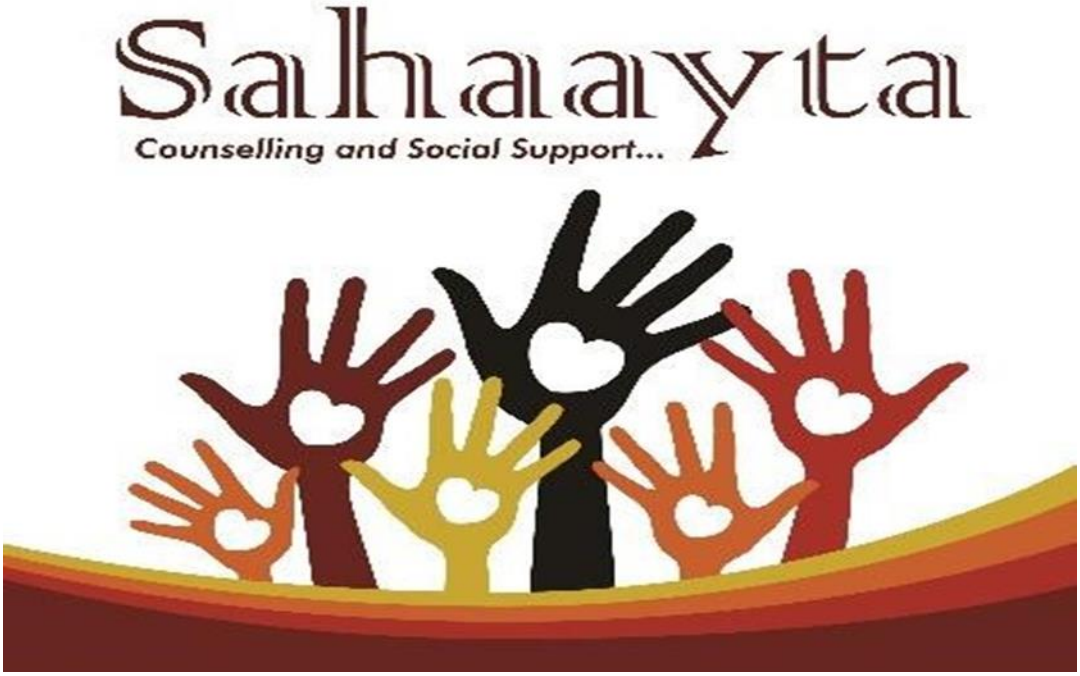

Strength and Dignity:

Women's Stories of their Hopes and Aspirations after their Family Members' Residence at Gandhi Nivas

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Overview

Introduction

Gandhi Nivas was established in response to the needs of local South Auckland communities, where men bound by Police Safety Orders (PSO) required emergency housing and social support. Men bound by a PSO need to find alternative accommodation for the duration of their Order, such as finding a motel room, sleeping in their car or staying with friends or family. The Gandhi Nivas residence provides alternative accommodation for men bound by a PSO. Sahaayta Counselling and Social Support provides care in the Gandhi Nivas residence through provision of meals, a bed, clothing, counselling, advocacy and other social supports including stopping violence programmes and opportunities for learning about emotional regulation, legal processes in Aotearoa New Zealand and social expectations about women's rights to self-determination (Mattson et al., 2020).

Sahaayta also extends their support services to the women and children of the men who reside at Gandhi Nivas. The families are contacted as soon as possible after the men enter the home and the whole family is provided the social supports that they need, including referrals.

In the current study, we spoke to 15 women about their engagement with Sahaayta in order to understand how they experienced the support of the Gandhi Nivas early intervention collaboration. The women who participated in interviews were embedded in diverse cultural communities, including Southeast Asian communities such as Punjabi, Sri Lankan, Indian and Fijian Indian; as well as Chinese, Samoan and Māori communities. Most participants were immigrants; however, four participants were born in Aotearoa New Zealand. The participants ranged in age from their early 20s to their 50s. Nine participants were engaged in employment. While many participants requested to be simply identified by a number, the research team chose pseudonyms that felt dignifying to the women's stories in the predominant language of the woman's ethnic community.

The Research in Context

The current study is the seventh in our series of reports on our research collaboration with Gandhi Nivas. The programme of research has been diverse, engaging statistical analyses of patterns of re-offending, ethnographic studies with stakeholders and men who have resided at the Gandhi Nivas home, and a presentation of women's narratives and patterning difference among their stories of how they came to be engaged with Sahaayta. Our previous research within Gandhi Nivas (Coombes et al., 2017; Mattson et al., 2020) alerted us to the differences in legal contexts that migrant communities must navigate.

In this study we engage with the concept of coercive control that is vital for understanding entrapment in intimate relationships. Coercive control is explained as individual men's techniques for controlling partners and family members through physical and sexual assault, but also through mobilising gender norms and stereotypes to assert dominance and microregulate women's actions to meet traditionally gendered expectations (Stark, 2009; Morgan et al., 2019). Family violence interventions that attend to coercive control and its interconnections with broader gendered social norms aim to empower women to meet their own goals and open space for their autonomy, while dignifying their resistances to violence in their lives.

We utilise an entrapment framework (Tolmie et al., 2024) so as to locate coercive control in the context of wider social and systemic entrapments. We attend to how the broader contexts of coercion, like family and immigration contexts, restrict autonomy.

Social entrapment includes responses from family, friends, community and the abuser themselves, as well as disclosures of violence or control: those who are closest in women's everyday lives may prohibit disclosures or support violence through justifying men's authority to abuse and control family members. Systemic entrapment includes the systems and institutions that shape lives, including ongoing processes of colonisation in the context of government and non-government services (Tolmie et al., 2024). Distinctions between social and systemic entrapments are unclear, as entrapments compound. Our analytic framework informed by understandings of entrapment calls to our attention the multitude of ways social and systemic restrictions curtail women's autonomy and capacity to act – intersecting inequalities (gender, race, class for instance) shape experiences of violence and control, as well as the options for being safe (Tolmie et al., 2024).

Globally, cultural traditions can be steeped in gendered hierarchies that privilege men and subordinate women, which has serious implications for women's legal rights, social status in communities, and positioning within families. And while legal statuses may change, like making dowries illegal in Indian law, social norms that subordinate and control women persist.

Women's movement and capacity for action in response to violence can be restricted by financial deprivation, working long hours, un- and underemployment, the cost of living, alcohol/substance use in the family, language barriers, responsibilities for other family members and no or limited access to education. These precarious restrictions reduce women's opportunities for forging new connections in a new country, producing men's lives as the focal point of their relationships, enabling men's control of women's agency and entrapping women in violence. Knowledge of the processes of immigration, for example, is often controlled by the men, positioning men as gatekeepers to women's legal immigration.

Women's social status in many cultural contexts is intricately tied into marriage and creating a successful family, so becoming a good wife and good mother, as defined through traditional patriarchal cultural values, becomes a key performance for women to engage in as best they can to have a successful family and a successful life. In previous research (Krishnan et al., 2012), women have identified multiple triggers for men's violence, including denying rejecting demands for sex, fights over finances and the husband's employment, and women's activity the community. These triggers suggest violations of traditional patriarchal cultural gender roles, particularly in ways that open space for women's autonomy.

The research process

Through research processes informed by a community psychology approach, we collaborated with Sahaayta and women clients to understand how the support services offered to women and their families through Gandhi Nivas have helped them to become safer and more secure in their homes. While we pay attention to how Sahaayta intervenes in women's lives to progress safety, we especially pay attention to the hopes and dreams expressed by the women as new opportunities open up for them.

In collaboration with Sahaayta, we negotiated specific research questions:

- How do family members understand the circumstances that brought them into contact with Sahaayta? How do the services offered by Sahaayta take their circumstances into account?
- How has Sahaayta been involved in identifying and meeting family members' needs for improving their safety and wellbeing?
- How has it been helpful to have Sahaayta and other services/organisations involved in early intervention work with the family?
- How have the early intervention services offered to the whole family helped to improve family members' safety and non-violence within the family?
- Have family members experienced safety issues that early intervention services have not been able to help them to address?

Gathering the women's stories

We engaged reflexive thematic analysis to interpret women's stories in the context of our knowledge of Gandhi Nivas, Sahaayta and our academic knowledge of the field. We identified three themes concerned with Sahaayta's understanding of differences amongst the women's circumstances to enable respectful, dignified support: understanding coercive contexts; making sense of safety and wellbeing within precarious conditions; and prioritising safety. Our analysis also identified three further themes concerned with the ways in which transformative support is offered by Sahaayta

staff. These three themes are: ethics of care; changing understandings of domestic violence; and reconstituting dignity from a new place.

Analysis: Understanding Coercive Contexts

Familial relationships and migration histories

Women told us diverse stories of their families and migration. Sahaayta's expertise with diverse social norms of their diasporic Southeast Asian communities enables them to hear the differences among the women and engage with the women's social needs in her family and community. While some of the women had grown up in Aotearoa New Zealand, others had no knowledge of their new country where they were expecting to improve their conditions. Navjot tells us: "there was an expectation that I would have a better life. When I came here, I didn't know anything about NZ". Esin arrives in Aotearoa New Zealand as a refugee, seeking safety for her family from political instability. Sahaayta engages the varying ways women they meet come to be in Aotearoa New Zealand and how these connections might enable safety in their homes. Without making assumptions about how families might be configured, Sahaayta respond flexibly to how the whole family could be engaged in supporting the women to become more safe.

Marriages and couple relationships

While all the women have come into contact with Sahaayta because their partners were bound by PSOs, the relationships in which the women experienced victimisation were diverse. Most women were at risk of violence from a partner, but two mothers at risk of violence from their sons were also participants in this research. Women told us diverse stories about their relationships with men, including relationships that were forced, coerced, resisted, or welcomed.

Arranged marriages were described in multiple ways. Navjot marriage was arranged and "it was good for ten years". Chatura had the opportunity to reject potential husbands selected by her parents, eventually marrying a man known to her. Other women resisted the marriages arranged for them. Whether arranged or not, marriage is aspirational for the women. Sahaayta know that arranged marriages involving families are ideally negotiated carefully so that a woman moves from the protection of her family relationships to the security of her new husband's family.

Some women found themselves married to men who did not want to be married, either to them specifically or at all. Chatura's husband told her that he only married her because his parents said he must – he "destroyed" Chatura's life. Women held expectations of their new husbands embedded in the gendered social norms of their communities – husbands have responsibilities to their families.

In some women's stories, arranged marriage and love become entangled. Some women met, and fell in love with, their partners through school, employment or the community. Elei's marriage happened through a set of compounding factors: to avoid the stigma of a taboo relationship, for her personally and for her family in her community; for her partner to fix his immigration issues; and for love. There were also women who felt that they needed to stay with their partners because their partners brought them to Aotearoa New Zealand, and they did not want to appear ungrateful for the opportunities of a 'better life' in a new country.

Becoming a good wife to live a good life

The women spoke of the importance of family 'success' within their communities, where women become good wives and mothers alongside good husbands and fathers. Women told us of socio-cultural contexts where there were few opportunities for women to succeed beyond being a wife and mother. Chatura wanted to become a housewife and lead "a normal life".

Most of the women told stories of gendered expectations of marriage that were not being met – particularly about the division of labour at home and in employment, and finances. The women typically desired traditional gendered roles where their performance of a traditionally 'good wife and mother' is complemented by their partner's performance of a traditionally 'good husband and father' to produce a successful family unit.

Few women expected to experience violence in their marriages. Fulli had "never experienced it before… never seen it". Women's stories of coming to recognise violence as well as their shock to be experiencing violence speaks to how traditional heteronormative marriages do not necessarily normalise violence, as many women came from traditional backgrounds.

Women were trying to live up to gendered cultural expectations to produce a successful life for themselves, to role model for their children, and within their communities. Their partners' or sons' struggle with or are disinterested in performing traditional men's roles in the family. Zhi, Elei and Ilihia all tell us of their partners' struggles to find stable employment. Greetha and Avana tell us that their husbands over-work, leaving little time for connecting as a family. Aroha and Esin are concerned about their sons' resistances to join and stay in the workforce. Most of the women suggest that men need to be working or engaged in study in order to be fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in their families and communities.

Analysis: Making Sense of Safety and Wellbeing Within Precarious Conditions

Precarious material conditions

Many women talked to us about idealised marriages/partnerships where labour was divided and each partners' contributions respected. However, the women reported that their relationships were typically imbalanced, with women taking on a much heavier share of the responsibilities of family life and receiving little acknowledgment or respect in return. Zhi tells us her husband "never took any other responsibilities" like mowing the lawns or cleaning.

The division of financial responsibility was often in contention through the women's lives, with some women going to work themselves help pay the bills, and others used their own personal money. Even those women who earned their own money for the family were not in control of the finances, with money mostly spent by the men. Anika had been working and earning her own money, but after the traumatic birth of her baby, she cannot go back to work to regain her financial independence. Usha has never been permitted to work: "he did not let me work". Women who work also struggle with the costs of living in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and encounter poor institutional responses from agencies if their finances are insufficient.

Usha and Navjot both told us stories about men in their lives not taking responsibilities seriously in precarious circumstances. Usha's son has refused to find work, straining the household, and Navjot's husband did not provide for the family, spending any money on alcohol. With Sahaayta's help, Navjot has taken on the family responsibilities: "I have my own car. I was on a benefit, they helped me. I got my own car. I have my own house on rent".

Becoming involved with systems responses to violence

Women told us of the difficulties navigating institutional responses in Aotearoa New Zealand, most notably when they had engaged with the New Zealand Police or child services. Zhi tells us that child services threatened to take her children away if she remained in her home with her husband, who was refusing to leave. Sahaayta have helped her to better understand her rights in complex institutional systems.

