or intimate partner in their relationships.*
- *No specific age, race or background is required.*

There will be an interview conducted and this will be based on your time and date preferences. The venue of the interview will be discussed further upon your consent.

All information given will be treated as strictly confidential material and will be kept completely anonymous. You are free to withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

If you are interested to get involved in this study, please take one of the contact information tags below and please feel free to contact me as soon as possible!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Mariny Abdul Ghani
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Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Appendix 1: Advertisement Poster (with tear-off tag) for Sample Recruitment – Malay language

**KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA DI
MALAYSIA: SATU KAJIAN BERDASARKAN
PERSPEKTIF MANGSA WANITA**

KEMENTERIAN KESIHATAN MALAYSIA

Penyelidikan bertaraf Doktor Falsafah ini adalah dijalankan bertujuan untuk meneroka pengalaman yang dilalui oleh mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di kalangan wanita Malaysia

Kajian ini sedang mengenalpasti kriteria peserta seperti berikut:

- *Wanita Malaysia yang sedang melalui dan/atau pernah melalui pengalaman keganasan rumahtangga oleh suami atau pasangan mereka.*
- *Tiada pengkhususan umur, bangsa atau latarbelakang.*

Satu sesi temubual bersemuka akan dijalankan dan ketetapan tarikh dan masa adalah bergantung kepada kesesuaian anda. Lokasi temubual akan dibincangkan dengan lebih lanjut jika anda bersetuju untuk terlibat.

Semua maklumat yang diterima dianggap sebagai SULIT dan RAHSIA. Anda berhak untuk menarik diri pada bila-bila masa, atas apa-apa sebab dan anda tidak perlu untuk menerangkan sebab-sebab penarikan diri tersebut.

Jika anda berminat untuk melibatkan diri dalam kajian ini, sila ambil satu tag butiran maklumat di bawah dan hubungi saya segera!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

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Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

Appendix 2: Advertisement Flyer for Sample Recruitment

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY FROM THE WOMEN VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVE

This is a PhD research and the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of living in abusive relationships among the Malaysian women victims

This study is looking for the participant's criteria as follows:

- *Malaysian women who are experiencing and/or had the experiences of victimization by husband or intimate partner in their relationships.*
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There will be an interview conducted and this will be based on your time and date preferences. The venue of the interview will be discussed further upon your consent.

All information given will be treated as strictly confidential material and will be kept completely anonymous. You are free to withdraw at any time or reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

If you are interested to get involved in this study, please feel free to contact me as soon as possible!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY

This is a PhD research and the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of living in abusive relationships among the Malaysian women victims

This study is looking for the participant's criteria as follows:

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If you are interested to get involved in this study, please feel free to contact me as soon as possible!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

**KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA DI MALAYSIA:
SATU KAJIAN BERDASARKAN PERSPEKTIF
MANGSA WANITA**

Penyelidikan bertaraf Doktor Falsafah ini adalah dijalankan bertujuan untuk meneroka pengalaman yang dilalui oleh mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di kalangan wanita Malaysia

Kajian ini sedang mengenalpasti kriteria peserta seperti berikut:

- *Wanita Malaysia yang sedang melalui dan/atau pernah melalui pengalaman keganasan rumahtangga oleh suami atau pasangan.*
- *Tiada pengkhususan umur, bangsa atau latarbelakang.*

Satu sesi temubual bersemuka akan dijalankan dan ketetapan tarikh dan masa adalah bergantung kepada kesesuaian anda. Lokasi temubual akan dibincangkan dengan lebih lanjut jika anda bersetuju untuk terlibat.

Semua maklumat yang diterima dianggap SULIT dan RAHSIA. Anda berhak menarik diri pada bila-bila masa, atas apa-apa sebab dan anda tidak perlu menerangkan sebab penarikan diri tersebut.

Jika anda berminat untuk melibatkan diri dalam kajian ini, sila hubungi saya dengan segera!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

**KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA DI MALAYSIA:
SATU KAJIAN BERDASARKAN PERSPEKTIF
MANGSA WANITA**

Penyelidikan bertaraf Doktor Falsafah ini adalah dijalankan bertujuan untuk meneroka pengalaman yang dilalui oleh mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di kalangan wanita Malaysia

Kajian ini sedang mengenalpasti kriteria peserta seperti berikut:

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Jika anda berminat untuk melibatkan diri dalam kajian ini, sila hubungi saya dengan segera!!!

Mariny Abdul Ghani
012-3558419

EXPLORING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ABUSED WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

Participant Information Sheet

Name, address, email and contact number of Main Investigator

Mariny Abdul Ghani / M.Abdul-Ghani@lboro.ac.uk / 44 753 1689 227 / 012 3558419
(Research student)

Name, address, email and contact number of all other investigators/supervisors

Jo Aldridge / j.aldridge@lboro.ac.uk / 44 01509 22 3670 (Research Supervisor)

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of living in abusive relationships from the perspective of abused women in Malaysia.

Who is doing this research?

This research will be fully conducted by the main investigator (name as above) with a close supervision from the research supervisor (name as above).

Are there any exclusion criteria?

