"Violent behaviour is often caused by an interaction of situational and individual factors. That means that abusers learn violent behaviour from their family, people in their community and other cultural influences as they grow up. They may have seen violence often or they may have been victims themselves .... Alcohol and other chemical substances may contribute to violent behaviour. A drunk or high person will be less likely to control his or her violent impulses".

-Toby D. Goldsmith et. al., 22 November 2000.

So far as Indian society is concerned, in the past few decades, the increasing evidence regarding the phenomenon of domestic violence has drawn the attention of several concerned feminists, human rights groups, social scientists and social work practitioners. Many scientists have attempted to study the phenomenon and have proposed several theories to explain the same. An overview of various theories that have been put forward is as follows:

1. **FEMINIST APPROACH OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

   As the name suggests, this theoretical perspective emerged during the height of the Women's movement in 1970s. Supporters of this theoretical orientation argue that domestic violence is broadly defined as male coercion of women. Domestic violence is one form of violence against women, but other forms includes rape, sexual assault, female infanticide, marital rape and female circumcision.\(^1\) The common elements in all these type of violence against women are gender and power.

   Feminists’ understanding is that the society is structured in a patriarchal order in which men maintain a privileged position through the domination of women (Littlewood, 2004). Therefore, the power imbalances inherent in the patriarchal society create and perpetuate male violence against women (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). They further contend that, domestic violence is rooted in gender and power,
and represents men’s attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Salo, 2005).

These feminist ideologies have spawned notions that male violence is a result of pervasive sexism in our norms, values and institutions (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005). Blacklock (2001) argues that sexual violence is used by men as a way of securing and maintaining relations of male dominance and female subordination, a notion central to the patriarchal social order. Thus male violence within families is part of a wider system of male power (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004).

The widely adopted explanatory and treatment model of domestic violence, the Power and Control wheel, developed in Minnesota was engineered by feminism. It is used extensively in Counseling and advocacy work with male batterers. The model places male domination at the center of any consideration of abusive relationship. Its objective is to deconstruct fertile grounds that support the further breeding of male violence against women (Loseke, 2005). This model is consistent with Social Work principles, which focus on the improvement of the social functioning of individuals. Furthermore, the function of social work is to regulate conflicts in relationships by ensuring that every person’s rights are upheld (Ambrosino et al, 2005).

This study has chosen to utilize the feminist theory to a large extent over the other two theories mainly because the other theories failed to adequately meet the requirements of the research questions and problem. The social learning theory places emphasis on violence as learned behavior during childhood and thus concentrating on respondents’ histories and yet the study is focusing on present experiences of violence. The Systems theory focuses on the family and yet the research intends to acquire information from the perpetrators experiences of violence. In addition both theories ignore the patriarchal context in which domestic violence occurs.

Researchers like Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh (2005), concede that theories that fail to acknowledge the presence of patriarchy in domestic violence issues are flawed and meaningless. Studies have shown that in the past three decades, largely through feminist activities the issue of domestic violence has been raised to the public consciousness as a serious societal problem. Furthermore, research findings
internationally have been consistent with feminist propositions. In India findings show that violence occurs within the traditional family system and within the context of institutional patriarchy (Fernandez, 1999). In addition, studies in China documented that the patriarchal family system and gender inequality within the family are largely responsible for the prevalence of wife abuse. Lastly, the impetus to develop treatment models like the Duluth Model- Power and Control Wheel operating in Western countries like America, Canada and United Kingdom has been spawned by feminists who work with battered women (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). There are weaknesses that have been forwarded in critique to the theory. Family violence researchers suggest that, other substantive disciplines argue that patriarchy is just one variable in a complex constellation of causes (Anderson, 2002). They contend that socio-demographic indicators like educational and employment status among others, influence propensities for domestic assaults. The researcher contends that whilst these postulations have substance, ignoring the part played by patriarchy is simplistic and mechanistically misleading. Domestic violence practitioners in the United Kingdom contend that, the important thing is to ask what it is about men’s constructions and their relationships with their partners that permit them to use abusive behaviors towards them because of their lack of employment and low educational status (Blacklock, 2001). Lastly, mainstream feminism has been considered inadequate in addressing the needs of all women as it has fallen short in concerns of racial/ethnic and class diversity among women (Loseke, 2005). In the light of this factor, this study will also utilize the black feminist theory and the African feminist theory in-order to address the above concerns.

The participants of the international workshops then assessed the different factors. The concepts of masculinity and male dominance over women—called “patriarchal attitudes” or “machismo”—were established as the basis for all subsequent factors. It was agreed that the concepts of masculinity and male dominance were responsible for denying women access to and ownership of land, property and other resources. Violent conflict resolution corresponded to “the logic of hegemonial masculinity”—argued the workshop
Radical feminism and male violence against women

The Radical feminist thought as purported by Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh (2005), acknowledges that patriarchy enables men to dominate and control women (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005). By the same token, within a patriarchal social order, men maintain a privileged position through their domination of women and their monopoly of social institutions (Cunningham et al, 1998). The study argues that this permits men to benefit from their power over women in every way, from ego-satisfaction to economic and domestic exploitation, sexual domination and political power. Patriarchy is regarded as a violence that is practiced by men and male dominated organizations over women and is linked to all forms of abuse against women (Firestone, 1970). Feminist analysis of male violence connects it to the pervasive sexism in our norms, values and institutions (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005).

By the same token, Yllo, (2005), proposes that, “When a man rapes his wife because he feels it is her wifely duty to submit, this is not just a conflict of individual interests, but that which is deeply gendered and the husband’s perceived entitlement has strong institutional support” (p115).

Radford & Stanko (1997) argue that, sexual violence is used by men as a way of securing and maintaining relations of male dominance and female subordination, a notion central to the patriarchal social order. Thus male violence within families is part of a wider system of male power (Yolo, 2005). This ideology converges with the hegemonic masculinity concept which projects that men’s use of violence against women embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Gilgun et al, 1999). This realisation has acted as an impetus for feminist treatment programs that focus on addressing power relations in gender violence cases, such as the use of power control wheels that deconstruct fertile grounds that support the further breeding of male violence against women (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005).

The researcher’s frame of reference is that, the South African society like many other societies is patriarchal and that violence is largely perpetrated by men against women. As such, domestic violence cases are difficult to deal with, as society
comprehends a man's use of violence against his spouse as a mechanism to discipline his partner. Conclusively, the researcher contends that feminists have exposed the breeding ground for domestic violence, which is patriarchy. The study's standpoint is that although patriarchy contributes to the abuse of women, it is not fair to insinuate that all men are consciously programmed to violate women, as the entire male population is not abusive.