Many of the women spoke about being uncertain about engaging the police, sometimes through culturally specific understandings of police or concern about unwanted responses from police. Women wanted violence to stop, but not necessarily through PSO or arrest. Chatura and Shirim were wary of police intervention, with Shirim concerned about the practical implications of her husband being removed from the household: she was reliant on her husband for transport to work, so police intervention can mean jeopardising her employment. The women tell us that Sahaayta helps them to

navigate institutional interventions into their specific contexts, hearing and accounting for specific practical consequences in women's daily lives.

Using the police, or the threat of police, to control and entrap women was a regular feature of women's stories, particularly where women's cultural contexts had understandings of police as supportive of men's positions. Sahaayta staff have helped women to understand and negotiate these complex relationships with police to better enable family safety.

Analysis: Prioritising Safety on her Terms

Security within precarity

Women's safety and security are intimately connected in precarious material conditions. Greetha tells us of the importance of a home like Gandhi Nivas for her family's safety and their financial precarity, where she knows her partner is in a safe place and does not need to spend money on accommodation or food. Zhi was similarly appreciative of Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta working with her and her husband for safe outcomes, where she knew he was safe too.

Sahaayta have also helped women make progress towards financial security and independence. Chatura, for example, is back working and studying again after some acute financial struggles, and Elei is happier in a new job with more flexibility.

Alcohol abuse remains a problematic context for women's precarious safety and security, with partners and sons continuing to drink, or alternating between drinking and sobriety. Sahaayta works with men's drinking, and some women have seen positive effects, like Aroha, who is happy that her son is now gaining skills and working. But Fulli's partner does not engage with Gandhi Nivas, and his drinking continues to threaten her. Sahaayta are supporting her to stay safe in her context.

Chatura has been abandoned by her husband, socially and financially isolating her further while she also navigates recovery from an injury caused by her husband. But Sahaayta is helping her to stay engaged in educational and employment opportunities as she can. Chatura tells us that Sahaayta "were a strength for me… I'm happy now I'm here. I must start my study again. They were the strength for me to undertake my plans". The "teamwork" she experiences with Sahaayta staff enables Chatura's social entrapment to be addressed with specific care for her context and how she wants and needs to become safe and to thrive.

Navigating systems responses

Sahaayta staff have helped women to become skilled at using their service, where women learn who to call for help, and how to stay in touch with Sahaayta as a source of support. Navjot spoke of how much she valued Sahaayta's support when engaging a lawyer: "I had a feeling that I was supported,

that someone was there behind me". She became more confident within a confusing Western justice system with Sahaayta's support.

As well as the legal matters that arise from police intervention into family violence, many of the women are embedded in complex immigration issues, compounded by women being denied access to information through a husband's control. For Fulli, problems with her immigration documentation were discovered as a result of police intervention into her husband's violence against her, altering her relationship with the authorities. Women, like Fulli, who are denied immigration knowledge might not be able to make decisions about their safety and security (like calling the police) if they are fearful of a punitive institutional response. The threat of being 'sent home' might bring with it a different set of violences, and as such become a powerful barrier to accessing help that Sahaayta helps the women to navigate and overcome.

Analysis: Ethic of Care in Coercive Contexts

Transforming women's social relationships

Many of the women did not have many or any social connections in their communities, beyond their husbands and perhaps a few family members. Those without employment or study opportunities were particularly isolated. Chatura did not "have any friends here" and has felt that she can trust Sahaayta staff with her feelings, which has been "really helpful". While Navjot had friends to talk to, her husband increasingly isolated her, asking her "not to speak to my friends. Not to speak to anyone, not to meet my friends". Sahaayta though has helped to gain "a bit of a friend circle" for support. Sahaayta have helped many of the women to gain social connections that help them maintain safety.

For some women, churches, temples or gurudwara can provide some social connection. Avana tells us that she used the support of friends in her faith community and specifies that she could not talk to neighbours about the violence she was experiencing. With Sahaayta's help, her existing social supports have strengthened, and her new understandings of women's autonomy have enabled Avana to gain confidence and independence. Zhi, however, did not find support for herself within her faith community – her church supported her husband instead, encouraging her silence about the violence she was experiencing. With Sahaayta's support she is connected with friends and family on her journey learning to be a "solo mum": "for me, choosing myself, is something new".

Sahaayta have helped women to navigate new relationships with their husbands that look different to the dominant Western response that demands women leave violent relationships. Tiaho told no one of the violence she experiences, not even her sisters or best friends. Sahaayta are helping Tiaho to continue living with her partner, safely. Couples counselling helps to "vent" and clear up

miscommunications. Tiaho has learned that her “troubles and burdens needed to be heard, and to be addressed with someone” and her partner needs to be accountable for change.

Removing men from homes, rather than requiring women and children to leave, brings men into view to hold them to account for violence and control. While Gandhi Nivas helps to shift focus onto men’s violence, the women we spoke to tell stories that suggest they are taking on the burden of responsibility for maintaining safety in their homes. Women spoke of concerns that their partners are not engaging with change opportunities. Staying in connection with Sahaayta helps women maintain safety despite their partners’ lack of engagement.

Jumari and Esin still live with their husbands, but no longer engage in responsibilities as wives. Esin and her husband live in separate spaces in their home and she does not care for him. Outwardly, they maintain their marriage, avoiding the stigma in her community of an unsuccessful family: “because of my kids I have allowed him to be at home. So, I'm here, I'm at home for the sake of my kids, and I'm comfortable”. Sahaayta has helped her to end the relationship of husband and wife while maintain the outward face of the marriage, and this has made her feel safe, happy and in control in her home.

Avana had stayed in her marriage, but with Sahaayta’s support she has gained confidence and autonomy: “Now I can make my own decisions” about going to the movies, for example. She can now safely challenge the social norms that had entrapped her in obeying her husband.

Listening and responding respectfully

Women valued trust when sharing their experiences of violence. Fear of judgement was no longer a barrier for seeking help for the women as they engaged with Sahaayta. For Chatura, sharing her experiences of violence was “just too hard to tell”, particularly in the context of loving her husband. But Sahaayta were “a real help” to her for gaining strength. Ilihia has her mother’s support, but does not tell her everything, so she is grateful that Sahaayta staff “made the burden I was carrying just a bit lighter” by providing judgement-free responses to her reality.

Fulli tells us that a Sahaayta staff member “was like a mother to me, who supported me, who cared for me”. Aroha’s son resided at Gandhi Nivas, and she appreciates how the staff “cared; they really cared” for her son, and for her. And this care has engaged changes in her son: he has cut down his drinking and he is working. Zhi tells us that being listened to and understood was “extremely helpful”, for practical issues as well as emotional support.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was a deep concern for the women we spoke to – and assuring confidentiality helped make Sahaayta staff safe people for women to talk about what was going on in their lives, including experiences of violence. Greetha explicitly tells us: "I feel very safe talking to people in Sahaayta because I knew that things were confidential".

Being sure of confidentiality is critically important for the women who also have partners speaking to Sahaayta staff. Ilihia was worried about talking to Sahaayta staff as she knew they were also speaking to her husband and did not want what she said to be repeated to him. But engaging with Sahaayta staff reassured Ilihia: "Somewhere down the line I felt in the way she talked to me and helped me through the process, it gave me some, like, assurance, everything would be alright whatever I say to her".

Fear of judgement, personally and through their communities, was a barrier for many of the women, but Sahaayta's commitment to, and demonstrations of, privacy helps women to become safer by opening a confidential line of communication that the women can have confidence in.

Analysis: Changing understandings of domestic violence

Recognising patterns

The women told us of diverse ways that Sahaayta have helped them to address violence they experience. Some of the women have transformed their understandings of what constitutes violence, shifting away from rigid understandings of violence as only physical or material. Zhi now recognises patterns of jealousy and obsession from her husband as control.

Elei's husband drinks, straining their new marriage. They "butt heads" if she challenges his drinking, or his weaponisation of counselling language. Sahaayta is helping her to recognise the ways she resists her husband's coercive control. Many of the women are learning, through Sahaayta's counselling, about gendered power relations, particularly where prioritising men's lives and interests over women's has been normalised.

Resilient resistance

As the women have gained understandings of how violence is shaped through power, they are now challenging this power in diverse ways. Chatura is making plans for her own personal future, after learning with Sahaayta about loving herself and not only thinking about her husband's desires. Ilihia was initially resistant to marriage counselling but has since learned how Sahaayta's culturally contextual and confidential counselling can hold her husband to account, building her resilience and

helping her to learn and change too. She tells us that when her and her husband argue now, they each call their counsellors for help.

For Tiaho, a secure future for her baby is important. She resists her partner's abuse by prioritising her role as mother to her daughter: "he should think, I'm the mother of his child, so if baby means the world to him, he can also think about me". The counselling that Sahaayta offers has built many of the women's resilience and resistance to violence within their specific circumstances.

Challenging normative coercion

Sahaayta's intervention has helped many of the women identify abuse and challenge it in everyday contexts, not just the more explicitly violent events. For some couples, Sahaayta became the first point of intervention in escalating fights. Greetha's husband began to take himself to Gandhi Nivas: "we were undergoing counselling they said, "You come any time." So, he took the liberty of going and checking himself in… So I thought Sahaayta was the place where I felt safe, he felt safe and, I tell you, it is a blessing in disguise". Gandhi Nivas, managed through Sahaayta's supportive staff, has enabled Greetha and her husband support where otherwise they had none.

Some women told us of how they were actively implementing change, while men were experimenting with some change. Tiaho tells us that her partner seems to only be trialling change, while she fully engaged as she "needs comfort and help at the end of the day". Jumari thinks her partner's engagement at Gandhi Nivas is a "little bit working" even as he still resists, while she has found her counselling helpful and is proud of her developing independence and expanding understandings of violence.

The normative social status of 'victim' can bring with it shame and blame, particularly for women, and even more so in contexts where women's subordination to men is the social norm. Chatura did not want to be a victim and Sahaayta were working with her resilience: "at that time they was strength for me. They were really strength for me". Chatura told us: "I have no one here to make sense of my things [experiences]. They were the only ones who were with me and continue to offer me any help". Esin tells us that a Sahaayta staff member she refers to as "sister" has helped her gain confidence to share her experiences in order to stay safe in her home.

Analysis: Reconstituting Dignity in a New Place

Being heard

Coming into contact with Sahaayta's was initially experienced as a humiliating crisis; for Greetha it was shattering, and for Chatura is was a "zero point". In such a crisis time, Zhi tell us it was so important for her to have one person who knew her story well and would listen, understanding her

and her families emotional and practical needs in the chaos of multiple institutional interventions into her family at a time of distress. Many of the women also spoke of how much they valued the accessibility of the Sahaayta staff, knowing they could call any time for help.

Women told us stories of moving forward with their lives. Fulli tells us: “I got out of a prison and I learned to live here”. Usha also tells us of the help Sahaayta have given her and her son to turn their attentions towards employment and economic security, in the context of knowing that she “can contact them any time” she or her son need support.

Becoming independent

With violence changed or changing and practical needs met, the women’s hopes and dreams came into focus. The women told stories of becoming independent and of movements towards freedom. Chatura had been independent prior to her marriage, and even with a painful hand injury, she is moving forward with independence on her own with Sahaayta’s help in navigating systems like Work and Income. Anika, currently still in her marriage, is building her confidence in her independence, especially should her marriage status change: “I will be alright, I will be more independent. I will be more financially strong”. Sahaayta has helped Anika feel more secure knowing that she can be independent and has support available when she needs it.

The women also told us of desires to move freely. With Sahaayta’s support, Fulli is now learning to drive: “I'm halfway there in learning how to drive. I've got a lot of encouragement from her. This is only, only because of [name of staff]”. Learning to drive has created freedom of movement for Fulli, and she is now also working.

Aroha wants for son to be independent: “To be able to take care of himself; that’s really all I want”. She is hopeful now that he is working, thanks in large part to the support he engaged at Gandhi Nivas. Usha wants similar effects for her son: “I just want him to finish his course and get a job. He can do what he wants” so that he can “go well moving forward”. Sahaayta staff’s care for the specific contexts of different families enables women to make their own decisions about what transformation, hopes and aspirations look like for them and their families.

New places of reconstituted dignity

The women we spoke to shared diverse pathways towards experiences of dignity, where transformation into conditions of happiness, security and excitement become possible. For Ilihia, Sahaayta’s open and judgement-free support has enabled her to feel “really good” as she moves forward in her marriage: “You have no idea how much of a burden I have offloaded to you”.

Esin has been supported to renegotiate her marriage, where she no longer engages in the role of wife, but remains married and living in the same house as her husband. The burdens she carried, shared with Sahaatya, no longer control her.

Shirim tells us that a change in her husband's work conditions has created more space for them to attend to their relationship, and Sahaayta have helped the couple to navigate visa issues that were producing conditions of conflict within their marriage. And Shirim knows she can continue to ask Sahaayta for support: "They just asked that you can come at any time if you have a problem in the future to help us".

Greetha appreciates the opportunities for balance in her relationship that Sahaayta help with: "it is good to know that there is a place and with a third person, being able to go back and forth and whisper a little bit into his ears, whisper a little bit into my ears, just balances the equation". She often reassures her worried daughter that the family will be ok, and tells us: "she sees a steady progress maybe two percent every week, but it's getting there".

Tiaho's goal is for her and her partner to get married soon – she aspires to the values of a Christian life where her and her partner take up the roles of wife and husband, restoring dignity to herself and her family, and role modelling her values for her daughter. Her partner knows that she is committed to these values and Sahaayta are helping Tiaho to be assertive: "what I've learned so far is that I can take charge".

Jumari is also taking charge, with her passions extending to educating woman and girls in India: "I gonna help educate the women and also in the village… because I think those girls are so special. They are so special and I want them to be special, and why not?" Jumari's husband does not approve of her activism to educate girls, but Jumari persists, mobilising her own advocacy for others through Sahaayta's advocacy.