No.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes! After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

Yes, you are required to attend an interview and this will be conducted in a safe and private place. The venue, date and time of the interview will be based on your preference.

How long will it take?

The interview will approximately take about 40 to 60 minutes.

Is there anything I need to do before the sessions?

No.

Is there anything I need to bring with me?

No.

What type of clothing should I wear?

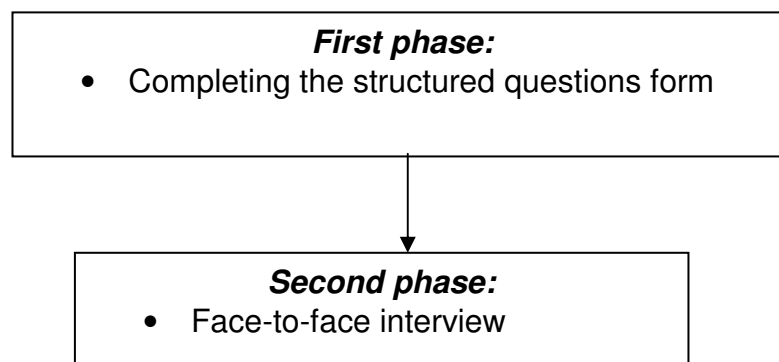
You may wear any clothing that comforts you.

Who should I send the questionnaire back to?

You should send the completed questionnaire back to the main investigator.

What will I be asked to do?

The flow chart of the research procedures:



What personal information will be required from me?

This research may require you to share your experience, thoughts, opinions and views on several matters regarding abusive relationships from the perspective of abused women.

Are there any risks in participating?

No. However, it is possible that during the interview you may feel a little anxious or sad when recalling your experiences of living in the abusive relationship.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Data collected will be strictly treated as confidential materials, stored in accordance with Data Protection Act 1998 (Data Collection and Storage).

What will happen to the results of the study?

The result of the study mainly will be reported as the findings for the research and if possible, it will be published for an academic and related research purposes. No real names or identities will be used or revealed.

What do I get for participating?

Your participation will contribute to new knowledge and evidence in the issues of domestic violence in Malaysia. The results of this study will hopefully contribute to our understanding about the needs and supports that the victims/survivors require in dealing with the situation which may influence the future policy development and practice concerning the problem of domestic violence in Malaysia.

I have some more questions who should I contact?

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact main investigator as in the details provided at the first page of this form.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

There are few ways of getting yourself heard. First, please do discuss the issue or aspect of it with main investigator or else you may also directly inform the research supervisor. You may also make your complaint to the Chief Operating Officer of Loughborough University which is available online at this link;
[http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing\(2\).htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm).

MENEROKA PENGALAMAN KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA DARIPADA PERSPEKTIF MANGSA WANITA DI MALAYSIA

BORANG MAKLUMAN PESERTA

Nama, alamat, emel dan nombor telefon penyelidik utama

Mariny Abdul Ghani / M.Abdul-Ghani@lboro.ac.uk / 44 753 1689 227/ 012 3558419
(Pelajar penyelidikan)

Nama, alamat, emel dan nombor telefon penyelidik lain/penyelia

Jo Aldridge / j.aldridge@lboro.ac.uk / 44 1509 22 3670 (Penyelia penyelidikan)

Apakah tujuan penyelidikan ini?

Tujuan penyelidikan ini ialah untuk meneroka pengalaman wanita mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia.

Siapa yang menjalankan penyelidikan ini?

Penyelidikan ini dijalankan sepenuhnya oleh penyelidik utama (seperti nama di atas) dengan pemantauan berterusan daripada penyelia penyelidikan (seperti nama di atas).

Adakah apa-apa kriteria khusus?

Tidak.

Setelah saya mengambil bahagian, bolehkah saya mengubah fikiran?

Ya, setelah anda membaca Borang Makluman Peserta ini dan mengemukakan soalan, anda akan diminta untuk mengisi Borang Keizinan Peserta. Jika anda ingin menarik diri daripada penyelidikan ini setelah bersetuju untuk melibatkan diri, sila hubungi penyelidik utama. Anda boleh menarik diri pada bila-bila masa, atas apa-apa sebab dan anda tidak perlu untuk menerangkan sebab-sebab penarikan diri tersebut.

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet – Malay language

Adakah saya perlu untuk menghadiri apa-apa sesi dan di mana ianya akan dijalankan?

Ya, anda perlu menghadiri satu sesi temubual dan sesi ini akan dijalankan di tempat yang selamat. Tarikh, masa dan tempat temubual adalah bergantung kepada kesesuaian anda.

Berapa lama masa sesi temubual berlangsung?

Sesi temubual akan mengambil masa antara 40 hingga 60 minit.

Adakah saya perlu melakukan apa-apa perkara sebelum menghadiri sesi temubual?

Tidak perlu.

Adakah saya perlu membawa apa-apa bersama saya semasa sesi temubual?

Tidak perlu.

Pakaian jenis bagaimanakah yang perlu dipakai?