Currently, feminism is an ideology, if not a social movement that is subject to many qualifications (Oyewumi, 2003). The distinction between the mainstream feminism (white feminism) and Black and African feminism reflect contestations that have become very much a part of history and worldwide development of feminist ideas. Mainstream feminism has been considered inadequate in addressing the needs of all women as it has fallen short in concerns of racial/ethnic and class diversity among women (Loseke, 2005).

**Feminism and male violence against women - Duluth Model**

This study has chosen to use the feminist theory to a larger extent over the other three theories mainly because the other theories failed to adequately meet the requirements of the research questions and the problem statement of the study. The social learning theory places emphasis on violence as learned behavior during childhood and thus concentrating on respondents' histories and yet the study is focusing on present experiences of violence. The systems theory focuses on the family and yet the research intends to acquire information from the perpetrators experiences of violence. Researchers like Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh (2005), concede that theories that fail to acknowledge the presence of patriarchy in domestic violence issues are flawed and meaningless.

Studies have shown that in the past three decades, largely through feminist activities the issue of domestic violence has been raised to the public consciousness as a serious societal problem. Furthermore, research findings internationally have been consistent with feminist propositions, in India findings showed that violence occurs within the traditional family system and within the context of institutional patriarchy (Fernandez, 1999). In America, 29 studies have concluded that assaultive husbands perceived the use of marital violence as acceptable. Studies in China documented that,
the patriarchal family system and gender inequality within the family are largely responsible for the prevalence of wife abuse. Lastly, the impetus to develop treatment models like the Duluth Model- Power and Control Wheel operating in Western countries like America, Canada and United Kingdom has been spawned by feminist work with battered women (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004).
The Power and Control Wheel (1993)

Developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, the Power and Control Wheel illustrates the tactics an abuser uses on his victim. Constantly surrounded by threats and/or actual physical and sexual abuse, the victim is subjected to the various tactics listed in the spokes as the abuser attempts to exert complete power and control over her.

Function of Domestic Violence: A Pattern of Control

Domestic violence is not simply two people who physically hurt one another because they cannot control their tempers during an argument. Certainly, violence in this form is devastating and should be stopped. But, the core issue of domestic violence is much more insidious.

Battering or abuse is a pattern of behavior that seeks to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation. Batterers believe they are entitled to control their victims. They believe that threats and violence are acceptable and will produce the desired results. Therefore, domestic violence is purposeful and instrumental behavior.

The perpetrator's pattern of abusive acts is used to gain compliance from or control over the victim. It is directed at restricting independent thought and action so that the victim will become devoted to fulfilling the needs of the perpetrator. The pattern is not impulsive or 'out of control' behavior. Tactics that work to control the victim are selectively chosen by the perpetrator. This achievement is unfulfilling however, because the perpetrator can never get enough control to make him/her feel comfortable. It is impossible, despite the victim's attempts to comply.

It is the abuser's use of physical force that gives power to their psychologically abusive acts.

Psychological abuse becomes an effective weapon in controlling victims because they know through experience that abusers can and will at times back up their threats with physical assaults. Sometimes the abuser is violent only once, but it is the threat that they will be again that keeps the victim fearful and under control.

Perpetrators will use whatever combination of tactics they find most successful with their victim. The tactics used are not random - they are carefully
planned and each is used at a time when the perpetrator knows it will be most effective.

At the core of feminist explanations is the view that all violence is a reflection of unequal power relationships: domestic violence reflects the unequal power of men and women in society and also, therefore, within their personal relationships.² Feminist theorists never employ terms such as "family violence", "Spouse abuse", marital violence", and "conjugal violence" because they believe these terms shift the focus away from the concept of male coercion and away from the woman. Rather, they advocate for terms such as "wife-beating", "domestic violence, "battered women" and "woman abuse" because they more accurately depict the phenomenon of domestic violence.³ By defining and conceptualizing domestic violence in this manner, the victims are clearly women and wives, and they should be the focus of research, interventions, and policies.

Advocates of the feminist theory assert that the etiology of domestic violence lies in the patriarchal structure of society, in which men play a dominant role in most social institutions.⁴ Male dominated structures are exhibited in the economic structures, social institutions, sexist division of labour, and traditional gender role expectations.⁵

Along with verbal, emotional, and economic abuse, violence is a means of maintaining male power in the family when men feel their dominance is being threatened. Economic roles have left women dependent on men and unable to escape abusive situations.⁶ Men's superior physical strength may enable them to dominate women through violence.

Feminists argue that a consequence of the social arrangement in which men hold the positions of respect and power is that men and women alike devalue the feminine and over-value the masculine. To the batterer, women are childlike and incompetent. This differential access is the result of society assigning value to certain characteristics. In other words, there is a hierarchy of what is viewed as inferior or superior, and the attribute "male" for gender is valued more so than "female".⁷

Paul has identified the close relationship between the control and management of money in marriage and the exercise of power. Wives were likely to have greater
decision-making power if they were in paid employment. Research by Kalmuss and Straus shows that women's economic dependence is a mediating factor in violence against wives; the greater the dependence, the greater the risk of serious assault. Homer, Leonard and Taylor have also studied the control and management of money in violent relationships and concluded that 'the exercise of the power of the purse and the force of the fist coincided in the lives of vast majority of the women interviewed'.

In the feminist view, batterers feel that they should be in charge of the family: making decisions, laying down rules, disciplining disobedient wives and children, and correcting unsatisfactory performance of duties. Batterers may typically exercise control over the family in non-violent, coercive ways and only sometimes resort to violence. As men, batterers feel entitled to gender-based respect and obedience; therefore, what they perceive to be disrespect and disobedience infuriates them. Batterers often rationalize their violence on the grounds that it was necessitated by their partner's actions: she provoked or insulted, and they simply reacted as any man would.

**Criticisms of the Feminist Model**

Feminist analysis comes from research showing that batterers are less secure in their masculinity than non-batterer—the theory being that men who do not feel masculine will need to assert their masculinity more forcefully to compensate for their sense of inadequacy. Other studies have documented the sense of entitlement batterers feel in controlling their partners' behaviour and in justifying violence if these women deviate from the female sex role.

Critics have claimed that the female perspective overemphasizes socio-cultural factors, such as patriarchal values, to the exclusion of individual factors like growing up abused. Men's behaviour in intimate relationships varies across individuals, and broad cultural factors cannot explain this variability. Feminist theory predicts that all men in our society will be abusive.

Besides being untrue, this theory makes it impossible to predict which men will be violent. To make individual predictions, a model must assign a role to other factors including, but not limited to psychological deviance.

