

to cyclical fluctuations between periods of abuse and relatively peaceful coexistence. The theory also explains how women become victimised, how they fall into “learned helplessness” behaviour, and why they do not attempt to escape (Walker 1979). The cycle of violence is made up of three separate and distinct phases. The first stage is called the “tension building” phase, during which the abusing spouse exhibits moodiness, is short tempered, and is critical of his spouse. It is during this phase that the other spouse may feel as if she is “walking on egg shells”, and attempts to avert any further escalation of the tension. The second phase is called the “explosion” phase. This is a relatively short-lived phase in which the tensions of the previous stage reach crisis proportions and a physical assault ensues. The third and final phase has been called the “honeymoon” phase, because it is during this phase that the abusing spouse shows great remorse for his actions and promises never to repeat the episode. According to Walker (1979), it is not uncommon that the abused spouse and her perpetrator will engage in lovemaking soon after the assault. It is thought that the interchange between caring and abuse keeps the abused wife from leaving the relationship and the abuser from changing his behaviour. Despite the cyclical nature of the abuse, due to the influence of situational factors, it is difficult to predict the timing of each phase or the repetition of the cycle (Walker 1979).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As the aim of this study was to understand the underlying causes of violence against women and girls, focus fell on psychological and social variables, and those related to early childhood. These are diverse and complex, and demanded a multi-purpose research design. Previous studies on violence against women conducted in Namibia had focused mostly on the quantitative, statistical description of violence. For the current research, in order to gain insight into the contextual meaning of the violent behaviour, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted.

#### **3.2 Research settings**

The inmates who constitute the research sample were drawn from the prisons listed below. According to the Ministry of Safety and Security (MSS), these prisons house those inmates who have been found guilty of violent crimes against women and girls.

- Windhoek Central Prison, Khomas Region
- Hardap Prison, Hardap Region
- Walvis Bay Prison, Erongo Region
- Swakopmund Prison, Erongo Region

- Oluno Rehabilitation Centre, Oshana Region
- Divundu Rehabilitation Centre, Kavango Region

### **3.3 Participants/sample**

The sample consisted of inmates who had been sentenced as perpetrators of violent crimes against women and/or children and imprisoned (see Table 1 and Figure 1 below.) A sampling frame (the study population) was constructed from a list of prisoners provided by the Prisons Authority. This was further stratified into the types of violent crimes committed, and a sample of 200 inmates was selected on the basis of systematically and proportionally stratified probability. A sample interval was calculated and a random number (k) assigned within the first interval, and thereafter every  $k^{\text{th}}$  element was selected.

**Table 1 The sample population as per record of the selected prison**

<b>Prison</b>	<b>Total number of inmates</b>	<b>Proportion of total (x/y)</b>	<b>Proportional selection of 200 cases for study (28% of sample size – <math>x/y*n</math>): # Interviews</b>
Windhoek Prison	219	0.31	61
Hardap Prison	331	0.46	93
Oluno Rehabilitation Centre	41	0.06	11
Walvisbay Prison	77	0.11	22
Divundu Rehabilitation Centre	42	0.06	12
Swakopmund Prison	4	0.01	1
Total inmates (y)	714	100%	200



### **3.4 Methods of data collection**

Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative tools. The quantitative tool used consisted of a questionnaire tapping the following information:

- socio-demographic information;
- current or most recent partner of the perpetrator;
- perception of gender roles on the part of the perpetrator;
- behaviour patterns of the perpetrator; and
- financial autonomy of the perpetrator.

The psychological profiles of the perpetrators were assessed with the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (1985). The EPQ consists of 90 items containing three subscales, namely neuroticism (EPQ-N); introversion-extraversion (EPQ-E); and psychoticism (EPQ-P).

For the qualitative part of the study, focus group discussions were held at the various prisons with selected inmates who indicated their willingness to participate.

### **3.5 Ethical and safety considerations**

Research on violence against women and girls is difficult to conduct. In particular, there are a large numbers of ethical and safety issues that need to be considered when implementing such research. The following principles guided the research:

- The consent of the inmates who constituted the research sample was obtained.
- The safety of the respondents and the researchers was considered to be of paramount importance.
- The utmost care was taken to ensure that the questions posed to the respondents did not invoke potentially violent reactions.
- Care was taken to ensure that the participants' identities would remain confidential.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Response rate**

As indicated above, the sample selection for the study was 200 inmates proportionally distributed among the selected prisons throughout the country. Table 2 indicates the participation rate of the selected prisons and the inmates. (The terms "inmates" and "perpetrators" are used interchangeably.)