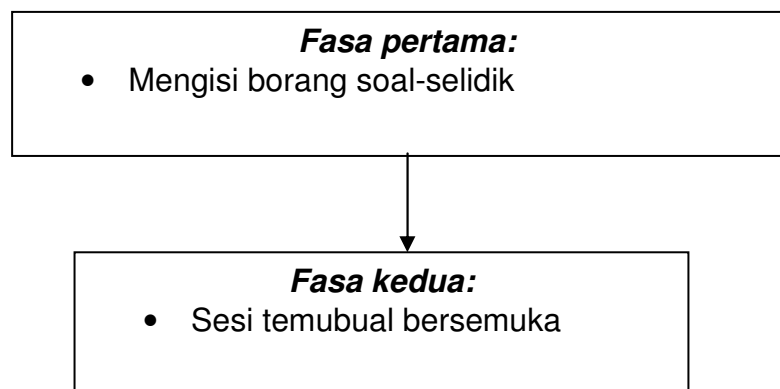
Pemilihan pakaian adalah bergantung kepada kesesuaian anda.

Kepada siapakah perlu saya kembalikan borang soal-selidik?

Anda perlu mengembalikan borang soal-selidik kepada penyelidik utama.

Apa yang perlu saya lakukan?

Carta alir prosedur penyelidikan:



Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet – Malay language

Maklumat peribadi apakah yang diperlukan daripada saya?

Penyelidikan ini memerlukan anda untuk berkongsi pengalaman, pendapat dan pandangan berkaitan pengalaman sebagai seorang mangsa keganasan rumahtangga.

Adakah terdapat apa-apa risiko semasa penglibatan saya dalam penyelidikan ini?

Tiada. Namun, anda mungkin akan berasa sedikit ketidakselesaan atau kesedihan semasa menceritakan pengalaman anda tersebut.

Adakah penyertaan saya dalam penyelidikan ini akan dirahsiakan?

Semua data yang dikutip adalah dianggap sebagai bahan-bahan rahsia dan disimpan mengikut Akta Perlindungan Data 1998 (Pengumpulan Data dan Penyimpanan).

Apakah yang akan berlaku setelah hasil dapatan penyelidikan ini diperolehi?

Hasil dapatan akan dilaporkan sebagai keputusan penyelidikan dan jika bersesuaian, ianya akan diterbitkan untuk tujuan akademik dan penyelidikan sahaja. Tiada nama dan identiti akan digunakan atau didedahkan.

Apakah yang akan diperolehi hasil penyertaan saya?

Penyertaan anda akan menyumbang kepada pengetahuan baru dan sebagai bukti dalam membincangkan isu keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia. Hasil dapatan ini diharapkan agar menyumbang kepada kefahaman tentang keperluan dan sokongan yang diperlukan oleh mangsa keganasan rumahtangga dalam menghadapi situasi tersebut. Ia juga diharapkan dapat mempengaruhi pembangunan polisi dan praktis berkaitan masalah keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia pada masa hadapan.

Jika saya mempunyai sebarang soalan lanjut, siapakah yang perlu saya hubungi?

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet – Malay language

Jika anda mempunyai sebarang pertanyaan, sila hubungi penyelidik utama seperti di butiran yang disediakan pada muka hadapan borang ini.

Bagaimana jika saya tidak berpuashati dengan cara penyelidikan ini dijalankan?

Terdapat beberapa cara untuk mengetengahkan masalah tersebut. Pertama, sila berbincang dengan penyelidik utama. Kedua, anda boleh berhubung secara terus dengan penyelia penyelidikan. Ketiga, anda juga boleh mengemukakan aduan kepada Ketua Pegawai Operasi, Loughborough University menggunakan alamat atas talian seperti berikut; [http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing\(2\).htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm)

- Tamat -

EXPLORING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ABUSED WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study and my participation is voluntary.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study.

Your name

Your signature

Name of investigator

MARINY BINTI ABDUL GHANI

Signature of investigator

Date

**MENEROKA PENGALAMAN KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA
DARIPADA PERSPEKTIF MANGSA WANITA DI MALAYSIA**

**BORANG KEIZINAN PESERTA
(diisi selepas membaca Borang Makluman Peserta)**

Tujuan dan butiran penyelidikan ini telah dijelaskan kepada saya. Saya memahami bahawa penyelidikan ini dijalankan bagi memperolehi pengetahuan secara saintifik dan segala prosedur berkaitan penyelidikan ini telah diteliti dan diluluskan oleh Jawatankuasa Penasihat Etika (*Ethical Advisory Committee*), Loughborough University.

Saya telah membaca dan memahami isi kandungan Borang Makluman Peserta dan Borang Keizinan Peserta ini.

Saya diberi peluang untuk mengemukakan soalan-soalan berkaitan penyertaan saya dalam penyelidikan ini.

Saya memahami bahawa saya tidak mempunyai kewajiban untuk mengambil bahagian dalam penyelidikan ini dan penyertaan saya ini adalah sukarela.

Saya memahami bahawa saya berhak untuk menarik diri daripada penyelidikan ini pada mana-mana peringkat, atas apa-apa sebab dan saya tidak perlu untuk menerangkan sebab-sebab penarikan diri tersebut.