There can be no doubt that feminist analyses have added greatly to our
understanding of domestic violence by viewing it in the context of power relationships and the more general position of women in society. However, 'feminists have focused too narrowly on patriarchy and sexual oppression, and therefore failed to consider class, racial and cultural oppressions'.

Feminist approaches to domestic violence reject explanations based on individual pathological behaviour. In doing so, they bring domestic violence firmly into the political arena. Individual therapy may have a place, but the violence will continue so long as women are denied equal access to power and resources.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, occurring simultaneously with the women movement there was an increased emphasis on family economic policy and social programmes. As a result, the family as an institution which was once viewed as private was now scrutinized by the public.\textsuperscript{12} In addition the "discovery" of child abuse in the mid 1960s by medicine and sociology began to disseminate the notion that the family or the home was not necessarily a safe and non-violent place.\textsuperscript{13}

By the early 1980s, more scholars and researchers began to focus on domestic violence from a family sociological perspective. This theoretical orientation emphasizes the family structure, As a result the family violence perspective maintains that domestic violence or spouse abuse is one form of family violence. Other forms of family violence include child abuse, sibling abuse and parent abuse. Terms commonly used by advocates with a family violence perspective include "spouse abuse", "marital violence", "conjugal violence" and "family violence".

This theoretical perspective asserts that the cause of spouse abuse lies in the structure of the contemporary family institution- in other words the family is a system of social relations with unique properties that make it a particularly fertile ground for violence. For example, family members spend a great deal of time with each other; the involvement with each other is intense, they know each member's vulnerabilities, membership is not voluntary and family matters are generally private and therefore there is a lack of social control of behaviours within the family. All these characteristics serve to cloak or hide violence in the family.\textsuperscript{14}

The family systems model regards individual problem behaviours as a manifestation of a dysfunctional family unit, with each family member contributing
to the problem. Rather than identifying one individual as the cause of the violence and removing that person from the home or singling that person out for treatment.

According to the family systems (or "interactional") model both partners may contribute to the escalation of conflict, with each striving to dominate the other. Family systems theorists believe that most abuse is verbal and emotional, but as the conflict escalates, either partner may resort to violence. Because, from this perspective, interactions produce violence, no one is considered to be the perpetrator or victim, even if only one person is physically violent. Family systems theory also suggests that interactions may permit or facilitate abusive behaviours in one person, such as a non-abusive parent's failure to intervene in child abuse or a family member's failure to establish appropriate personal boundaries, thus setting the stage for their own victimization.

**Advantages and Criticisms of the Family Systems Model**

Family systems therapists criticize psychological approaches that focus on individual deficits (low self-esteem, dependence, anger) while neglecting to teach interpersonal skills that could promote safety. Family systems theory leads to treatment that involves improving communication and conflict resolution skills. Both members of the couple can develop these skills through "solution-focused brief therapy" that:

- locates the problem in the interaction rather than in the pathology of one individual;
- focuses on solving the problem, rather than looking for causes; and
- accentuates the positive-for example, examining occasions when the couple avoided violence.

Advocates of the family systems approach note that many violent couples would like to remain together, and that there may be positive aspects to the relationship that counseling can build on. However, while some observers report that over half of domestic violence couples remain together, a study of abused wives whose husbands did become non-violent found that most of the women subsequently terminated the marriage because of other marital problems that became apparent after the violence ended. Portion of population in general with psycho-pathological
SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

The socio-psychological model assumes that criminal violence can best be understood by careful examination of external environmental factors that exercise impact on an individual offender. This model also examines the types of everyday interactions (say, stressful situations or family interactional patterns) which are precursors of violence. Theories such as the Frustration-Aggression Theory, the Perversion Theory and the Self-Attitude Theory approach criminal violence from a socio psychological level of analysis.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

This theory first stated in 1939 by Dollard, ct. al., derived many of its basic postulates from Freudian theory. It explains the process by which aggression is directed to the source of frustration. Whenever something interferes with an individual's attempt to reach some goal or end, he feels frustrated and frustration in turn leads to some form of aggression (John Dollard). After taking various criticisms into account, this theory was modified. Today it is recognized that an actual display of aggression may be inhibited by either internalized norms of external controls, even though the impulse for aggression may be strong following some frustrating experience. It is also recognized that frustrations can be cumulative and that they can remain active over a long period of time. It is also acknowledged that people perceive frustrations in varying ways, with those deemed arbitrary or unreasonable most likely to trigger aggressive responses. Further, it is recognized that responses to frustrations can be learned. In short, aggressive actions are not an automatic consequence of frustration, and their occurrence depends upon numerous factors.

Criticism

According to the Frustration-Aggression theory, aggression is always directed towards one who is believed to be responsible for frustration. If this is so, this theory does not explain criminal violence in the types of crimes as we have analyzed here. Take for example the case of a dowry-death. Why does the mother-in-law /husband kill the daughter-in-law /wife when the source of frustration is not the girl who is killed but her parents who fail to fulfill the dowry demands?
Thus, theory is criticized on the ground that aggression is not always directed to the source of frustration but also because it is often directed towards some other object. It is also criticized on the grounds that: (i) the relationship between frustration and aggression is not innate, (ii) a wide variety of responses may result from frustration and aggression is not the only response, and (iii) aggression may be an adaptive response and a rational choice of behaviour.

Yet other criticisms against this theory are: (i) human behaviour is not an extension of animal instinctive or innate behaviour but the product of a complex interplay of biological and environmental factors. An individual's social behaviour depends upon his social and cultural milieu; (ii) responses to frustrations are learned just like any other social behaviour and what is learned has a lot to do with socialization practices which themselves differ from group to group and society to society.

**Perversion Theory**

The psychoanalysts explain violence on the basis of the Theory of Perversion (Giles Pie, 1952) and the Theory of Symptom Formation. They do not regard perverts as constitutionally inferior people but maintain that perversion develops from instincts (see, Menachem, Amer, Patterns in Forcible Rape, 1971). According to Freud's early theory (1949), perversion essentially means persistence in the adult of infantile instincts and behaviour at the expense of adult behaviour. In the pervert, infantile traits fail to undergo the normal process of integration during puberty but are not converted into neurotic symptoms. Violence can be the product of strong inborn drives or of pathological experiences in infancy or early childhood (Johnson, 1956). In the latter cases, childhood conceptions of the relations between the sexes as being aggressive and sadistic and the idea of pleasure as a negative process, essentially achieved by relief from a state of "unpleasure" are carried into adulthood.