Zhi, still wary of the social stigma of a "broken home", is enjoying her new life as a solo mother: "I'm living a wonderful life with my kids. I am enjoying being a solo and I'm self-learning". Navjot also moves forward without her partner, but with Sahaayta's support: "I had a feeling that I was supported, that someone was there behind me… His ideas were different, he thought that these people were bad, they break homes. But I think I view them as someone who supported me, and because of them I could move on, move ahead in my life. And my kids are happy as well now. I'm happy too". And Navjot is now excited to be married to a new man who supports her and her children to live a dignified family life.

Conclusion

The women we spoke to tell us stories of how Sahaayta helps them to carry the burden of the violence they experience, providing emotional and practical supports in their specific contexts. Sahaayta's careful attention to diverse complexities that women and their families are embedded in enables connections with women that pull them out of isolation and entrapment, and into independence and restored dignity where diverse hopes and aspirations become possible again.

Table of Contents

Key Contacts i
Recommended citation: i
Acknowledgements ii
Overview iii
Introduction 1
The Research in Context 3
Collaborating with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta 3
Understanding the current literature 3
The research process 10
Gathering the women's stories 11
Analysis: Understanding Coercive Contexts 14
Familial relationships and migration histories 14
Marriages and couple relationships 17
Becoming a good wife to live a good life 22
Analysis: Making Sense of Safety and Wellbeing Within Precarious Conditions 29
Precarious material conditions 29
Becoming involved with systems responses to violence 36
Analysis: Prioritising Safety on her Terms 40
Security within precarity 40
Navigating systems responses 47
Analysis: Ethic of Care in Coercive Contexts 52
Transforming women's social relationships 52
Listening and responding respectfully 60
Confidentiality 63
Analysis: Changing understandings of domestic violence 65
Analysis: Reconstituting Dignity in a New Place 74
Conclusion 86
References 88

Introduction

In response to an epidemic of family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Justice, 2015; New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017), Gandhi Nivas was established in 2014 to meet the needs of local communities for early intervention to prevent escalating family harm. The organisation is a collaboration between community members and New Zealand Police to provide counselling and social support and temporary accommodation for men bound by Police Safety Orders (PSO) (Coombes et al., 2017). The orders legally bind men to stay away from their homes and members of their family at risk for a period not exceeding 10 days (Morgan & Coombes, 2016; New Zealand Government, 2018). An early evaluation of PSOs, identified the need for emergency housing and support for men who are bound by the orders, with support also available for the person/s at risk of their harm (Mossman et al., 2014).

Police are authorised to bring men bound by a PSO to Gandhi Nivas; the residence providing an alternative to more precarious accommodations like motels, cars or staying with friends or family. Gandhi Nivas also accepts men on bail, who have no other suitable bail residence, and men who self-refer or return to stay voluntarily (Morgan et al., 2020).

From its inception, Sahaayta Counselling and Social Support have played a key role as provider of social support within their communities and within the Gandhi Nivas homes as they were established. When men are brought to the homes, they are welcomed, and if they decide to stay, they are provided with meals, accommodation, clothing if needed, counselling, advocacy, and social support. They can attend stopping violence programmes with other men, facilitated by Sahaayta staff, and engage in other support group activities (Mattson et al., 2020). Some men who are engaging with the opportunities for change that Sahaayta provide report learning new ways to communicate, strategies for emotional regulation, legal constraints on how they may discipline their wives, and social expectations of women's rights to self-determination (Mattson et al., 2020).

Sahaayta also provides advocacy, counselling and social support services for women and children in the community when men in their families are referred to Gandhi Nivas. As soon as possible after men are taken into Gandhi Nivas, Sahaayta contact their families, usually wives or mothers, to let them know that the men are safe with them, and to offer support (Coombes et al., 2020/2024). Sahaayta conduct home visits and stay in contact by phone as needed by the women. They provide counselling for the women, their children, the couple or the whole family as needed. Social services and referrals are offered, once the women's circumstances and needs are known.

In the current study we heard 15 women's stories of their engagement with Sahaayta to understand better how women experience engaging with the support they are offered through the Gandhi Nivas early intervention collaboration. Of the 15 women who participated in interviews, eight were culturally embedded in different Southeast Asian communities: Punjabi, Sri Lankan, Indian and Fijian Indian. There were also women from Chinese, Samoan and Māori communities. Four participants were born in Aotearoa New Zealand, and none identified as Pākehā, though they spoke of the differences they experienced culturally since they were raised in a dominantly Western nation. Many of their community members, as with the majority of participants, are immigrants. Seven participants were in arranged marriages, though they were not all living with their husbands at the time of their interviews. The youngest participant was around 20 years old and the oldest in her 50s. Nine of the women were in employment. When participants were invited to give us pseudonyms they preferred, all of them declined and some said, "just give me a number". We understand mistrust of researchers and the safety of confidentiality that the women wanted from numbers. We also understand that each woman is one among many. For the current report, we chose pseudonyms that felt dignifying to the women's stories. The names we chose for each narrative were selected from published lists of girls' and women's names online within the predominant language of the woman's ethnic community. We chose names whose meanings spoke to the inspiration that each woman gifted to the project. The pseudonyms selected are: Usha, Shirim, Avana, Greetha, Navjot, Esin, Aroha, Zhi, Chatura, Fulli, Elei, Tiaho, Ilihia, Jumari, and Anika. Each woman's unique story spoke of their histories, their encounters with Sahaayta and the caring support that enabled them to become safer in their homes.

The Research in Context

Collaborating with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta

This is the seventh report on research our team has conducted with Gandhi Nivas since 2015. Studies we have undertaken include statistical analysis of police records to examine re-reported occurrences of family violence and changes in re-offending patterns before and after intervention (Morgan & Coombes, 2016; Morgan et al., 2020). We have also undertaken ethnographic studies including interviews with stakeholders (Coombes et al., 2017) and men who have engaged with Gandhi Nivas (Mattson et al., 2020). Previously, we presented each of the narratives of the 15 women who participated in the current study, subsequently providing a map of the patterns of differences among them (Coombes et al., 2020/2024). Our current project is informed by our previous engagement with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta, through the activities, processes and analyses we have already conducted. Collaboration with the stakeholders is critically important to our inquiries and they support our research activities in the midst of supporting families with early intervention for family violence.

Understanding the current literature

Since our research is located in the field of domestic violence studies in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as community psychology, we are also informed by previous research and community collaborative research praxis. Gandhi Nivas was established in response to needs identified in Southeast Asian communities of Counties Manukau. The majority of women we spoke with were from Southeast Asian communities with some members of other indigenous and immigrant communities also participating. The focus of our literature review relates to the socio-cultural context of migrant communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly those from Southeast Asian homelands.

From stakeholders and men residing at Gandhi Nivas, we have heard accounts of the necessity to teach men that the use of violence to exercise authority over their families is against the law in Aotearoa New Zealand. The legal context in their homelands is frequently different, and Indian law and policing were the usual social context for many Gandhi Nivas clients (Coombes et al., 2017; Mattson et al., 2020). While the legal frameworks in both countries now address family violence, in Aotearoa New Zealand, collaborative responses between community and Police to develop interventions for family violence have a longer history, having been introduced in the 1980s with the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (Dominick, 1995; Robertson, 1991, 1992). Following the Duluth model of coordinated responses, various community and Police initiatives, including Gandhi Nivas,

have evolved over time (see for example Mossman et al., 2017; Roguski, 2012). The Duluth model involves a strong commitment to systems advocacy, recognising the harms of structural violence, and the importance of community involvement in changing the ways that colonial institutions and legal traditions respond to family violence (Radke et al., 2023). It also involves an approach to interpersonal intimate violence which considers the tactics men use to exert control over women in intimate relationships.

The concept of coercive control, which is vital to understanding entrapment in an intimate relationship, emerged somewhat later than the Duluth model. Coercive control refers to individual men's techniques for imposing control not only through physical and sexual assault but also through mobilising gender norms and stereotypes to assert dominance and microregulate women's actions to meet traditionally gendered expectations (Stark, 2009; Morgan et al., 2019). Coercive control creates conditions of "unfreedom" for women through the imposition of "limitations on speech, movement and social connections" alongside "objective constraints over money, information and decision-making" (Stark, 2009, pp. 205, 221). Family violence interventions attending to coercive control and its interconnections with broader gendered social norms aspire to empowering women to meet their own goals and aspirations, opening spaces for autonomy while dignifying their resistance to violence and their commitments to social and familial relationships.

To attend to the diverse coercive contexts that produce and maintain violence against women and children, we engage an entrapment framework, following the work of Tolmie et al. (2024). Understanding entrapment and its relationship with coercive control, provides context for family violence, and how to respond to family violence in the communities that Gandhi Nivas serves. Coercive control has become understood through behaviours and tactics deployed by an individual, but the broader contexts of coercion, and how they restrict autonomy, need to be brought to the foreground. Coercive control must be located "within a broader understanding of social and systemic entrapment… to avoid potentially harmful conceptualizations" of family violence (Tolmie et al., 2024, p. 55) that perpetrate further violence within families. For instance, dominant social expectations of women to separate from men who have been violent towards them do not take account of the many situations in which separation is socially stigmatised nor situations where couples become embedded within families and immigration contexts as they marry so relationships cannot be simply ended.

More than individual actions to control as an exclusive focus of attention, entrapment encompasses "the restrictions placed upon a victim-survivor's autonomy and agency by their partner's abusive and

controlling behaviors and by broader systemic patterns of harm" (Tolmie et al., 2024, p.55). There are complex, intertwining social and systemic contexts that shape and constrain how someone can respond to violence and seek safety. Social entrapment encompasses responses from family, friends, community and the abuser themselves, to disclosures or possible disclosures of violence or control. Women may be socially entrapped when those who are closest in their everyday lives prohibit disclosures or support violence against the women by justifying men's authority to abuse and control their partners. Systemic entrapment brings together the systems and institutions that shape our lives, including ongoing processes of colonisation in the context of government and non-government services (Tolmie et al., 2024). Distinctions between social and systemic entrapment can become extremely unclear, as the entrapping compounds throughout the ecology of women's everyday experience. So, an analytic framework informed by understandings of entrapment calls to our attention the multitude of ways social and systemic restrictions curtail women's autonomy and capacity to act – intersecting inequalities (gender, race, class and so on) shape experiences of violence and control, as well as the options for being safe (Tolmie et al., 2024).

Inequalities within settler states affect all of the women in our current study who come from different homelands with different colonial histories. The legal context for addressing family violence differs in the homelands of women from different ethnic diasporic communities in Counties Manukau who come into contact with Sahaayta. Cultural traditions can be steeped in gendered hierarchies that privilege men and subordinate women, which has serious implications for women's legal rights, social status in communities, and positioning within families. Historically, for example, it was written into Indian law that wives must adjust to married life through "obedience, service, and servility" (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004, p. 98). And while dowries have now been made illegal in Indian law, the idea of women as private property and as performers of only certain constrained, traditional roles persists through social norms. Men clients' participating in previous Gandhi Nivas research (Mattson et al., 2020) often affirmed the patriarchal traditions through which they grew into social expectations of both material and moral authority within their family.

In India, traditions of understanding domestic violence as a private matter for the family, rather than as a crime against women in particular, influence social relationships, and expectations of men and women in marital relationships (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004). Where violence is viewed as a private family matter, talking about it beyond the family is not encouraged, and potentially increases family conflict (Krishnan et al., 2012). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the privacy of violence in the home as a social norm is a longstanding tradition challenged by public campaigns to raise awareness that violence in the home is unacceptable (see for example, Roguski, 2015). The 'public vs private' problem in

domestic violence still persists despite global shifts in domestic violence law, as dominant understandings of violence within marriages regard wife abuse as a private matter between partners, as discussed in Coombes et al. (2017) by Gandhi Nivas stakeholders. As such, police, doctors, lawyers and counsellors, in varying homelands, operate within the same patriarchal systems that maintain gendered hierarchies that blame women for men's violence and aim for women to take responsibility for maintaining family 'harmony'. The "strict compliance to traditional gender roles… has encouraged tolerance of violence of women by men…" (Hayes & Franklin, 2017, p. 88) and limits how women can understand violence they experience, and how to seek help for that violence – all compounded through the processes of migration for many of the women in the current study.

In her work with migrant women in Australia, Vasil (2023) concluded that "precarity associated with women's status not only limited the options that were available to them, but also worked to "entrap" victim-survivors in violent relationships…" (p. 19) by limiting capacity for action. Immigrant and refugee women report financial deprivation as a major factor in their isolation (Abraham, 2000), as their movement can be severely controlled through restricted financial resources, or they and their partners (and even children) may have to work long hours to make enough money to cover basic costs of living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Gandhi Nivas stakeholders recognise that material precarity is further complicated by alcohol or other substance use (Coombes et al., 2017). Language is also a barrier, where women have been isolated from opportunities to learn to speak the dominant language of their new country due to the burden of care and provision responsibilities for their families, limiting their access to services and social opportunities (Ahmad et al., 2004). Not being able or permitted to work or study also hinders women's capacities to make new friends and forge new connections in a new country, with women relying on men to help them negotiate their new cultural context, producing the men and men's lives as the focal point of the relationship and enabling control of women's agency to engage socially, economically, politically (Abraham, 2000), entrapping women in violence and closing off possibilities for autonomy.

Immigration laws can contribute to family violence, as women and children come to rely on men for financial and social stability in a new country (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020), contributing to the isolation that women experience. The knowledge and skills required to understand and navigate the complexities of immigration law and status can be unattainable for women, particularly for women embedded within traditional cultural contexts that do not give women and girls access to education (Jelinic, 2019), as knowledge of the processes of immigration are often controlled by the men. Women can be unsure of their status and legal rights in their new country, and this positions their men as gatekeepers to legal immigration.