Saya memahami bahawa segala maklumat yang saya berikan akan dianggap sebagai sulit, tidak didedahkan serta dirahsiakan oleh penyelidik melainkan (di bawah ketetapan yang diwajibkan oleh agensi-agensi di mana penyelidik bekerjasama), kerahsiaan perlu dimungkiri demi melindungi keselamatan saya atau pihak-pihak lain yang berkaitan.

Saya bersetuju untuk terlibat di dalam penyelidikan ini.

Nama

Tandatangan

Nama penyelidik

MARINY BINTI ABDUL GHANI

Tandatangan penyelidik

Tarikh

Appendix 5: Structured Question Form

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Background Information

Please answer every question by filling in the space provided or by selecting the answer as indicated.

Part 1:

	You	Husband/Partner
1) Age:	..... years old	..... years old
2) Ethnicity:	.....	.....
3) Religion:	.....	.....
4) Education level:	.....	.....
5) Occupation:	.....	.....
6) Monthly income:	RM	RM
7) Marital status:	Married/ Divorced/ Widow/ Non-married relationship	
If married, this is:	First time/ Not the first time	First time/ Polygamy/ Not the first time

Part 2:

1) How long have you been with this husband?	..... years
2) Numbers of children do you have with this husband:	..... person(s)
3) How long have you been in this abusive relationship?	..... years
4) Number of family members living with you in this relationship:	..... person(s)
5) Have you had previous abusive relationship?	YES/ NO
- If YES, how long did the relationship last?	..... years
- Numbers of children do you have from previous husband:	..... person(s)

Part 3:

What factors do you think that contribute to domestic violence problem in your relationship?

- Thank you for your co-operation -

Appendix 5: Structured Question Form – Malay language
BORANG SOAL SELIDIK

Maklumat Latarbelakang

Sila jawab setiap soalan yang berikut dengan mengisi ruangan yang disediakan atau dengan menandakan pada pilihan jawapan yang berkaitan.

Bahagian 1:

	Anda	Pasangan
1) Umur:	..... tahun	..... tahun
2) Bangsa:	.....	.....
3) Agama:	.....	.....
4) Tahap pendidikan:	.....	.....
5) Pekerjaan:	.....	.....
6) Pendapatan bulanan:	RM	RM
7) Status perkahwinan:	Berkahwin/ Bercerai/ Janda/ Balu/ Tidak berkahwin	
Jika berkahwin, ini:	Kali pertama/ Bukan kali pertama	Kali pertama/ Poligami/ Bukan kali pertama

Bahagian 2:

1) Sudah berapa lamakah anda bersama pasangan sekarang?	..... tahun
2) Bilangan anak hasil perkahwinan bersama pasangan sekarang:	..... orang
3) Sudah berapa lamakah anda mengalami masalah keganasan rumahtangga ini?	..... tahun
4) Bilangan ahli keluarga yang tinggal bersama anda ketika anda mengalami masalah keganasan rumahtangga ini:	..... orang
5) Jika ini bukan pertama kali anda berkahwin, adakah anda pernah mengalami masalah keganasan rumahtangga di dalam perhubungan anda yang terdahulu?	YA/ TIDAK
- Jika YA, berapa lamakah hubungan tersebut berlangsung?	..... tahun
- Bilangan anak hasil perkahwinan anda dengan pasangan terdahulu:	..... orang

Bahagian 3:

Pada pendapat anda, apakah faktor penyebab yang menyumbang kepada masalah keganasan rumahtangga di dalam perhubungan anda?

- Terima kasih atas kerjasama anda-

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview with Abused Women

Researcher opening statement: “Thank you for your willingness to participate and share your experiences about domestic violence. Your thoughts and views regarding domestic violence issues are very important in order to improve the care and services provided for Malaysian women who are in this situation. This whole session will take approximately 40 to 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. Our conversation is strictly confidential and you can stop the conversation at any time if you feel you want to. You may also indicate if you do not want to answer any of these questions”.

Questions for building rapport

- Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself? (example: where do you grow up etc)
- How did you meet your husband/ex-husband?
- Can you tell me about the relationship of you and your husband/ex-husband?

Questions on historical information

- Have you ever been treated by a doctor or hospitalized for injuries inflicted by your husband/ex-husband?*
- What was the worst incident? Why?*
- Has your husband/ex-husband ever been arrested for hurting you before?*
- Has your husband/ex-husband ever been prosecuted for the violence that he committed?*

Questions on forms of abuse

- Did you ever experience such abuse like hitting, kicking, biting, punching or strangling?*
- Was any instrument used during the abuse? (example: a knife, a belt etc)
- Did your husband/ex-husband regularly checked where you were, restricted the use of television, radio and telephone or tried to keep you distance from you family?*
- Did you ever experience such abuse like calling you names, threatening, insulting or criticizing your physical appearance?*
- Did your husband/ex-husband have total controlled on your social activities such as restricted the time for you to socialize with your family and friends or prohibit you from seeing them?*
- Did your husband/ex-husband demand sex from you whether you wanted to or not, make you engage in the sexual acts which against your will or force you to have sex with him?*

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women

- Did your husband/ex-husband have total control of your own money or make whatever financial decisions without talking to you or make you beg for money to fulfil your basic needs?*

Questions about domestic violence impacts on abused women

- What do you think have been the impacts of the abusive relationship on you?*
- How do you describe the effects of the abuse in terms of your physical health?
- How does your social life being affected due to this abusive relationship?
- How do you describe the psychological effects of the abuse on you?
- How do you describe your emotional state due to this abusive relationship?
- What do you think was the cause of your husband/ex-husband's violence toward you?
- What do you think have been the impacts of domestic violence to your children (if any)/ your extended family/ friends/ community at large?