Explaining different kinds of perversion, psychoanalysts point out that maturation involves leaving early aims and objects and choosing new aims. Perversions can, therefore, be conceived of as distortions of aims and objects and in the absence of the distortion of appropriate feelings towards these objects (see, Freud, Three Essays).
Fenichel (1945) consolidated the approach that aggression arises from
castration fears which in turn are derived from earlier oral sadism. This was later
accepted by most psychoanalysts as a possible explanation of the etiology of
perversion, in particular violence against the weak. This theory was considered
important because it was supported by the clinically established fact that there is a
higher incidence of perversion among males than among females.

A discussion of the dynamics of perversion has included the objects of aggression
and the operations of the ego and superego. One theory suggests that the ego is 'split'
in perverts; (Gilles Pie, 1944) another that through ego mechanisms, the object splits.
Klien (1946) suggests that a 'good' object is idealized by the pervert while he uses
aggression towards a 'bad' object.21

Criticism

The present theory is rejected because of the limitations of its approach. While
explaining psychoanalytical hypothesis of 'infantile instincts', 'inborn pathological
drives', 'distorted feelings', 'childhood sadism' or 'split ego' about causes for
committing an offence by individual male offenders it ignores an important
dimension of environment in the causation. Wife beating, rape, bride-burning, and
even murder cannot be the result of a mere primary institutional component of a
personality or a means of solving psychic conflict. Though aggression is a basic
element in personality structure, its origin and direction in social relations, especially
between the sexes, cannot be explained only as a result of personality pathology.

Self-Altitude Theory

This theory maintains that in a society, a culture, or a group that values
violence, persons of low self-esteem may seek to bolster their image in the eyes of
others and themselves by carrying out violent acts. It explains the propensity to
violence of those for whom society makes it difficult to achieve an adequate level of
self-esteem (see Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Criticism

Accepting this theory would mean that all individuals who use violence
against women (that is, rapists, abductors, murderers, and batterers) suffer from low
self-esteem.22

60
The Cycle Theory of Violence and Psycho-social Theory of Learned Helplessness

Two of the most often discussed theories on battered women are Lenore Walker's 'The Cycle Theory of Violence' and 'Psychosocial Theory of Learned Helplessness'.

The cycle theory of violence comprises three distinct phases in the cycle of violence—the tension building stage, the acute battering incident and kindness and contrite loving behaviour. In the first stage, when minor battering incidents occur, the woman adapts, rationalizes and externalizes the problem. Tension mounts in the second phase leading to the acute battering incident leading to severe repercussions on the woman physically, emotionally and psychologically. Phase three is welcomed by both the partners, which is marked by uncontrolled love, affection and promises by the husband never to repeat the incidents again. This cycle keeps repeating itself in the lives of almost all battered women. The psycho-social theory of learned helplessness focuses on the factors which reinforce battered women's victimization. According to this theory, battered women operate from a premise of 'helplessness' which further serves to only aid passivity and a fatal acceptance of the exploitative situation.23

Criticism

Walker talks of immobilizing terror leading to learned helplessness. Dobash and Dobash reject the notion of 'learned helplessness' which has 'negative implications for public perceptions and actions associated with the problem of violence against women' and is 'based on false premises and unsubstantiated evidence regarding the predicament and actions of women experiencing persistent violence'.24

Survivor Theory

As opposed to the cycle theory, E.W. Gondolf and E.R. Fisher proposed the survivor theory in 1988 which views women not merely as passive victims but proactive help seekers and survivors. The assumptions of the survivor theory are in sharp contrast to the above theory of learned helplessness. The survivor theory credits women with the capacity to innovate newer strategies of coping and acknowledges the efforts of the survivors in seeking help from formal and informal sources. In addition,
the survivor theory stresses the need for accessible and effective community resources for the woman to escape from the batterer. As mentioned earlier, the survivor theory takes cognizance of the multiple help-seeking behaviour of women in the face of increased violence. Further, it also lauds the *female survivor instinct* which focuses on nurturing rather than destruction, the willingness to adapt and the efforts directed at furthering of self-growth.

**SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORIES**

The sociological or socio-cultural model provides a macro level analysis of criminal violence. This model examines criminal violence in terms of socially structured inequality, and social and cultural attitudes and norms regarding anti-social behaviour and inter-personal relations. Besides the two well-known theories, viz. the Structural-Functional Theory and the Theory of Subculture of Violence, the Learning Theory, the Exchange Theory, the Anomie Theory, and the Resource Theory also come under socio-cultural analysis.

**Structural Theory**

This theory asserts that social groups differ in respect to their typical levels of stress, deprivation and frustration and in the sources at their disposal to deal with these stresses. It explains that those individuals would be more violent who combine high stress with low resources. This theory thus explains an individual's action in terms of the ways it is shaped or determined by social forces of one kind or another. Among the possible sources of stress are 'economic conditions, bad housing, relative poverty, lack of job opportunities and unfavourable and frustrating work condition'. Men and women are socialized into particular roles to which are attached a set of socially determined expectations. If structural faction prevents these expectations from being realized, frustration results and violence may ensue. Furthermore, in a variety of ways violence is socially legitimated.

**Criticism**

One consequence of accepting this position is that the action of individuals has nothing to do with their personalities and values, and that violence cannot be described in terms of conflict, suppression, sublimation, guilt, and so on. The role of rationality also has to be rejected in social action. The structuralistic perspective, thus,
leaves some questions unanswered because of which it is criticized.

It should also be observed, however, that while stress resulting from poverty, inequality and various forms of deprivation may be contributory factors in domestic violence, only a small proportion of those who experience such conditions behave violently and many of those who do behave violently are neither poor nor deprived.

The identification of structural factors gives a more political flavour to explanations of domestic violence. For example, a study by Straus revealed: (i) that there was a lower incidence of domestic violence when the inequalities between men and women were less marked, and (ii) that weaker social bonds gave rise to increased domestic violence.26

**System Tension and Feedback Systems Theory**

This theory was developed by Straus (A General Systems Theory of Violence between Family Members, 1973) to explain intra-family violence. Straus accounts for violence in the home by viewing family as a purposive goal-seeking, adaptive social system. Violence is seen as a system product or output rather than an individual pathology. Straus specified positive feedback in the system which can create an upward spiral of violence, and negative feedback which can maintain, dampen, or reduce the level of violence.

According to this theory, violence is precipitated by factors such as stress and inter-individual conflict and is followed by consequences which maintain or escalate violence in family and in society.