Women's status, in many cultural contexts including Southeast Asia, is intricately tied into marriage and creating a successful family, where it is considered necessary for women to marry in order to gain and maintain social status (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015). As such, becoming a good wife and good mother, as defined through traditional patriarchal cultural values, becomes a key performance for women to engage in as best they can to have a successful family and a successful life. For example, in Krishnan et al.'s (2012) study, women identified multiple triggers for men's violence, including denying demands for sex, fights over finances and the husband's employment, and "women's mobility within the community" (p. 327). Each of these triggers suggests a violation of traditional patriarchal cultural gender roles, like women wanting to engage in their intimate lives and in the community beyond their domestic lives, in ways that open space for their autonomy.

Previous research has found that violence can be used to discipline wives who did not perform duties to the satisfaction of their husbands, who were typically taking cues from their own mothers (or also commonly sisters) about what a wife should and should not do (Ali et al., 2021). The influence of other women suggests a social context where pressures to meet gendered expectations is ever-present and powerful within families, entrapping women through closing off opportunities for gaining help from family to become safe. Some men residing at Gandhi Nivas spoke of their expectations for women's obedience and the social and familial acceptance of violence as a form of discipline for shaping a successful traditional family (Mattson et al., 2020). Women may tolerate control and other forms of violence in the hope of placating their husband and in-laws (Anitha et al., 2018) and maintaining a traditional family unit. Conflicts can arise when expectations between the couple and their extended families differ or are not being met (Ali et al., 2021). Placating or managing conflict is a tactical response for women for maintaining safety: "Victim-survivors' tactical responses to their circumstances are shaped by their partner's, as well as their community's and the system's patterns of harm" (Tolmie et al., 2024, p. 63). Many women try to appease their partners through trying to embody the ideal wife, even if this is a struggle or uncomfortable for them (Mahapatra & Rai, 2019). Women may also try to more explicitly and fully embody the role of 'good wife and mother', as demanded by their partner, only for the violence to continue after doing so: compliance to gendered expectations, and more specifically, a husband's expectations, does not stop violence (Bhandari, 2018).

Furthermore, women's ties to their family of origin are weakened while they embed themselves in their marital family in the role of wife (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015); new wives are expected to adjust quickly to new family structures and expectations that in some cases can differ significantly from their own contexts. Marital interference from in-laws is common, from controlling resources to

reproductive health (pressuring to have children or aborting pregnancies) (Mahapatra & Rai, 2019). Abuse by in-laws includes physical abuse and denying access to resources like money and personal belongings (Kamimura et al., 2017), compounding isolation that entraps women in violence.

Immigrant women in Ahmad-Stout et al.'s (2021) study were experiencing complex family support, with some families helping women to leave, some helping women to manage the violence, and some encouraging women to stay in the relationships by normalising and legitimising the violence. This study and our studies (Coombes et al., 2020/2024 and the current study) highlight the diversity of experiences that women have as they negotiate new families, and the importance of not making assumptions about how immigrant or refugee families are structured, particularly as they negotiate multiple and competing cultural expectations as immigrants or refugees in new countries and new socio-cultural contexts.

Traditional socio-cultural contexts can themselves be entrapping for women experiencing violence, where there are strict gendered expectations that shape how a woman can manage violence and seek help, particularly in a new country. Through the multiple intersectional locations that migrant women occupy, the capacity to act to seek help in a new homeland becomes increasingly restricted: migrant women and indigenous women are more likely to be dealing with compounding social and systemic harms while having less access to culturally specific services and "more likely to be pathologized and to experience extremely unsafe police and child protection service responses" (Tolmie et al., 2024, p. 64), particularly where services (including police) do not carry with them understandings of the social contexts in which women and families are deeply embedded.

Engaging entrapment then requires attention be paid to social location, historical contexts and intergenerational experiences (Tolmie et al., 2024), and what these locations mean for the experience of precarity and becoming autonomous. To understand entrapment, we need to understand the "operations of intersectional inequities and state-sanctioned violence" (Tolmie et al., 2024, p. 61) in the family's life and the wider communities they may be embedded in. Government and non-governmental services, and state entities like the police, can compound the experience of violence, entrapping victim-survivors further by again limiting or eliminating capacity to act or for transformation. Indeed, barriers to seeking help include lack of accessible information and fear of what will happen to their partner and family (Mahapatra & Rai, 2019), particularly where there is (rightful) fear and distrust of government authorities. Talking with Māori women, we can learn that as well as unsuccessful attempts to gain help from friends and family, many become entrapped "by agencies whose purpose was to help them, they thought" (Wilson et al., 2019, p. 18), as these

agencies can be informed by Western frameworks that do not account for difference. Both social and systemic entrapment limit opportunities for autonomy.

Shifting away from Western individualised understandings of women's responses to family violence opens up diverse understandings of how intersecting oppressions compound the experience and effects of violence, close off spaces of safety and security, and how responses need to open opportunities for women and families to act on achieving their own dreams and aspirations in safety. Western, colonial understandings of individual agency, romantic love and social norms of women's responses to violence that inform dominant approaches to family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand do not make space for cultural differences that could better engage safety in diverse cultural contexts (Wilson et al., 2019). Individualised, Western understandings foreclose on the potential for understanding the ways in which women do resist or engage safety that might look different when coercive contexts that entrap are taken into account.

When entrapment is understood through the multiplicities of socio-cultural contexts, locations and dynamics, resistance also must be understood to look and feel different across different contexts, and times (Tolmie et al., 2024) – so we attend to the diverse ways women navigate their contexts and the social and systemic violence they experience and are entrapped by, as well as how Sahaayta engages these contexts to effectively move with the women and their families towards safety.

Utilising entrapment as a framework enables understandings of the capacities to act that are possible, or not possible, and can challenge responses to violence that tax a family's resources and/or perpetuate further harm through inadequate or dangerous processes that make women, children, and men, unsafe and further entrap women and children in violence (Tolmie et al., 2024). Social entrapment and systemic entrapment compound each other's effects, deepening the embeddedness within entrapping contexts where abuse (in its many social and systemic forms) can be normalised and rendered invisible, and experienced differently in different families. By understanding social and systemic entrapment, we can problematise one-size-fits-all approaches to family violence (Tolmie et al., 2024). Our presentation of the patterns within the women's narratives (Coombes et al., 2020/2024), as well as the current study's analysis, affirms the differences in how women are or become entrapped, and how becoming safe looks different in different families. Many of the women who participated in our study were members of Southeast Asian migrant communities; however, even those women who shared similar cultural contexts were experiencing different forms of social coercion, complex relationships within their families and communities, and diverse feelings and effects of isolation. Stakeholders and Sahaayta staff are familiar with the social

contexts of their clients (Coombes et al., 2017) and understand that the conditions of families' lives provide fertile ground for early interventions in response to family violence. How Sahaayta's praxis supports women becoming safer in their homes is the focus of the current study.

The research process

Our research process is informed by the principles and values of community psychology (Robertson & Masters-Awatere, 2007; Hodgetts et al., 2013; Sonn & Quayle, 2012). As researchers, we understand ourselves as collaborating with Sahaayta and their women clients participating in the study to meet our shared goal: understanding how the support services offered to women and their families through Gandhi Nivas have helped them to become safer and more secure in their homes. From our community psychology perspective, we value the voices of stakeholders and their clients as experts in the field of our study. Their everyday, experiential understandings form the stories that we hear when we listen to and interpret their knowledge of their own situations and the events that brought them to engaging with Sahaayta for safety support. Co-constructing knowledge with Sahaayta and their clients also means we are sharing an interest in how Sahaayta's cultural and intervention expertise, in practice, supports the transformation of clients' circumstances to enable them to become safer in their homes. We acknowledge the partiality of our research in that we focus on how Sahaayta's support has made a difference in the lives of women who both engaged with the services available and also felt strongly that they should contribute to research to help understand, and inform, Sahaayta's praxis. We focus our attention especially towards the hopes and dreams voiced by the women as they respond to the new opportunities provided to them.

Acknowledging and respecting participants and staff as experts travels alongside out commitment to enriching our interpretations of participants' perspectives through ethnographic research strategies (Coombes & Te Hiwi, 2007; Coombes et al., 2016) that enable researchers on our teams to become embedded in the everyday practices of Sahaayta as they work in the Gandhi Nivas homes and in the communities to offering counselling and social support to their clients. From our experiences of conducting research with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta over several years, with also bring with us the stories of other participants, and other lines of inquiry that inevitably also inform our current study.

When we set out on the journey of listening to the women's stories of Sahaayta's intervention and support of their dreams and aspirations, we negotiated with Sahaayta that we would address specific research questions that centred on their clients' experiences:

- *How do family members understand the circumstances that brought them into contact with Sahaayta? How do the services offered by Sahaayta take their circumstances into account?*

- *How has Sahaayta been involved in identifying and meeting family members' needs for improving their safety and wellbeing?*
- *How has it been helpful to have Sahaayta and other services/organisations involved in early intervention work with the family?*
- *How have the early intervention services offered to the whole family helped to improve family members' safety and non-violence within the family?*
- *Have family members experienced safety issues that early intervention services have not been able to help them to address?*

Although we had phrased our questions to leave open the possibility of any family member contributing to the research, volunteers were all self-identified women who took part in interviews to discuss their hopes and aspirations and Sahaayta's support for them.

Gathering the women's stories

Researchers Leigh and Sita accompanied Sahaayta staff as they moved through their community so that they become familiar with the context and process of engagement with families and the community contexts in which women and children were embedded. Women were recruited for interviews by Sahaayta staff who were able to assess their safety to take part in the study. Women who volunteered to take part had the option of having a counsellor from Sahaayta present for the interview if they wished. Interviews were conducted in English with some translation from Hindi occasionally provided by Sita. Sita also conducted four interviews in Hindi that were subsequently translated into English. Interviews were transcribed in full, including interviewers' questions. Sahaayta staff were available to assist with issues of translation from other languages, for support and to minimise possible cultural misunderstandings[1].

Our analysis process involved immersion in the transcripts of the women's interviews to conduct a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) aiming for a rich, nuanced interpretation of the stories the women told us about engaging with Sahaayta. Our thematic analysis incorporates our experiential knowledge of previous research with Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta, as well as our academic knowledge of the field and the concepts we engage in our analytic interpretations. In particular we draw on concepts of social entrapment and coercive control in relation to intimate partner violence (IPV), and the significance of *experiencing* IPV against your mother, as a child

[1] The ethical protocol for the study was approved by Massey University Human Ethics Committee SOB 17/33.

(Callaghan et al., 2018). Although all forms of family violence are recorded in our studies of men referred to Gandhi Nivas by police, gender-based violence and IPV are central to our analysis.

Each of the women's stories was also analysed to represent the unique narrative of their stories of experiences with Sahaayta, and the circumstances that brought them to Sahaayta. The analysis involved identifying the stories within the women's transcripts that the women chose to tell, and as far as possible in their own words, re-presenting them in their temporal order: from the beginnings they introduced at the start of the interview, though the complicating events that brought them into contact with Sahaayta, and the support they engaged with. The stories follow the narrative flow of significant events and relationships for the women, to trace how they are now achieving goals they have set for themselves as they are becoming safer and more secure (Coombes et al., 2020/2024). With both the reflexive thematic analysis and the narrative re-presentations, we conducted a third analysis of the patterns of diversity and similarity among the women's stories of the circumstances and their experiences with Sahaayta (Coombes et al., 2020/2024).

Our current report primarily concerns the reflexive thematic analysis, which has developed through analytic and conceptual conversations within the team and processes of shared writing that enable our interpretations to be deepened through dialogue and shared understandings. We returned frequently to the women's stories, their transcripts and our background in the literature to refine our understandings of the women's perspectives on Sahaayta's support.

Each of the women were embedded within the social norms, obligations and familial connections of their ethnic, religious or culturally specific communities. Their accounts of how they came to meet Sahaayta often involved stories of complex family relationships, circumstances in their homeland if they were migrants, relationships within their diasporic communities even when they are born in Aotearoa, and familial relationships of significance to them (Coombes et al., 2020/2024). From these circumstances the women accounted for particular situations in which men in their families, their husbands, boyfriends or sons come to be referred by police to Gandhi Nivas and told of their own engagement with Sahaayta and how they were supported for change.

The themes we co-constructed with the women's stories focused on the diverse situations and complexities that Sahaayta staff understood as the conditions enabling violence against them. Sahaayta staff are embedded in their communities and moving through locations where clients live their everyday lives, they are particularly familiar with Southeast Asian communities, the challenges facing immigrant communities, including racism and exploitation, and the social norms that shape their clients' experiences (Coombes et al., 2017), and in this case too, their hopes and dreams. Three

themes concerned Sahaayta's understanding of differences amongst the women's circumstances to enable respectful, dignified support:

- Understanding coercive contexts
- Making sense of safety and wellbeing within precarious conditions, and
- Prioritising safety

Three themes concerned the ways in which the women's stories told of the transformations enabled by the support of Sahaayta's staff. Transformative support themes are entitled:

- Ethics of care
- Changing understandings of domestic violence
- Reconstituting dignity from a new place

We present our discussion of each theme with evidence from the women's narratives. We honour the women's voices by integrating them into the writing of our analysis wherever possible. We also incorporate longer quotes from their stories where they give testimony to specific complexities that speak to the nuanced social processes Sahaayta understand through their cultural expertise. From time to time, we also make connections with relevant literature that informs our research into Sahaayta's praxis and the experiences of women who participated in the study to tell us how Sahaayta worked with them. Throughout our research process, we aim bring together the literature, the women's voices, and our analysis as we co-create knowledge of Sahaayta's praxis together.

Analysis: Understanding Coercive Contexts

From our conversations with women, Sahaayta staff have worked to understand the coercive contexts of women's lives. That is, Sahaayta staff engage with the social and institutional relationships that shape women's lives and experiences and understand how such relationships produce and shape the precarious unsafe home situations in which the women are located.