Questions about barriers in disclosing the abuse and seeking help

- Did you tell anyone about the abuse?
If YES, who?*
- Did you seek for assistance from anyone?
If YES, who?*
- Did you report the incident to the police?
If YES, how long did it take for you to disclose the incident?*
- What are the factors that inhibit you from reporting the incident?

Questions about helpful resources in dealing with domestic violence

- How did you deal with the violence?*
- What informal support networks do you receive? (example: family, friends etc)
- How useful have these supports been?*
- What formal support services do you receive? (example: counselling centre, shelter home etc)
- How useful has this support been?*
- [If the victim has received formal or informal supports] Is there any areas should be improved?
- At the moment, what would be most helpful to you?*
- What support or helps would you like to have in order to solve the problem?*
- What sort of supports should be available to women who experience domestic violence?*

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women

Questions about awareness on existing provision services for domestic violence victims

- What do you know about Domestic Violence Act in Malaysia?
- What do you know about laws regarding domestic violence offences in Malaysia?
- What do you know about services provided for domestic violence victims?

Questions for termination

- What plan do you have in mind for yourself in the future?*
- Do you have any other things you might want to share with me?*
- Do you have any questions about this study or anything else at this time?
- Will you mind to be contacted again if I need some further information from you?

Researcher closing statement: "Thank you for your time and it is an honour to have you as a participant in this study. Your contribution is very much appreciated. Thank you."

Note: The question with * was followed by further enquiries (based on the participant's responses).

- The end of interview guide -

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women – Malay language
PANDUAN TEMUBUAL

Temubual dengan Wanita Mangsa Keganasan Rumahtangga

Kata-kata aluan penyelidik: “Terima kasih di atas kesudian untuk terlibat dan berkongsi pengalaman anda di dalam penyelidikan ini. Pendapat dan pandangan anda berkaitan isu ini sangat penting bagi meningkatkan kefahaman, taraf perkhidmatan serta bantuan yang ditawarkan kepada wanita-wanita mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia. Sesi temubual ini akan mengambil masa selama 40 hingga 60 minit dan ianya akan dirakamkan. Perbualan ini adalah sulit dan rahsia. Anda berhak untuk menamatkan perbualan ini pada bila-bila masa dan anda juga boleh memilih untuk tidak menjawab mana-mana soalan jika anda ingin berbuat demikian”.

Soalan untuk membina hubungan

- Bolehkah anda ceritakan serba sedikit tentang diri anda? (cth: di mana anda dibesarkan etc)
- Bolehkah anda terangkan bagaimana anda bertemu dengan pasangan anda?
- Bolehkah anda ceritakan bagaimana hubungan anda dan pasangan secara umum?

Soalan mengenai sejarah pengalaman keganasan rumahtangga

- Pernahkah anda dirawat oleh doktor atau dimasukkan ke hospital oleh kerana kecederaan yang dilakukan oleh pasangan?*
- Apakah insiden yang paling teruk pernah berlaku? Kenapa?*
- Pernahkah pasangan anda ditahan oleh polis kerana mencederakan anda?*
- Pernahkah pasangan anda didakwa di mahkamah atas kesalahan mencederakan anda?*

Soalan mengenai jenis-jenis penderaan

- Pernahkah anda mengalami penderaan seperti dipukul, ditendang, ditumbuk atau dicekik?*
- Adakah senjata digunakan semasa anda dicerderakan? (cth: pisau, tali pinggang etc)
- Adakah pasangan anda memantau di mana anda berada, menyekat penggunaan televisyen, radio dan telefon ataupun cuba menjauhkan anda dari keluarga anda?*
- Adakah anda pernah mengalami penderaan seperti digelar dengan gelaran yang tidak baik, diugut, dihina ataupun penampilan fizikal anda dikritik?*
- Adakah pasangan anda menghadkan aktiviti sosial bersama keluarga anda dan rakan-rakan ataupun melarang anda daripada bertemu dengan mereka?*
- Pernahkah pasangan anda menghendaki hubungan seks di luar kebiasaan, melakukan perbuatan seks tanpa kerelaan anda ataupun memaksa anda mengadakan hubungan seks dengannya diluar kemahuan anda?*

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women – Malay language

- Adakah pasangan anda mengawal penuh soal kewangan anda ataupun membuat keputusan berhubung kewangan tanpa berbincang dengan anda atau membuatkan anda sehingga terpaksa merayu untuk mendapatkan wang bagi memenuhi keperluan asas diri anda?*

Soalan mengenai kesan keganasan rumahtangga terhadap mangsa

- Pada pendapat anda, apakah kesan keganasan rumahtangga ini kepada anda?*
- Sejauhmanakah kesan penderaan tersebut kepada kesihatan fizikal anda?
- Sejauhmanakah kehidupan sosial anda terjejas berikutan penderaan ini?
- Sejauhmanakah kesan penderaan tersebut kepada psikologi anda?
- Sejauhmanakah keadaan emosi anda terjejas berikutan penderaan ini?
- Pada pendapat anda, apakah punca yang menyebabkan pasangan anda bertindak ganas?
- Apakah kesan keganasan rumahtangga ini kepada orang-orang di sekeliling anda misalnya anak-anak (jika ada)/ keluarga/ rakan/ komuniti setempat secara amnya?