**Criticism**

This theory has been criticized on the basis that there has been little research specifically concerned with the learning of marital violence. It also over-emphasizes the social system and completely ignores the role of individual's personality.27

**Resource Theory**

This theory of intra-family violence developed by W.J. Goode (Force and Violence in the Family, 1971) was in fact the first theoretical approach applied explicitly to family violence. Goode states that all social systems rest to some degree on force or threat. The greater the resources a person can command within a social system, the more force he or she can muster. However, the more resources a person
can command, the less the chances are that a person will actually deploy violence. Thus, violence is one of the resources that individuals or collectivities use to maintain or advance their interests. But violence is used as a last resort when all other resources are exhausted. Applying this set of assumptions to the family, Goode explains that family is a power system in which four sets of resources are in operation to maintain stability, economic variables, prestige or respect, love, and force or threat of force. As a child, the batterer, torturer, murderer or humiliator learns to use force or threat of force if he feels there is an imbalance in family transactions. For example, when he feels he is missing out on respect or love or faithfulness, force is the only resource he has at his command. A husband who wants to be the dominant family member but has little education, lacks inter-personal skills, is likely to resort to violence to be the dominant person.

**Criticism**

This theory does not explain all forms of violence against women. Various arguments can be given against this theory when applied to wife battering, dowry deaths, murders, rapes, and so on.

**Patriarchy Theory**

This theory developed by R.E. Dobash, and R. Dobash (Violence Against Wives, 1979) maintains that throughout history, violence has been systematically directed towards women. Economic and social processes operate directly and indirectly to support a patriarchal social order and family structure. Dobash's central theoretical argument is that patriarchy leads to the subordination of women and contributes to a historical pattern of systematic violence directed against females.

**Criticism**

Dobash's theory, while perhaps the most macro-level approach to violence against women, has a major drawback of being a theory that is essentially a single factor (patriarchy) explanation of violence (towards women).

**Conflict and Control Theories**

Scholars like Foucault (1975), Thompson (1977) and Rothman (1980) have presented a domination model of deviance. They have talked of rules imposed on the powerless by the powerful. Radical and conflict sociologists like Quinney (1977)
have argued that the purpose of controlling deviance is to protect the interests of the dominant classes and to prevent access to their resources by outsiders. In other words, the control apparatus is created to prevent the powerless from pursuing their interests, particularly if that pursuit involves gaining access to resources monopolized by the powerful. Imposing varied restrictions on women and compelling them to remain dependent on men economically, socially and emotionally to make them realize that they are 'weak' and powerless in all respects, stands as an example of this argument. To the extent that the agents of control belong to the dominant group, an overall system of devaluation of the 'powerless group' (women) can easily be implemented. Schur (1983) contends that male control of deviance labeling results in their continued dominance in most spheres of life.

The constraints on women's rights can be interpreted as function of the successful definition of women as different from and inferior to men. *Man talks of woman not in herself but as relative to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being. She is differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute; she is the Other*.

Sex role norms clearly differentiate men from women. When these norms become internalized, they are accepted as facts and seldom questioned. Millet (1970) has said: "Because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different. Women live in such a different economic, cultural and social world from men that their reactions cannot be understood from a master model developed in male society.

**Criticism**

What is in question is not the existence of gender differences but the extent to which such differences justify restrictive role assignments to each gender. There is little disagreement regarding the cultural construction of gender, but there are conflicting views on the role biological factors play in such development.

Thus, women are: (i) declared as different, and (ii) defined as inferior, and (iii) women stereotypes are justified, and (iv) they are systematically deprived of rights, and (v) all attempts at change are restricted.
Interactionist Deviance Theory

This theory, exemplified by theorists such as Erikson (1964), Becker (1963), Schur (1971), and Lemert (1978) has three characteristics: (i) it cites sex roles as causal factors of why people engage in crime and deviant behaviour, (ii) it maintains that societal expectations about appropriate sex role behaviour influence the diagnosis and labeling of certain actions as deviant or criminal, and (iii) it holds that gender affects the response to such (deviant) behaviours by society (Wisdom, 1984: 185). Since women tend to be less powerful and of lower social status than men, they are easily labeled as deviant in cases of domestic violence. This theory explains family violence in terms of sex role or gender norms, i.e. differential expectations for values, attitudes and behaviours as a function of one's gender. These norms serve as important standards against which women and men are evaluated through application of various sanctions (Schur, 1984).

According to the prevalent sex role norms, a husband expects a 'good wife' to behave in a certain manner. She has to run the household smoothly, ensure children's well-mannered behaviour, avoid assertiveness and remain submissive to elders in family. Any show of independence on her part would violate sex role expectations for female behaviour. According to deviance theory, norm violations tend to trigger forces aimed at making the violator conform to expected standards of behaviour. Thus, when women do not behave like the male's ideal of wife, husbands use violence against them to make them conform to norms.28

The Social learning theory

Social learning theory while still concentrating on individual perpetrators, introduces a social element by attempting to explain men's violence towards women as learned behaviour. This phenomenon is seriously referred to as 'intergenerational transmission of violence'. What it purports to demonstrate is that those who witness violence between their parent, or who themselves experience abuse as children are likely to resort to violence in adulthood.29 This theory explains both the variations of persons and situations in their tendency to respond aggressively by reference to prior experience, reinforcement patterns, and cognitive processes. Steele and Pollock (1974) and Bennie and Sclare (1969) have maintained that abusive male adults are
likely to have been raised in abusive homes. In fact, this 'family determinism' approach maintains that all victims of childhood violence will grow up to be violent adults.30

This theory provides a broad analysis to examine the individual within the larger social context in which he/she is situated (Barnett, Perrin & Perrin, 2005). The social learning school of thought is of the view that experiencing violence in the family of origin contributes to one's risk of committing wife abuse during adulthood (Cunningham, Jaffe, Baker, Malla, Mazaheri & Poisson, 1998). Thus, the theory argues that people model behaviour that they were exposed to as children. By the same token, they state that violence is learned through role models provided by the family either directly or indirectly and reinforced in childhood and continued in adulthood as a coping response to stress or a method of conflict resolution (Mihalic & Elliot). Barnett, Perrin & Perrin (2005), state that:

"Abusive parents provide children with a classroom for learning specific forms of abusive behaviours, particular attitudes, and distinct cognitions that justify violence" (p. 327).

In similar fashion, people attend to the modelled behaviour of the significant others, encode this behaviour and integrate it through motor reproduction. Moreover, the amount of observational learning that take place is dependent on a number of factors including, observed and experienced rewarding or deterring consequences of the behaviour and the characteristics of the observer and the individual modelling the behaviour (Cunningham et al, 1998).

Criticism

Flitcraft31 reject the notion that violence is transmitted from one generation to the next; they argue that the studies which claim to show this are methodologically flawed and base their conclusions on inadequate evidence and unsound interpretation. Widom points to methodological weaknesses in the research, including in retrospective nature and the lack of an adequate control group.