Well informed by the social determinants of health (Coombes et al., 2017), Sahaayta focus on understanding histories of family violence as they are embedded in the ordinary daily lives of clients. The women we talked to told stories about their lives that were typically embedded in life-long social and familial relationships where their situations are shaped through specific events that necessitate and facilitate their compliance in order to maintain the woman's safety and her family's safety. When Sahaayta and the women consider her safety, they take account of the safety of her social status and her family's standing in their community. Understanding the social coercions in which women experienced violence in their home involved Sahaayta appreciating and supporting the women's safety at home, in her family, and in her community. Sahaayta supports women whose circumstances include different familial relationships and migration histories; various kinds of couple relationships, including arranged marriages; expectations and social norms of becoming good wives; and encounters with systems responses to family violence, including police.

Familial relationships and migration histories

The women we spoke with told various stories of their families of origin that were significant in their understandings of themselves and the violence that brought them into contact with Sahaayta. Stories of migration often interwove with stories of family, even for the women who were born in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Avana, for example, explained her homeland as *a poor country* and she migrated full of hope for a new future. And although Zhi was born here, and *grew up in Mangere, near the mountain,* she is strongly connected to her parents' diasporic community locally. She tells us her *mindset was more kind of Westernised*, which causes tensions in her family relationships. In the women's family relationships, connections with homelands, ethnic cultural communities, and religious affiliations became significant in shaping the conditions of their lives. Sahaayta's expertise in the social norms of their diasporic Southeast Asian communities enabled them to hear the differences among the women, and respectfully engage with the women's social needs in her family and community. Like most of the women who spoke with us, Navjot had migrated from Southeast Asia:

I came to New Zealand as a visitor because there was an expectation that I would have a better life. When I came here, I didn't know anything about NZ. All I knew was Papatoetoe, that's where I was. I didn't know how big NZ was. I had not gone anywhere except for India.

Navjot travelled with expectations of life in a wealthier country, where there is greater opportunity for stability and security. Sahaayta staff are familiar with the dreams of a better life that draw immigrants to their host country and challenging new experiences in a different cultural environment, where language barriers and limited opportunities complicate how dreams may be realised (Coombes et al., 2017). Knowing immigrant aspirations from within their own communities, enables Sahaayta to focus their work on the practical and emotional support specific women need to begin living their dreams.

Aroha was relatively widely travelled before her son was born and has *been back here* since. Her son is *familiar with this place, and he's got people who love him; he's a lucky person actually.* Her expectations were shaped by experiences in other places and here her son has *more opportunities in his short life than most of us get in our lifetime*. She too has settled here with hopes and aspirations for her family's future.

From a different homeland, Esin travels here with trauma already in her and her family's lives. She and her whole family are refugees from a country where *there's a war going on for 14 years.* They come seeking safety from political instability. All her family have *the problem of depression.* Sahaayta bear witness to the movements of peoples fleeing political instability alongside the various struggles of migrant and diasporic communities and differences amongst those who travel here. In the women's stories we hear the differences among their families and stories of homeland, that Sahaayta understand as vital connections for each woman's experience of becoming safer in her home.

Within migration stories, there are stories of the women's education or their educational aspirations. These are circumstances that also account for the relevance of education in the women's story of becoming a migrant, a wife or a mother. Navjot tells us that *no one really cared about girls and their education.* She lacks education because her family didn't value educating girls when she was a child. It is not uncommon in her homeland for girls finish school early. For Fulli, *if you were rich then you thought about education.* Her family were not rich enough to think about it. Elei *got bullied and dropped out at year 12.* While the women speaking with us clearly valued education, their opportunities for schooling were often constrained by gender, poverty, and violence. As the women

affirm, Sahaayta also values education, supporting women to resume studying if they want to follow their educational or training dreams, dignifying their aspirations with affirmative encouragement and practical help.

Other women among Sahaayta's clients are well educated and independent. Anika's mother insisted on her studying and would say "*be successful so that in the future, if anything happens in your life, you'll be independent".* Ilihia had a university degree with *a double major in accounting and management*. She travelled with an expectation of work fitting her certification. For some women, qualifications and migration are strongly linked, with Anika travelling here for her *first year of study* on a student visa after it had taken *a while to get a visa here.* She shares the struggles of student study with her partner who *understands very well because he also came on a study visa*. For all of the women, Sahaayta offer support that enables study and financial independence. In responding to their clients, they take account of the women's backgrounds in education and how they are linked to the devaluing of women's schooling for some and the struggle for financial security in Aotearoa New Zealand for them all.

Within the family stories, relationships with mothers and fathers are often mentioned as shaping the women's lives, yet among the women their childhood families are different. Elei was adopted by her uncle and aunt and says she *was given as a gift to them*. She thought of them as *biological* parents since they raised her from birth. They support her to be a good wife: her *parents were always like, "be wise"* and she knows t*hey just want the best for* her. Jumari's mum was her dad's *second wife.* He was older and a strong influence as she remembers *all that spirit, he spent time with* her*, all that time, 13 years.* While both Elei and Jumari had experiences of growing up with mothers and fathers, as the daughter of a solo mother, Tiaho says her *immediate family consists of* her *mother, brother, two sisters and* herself. Navjot's childhood changed when her *mother fell sick and there was no-one to look after her. All the relatives were busy with their own lives.* As the oldest child, Navjot stayed home and did not go to school. In different ways, particular family relationships and specific childhood events shape the women's expectations of their own womanhood and their lives as wives and mothers, diversely. Making no assumptions about how families may be configured, yet understanding the significance of familial relationships in their clients' lives enables Sahaayta staff to respond flexibly to how other family members could be engaged in supporting the women becoming more safe and secure, involving households in conversations on safety planning where possible.

In the communities of the women participants, there are many differences in the childhood and migration stories that the women shared as background for their meeting with Sahaayta. Significant

circumstances, relationships and events in the women's pasts began processes of becoming responsible to family and community for their conduct as adult women. In the following sections the women's marriages and couple relationships illustrate similar differences amongst family arrangements and migration journeys through which the women become wives and experience marriage relationships they were not expecting.

Marriages and couple relationships

When women first come into contact with Sahaayta, it is because police have been called to a family violence occurrence. The women we spoke with were primarily at risk of their partner's violence, although we also spoke with two mothers whose sons had been referred to Gandhi Nivas. For all of the women, marriage and coupledom shaped their experiences depending on circumstances and the events that unfolded in the couple's life. Women told us of arranged and love marriages, intimate relationships that were forced or coerced as well as those welcomed or resisted. As central as marriage and coupledom is for the women, it is experienced differently by each of them.

Through the stories of the women we spoke to, the notion and experience of the 'arranged' marriage is understood multiply, the intersections of the women's particular sociocultural contexts producing different constraints, and resistances. Navjot told us *a relative actually got me married to this guy. It was good. It was good for ten years.* For Chatura her *parents* arranged a *marriage,* when she was *30* years old. *Before marriage,* she and her husband had *known each other six months* and she accepted him although her parents *tried to find* her a husband *when* she *was 27, 28,* all of whom she had rejected. Sahaayta staff understand arranged marriages from the inside of their communities. They know that arrangements involving families are ideally negotiated carefully so that, through marriage, a woman moves from the protection of her family relationships to the safety and security of her husband's family. For Navjot, ten years of her marriage had successfully achieved her vision of the ideal. Chatura clearly had the opportunity to decline arrangements she did not wish to enter.

Some of the women indeed resisted marriages that were arranged for them, without their consent, by family members. Jumari recounted how her *mum, one day in the morning, 3 o'clock, she said, "oh wake up we are going to the temple" and* she *got up, I got ready and then* she *had the forced wedding.* She fought against the marriage, claiming she was *18 years old,* and couldn't be forced. In her resistance, she found opportunities to resist within the relationships of his family and her own:

> *And it's very hard,* at *that time. I either kill myself,* or *I have to fight with the whole* [name] *state. So I decided not to kill myself, I'm gonna fight with the state. That guy, in their family, he was also like me. He said to the family, "Look, that girl, she*

don't wanna be living with him, don't force it." He said to me, *"I'm your brother, I will help you." It* was *like my life, from* [year] *to* [two years later]*: I lived in my mum's house, concentrating on my meditation. That guy who called me* his *sister,* went *to Australia, and he sponsored me from there. His other friend was in New Zealand: he sponsor*ed *me here, so I came to New Zealand.*

The courage of Jumari's conviction, her refusal to live with her husband when she was forced into a temple marriage, speaks to the strength of the social norms of obedience to parental decisions about marriage. Still, it is from within the family to whom she has been promised that she finds tolerance for her refusing the marriage. Her mother too, enables her to live a meditative life at home, not fulfilling the duties of a wife. While she *fought the state* in her determination, her resistance was heard within the families responsible for her at the time. The nuanced possibilities of compliance and resistance within traditions of arranged marriages, as well as family sanctions and supports that are normative for women clients are of the same social fabric as those Sahaayta staff bring to supporting Southeast Asian women and their families. From their own lived experiences, they understand the social norms though which family interconnections are interwoven both with the women's entrapment in harmful patterns of abuse and violence; and with the support they engage to resist violence and become safer within their homes, families and communities.

Some of the women had looked forward to their arranged marriage, with great pride for fulfilling the duty. Usha migrated to marry her husband, when *some relatives fixed the match.* Her husband was *about 15 years older than* her and her *cousin and the people who arranged the marriage assured* she *that* she *would be looked after properly.* Her expectations were for a safe and secure future as a wife. For Fulli, her husband's *family was known to* her family, *and someone said his mother was looking for a good daughter-in-law, and they asked* her family, *and* she *said yes.* As these participants were becoming adult women, arranging a good marriage is a significant step for many families. Fulli recalls how *once you were grown up, your parents, all they wanted to do was worry about your marriage.* It is often the case that Western literature represents arranged marriage as constraining the agency of adult women independently deciding their own most intimate partnerships, which is more usually a social norm for Western immigrant and Pākehā communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the women's anticipation of their marriages as the fulfilment of a family aspiration, many chose their partners from those men their parents or other family member proposed and looked forward to their experiences of married life.

Whether happily anticipated or resisted, some of the women found themselves in arranged marriages to men who did not wish to be married. Chatura expected her husband would want a

family and found that he didn't. *When* she *asked him, he said, "I just married you because my parents said."* She had trusted him and believed in her marriage. *He destroyed* her *life.* Usha's husband left her alone to provide for the family. *He stopped giving* her *money, even for the doctor's bills. And he said, "you can earn your own money and spend it." He packed his bags and he said, "I'm going." And he left.* Chatura and Usha's expectations of their husbands are founded in the gendered social norms of their communities, where husbands have responsibilities as fathers and providers for their families. While their husbands abdicated their responsibilities differently, in each case the women's arranged marriage left them in precarious social and economic conditions. Sahaayta's understanding of the women's cultural expectations of their marriages enabled their praxis of caring for the women's social, emotional and material wellbeing and supporting them to maintain their dignity in the face of their husband's violence and lack of responsibility for the gendered role prescribed for them.

While families were always involved in arranged marriages, some of the women described love marriages that had been heavily influenced by family but were not described as being arranged despite explicit arrangement by family members. Social and familial circumstances in relationships entangle the ideas of the love marriage and the arranged marriage, as while the wife and husband may have found each other (through their communities, their schooling or their employment), their families may expect the couple to marry before the couple is ready. In cultural contexts where sexual relationships must only occur within marriage, the couple can be pressured to marry and start a family when they are either too young or are thought to be getting too old; or where immigration status might be problematic. Shirim told us hers is *a love marriage.* She and her husband *spoke to* their *families. They just agreed* because they were young, *not 18, 18 plus.* They were *not matured.* In hindsight, Shirim understood that she and her husband weren't ready for marriage and the gendered role responsibilities expected of them, including parenthood. Couples can face some strong social and cultural pressures to progress their unarranged relationships to 'legitimate' relationships between husband and wife. For some, a teenage romance suddenly becomes a marriage, complete with a set of expectations and obligations around maintaining an idealised marriage by having children, working, owning a house and looking after other family members. The couple are entrapped in a series of expectations that become even more amplified when they move to another country and are expected to share money and social status with family and communities that remain in the country of origin.

In some cultures, dating as it is understood in the West is taboo (Ragavan et al., 2021), creating secrecy around unsanctioned relationships, which then increases the difficulty of talking to family about sex and violence at any stage of the relationship. Through our conversations with women, it

seems that such dating taboos produce enormous pressures for whole families to quickly make dating relationships legitimate through marriage. It has been understood that early marriages of dating couples are done in order for the families to avoid the stigma of, particularly, a daughter dating, which effects the social standing of the whole family and may jeopardise future arranged marriages between families. The women we spoke with share stories that speak to the lived experience of being the daughter, sister, niece, granddaughter of families whose social standing depend on women's reputations. As with Shirim, Elei describes how she came to marry her husband, telling a story of urgency in the pressure for her to marry. She had gone to Samoa to meet up with her boyfriend and:

> *My dad came over* [to Samoa]*, when I went in September; he came over the next week, because I told him while I was over there. I said, "I need to tell you something: I'm not even staying with my uncle, I'm with this guy from Samoa." My dad was really hurt, because I kind of understand, my dad never thought anything of it. He's like, "Why of all places would you go and get a boyfriend from Samoa?" My dad, he doesn't look down on his own people, he is more educated and he knows there's nothing over there.*

Her *dad was the most hurt, and* her *mum was just in the background.* She and her boyfriend were married after he migrated. She was advised that they *had to get married in order for him to come here*. They were married *in a registry office.* For Elei, her marriage eventuated as something she 'had' to do, for herself as an unmarried woman 'staying with' (sexual relationship) a new boyfriend; for her family, to mitigate the anxious stigma of an unwed couple in the community; and for her partner, to aid him with immigration troubles as he had been trying to live in Aotearoa New Zealand; and all within the context of also loving her partner – a man she wanted to be with in one context when she was young and dating in Samoa, but was coerced to be with in another context as a young, married and pregnant woman in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Women in traditional arranged marriages also told us they love their husbands, so there are complicated boundaries between arranged and love marriages where one form is not so distinct from another – distinction that can be emphasised in research (see for example Ali et al., 2021) through categorising relationships as one or the other, and in some cases, viewed through Western understandings of love that conflate love with choice. Chatura tells us that she *didn't complain* about *family violence because* she *love*s *him,* while Jumari has confidence that her husband *loves* her*:*

> *So again, we had a lot of conflict, but he tried to make the family. He loves me, I know that for sure, but he doesn't know how to keep me happy.*

Significant in Jumari's confidence is her partner's commitment to their family, which we understand to meet her expectations of a husband. She says he is *a nice guy,* who works in a factory. However, their relationship is so fraught that the conversation with the interviewer is favourable by comparison:

> *but then, we don't agree. Like you and me can sit and talk, we cannot talk.*

Taking responsibility for *making* the family and loving his wife does not create harmony and stability in their home. Tiaho knew that she and her husband could *only be stable if* they *trust and love each other. If there was no love,* they *couldn't have* their *baby.* Love does not distinguish between marriage arrangements in the women's stories of their experiences.