Soalan mengenai halangan dalam melaporkan penderaan dan mendapatkan pertolongan

- Pernahkah anda memberitahu sesiapa berkenaan penderaan yang dialami?
Jika YA, siapa?*
- Jika TIDAK, mengapa?*
- Pernahkah anda mendapatkan pertolongan daripada sesiapa?
Jika YA, siapa?*
- Jika TIDAK, mengapa?*
- Pernahkah anda melaporkan insiden penderaan tersebut kepada pihak polis?
Jika YA, berapa lama masa diambil sehingga anda bersedia untuk berbuat demikian?*
- Jika TIDAK, mengapa anda tidak laporkan?*
- Apakah faktor-faktor yang menghalang anda daripada melaporkannya?

Soalan mengenai sumber-sumber yang dapat membantu menghadapi masalah keganasan rumahtangga

- Bagaimana cara anda menghadapi pengalaman penderaan tersebut?*
- Apakah sumber sokongan tidak formal yang telah anda terima? (cth: keluarga dan rakan etc)
- Sejauhmanakah bergunanya sokongan ini kepada anda?*
- Apakah sumber sokongan formal yang telah anda terima? (cth: rumah perlindungan etc)
- Sejauhmanakah bergunanya sokongan ini kepada anda?*
- [Jika mangsa telah menerima sokongan formal] Adakah aspek yang boleh ditambahbaik?
- Buat masa ini, apakah perkara yang paling membantu kepada anda?*
- Sokongan atau bantuan bagaimanakah yang anda inginkan bagi menyelesaikan masalah ini?*

Appendix 6: Interview Guide with Abused Women – Malay language

- Pada pendapat anda, sokongan yang bagaimanakah yang perlu diadakan bagi membantu wanita yang mengalami masalah keganasan rumahtangga?*

Soalan mengenai kesedaran berkaitan perkhidmatan/hak-hak untuk mangsa wanita

- Apakah yang anda tahu tentang Akta Keganasan Rumahtangga di Malaysia?
- Apakah yang anda tahu tentang undang-undang berkaitan kesalahan bagi kes keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia?
- Apakah yang anda tahu tentang perkhidmatan yang telah disediakan untuk mangsa keganasan rumahtangga?

Soalan untuk mengakhiri temubual

- Apakah perancangan yang anda buat untuk diri sendiri di masa hadapan?*
- Adakah perkara-perkara lain yang ingin anda kongsi bersama saya?*
- Adakah soalan-soalan yang ingin anda kemukakan samada berkaitan penyelidikan ini mahupun perkara-perkara lain?
- Adakah anda sudi untuk dihubungi di masa akan datang jika saya ingin mendapatkan apa-apa maklumat lanjut daripada anda?

Kata-kata penutup penyelidik: “Terima kasih di atas kesudian anda dan saya amat menghargai kerjasama anda sebagai peserta di dalam kajian ini. Terima kasih”.

Nota: Soalan yang bertanda * disusuli dengan soalan lanjutan (bergantung kepada respon peserta).

Interview with Domestic Violence Service Provider

Researcher opening statement: “Thank you for your willingness to participate. This whole session will take approximately 40 to 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. Your given information regarding this issue will be very important in order to improve the cares and services provided for those women who are in domestic violence situation”.

Questions about services provided for women victims

- Can you describe the reporting level of domestic violence in your organization?*
- What are the barriers that may inhibit domestic violence victims from reporting the incidents and seeking outside help?*
- How can we overcome the problems of not reporting the cases?*
- What are the main impacts of domestic violence to the victim/ children/ families/ friends?*
- To date, what are the services provided by this organization for domestic violence victims?
- How do you describe the overall effectiveness of these services in helping those victims?*
- What are your advantages in comparison to other similar nature of organizations?
- What are the limitations that your organization faced due to providing such services to domestic violence victims?
- Is there any aspects of the services can be improved in the future?*

Questions about broader understanding of domestic violence development in other countries

- How are the services in your organization been established?*
- Are any particular countries or international agencies that lead the way how the services being set up in your organization?
- Are you aware of the literature or research on domestic violence, internationally?
 - If YES, can you elaborate on that?*
 - If NO, why not?*
- Are you aware of what have been done by other countries in terms of their services for domestic violence victims?
 - If YES, can you elaborate on that?*
 - If NO, do you think it is important to be aware of?*

Appendix 7: Interview Guide with Domestic Violence Service Provider

- Do you know any foreign countries' organizations which provide services for domestic violence victims?