This explanation does not appear to have a scientific basis. Accepting this theoretical explanation would be accepting a relationship in a too simplistic deterministic form.
Ram Ahuja applied this theory in studying a wife-batterer's history of abuse as a child and found that about half of the batterers (55 percent) had faced conditions of manifest physical brutality or severe emotional rejection in their childhood. The data thus supported the social learning theory. Yet, violence which is the result of victim's provocation or victim's complicity, etc., cannot be explained on the basis of this simple theory.

A critical analysis of this information shows that the social learning school of thought holds that, male violence is a result of men’s socialisation. The socialisation process of men takes place from birth and perpetuated through childhood stages and practiced throughout life. For example, men’s aggressiveness towards women to prove their strength is something that young boys learn from childhood (Tshesane, 2001). Moreover, notions of male dominance are taught within institutions like the family, school and therefore reinforced through the mass media representations of masculinity (Tshesane, 2001).

Be that as it may, the connection between these two variables is over elaborated as the major cause for violent action. Witnessing spousal abuse in one’s family of origin does not by itself explain a substantial proportion of batterers (Cunningham et al, 1999). Arguments forwarded in support of this postulation perceive that, the interaction of these two variables only happen to a few men (Blacklock, 2001). Not all men who had abusive experiences in childhood will go on to be batterers and conversely, not all batterers have had abusive childhoods (Barnett et al, 2005). This notion comes after substantial occasions of working with men and the realisation that most violent men use this as an excuse and making them look as victims of violence too (Blacklock, 2001). Moreover, there is a scarcity of literature to prove the relationship between the two variables: childhood exposure to violence and spousal abuse (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005).

Despite these findings, critiques state that the theory in isolation from other theories does not explain why intergenerational transmission of violence is not universal and why some other batterers do not report histories of exposure to violence in their families of origin (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanaugh, 2005). Moreover, there is a scarcity of literature to prove the relationship between the two variables: childhood
exposure to violence and spousal abuse. This study places the spotlight on perpetrators experiences of violence and not on the inter-relationship of men’s childhood experiences of violence and their present violent behavior. Despite these shortfalls, the theory is partially applicable to this study, as it highlights factors that also contribute to men’s use of violence against their partners.

**Social Learning Theory**

This theory asserts that human aggression and violence are learned conduct, especially through direct experience and by observing the behaviour of others. According to this theory (Albert Bandura, *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*, 1973) the individual learns violence through imitation. Individuals pick up the behaviour patterns of those they are taught to respect and learn from. Whether observed in the flash or via visual media, the behaviour of aggressive models is readily imitated by individuals. Aggressive behaviour patterns learned through modeling and imitation remain part of our repertoire of social responses over time. Rewards and punishments also play a crucial role in the learning and expression of behaviour patterns. One might think that physical aggression directed against one’s fellows could hardly have any rewards, actual or anticipated. But it is not so. Violence offers abundant rewards and one learns it very early in life.

**Cognitive Behaviour Theory**

The cognitive behaviour theory postulates that men batterer because:

- they are imitating examples of abuse they have witnessed during childhood or in the media;
- abuse is rewarded;
- it enables the batterer to get what he wants; and
- abuse is reinforced through victim compliance and submission.

This theory is same as social learning theory.

Advantages and Criticism of the Cognitive Behaviour Models

One advantage of the cognitive behavioural model is that its analysis of battering and its intervention strategy are compatible with a criminal justice response to domestic violence. The approach holds the batterer fully responsible for his violence and fully responsible for learning and adopting non violent alternatives.
Without trying to solve larger issues of social inequality on the one hand, or delving into deep-seated psychological issues on the other, the cognitive behavioural approach simply focuses on the violent acts themselves and attempts to change them.

The feminist perspective criticises the cognitive behavioural approach for failing to explain why many men with thought patterns or skills deficits that allegedly explain their domestic violence are not violent in other relationships, how culture or sub-cultures influence patterns of violence, and why some men continue to abuse women even when the behaviour is not rewarded.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Exchange Theory}

Richard J. Gelles feels that the Exchange Theory is the best theory of violence because it integrates the key elements of the diverse theories of human violence. According to the Exchange Theory, interaction is guided by the pursuit of rewards and the avoidance of punishment and costs. In addition, an individual who supplies reward services to another obliges him to fulfill an obligation and thus the second individual must furnish benefits to the first. The exchange does not pertain to concrete or tangible things; rather, it involves intangibles such as esteem, liking, assistance and approval. If reciprocal exchange of rewards occurs, the interaction will continue, but if reciprocity is not received, the interaction will be broken off. Thus, actors expect rewards to be proportional to the investments (distributive justice). The costs and rewards are judged in the light of alternatives.\textsuperscript{33}

This theory explains the growth of resentment, anger, hostility and violence when the principle of distributive justice is violated. In applying the principles of the Exchange Theory to explain violence in a family (in our case wife beating, dowry death and rape by a family member), we expect that people will use violence in a family if the costs of being violent do not out-weigh the rewards. Goode suggests that force is used more by those in the poorer classes partly because they have less alternative resources and partly because their socialization experiences teach them to depend more on force. However, all researchers do not agree that the poor classes do use more force, though statistics show more violence against women in lower classes. Higher figures of violence in poor classes are there because of the fact that greater
proportion of the population belongs to lower classes or it may be that middle classes have more resources or have greater motivation to hide their offences.

**Criticism**

Intra-family relations are more complex than those studied by Exchange Theorists. A wife cannot break-off interaction with her husband and parents cannot break-off interaction with their children, even if there is no reciprocity. Goode (1971) however, believes that violence is used as a last resort to solve problems in the family. But Nye (1979) does not accept Goode's viewpoint. In applying this theory to intra-family violence, we find some costs for being violent. First, there could be the chance of the victim hitting back; second, a violent assault could lead to an arrest and/or imprisonment; and finally, using violence could lead to loss of status. Thus, since the cost greater than the reward, how does the Exchange Theory explain violence against women?

**MULTI-FACTOR THEORY**

**Integrated Approach Theory**

An attempt has been made by Ram Ahuja (1998) to develop a theoretical model which would explain all types of violence against women. He describes this a middle-range theoretical proposition.

This approach has been adopted by borrowing certain concepts from sociologists and criminologists like Hirschi (Causes of Crime, 1976), Schultz (Studies in Social Theory, 1964), etc. It not only explains the etiology of violence against women but also uncovers the recurring patterns in which particular types of people are found to commit a particular type of crime against a particular type of individuals, in particular types of circumstances.