There are even complexities to defining marriage itself, with one woman not legally nor religiously married to her husband, but instead felt bound to him by a piece of paper, by obligation rather than legal standing. Jumari, who earlier escaped a forced arranged marriage, found herself *living together* with a man who had told her, that for *permanent residency you have to get married*. Initially he said "*You don't have to stay with me" s*o she *just signed the paper to stay in New Zealand. But after one and a half months, he said, "No, you have to stay with me."* He claimed that if she didn't live with him, it would be *a fraud.*

Other women also told us they felt a sense of duty to stay with their partners because their partner had been instrumental in bringing them to Aotearoa New Zealand and setting up their lives here. The women do not want jeopardise their place in Aotearoa New Zealand, or to appear ungrateful (particularly within their families and communities) for the opportunities they had been given to live in Aotearoa New Zealand – a country that was often spoken of as a providing a 'better life' for the women and their families, particularly their children. Esin wondered how she could respond *to society* when *they're going to say, this is the man who brought you here to NZ, gave you a good life, a house. You and your children are here because of him.* Esin *asks what am I?* wondering who she becomes if she is not a grateful good wife in the eyes of society. Like other women in our study, Esin understands that she is accountable to her family and community for her continuing success in her roles as good wife and partner.

Navigating the blurry lines of love, marriage and coupledom, and their interconnections with violence, gendered social norms, and expectations, Sahaayta respond with respect for the women's different familial and community affections of the women clients. Whether love, duty, respect, or obligation bond the women within networks of social relationships, Sahaayta staff understand there are limits to the women's accountability for their entrapment in insecure and unsafe homes.

Becoming a good wife to live a good life

Many of the women we spoke to are deeply concerned with how their family would be seen as and become 'successful' in the eyes of their wider families and communities. Cultural, ethnic, religious and familial traditions were involved in how the women understood their pathways to good lives as wives and mothers with the men their families chose and those they love. The women's stories of how they came to be married, and indeed came to endure marital violence, tell of societal, cultural and familial contexts that offer women few opportunities other than becoming a good wife. With chances for a good life seemingly available, women may come to value and aspire for marital success, particularly as a good wife is normalised through social and cultural understandings of family and traditions of gender roles in couples. Many of the women we spoke to were resolute in their aim to be a good wife who is also a normal wife with a normal life. Chatura tells us that hers *was an arranged marriage, organised by* her *parents*. She *just wanted to be a housewife, do normal things, and lead a normal New Zealand life*. She was expecting to have children as a part of her normal life and *found out that he didn't want to have a baby*. He had complied with his parents' wishes and married her for her dowry.

For the women we spoke to, most spoke of gendered expectations of marriage that were not being met, particularly expectations about the division of labour at home and in employment, and how household money was spent. And for many women, these expectations and their inability/incapacity to be met, are complicated further by the coercive contexts through which the marriages may have occurred. When traditional gender roles and family structures function smoothly, with expectations met, families can enjoy the benefits of clearly defined gender roles. The women we spoke to typically desired traditional gendered roles where the performance of the 'good wife and mother' (through the multitude of ways she cares for the household) is complemented by the 'good husband and father' (who provides for the household through employment and responsibility). So expectations of married life are characterised by (gendered) cooperation to produce a functioning family unit. Many of the women were very surprised that their married life became characterised by violence. And for those women who had experienced their partner's violence prior to marriage, there was some shock that the violence did not stop, and indeed escalated, after marriage. Marriage was considered to be a new form of the relationship, perhaps particularly sacred in some instances, where violence would not occur as gendered expectations would settle or fall into place once the partners took up the roles and responsibilities of wife and husband. While a traditional good wife would take care of the children, her husband and their house, the traditional good husband would take responsibility for the safety of the household – financially and physically. A husband's violence against his wife

jeopardises family safety and security. From this perspective, a husband's violence violates his social contract as a husband and is shameful.

Traditional family structures have been suggested as sites where violence is more common in previous research attending to South Asian cultural contexts (Ahmad et al., 2004; Jiwani, 2005; Ragavan & Iyengar, 2020; Raj & Silverman, 2002), with both women and men experiencing violence in their family homes as children and during adolescence. Among women participating in the current study were some who had not ever experienced violence within their family, as well as those for whom it was so normalised from childhood as to be taken-for-granted. We also know that, globally, many forms of violence are normalised, and as such, are not always understood as violence (Penttinen, 2024). Contributing to the normalising of violence against women, myths are produced about how normalised violence is in particular communities. That is, violence is assumed to be more common in 'other' communities and therefore more likely to be experienced by others. A number of the women we spoke to challenge any assumption that violence would be more common in their ethnic communities through their surprise and lack of understanding of the violence they experienced. A particular violation of marriage expectations for some of the women was the shock of experiencing violence at the hands of their partner. Fulli told us she was very surprised by the violence she experienced, as she had not expected violence as part of her marriage. She *didn't know what violence was, 'cause* she *had never experienced it before*, she *had never seen it*. Zhi also spoke of not recognising violence:

> *He was never a violent person, but before we got married,* I did *notice things. Because I have never experienced or never actually encountered some of it, I didn't really* become *concerned. I thought it would be fine. I didn't think twice about it, but I did notice he was jealous. He was obsessed and jealous.*

The *things* Zhi noticed did not constitute violence as she understood it at the time. Zhi remembered an event from before she was married where she thought her partner's actions *weird*:

> *So before we got married, we went back and visited his mum and dad. I had friends overseas and we met with them. I have a guy friend who's just friends. He was talking to me and he* [husband] *got really upset. It was just before we got married, and his mum and dad were with us. They had to calm him down. I guess it was part of normal life, throwing a tantrum, and I thought 'that's weird' and 'that's so strange' because I had never encountered it. I didn't even think it was not normal. A control* tactic, *and I didn't know that. I just thought, 'what's this'?*

For Zhi, her partner's conduct became sensible as a *tantrum* since she lacked another frame of reference, and she normalised the family's responses to him. Prior to engaging with Sahaayta, Zhi's understanding of violence did not include patterns of jealousy and obsession or becoming *really upset* about her talking with another man. She has learned about coercive control and the tactics men use to reduce women's freedoms and constrain their relationships with others.

Chatura explained that with her background so different from her husband's, she hadn't anticipated her husband would not be committed to having children and becoming the family's provider. She and her husband didn't know people from their *ethnic community, and* she *had no friends of* her *own*. She discovered that *he had a girlfriend and was angry with* her *that* she *didn't like it. He was lying and hitting* her. This was not her expectation of a marriage or her husband since she *believed he had wanted* their *marriage. He didn't.*

Among the women, different experiences of recognising violence in the context of normalisation, as well as their shock at the violence they experience, speaks to how traditional understandings of heteronormative marriages do not normalise violence, as many women came from traditional backgrounds, but were not familiar with the violence they came to experience in their own marriages, particularly when the violence was supported by, and sometimes perpetrated by, their new in-laws as well. Anika became so unsafe that she *doesn't speak to* her *mother-in-law anymore*. *There were too many fights* to continue the relationship.

It is possible that some of the women who decided to participate in the research may have done so because their experiences of violence prior to Sahaayta's intervention were so foreign and surprising to them and their experience of family violence and family life deviated so sharply from their expectations and previous experiences in their families of origin. Previous research (Hayes & Franklin, 2017; Krishnan et al., 2012; Ragavan et al., 2021) has suggested that stricter adherence to traditional family structures and values is linked to increased likelihood of violence occurring within the family, particularly when traditional expectations have been perceived to have not been met or have been violated by women (wives, daughters, mothers, sisters). For the women we spoke to, there were variations to how their families engaged with cultural, ethnic or religious traditions, with women telling stories about how their families functioned and how they wanted their own families to engage with tradition or transformation, particularly as migrants/refugees. The women's inexperience with violence challenges the idea that violence against women is always a feature of patriarchal, traditional cultures and family structures that are deeply embedded within such cultures. It is often assumed culturally, and as such, through mainstream research that violence against women is particularly acceptable in certain cultures; however, the women's shock about the violence

and violation of gendered norms they experienced affirms that violence cannot be assumed on the grounds of cultural acceptance within some groups.

Through our conversations with the women, it became clear that Sahaayta staff respond specifically to each woman's context, not applying assumptions about what women have and have not experienced based on their cultural background or family structure. Regardless of previous experiences with violence or stricter adherence to traditional cultural values, the women we spoke with, like Chatura, whose husband didn't want their marriage, held cultural gendered expectations about how normal married life would be that were often not met within their relationships. The context through which the marriages occurred was often coercive for both wives and husbands – where one or the other (or both) did not wish to be married (either at all, or just not to their arranged partner) – and produced further coercive contexts within the marriage as it progressed, broke down and became characterised by violence. In some instances, families and communities coerce women into tighter adherence to the 'good wife' role through multiple forms of violence and abuse including isolation and gaslighting. Talking about, and resisting, violence and problems such as alcohol use can be met with attempts to silence women, as they might be seen to be challenging their marriages, and as such, their families and communities as well. They may be seen as not being a good wife. Navjot was expecting a better life, however, her *much older* husband was *excessive*ly *drinking and can't see anything else.* As a responsible mother, Navjot is worried *because kids learn what they see*. Although *everybody* in her ethnic community *knew* about her husband's drinking and violence, *they used to say, "you keep quiet, don't say anything, that's just the way he is."* She *didn't get any help.*

Many of the women are feeling, or felt, enormous pressure to produce and maintain a successful family, doing the work of a good wife in order to achieve that success: the women try to embody the good wife so as to also shape, or perhaps receive in response, a good husband and happy children. That is, where gendered expectations are met within families, there may be less conflict about meeting these expectations and thus fewer perceived violations that create tension. Men's violence violates the expectations of marriage and family life, where husbands and wives are expected to fulfil roles, a concept used commonly by the women we spoke to. For instance, Tiaho told us that *being man and wife is a role, and it's being a role model for* their *little girl's life*, that is most significant for her. Aroha also connected the roles of husband and wife with good parenting as she explained her worries that the men in her life were not helping her son. *Even though* she has *brothers, not really many of them are good role models, not all of them; but the love is there. That's the main thing, is the love but you still need to be shown how to be a man*. Gendered roles are valued as providing the guidance for young people to become healthy adults.

The women we spoke to described their attempts to live up to gendered/cultural expectations, including Esin and Jumari who now only maintain their marriages outwardly. After her engagement with Sahaayta, Esin *has allowed* her husband *to be at home* and she is *at home for the sake of my kids, and* she's *comfortable. He's at home, but* she has *no relationship with him.* Jumari says that she and her defacto husband *are not really living together.* She *sleeps on my own bed.* Tiaho aspires to *already be married. To be a Christian woman, you need that, it's a value* that is critically important to her. For Greetha her struggles to be a good wife were complicated when her husband *had a bad experience at his job* and her *mummy, terminally ill.* It *was all a bit hard for* her *to look after* her *mental well-being and yet be able to support him; it was a very bad time for* her. Yet she *didn't give up on my marriage and* she *just pulled through*, with her priority still to live up to the expectations of a supportive wife.

While the women valued their roles and found ways to live up to community expectations, some also describe their men's struggle or disinterest in fulfilling a traditional men's role. For example, most of the women discussed their husband's or son's employment situation, emphasising how the lack of employment was problematic for the family and for the men specifically. Zhi told us her husband *found* work *a struggle from the start. He never really had a fulltime job; it was doing part time jobs.* Elei's partner had *thought he was going to get a future here,* in Aotearoa New Zealand *but* his employers *were treating him like a slave,* and he ended up on a work visa, working for his father-in-law. Ilihia spoke to us of the pattern of her partner's unstable employment:

> *when he came here working in the kitchen, here is really hard. You get complaints from people and they will tell you upfront. He is the kind of person who will not last long in a job if the job is too hard. He used to work a construction company; he did not last a year there as well, and it's the same thing with his last job. He worked as a chef before the construction work; it did not last a year as well. So, I think it's a pattern.*

Ilihia shows compassion for her husband's struggle, understanding that he has found it hard, here in Aotearoa New Zealand, after his migration. Nonetheless, the struggle leaves them financially precarious and dependent on the stability of her work.

For Greetha, it was her partner's pressure for her to go to work that was remembered. *He kept on, "Oh, yeah, you're spending your time; go to work," because he didn't have a job, I didn't have a job. Money was really tight.* As the women spoke with us about their concerns with their partners' employment, it was clear the importance of the role of provider for their family was a duty their partner was not fulfilling.