If YES,

- ✓ Can you name them?
- ✓ How do you know about them?
- ✓ Are there any similarities or differences on what you have in your organization?*
- ✓ Is there any networking developed between your organization and theirs?
 - If YES, how well the connection has been developed?*
 - If NO, do you think it is beneficial to have the networking developed?*

If NO,

- ✓ Do you think that knowing other similar nature of organizations will be helpful for your organization?*

Researcher closing statement: "Thank you very much for your time. Your contribution in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you."

Note: The question with * needs further enquiries (based on the participant's responses).

- The end of interview guide -

**Temubual dengan Agensi yang Menawarkan Perkhidmatan kepada Wanita
Mangsa Keganasan Rumahtangga**

Kata-kata aluan penyelidik: “Terima kasih di atas kesudian penglibatan anda di dalam penyelidikan ini. Sesi temubual ini akan mengambil masa selama 40 hingga 60 minit dan akan dirakamkan. Perbualan ini adalah sulit dan rahsia. Pendapat dan pandangan anda berkaitan isu ini sangat penting bagi meningkatkan mutu perkhidmatan serta bantuan yang ditawarkan kepada wanita-wanita mangsa keganasan rumahtangga di Malaysia”.

Soalan mengenai perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan kepada mangsa

- Bolehkah anda terangkan mengenai kadar kes keganasan rumahtangga yang dilaporkan di organisasi ini?*
- Apakah halangan yang menyebabkan mangsa keganasan rumahtangga merasa enggan untuk melaporkan kejadian tersebut dan mendapatkan bantuan luar?*
- Bagaimanakah caranya untuk kita menggalakkan mangsa keganasan rumahtangga untuk melaporkan kes-kes penderaan tersebut?*
- Apakah faktor-faktor penyebab masalah keganasan rumahtangga?*
- Apakah kesan utama keganasan rumahtangga kepada mangsa/ anak-anak/ keluarga/ rakan?*
- Sehingga kini, apakah perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan oleh organisasi ini kepada mangsa?
- Boleh anda terangkan sejauhmanakah keberkesanan perkhidmatan-perkhidmatan ini dalam membantu mangsa?*
- Apakah kelebihan organisasi ini berbanding organisasi yang hampir serupa?
- Apakah limitasi atau batasan yang dihadapi oleh organisasi ini berhubung isu perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan kepada mangsa keganasan rumahtangga?
- Adakah aspek-aspek yang boleh ditambahbaik di masa akan datang?*

Soalan mengenai tahap kefahaman pembangunan isu keganasan rumahtangga di negara luar

- Bagaimana organisasi ini membangunkan perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan sekarang?*
- Adakah mana-mana negara atau agensi antarabangsa yang menjadi contoh untuk bagaimana organisasi ini membangunkan perkhidmatan?

Appendix 7: Interview Guide with DV Service Provider – Malay language

- Adakah anda mempunyai pengetahuan tentang karya (literatur) atau kajian-kajian/penyelidikan keganasan rumahtangga di peringkat antarabangsa?
 - Jika YA, bolehkah anda terangkan dengan lebih lanjut?*
 - Jika TIDAK, mengapa?*
- Adakah anda mempunyai pengetahuan tentang apa yang telah dilakukan oleh negara-negara lain berkaitan perkhidmatan yang disediakan kepada mangsa keganasan rumahtangga?
 - Jika YA, bolehkah anda terangkan dengan lebih lanjut?*
 - Jika TIDAK, adakah anda fikir bahawa ianya sesuatu yang perlu?*
- Adakah anda mempunyai pengetahuan mengenai mana-mana organisasi di luar negara yang menyediakan perkhidmatan kepada mangsa-mangsa keganasan rumahtangga?

Jika YA,

- ✓ Siapakah mereka?
- ✓ Bagaimana anda mengetahui tentang mereka?
- ✓ Adakah terdapat persamaan/perbezaan dengan organisasi ini?
- ✓ Adakah terdapat jaringan hubungan di antara organisasi ini dan organisasi tersebut?
 - Jika YA, sejauhmanakah hubungan tersebut dimeterai?*
 - Jika TIDAK, adakah anda fikir jaringan hubungan adalah sesuatu yang berfaedah?*

Jika TIDAK,

- ✓ Adakah anda fikir bahawa adalah sesuatu yang berguna jika anda mengetahui tentang organisasi yang hampir serupa?*

Kata-kata penutup penyelidik: “Terima kasih yang tidak terhingga di atas sumbangan pendapat anda di dalam kajian ini dan kerjasama anda amatlah saya hargai. Terima kasih”.

Nota: Soalan yang bertanda * disusuli dengan soalan lanjutan (bergantung kepada respon peserta).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Domestic violence is a pattern of assault & coercive behaviours including physical, sexual & psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.

Helps are there for you!