He prepares an integrated model which takes into consideration both innate and acquired behaviours, this model assumes the role of four factors: (i) social norms and social organization which socialize the individual, (ii) the personal characteristics of offenders and victims (psychiatric view) like emotional disturbances, aggressive impulses, a tendency to be rigid and domineering, a history of having been neglected or abused in childhood, low self-esteem, and so forth, (iii) the inter-personal characteristics of offenders (socio-psychological view) such as failure to get praise,
appreciation, words of affection and polite modes of address from others, higher than normal levels of coercive behaviour from others, such as verbal threats and words of dislike and disapproval, below average (or below normal) frequencies of overall family interaction and lack of outside social associations, etc., and (iv) the ecological or environmental factors, for it is within ecological boundaries that personal dispositions to use violence or commit crime are developed and crime-evoking situations arise.

This model concentrates on the sociological analysis of socio-structural conditions. The important conditions which lead a person to woman's victimization are: status frustrations, life stresses, career crisis, and structural opportunities. This view focuses attention not only on the aggressive act itself but also on the person who uses aggression and the person against whom aggression is used. The man who assaults a woman, physically or mentally, is often the man who either feels at a disadvantage with women or who feels at an advantageous position in demanding a specific thing from a woman.

Ram Ahuja's integrative approach is based on the analysis of: (a) the social system, (b) the personality structure, and (c) cultural patterns. In the social system, he includes strains and frustrations and structural opportunities; in the personality structure, he includes adjustment (in status), attachment (to groups), and commitment (to values and roles); and in cultural patterns, he includes the synthesis of traditional and modern values which operate as a means of social control (in a group/community/society). Violence appears to be the result of combination of certain factors. He pointed out the role of four factors in violence: (i) personality factors (of male aggressors), (ii) situational factors, (iii) cultural norms, and (iv) resistance potential of female victims. He says that Woman's resistance/ susceptibility potential would come from rigid sex role socialization patterns, leaving women with a sense of 'learned helplessness' so that they do not develop appropriate skills to escape violence.  

He further maintains that violence is used by people who are either frustrated or develop a superiority ego due to lack of adjustment, attachment and commitment under specific circumstances. Thus, violence is used by these frustrated individuals
when they view certain females as appropriate victims and certain situations as suggestive of, even opportune for the use of violence, i.e., in specific circumstances and not in all circumstances.

**The Multifactorial Systemic Theory**

This theory was propounded by Bhatti and Beig (1985): Within the multifactorial and systemic model, family violence can be defined as 'an act/action performed by a family member to get the desired conformity from the other members and when it carries a negative emotional component'. By multi-factorial it is meant that we are looking at the nature of family violence from more than one perspective that is not only from a psychological angle or sociological angle, but also from physical, emotional, and intellectual angles.

This model assumes that societal, cultural and socio-political developmental phases of a developing society bring a variety of changes in the value patterns of the system. Such transitional phases tend to disrupt the traditional homeostasis of the system. Norms and values of the system begin to dilute in search for newer adaptations. During this period to develop morphogenesis becomes extremely challenging for the family as a system. In order to seek the desired conformity from a fellow family member, family may use any means, namely, physical violence, verbal violence, emotional violence or intellectual violence. Thus, underdeveloped societies may possess concrete norms and values while developing and developed societies possess more fluid norms and values. Within this model it is postulated that lower degrees of violence exist in underdeveloped societies as the norms and values are more concrete. It is expected that violence may increase in degree, as norms become more fluid as in the case of developing and developed countries. It is also expected that the acts of violence will show qualitative changes with the development of the society and the ensuing change in norms. The acts of violence seen in underdeveloped societies may be more physical in nature while families in the developing countries may exhibit violence in emotional and intellectual areas. The relative degree of violence and the type of violence will therefore, depend on the developmental phase of the society.
Another school of thought, similar to the social learning theory is the systems approach. Proponents of the systems theory explain violence against intimates as a product of the family system. Violence is maintained through roles, relations and feedback mechanisms that regulate and stabilize the system. If violence is rewarded by the system, it is more likely to recur (Ambrosino, Heffernan, Shuttleworth, Ambrosino, 2005). Thus, behavior is affected by the responses and feedback of other members of the family. This causal explanation assumes that the unit of analysis for the assessment is the family or a subsystem within the family. The researcher is of the view that this theory offers an explanation of male violence, however, it fails to addresses the gender issues that contribute to domestic violence and the differential effects of violence. Similar notions purport that systematic interventions do not address gender issues by failing to challenge patriarchal belief systems that are often used to justify violence against women (Ambrosino et al, 2005). Be that as it may, this study will also utilise this theory to a lesser extent as it has elements of truth in it in explaining male violence.

Male violence can also be linked to the systems theory as it holds that an initial maladaptive behaviour most often results from the interaction of learning the different response patterns. Serovich & Craft (2005) are of the notion that individuals learn behaviour by watching and imitating actions experienced in the home environment. This can be as a result of attempts to maintain equilibrium, the family members may engage in violent means to attain this goal. Within this model, the family is viewed as a dynamic organisation of interdependent components that continually interact with one another. An aggressive action by a man towards his wife, from this theoretical perspective, results in a reaction by another family member. Thus Cunningham et al (1998) believe that, violence is maintained through the roles, relations and feedback mechanisms that regulate and stabilise the system. If violence is rewarded by the system its most likely to recur.

Serovich (2005) writes that:

“In violence prone families, love is equated with possession and disagreement is equated with hostility, disrespect or rejection” (p77)
One paradox of intimate partner violence is that, in an attempt to gain control, family members are actually increasing the dysfunction of the family (Serovich, 2005). Hence, for men who are abusive, witnessing violence in their families of origin provides a model of how to deal with relationship problems. In an attempt to maintain control over the relationship, these men may resort to violence because it is their most accessible coping strategy (Serovich, 2005).

The theory thus, contends that the unit of analysis for assessment and intervention is the family or a subsystem within the family for example, an adult couple rather than one or more individuals in isolation. The emphasis is on interaction, which enables the identification of behaviour patterns associated with relationship violence. (Cunningham et al (1998). Cunningham et al (1998) further state that, in most cases, romance and violence co-exist at some points in relationships, combined with the complexity of interactions between partners. This suggests that relationship characteristics may mediate the significance and interpretation given to violence both by the aggressor and the victim.

It has been noted that analysis of the co-existence of marital dissatisfaction and physical aggression in couples is associated with high levels of aversiveness, reciprocity of negative behaviour and anger responses, overt hostility, defensiveness, poor problem solving skills, patterns of demand-withdraw on the parts of both individual (Ronan, Dreer, Dollard, & Ronan, 2004). Thus, the holistic approach resulting from the systems perspective is appealing in its potential to increase an understanding of the links between violence against women and particular styles of family processes that involve the child.