Other men were regarded as good providers by themselves or their partners, but other issues of gendered expectations unmet led to tensions. Zhi told us that when her partner did have a job, *he was the priority and that's it. Whereas,* she *also had a job and kids. In his spare time, he would just be on the computer doing his own thing.* While she shared the load of providing for the family, he did not share the care work in the home. Greetha described her partner as *a workaholic. He would sometimes work seven days* and had no time for his family. Avana says that both she and her husband *have no time*; *six days* they *work; one day* they *stay home, do the housework.* Although a hard worker, Avana's husband drinks heavily, as do many of the women's partners.

The mothers of sons were deeply concerned about their son's education and employment opportunities, particularly as often they resisted such opportunities, sometimes violently. One mother, Aroha, is very clear about her concerns for her son that he has not had the masculine role models he needs in his life to become a 'productive citizen'. Aroha's son *did a* trade *course for a year, which was a total waste of money. He passed it, but he just really didn't wanna go there.* She's pleased when he begins working. Esin told us her older *son used to work, but there was something that happened in the workplace and he ended up getting into a fight and was sacked. And then he didn't work after that. He's at home. He doesn't work.* A younger son *doesn't work either.*

Most of the women suggest that the men in their life need to be working or studying in order to be fulfilling their duties within their families and communities. Where the men have precarious employment or do not work, the women frequently told stories about how their men's un/under-employment was a source of stress and tension – a violation of the traditional gendered role men play in their families and communities, and perhaps particularly so for migrant families who move to new countries like Aotearoa New Zealand for a 'better life' and to send money, and preserve family status, for family in their countries of origin – a task that might be a major struggle while living in a city such as Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland with an extremely high cost of living. For many of the women, dreams of a good life as a good wife fail to materialise when their partners either do not or cannot provide as expected of a good husband. With no money coming into the home, or women finding work on top of the full-time caregiving of the family, dreams of a good life shatter. While many of the women indicated understandings of structural and institutional constraints on their lives, their men's lives and their communities more broadly, the women often spoke of how 'working hard' and doing the 'right things' within their families, communities and wider society would produce successful lives; like making a home and rearing successful children. Their aspirations for more security and safety in their lives enables Sahaayta to work with them towards their hopes and dreams, taking practical steps alongside the family, and within the community, to strengthen the women's precarious material conditions and alleviate pressures from under/unemployment.

In some instances, women took on the financial responsibility for the family, getting a job themselves, despite the difficulties in doing so, ranging from the job market and particular lack of employment opportunities for migrant women, to inexperience, lack of education, lack of childcare or family resistance, particularly from their partners. We recall how some Gandhi Nivas resident men who participated in research were challenged by their partners' new-found freedom of movement, which enabled them the independence to work outside the home (Mattson et al., 2020). So the employment arrangements look very different across the women we spoke to, with all characterised by the tension to produce a good marriage and family in the context of precarity. We address the women's precarious living conditions further in the following theme that focuses on safety in these circumstances.

Analysis: Making Sense of Safety and Wellbeing Within Precarious Conditions

Precarious material conditions

Negotiating and navigating gendered expectations for households is complex and tightly bound to familial and cultural expectations as well. For the women we spoke to, ideal marriage/partnership is, or should be, characterised by shared respect, shared labour, and shared sacrifices. However, their relationships were characterised by imbalances, where the women take on a heavier share of the labour, responsibilities and sacrifices, and give respect while receiving little in return. Zhi told us that *even up until the time he was working full time, I guess he never took any other responsibilities.* She mentioned in particular that *the lawns were not done; the house cleaning was not done.* Yet even though her partner shared no domestic chores, Zhi spoke of doing *a lot of the financial stuff* for *the mere fact that he never got a proper job anyway*. She knew *how in his goodness of his heart he wanted to help*, but *he just could not get a job*. Chatura told us her partner *struggled* to meet the household bills, and then when she *see*s her *money,* she will *settle it.* The financial security of their families was critically important for the women, so that when their partners did not fulfil expected gender roles as providers, the women took on the burden of financial contributions. Their economic security depended on the conditions of their partners' unemployment and their own ability to work. When economic insecurity faces women clients, Sahaayta mobilise practical support, whether providing food parcels or blankets or advocating for women and children's secure accommodation, there is a shared understanding that material security is a precondition for the family's safety.

While childcare and household chores were the women's accepted responsibilities within their everyday expectations, the division of financial responsibility was often fraught, with the control of finances for the women and the whole family a source of significant stress, particularly contributing to the precarity of immigrant refugee lives in a new country. Ahmed-Ghosh (2004) asserts that Indian women, through processes of patriarchal culture, can have limited access to social, economic and political resources and dowries can amplify harassment and violence against women, as a dowry may be one of the few resources a woman has.

Dowry-related violence is the main cause of death for young brides, and can lead to torture (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004). For women reporting dowry harassment, the harassment included humiliation, not being allowed to spend the money on herself, having personal belongings taken off them and not being permitted to visit her family of origin (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015). Women were also not included in family decision-making. With or without the (reported) presence of a dowry, women experienced

these forms of harassment, so this is connected to women's status within Southeast Asian culture and law, where she is isolated from her family of origin and money that comes into the family is spent by her husband (or his extended family).

Dowry was rarely explicitly mentioned as problematic for the women we spoke with, although Chatura stated her in-laws' were thinking *only about the money* when they insisted her husband marry her. Money can be an incentive for families to arrange marriages for financial gain. Sahaayta's expertise in Southeast Asian cultures provides a depth of appreciation for the precarity of Chatura's situation, where she has lost her opportunity to become a good wife through a financially motivated marriage to a man who does not want a family.

While dowries were not explicitly identified as issues for the women we spoke to, many were financially dependent upon their husbands as they were not permitted to work, or their husbands were financially dependent upon them, with men deciding how money was spent. Women rarely had control over money, and if they did, there was little of it, and it was largely spent on their men's desires. Elei told us that she discovered her partner had paid for a motel while he was ostensibly staying at Gandhi Nivas:

> *he paid for a motel; $100. I was like, "What's going on, why would you pay for a $100 motel?" He said the guys that were staying with him in the same room as him, and this other Fijian Samoan guy, they all went to the motel and my husband paid most of it. I was so upset, because he didn't work the whole week. He can't get paid this week, so I've been supporting him.*

Since the men stay voluntarily at Gandhi Nivas, they are not held accountable for movements away from the home. Elei's story illustrates how her husband assumed his authority to spend money while he wasn't earning and turned away from the support offered in the home in the company of other men who had also been referred to Gandhi Nivas to protect their families from harm. Elei is left with a financial burden in the wake of a police intervention for her safety.

Elei told us that her partner *wanted to drink, he wanted to go out, eat KFC, not even eat at home, and* she wasn't used to that. She *was at* her *lowest, at the tipping point, like falling off. I was like, "I can't do this."* It was hard for her to come to terms with how her husband spent money. At the time of the interview, Elei's situation was changing and after her engagement with Sahaayta, she and her partner *eat at home more now*, and she feels more secure, financially.

Prior to their baby's arrival, Anika's financial independence gave her security: she *was working that time*, *earning good money*. *Now* she is caring for her baby she is *not earning money.* After a traumatic birth, her dependence on her partner became complicated by the arrival of her mother-in-law, who isn't helping her:

> *still I am doing it, all the housework, everything. Whatever I can do by myself I am doing. The main thing now is that you need to understand what is right and wrong. You can't always say, oh, my mum, she is right and she's everything, she is perfect, she'll never be wrong. This is the thing for the fights. Yeah, she made things worse. She is a mum. "Okay, no, I'm gonna look after him. You are giving me bad time, I'm not gonna look after you." I don't like to talk to them. I'm not talking them, it's two years.*

Anika's appeal to her husband to not defend his mother in every situation leads to fights between them, and alienation from her in-laws that leaves her even more isolated and insecurely dependent on her husband. In this context, she seeks her parents support, and her partner becomes angry:

> *One day I was cooking, and I have done all the cooking. He wakes up and then he starts shouting. He doesn't hit much, he holds, like this and there's so much bruising everywhere. After that he'll finish the fight and then he goes to work. And secondly, he was so angry. When he was in so much anger, he doesn't want to understand a single thing. Oh, my gosh. I said, oh, my gosh. And then he is the one who called the police over all these things happening in the relationship; and the policeman say, "We can't help you for your relationship."*

In Anika's story of her partner's assault on her, her responsibilities to do all the cooking, unsupported, are context for understanding how shocked and vulnerable she felt at the time. That he was so angry, he called the police, speaks to the strength of his moral authority in the household: he wanted his wife held accountable for angering him. In her telling, we hear how her husband dismisses her and takes no responsibility for bruising her *everywhere*, nor is she protected from further harm when the police do respond, this time. We also hear how her domestic duties, family relationships, and financial dependence intertwine as conditions in which she is hurt by her partner. Here we recognise the conditions that Tolmie et al. (2024) conceptualise as entrapment: not only the angry dismissal and harms perpetrated by her husband, but also the social relationships in which she becomes insecure and unsafe. These are conditions in which Sahaayta staff recognise the need for careful navigation of their clients' protection, social support, emotional support, and practical assistance.

While Anika's previous financial independence provided a background for her insecurity after the birth of her baby, Usha had not had an opportunity to work. She told us:

> *I've never worked, because he did not let me work. He used to do contract work. He did nothing, he worked for two or three years, and then nothing. The household survived on benefits; the Government helped. He used to drink on it, and I also had to run the house.*

Usha's partner did not consistently provide yet he also prevented Usha from working and providing for the family, and she was still expected to take responsibility for domestic duties; for running their home. As we listened to Usha's story, her partner moves in and out of temporary work, leaving them financially dependent on benefits that he uses then to drink alcohol. Problem drinking became a serious challenge in their relationship, often the cause of conflict between the couple:

> *The fights in New Zealand were because he would get drunk and he would fight and yell, and I used to stop him from drinking. I used to tell him that there were kids in the house. Then he would yell, and he would beat me. He beat me when I was pregnant, he would beat me in my stomach, he would kick me in the stomach.*

Although Usha's partner had been violent on many occasions, she persisted in resisting his excessive drinking, taking responsibility for quietening him for the sake of the children. Eventually, Usha found herself desperately precarious when her partner refused to give her any money:

> *We had gone to India, and we came back, and he stopped giving me money, even for the doctor's bills. And he said, "you can earn your own money and spend it." He told me he was leaving and went, he packed his bags and he said, "I'm going." And he left.*

Problem drinking contributed to precarious living conditions in several of the women's stories and was interwoven with the women's accounts of their partner's violence, their precarious living conditions, and the gendered expectations and social norms of the women's ethnic communities. Their safety is inseparable from their material and social conditions, and Sahaayta support families engaging with their services throughout their journeys to become more secure and safe by addressing material and social conditions as part of violence, not separate from it. Without financial security, Esin's fraught financial circumstances have led to dangerous situations, like her driving under the influence of medications that impair her abilities:

> *It's written clearly on the medicines that I'm not supposed to drive, but I do. I didn't have any other option, there was no father, what would happen to the kids? If I*

hadn't supported my daughter she wouldn't be a nurse. If I hadn't supported my son he wouldn't have a wife and kids. If I don't support my other son there would be nobody with him. There's a lot of problems now, I'm really worried. There isn't money for the train. My son asked me this morning; Mum there's no more money on the train card. And I said to him; God will provide. But I told him not to worry. I can take from my sister, I can take from his sister. Or God will somehow provide. I told him; you don't worry. We have today, we have tomorrow as well. So I said to him; you study, I'll manage everything else.

Esin's story speaks to the complexity of her decision to illegally drive to get her son to work when her husband is incapable; he is effectively *no father* for her children. Her responsibilities as a mother are to ensure her children are supported, a commitment she carries out, as evidenced by the successes of her older children. Motherhood responsibilities shape Esin's response to her financial precarity. She also speaks of the relationships in her family, with her sister and her daughter, where she can rely on sharing since she knows she can *take from* them if she needs to.

Institutional responses to women's precarity are not necessarily effectively supportive from the women's perspective. Fulli *work*s *in a hotel as a housekeeper. It's really hard work* and insufficient to meet the costs of running her household in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland:

Well, we were running the house somehow. Today I just saw that there's nothing in my bank account or his bank account. And on the 25th is the day that the mortgage goes out. I went to, so the mortgage hasn't gone out on the 25th. And I went to WINZ[2] and they said; "you've got a good job and you've got good wages".

Institutional help with her mortgage payments wasn't an option within systems that fail to account for the costs of living in precarity. Fulli's hard work for inadequate income speaks to the underemployment within many of the women's stories of their working families. When men who are clients of Gandhi Nivas spoke with us about their precarity, unemployment and underemployment were conditions that challenged them in their responsibilities as husbands and providers for their families in their diasporic communities (Mattson et al., 2020).

Employment, then, is also a key concern for these families that significantly contributes to their financial stress. Some of the men in the women's lives struggled to find and keep work, particularly work that paid enough to cover the bills and expenses of living in a city like Tāmaki Makaurau

[2] Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ): Ministry of Development services for employment and unemployment benefits.

Auckland where housing is scarce and expensive, and cars or expensive public transport options are typically required to gain employment. For Usha, the trouble of her son's abuse and violence towards her was interrelated to her responsibilities as a mother in setting expectations of her son's growing responsibilities as a young man:

> *I said that if he didn't want to study he would have to work, you can't just sit at home doing nothing. Other people would tell their kids to start working part-time at that age. But I said; I won't say that to you, but you study, at least study. But he didn't want to... He would play games the whole day, the PS4 and, on PS4 etc. And he had, he was 18 and then I said; you're 18, how long am I going to feed you? Start working, and then start earning money to help with the expenses. So he would angry for that, because I asked him to work.*

Usha sought support because her son's refusal to either work or study brought their relationship to a crisis and contributed to the financial strain Usha experienced. In her situation too, financial precarity, employment and violence were intertwined and interrelated to the gendered expectations for her responsibilities as a mother, and his as a young man. She understood her son's constant gaming as a refusal to accept his responsibilities to study or work.