Services offered:

- Telephone counselling
- Face-to-face counselling
- Legal advice
- One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC)
- Refuge or temporary shelters

For assistance call

The nearest:

Police stations
Pejabat Kebajikan Masyarakat Daerah (PKMD)
Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri
Emergency Department of primary hospitals

Helplines:

Police	999
Nur	15999
Teledera	1 800 88 3040

Pusat Kaunseling Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan (PKMAINS)

Branch Seremban	06-7679905
Branch Tampin	06-4433050
Branch Bahau	06-4553066
Shelter Home for (Abused) Women & Children	06-7678600
Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre	05-5467031
Women's Centre for Change Penang (WCC)	04-2280342
Pertubuhan Kesedaran Wanita Kedah	04-7326230
Ti-Ratana Welfare Society	03-79881818
Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO)	03-79575636
All Women's Action Society of Malaysia (AWAM)	03-78774221

Perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan:

- Kaunseling melalui telefon
- Kaunseling bersemuka
- Nasihat perundangan
- *One Stop Crisis Centre* (OSCC)
- Rumah perlindungan sementara

KEGANASAN RUMAHTANGGA



Keganasan rumahtangga ialah suatu corak tingkahlaku menyerang dan bersifat memaksa dalam bentuk fizikal, seksual & psikologikal, serta kawalan kewangan melampau yang dikenakan oleh individu dewasa atau remaja ke atas pasangan intim.

Kami sedia membantu anda!

Untuk bantuan, hubungi

Agensi berikut yang berhampiran:

Balai polis

Pejabat Kebajikan Masyarakat Daerah (PKMD)

Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri

Wad kecemasan hospital-hospital awam

Talian bantuan:

Polis 999

Nur 15999

Teledera 1 800 88 3040

Pusat Kaunseling Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan (PKMAINS)

Cawangan Seremban 06-7679905

Cawangan Tampin 06-4433050

Cawangan Bahau 06-4553066

Shelter Home for (Abused) Women & Children 06-7678600

Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre 05-5467031

Women's Centre for Change Penang (WCC) 04-2280342

Pertubuhan Kesedaran Wanita Kedah 04-7326230

Ti-Ratana Welfare Society 03-79881818

Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO) 03-79575636

All Women's Action Society of Malaysia (AWAM) 03-78774221

Appendix 9: Individual Profiles of the Participant and the Partner

The individual profiles of the abused Women

Participant	Age	Education level	Occupation	Monthly Income (RM)	Status	Years of marriage	Years of abusive relationship	Number of children
W1	35	Tertiary	Government	1500	Married	13	4	3
W2	39	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Widow	17	3	3
W3	42	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Married	8	4	3
W4	40	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Married (separated)	22	20	10
W5	50	Primary school	Business	2000	Married (separated)	15	9	4
W6	32	Secondary school	Casual job	Irregular pay	Married	9	1	4
W7	39	Secondary school	Business	1000	Divorced/ Remarried	14	10	3
W8	45	Primary school	Housewife	No income	Divorced/ Remarried	20	15	7

Appendix 9: Individual Profiles of the Participant and the Partner

W9	35	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Married (separated)	15	14	3
W10	28	Secondary school	Private	600	Divorced	3	3	2
W11	37	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Married (separated)	4	4	2
W12	33	Tertiary	Private	1800	Divorced	8	1	1
W13	41	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Widow	15	15	4
W14	40	Secondary school	Government	700	Divorced	20	5	2
W15	44	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Divorced/ Remarried	14	11	3
W16	47	Secondary school	Housewife	0	Divorced	14	8	4
W17	65	Primary school	Private	300	Married (separated)	9	1	2
W18	52	Secondary school	Private	1000	Divorced	20	17	2

Appendix 9: Individual Profiles of the Participant and the Partner

W19	57	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Divorced	30	7	6
W20	63	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Divorced	2	1	0
W21	40	Secondary school	Business	500	Widow	14	14	2
W22	19	Secondary school	Private	300	Married (separated)	3	2	1
W23	31	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Divorced	8	1	2
W24	60	Secondary school	Government	1500	Married	39	2	5
W25	54	Secondary school	Housewife	No income	Widow	21	21	3

Note: The exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report.

The individual profile of the partners

Participant	Age	Education level	Occupation	Monthly Income (RM)
P1	35	Tertiary	Private	2000
P2	Not clarified	Secondary school	Private	Unknown
P3	35	Secondary school	Business	2000
P4	41	Secondary school	Private	800
P5	55	Tertiary	Government	4000
P6	36	Primary school	Casual job	Irregular pay
P7	43	Primary school	Unemployed	No income
P8	52	Unknown	Unemployed	No income
P9	36	Secondary school	Private	2500
P10	27	Secondary school	Business	600
P11	40	Secondary school	Private	500
P12	30	Secondary school	Private	800
P13	Not clarified	Primary school	Unemployed	No income

Appendix 9: Individual Profiles of the Participant and the Partner

P14	40	Unknown	Private	500
P15	53	Secondary school	Private	Unknown
P16	47	Secondary school	Private	300
P17	62	Primary school	Government	250
P18	53	Secondary school	Private	1000
P19	57	Secondary school	Private	700
P20	60	Secondary school	Government	300
P21	Not clarified	Secondary school	Private	500
P22	27	Unknown	Private	Unknown
P23	33	Secondary school	Private	Irregular pay
P24	63	Secondary school	Business	3000
P25	Not clarified	Secondary school	Private	500

Note: The exchange rate of RM 100 is equivalent to £20.00 at the time of this report.