Those that do not support this school of thought voice that systematic explanation assigns co-responsibility for violence, which contributes to perpetrator justifications for aggression and victim blaming (Barnett et al, 2005). This study shares the same ideology with this proposition in that, it places the spotlight on male violence perpetrators, mainly because men’s individual standpoints in relation to their violent actions have been submerged in the victims (women) accounts. Despite this fact, the systems theory informs us of the impact of initial family lifestyles on the respondents’ present violent behaviour. The study will thus incorporate this theory.
into the study to a lesser extent in-order to obtain a holistic understanding of male violence. It also important to note that there is a relationship between the systems theory and the social learning theory in that there are both socialisation theories as they both look at violence as learned behaviour.

The subculture of violence theory

The sub-culture of violence theory is one of the most popular and controversial explanations for violence among blacks. According to Wolfgang and Ferracuti in (Oliver, 1994), the disproportionate rates of criminal violence among blacks are a product of their commitment to sub-cultural values and norms that condone violence as an acceptable means of resolving interpersonal conflicts (Oliver, 1994). This theory also contends that members of the sub-culture of violence develop favorable attitudes towards the use of violence through the processes of differential learning, association and identification. A subculture, according to him is a normative system of some groups or groups smaller than the society.

The theory purports that; there is a potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up life style, the socialisation process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions. Like all human behavior, Wolfgang wrote that homicide and other violent assaultive crimes must be viewed in terms of the cultural context from which they spring" (Wolfgang & Ferracuti in Baron, 1998).

Deviant behavior is not evenly distributed throughout the social structure. There is much empirical evidence that class position, ethnicity, occupational status, and other social variables are effective indicators for predicting rates of different kinds of deviance" (Wolfgang & Ferracuti in Oliver, 1994). This information tallies with findings established in some parts of South Africa in which violence was predominantly discovered among people whose occupational statuses are low. Violence was used as a means to reassert their masculinities (Morrell, 2002).

In essence, the subculture of violence theory holds that the overt use of violence is generally a reflection of basic values that stand apart from the dominant, the central, or the parent culture. This overt (and often illicit) use of violence constitutes part of a subcultural normative system that is reflected in the psychological
traits of the members of the subculture (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, in Baron, 1998). They argue that the black subculture actually values violence and that it is "an integral component of the subculture which experiences high rates of homicide". (Jewkes et al, 1999) state that just as the dominant society punishes those who deviate from its norms, deviance by the comparatively non-violent individual from the norms of the violent subculture is likewise punished, either by being ostracized, or treated with disdain or indifference. The African culture in relation to gender relations has generally been perceived as embracing violence, which in most cases is viewed as a way of disciplining the female spouse in instances were they would have disrespected the husband (Macdougall, 1999, Abrahams & Laubsher, 2004).

According to Wolfgang, "it is not far-fetched to suggest that a whole culture may accept a value set dependent upon violence, demand or encourage adherence to violence, and penalize deviation". Also, the more a person is integrated into this subculture, "the more intensely he embraces its prescriptions of behavior, its conduct norms, and integrates them into his personality" (Wolfgang & Ferracuti in Baron,1998).

Baron (1998) supports the above proposition by contending that no subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society of which it is a part. Furthermore, to establish the existence of a subculture of violence does not require that the actors sharing in these basic value elements should express violence in all situations (Oliver, 1994). Members of groups having a subculture of violence might need to carry weapons for protection against others. But they say that the very act of carrying these weapons becomes a common symbol of willingness to participate in violence, to expect violence, and to be ready for its retaliation. This study argues that labelling the whole South African society as violent because of the violent subcultures inherent in it is misleading and erroneous in that not everyone subscribes to the violent culture.

In the light of these facts, it is plausible to conclude that male violence in some parts of the society is not viewed as illicit conduct, but as normal, in specific relation to situations where violence is embraced as an instrument for discipline. This is evident in studies with abusive men that have exposed unremorseful feelings about
their actions of violence against their spouses (Macdougall, 1999; Kim, 2000). It is also assumed that the subculture of violence theory can be incorporated into our understanding of violence however; the reasons it forwards are but a part of a constellation of many others.

**Ecological Model**

Heise (1998) proposes a clearer and interrelated ecological framework for understanding violent behaviour among individuals (11). This framework includes a range of physical, social, emotional and psychological factors at the personal, community and societal levels. In this model, the causative factors are represented in the form of four concentric circles. The innermost circle includes the personal history of the man and the woman who are in the relationship. For example, this includes factors influencing their personalities such as being male, childhood experience of marital violence in their families, childhood experience of abuse. The second circle represents the micro system factors that influence familial relationship and include the immediate context within which violence takes place such as male dominance in the family, control over money and decision making at the household level by men, low status of women such as daughter-in-law within the family, use of alcohol, marital conflict situations.

![Ecological Model of Factors Associated with Partner Abuse](image_url)

**Figure 1.** Ecological Model of Factors Associated with Partner Abuse  
*Source: Adapted from Heise (11)*

- Norms granting men control over female behavior
- Acceptance of violence as a way to resolve conflict
- Notion of masculinity linked to dominance, honor, or aggression
- Rigid gender roles
- Poverty, low socio-economic status, unemployment
- Associating with delinquent peers
- Isolation of women and family
- Marital conflict
- Male control of wealth and decision-making in the family
- Being male
- Witnessing marital violence as a child
- Absent or rejecting father
- Being abused as a child
- Alcohol use
The third circle represents the exo-system representing the social systems and structures at the micro level or community level such as poor socio-economic status, unemployment, poor social surroundings leading to delinquent behaviour, lack of access of women to economic and other resources, and lack of support structures leading to powerlessness. The macro system represents the broader societal norms that serve to create a favourable environment for the other three factors to act. These include, the general societal acceptance of power structures that represent dominance, aggression and control of men over women; of rigid gender roles; of acceptance of interpersonal violence. This framework has been found to be highly flexible and can be applied across various settings; across same settings in different time spans and even within the same relationship across the lifecycle.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed a number of theoretical perspectives from which various causal explanations of violence can be derived. There has been an ongoing debate on which theory has explanatory power to indicate the causation of male violence against their female partners. Psychopathologists, social learning theorists, family system theorists, sociological theorists, cultural evolutionary theorists and feminists have had their share in this debate. Whilst this is the case, this study draws its theoretical framework largely from the feminist theory because its ideologies catch essence of the study's research questions and problem. However, it will borrow from other theories, which assist in explaining male violence such as the social learning theory, the systems theory and the subculture of violence theory.
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