Navjot's partner also refused his responsibilities as a provider, and she defends herself against any implication that he was justified because she was a demanding wife:

> *I didn't have any demands. All I wanted was for my kids, to raise my kids to have food. I've never demanded anything, like gold or clothes or anything, a home or car, nothing. He didn't do anything, there's no home, there's no car.*

Her husband *did nothing. He was useless,* and for four years she managed on a benefit while *he used to drink on it, and* she *also had to run the house*. Navjot also draws on her responsibilities as a mother to explain why she expected her husband to provide for her children. With Sahaayta's help, she takes responsibility herself, moving away from her dependence on him to provide for the family:

> *It's been four years now. I have my own car. I was on a benefit, they helped me. I got my own car. I have my own house on rent. I want to work now. My kid is ten years old, he goes to school. So yes, I have to work, and I will work. I want to work. At that time, I was like it's ok, you drink, but these people will help you, will help you with your drinking. And they tried, they tried counselling, they tried de-addiction. But no, he just, he didn't. He would go without drinks for maybe two*

months, three months, six weeks, and then if someone, if I refused sex he would drink again.

Navjot's car and home provide her with independence and enable her to move more freely through the community, so that she is available to be employed. Navjot tells us of Sahaayta's work to help her husband with his drinking that had compromised Navjot and her son's safety and security. She is still living with her husband four years after Sahaayta's intervention, yet she is clearly not bound by any wifely duties to consent to sex at her partner's requests. She recognises the way her partner has coerced her for sex through his alcohol use, and she no longer consents to his demands on threat of further drinking.

Esin's partner was so sick from alcohol abuse that he couldn't work. She and her family also *managed on the benefit* for many years. In Fulli's story too, alcohol affected her husband's ability to work:

He wants to quit, he cries, and he says he wants to quit, but he just can't. And I've spoken with [name of staff] *and she said she would come and help. He says he wants to, but he just can't. So the doctor said that there's been some effect on his health because of alcohol. And he stops drinking, but he can't do it for more than a week. When he doesn't drink for that week, he also doesn't eat. It's only when he starts drinking again, that he eats. So, he can't quit. He wants to quit, and he said he needs help, so and* [name of staff] *said yes, you know they would help. Because it doesn't work with the rehab because there's no places, there's no beds for him to be there. So now he's at home, he doesn't work, but he hasn't quit.*

Fulli's compassion for and understanding of her husband's losing battle with drinking is evident in her concern for his eating and how his wellbeing suffers when he goes without drinking. He cannot sustain abstinence and go without food, for long. Her faith is critically important to her understanding of her circumstances:

He says he wants help, but the doctor said that his body is destroyed from inside. I'm a Christian woman, I can't kick him out of the house when he's in trouble like this, out of humanity. That's what they teach us in the church, you don't throw a dying man out on the street. He is really sick.

Fulli's partner's addiction and ill health intertwine with the violence she has experienced so that her material conditions of everyday life create precarity and insecurity. Employment, unemployment and addiction issues are all social issues Sahaayta addresses through counselling, social support and referrals. Yet there wasn't a service that could help Fulli's partner and other women's partners did

not engage with services offered. Sahaayta recognise the social and institutional conditions that limit women's agency to change their circumstances, so they respond flexibly to the women's unique circumstances in their praxis. Sahaayta care for and respect the women's social constraints while supporting them as they become entangled in institutional responses to the violence they experience.

Becoming involved with systems responses to violence

Institutional relationships intervene in women's lives when protection from family violence involves police or child services. Women we spoke to discussed their experiences with police and child protection services[3] as fraught and difficult to navigate – particularly in many circumstances where women were not sure of their rights or the roles of police or child services. For example, Zhi told us that *after* she *had her first baby*, her *relationship with* her *husband wasn't the same*. She acknowledged their *expectations were different even though we were from the same community*. He left her and moved out of their family home, then:

> *He said, "I've got no place, I have to move back". I wasn't happy with that. Then he refused to move "this is my home, I'm not moving out". There was another situation, we had another police report come in and then CYFS contacted me again. "You will need to move out for the sake of the kids, otherwise they will be taken away". That was just so wrong. Because this means that I have to move out where I had a home and he could move home, no problem. Is it normal for them to bully?*

Child protection's focus on Zhi moving herself and her children away from her partner, rather than protecting them in their home, left Zhi feeling bullied by CYFS and compelled her to take sole responsibility for her and her children's safety from her partner's violence. The systems response she experienced disrupted the security of her home for her children, yet enabled her partner to remain in the home, increasing her lack of safety as well.

Zhi found Sahaayta has helped her to clarify and understand her rights and how to navigate complex institutional relationships like those with child services:

> *I think I probably had about five sessions over a period of time with them* [Sahaayta]*. That was probably around May, June, July last year. I definitely did individual* sessions*. Yeah, that was the best thing, myself. They were really helpful in educating me, I think. They were really helpful in having me*

[3] Currently Oranga Tamariki, formally known as Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS).

understand what my rights were and understanding that they deal with these types of things and what would happen.

Sahaayta's praxis of listening with respect to Zhi's situation also means that they help with ensuring she knows her rights when navigating institutionalised systems responses to her safety risks. Safety and rights are often considerations for women in relation to the police. Many of the women discuss their uncertainty about calling the police, due to situated understandings of law enforcement, like the fear of police corruption and brutality, and unwanted police interventions that might be enforced without the women's consent. Some women just want the police to stop their partner's violence in the moment, but police responses might involve removing their partner through PSO or arrest: a response that can produce even more distress for the family.

Tiaho, for example, worries about how police involvement will impact on her baby:

I don't want to be put in a situation where I have to ring the cops. I know it's not a good look for my child.

In Tiaho's experience, police attendance when she is victimised by her partner, risks bringing social sanctions for her child. Her phrasing, that it's not a *good look* for her child, speaks to the significance of the social relationships in which she is embedded and her avoidance of reputational damage for the sake of her child. Engaging with institutional support for her protection, by ringing the police when she is harmed or threatened, has social consequences that entrap Tiaho and leave her in a situation where she has to bear the burden of her own protection. Tiaho regularly engages with Sahaayta counselling support after her partner stays at Gandhi Nivas. She tells us that Sahaayta:

is a good help, because I can't do it on my own. Because, I know that my troubles and burdens needed to be heard, and to be addressed with someone.

With support, she is learning how to keep herself safer at home and to assert herself without engaging in arguments and conflict. She is changing through learning, and:

I've taken this program [with Sahaayta]*, it's not for the sake of just calling the cops, it's to have a say and have a voice. We need to empower that, it's not just for love, you've got to think of yourself and your children. Thank you for giving me the opportunity. I will be one of many empowered women out there. I hope one day my daughter can respect that and look back at this, and she will know what we went through, she won't have to go through it, because she has seen and heard. We can make her understand that that's not where we want her to end.*

As Tiaho learns that her voice is heard, she feels empowered by her engagement with Sahaayta, who clearly respect the extent of her care for her child manifests in her not wanting to involve police. Working with Sahaayta, Tiaho moves from avoiding the social sanctions of involving police, though she remains mindful of the social risk. Now, she aspires to becoming a role model to her daughter, who will live a safer life for the responsibilities her mother is taking.

Chatura also did not want police involvement in the intimate partner violence she was experiencing. She explained that there has been *family violence* in her home:

> *but I didn't complain because I love him, and because I know that there is a law; if I complain, he will get arrested and things. So I didn't complain*.

Police intervention is complicated for the women who come into contact with Sahaayta, as it is understood simultaneously as a necessarily intervention to stop violence, and as an intervention that has social consequences and feelings like shame and distress. Police intervention also has more practical effects, like how Shirim tells us that while her partner was bound by a PSO, she was without transport, as she was unable to drive herself:

> *They took him for five days. It's really hard for me to spend those days, because I was alone and do no driving or anything.*

Being unable to drive herself to work is a serious concern for Shirim, as being unable to get to work (or having to find expensive transport alternatives) jeopardises her employment and adds further stress to stressful contexts.

For these women, Sahaayta staff's support has helped them to address their concerns through responses tailored to the families' specific contexts, assisting women and their families to navigate complex institutional relationships so that they can get to safety, whatever form that takes as they respond to the circumstances of their everyday lives. From helping women to learn to drive to explaining legal issues to follow-up support, the women we spoke to have described how Sahaayta staff attend to the multiplicity of practical ways that women's lives might be impacted by violence and precarity that might prevent them from calling the police when they experience violence, while also working with the women to navigate the processes of complex institutional relationships. Sahaayta staff help women and their families with practical support to manage the chaos of institutional intervention into their lives.

In particular, some women were wary of calling New Zealand Police as they were unsure of how police in Aotearoa New Zealand operate, and what effects police intervention might have on their families and their lives, as Tiaho's story illustrates. The legal system in Aotearoa New Zealand has

been used by some of the women's partners against the women. Anika's husband called the police on her while engaged in an argument:

> *When he was in so much anger, he doesn't want to understand a single thing. Oh, my gosh. I said, oh, my gosh. And then he is the one who called the police over all these things happening in the relationship; and the policeman say, "We can't help you for your relationship*."

Police intervention, or threat of it, too frequently exposes women to institutional interventions that reproduce the conditions in which women are victimised and socially entrapped. Using the police, or even just the threat of the police acting in ways that support their partner, reproduces women's victimisation. Some women have had information withheld from them about the legal system in their new country, and some are very isolated, without contacts outside of their immediate family (like in a place of employment or education, or a friend or community group) to learn about their rights and the legal system in their new country. Some understandings were informed by police practices in their countries of origin. For example, Avana, through the relationship developed between her and Sahaayta staff, calls the police in Aotearoa New Zealand if her husband becomes violent. She described social barriers to calling the police for domestic violence in her country of origin:

> *It's happened before, many times before in Fiji. You know, in our country it's very hard to call the police, we don't want to have a bad record.*

While such a concern undoubtedly persists within communities across Aotearoa New Zealand (migrant or otherwise), Avana told us of multiple occasions when she and her family have now called police about her husband's violence, with the consistent support of Sahaayta staff to make the decision and then address any effects of that decision. The women's relationships with Sahaayta staff have enabled connections to be forged that expand the women's worlds wider and allow for advocacy particularly pertinent to the women's safety, like helping them to access and understand legal processes (from immigration to protection orders to WINZ to the role of the police), and security (like help with employment issues, transport, finances and so on). The women have been enabled to make their own informed decisions with the support of, and ongoing relationships with, Sahaayta staff. Safety and security are critically important aspirations that Sahaayta shares with their clients and works to enable. In the following section we discuss the women's experiences of becoming safer through Sahaayta's support.

Analysis: Prioritising Safety on her Terms

Understanding the particular contexts where families and communities discourage speaking out or challenging violence in order to maintain their place in community, a functional and successful family, is critical for helping women, and their families, navigate towards becoming free of violence. In particular, how Sahaayta staff continually engage with the everyday-ness of presenting and re-presenting as a 'successful' family is crucial, as the women we spoke to often told stories about how they maintained their families reputation through, for example, ongoing efforts to engage their partners in creating and raising children, or restricting alcohol intake, or gaining and maintaining education and employment (hers or her partner's), and other daily, mundane functions of the family and household relationships that require women's attention and negotiation. The coercive texture of these daily contexts means that women must engage in these negotiations for the (outward-facing) good of the traditional (successful) family, perhaps coming to understand their positioning as inevitable if community relationships are to be maintained. The women we spoke to acknowledged that Sahaayta staff understand and work within these complex negotiations and the range of ways that women have been entrapped by violence. From the diversity of the women's stories, it becomes apparent that Sahaayta staff form relationships with the women and their families through hearing and working with them within their complex relationships to make space for their needs and wants to be met on their terms. Transformation for one woman and her family might look very different from another woman and her family.

Security within precarity

Working, or studying to advance employment opportunities, is nearly unavoidable in the current socio-economic conditions, especially in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, but employment opportunities or resources for study are often unstable, and especially so for migrant/refugee communities. Men participating in previous Gandhi Nivas research (Mattson et al., 2020) told of struggles with employment, including exploitative employer relationships linked with their migration status. Those men who engaged with Sahaayta's services spoke of both practical and emotional support for improving their employment prospects, including finding clothes for a man to wear to a job interview (Mattson et al., 2020). Taking men into Gandhi Nivas provides an opportunity to help with keeping men engaged in work, especially if a Gandhi Nivas house provides them with a more local and resourced place to stay (as opposed to finding well-enough resourced friends or family to take him in, or staying in a motel or hotel), so that they can maintain their employment while prioritising the safety of women and children, and the men too.

Considering the significance of many of the women's precarious material conditions, their safety and security were intimately connected, especially for those women whose expectations of their partner's gender role as provider were disappointed in their marriage or migration circumstances. The women we spoke to suggest the Gandhi Nivas home and Sahaayta's counselling support enable families to use the home when tension and violence escalates in their own homes in ways that enable community connections to be maintained and large, sudden expenses to be avoided. At the time of the interview, Greetha was hoping *that the government or whoever, private funding, continues* for Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta's work. She explicitly identifies relieving the financial burden of being apart when she is unsafe as one of the crucial roles that Gandhi Nivas plays in early intervention:

> *When there is violence, domestic violence, and one partner's spouse is taken away, it just gives both of them time away from each other to put what is really important into perspective; what they are missing out on when they are away from each other. Also, which means that there is no burden on the finance part because when they go away, you're paying a motel or food or whatever; and that is additional this, because most of the problems have been because of finance. So, this is one part, the stress is taken away. Even if the person goes to the motel or something and they come back and you're back to square one. But with Sahaayta there is a follow-up with counselling and things like that, which wouldn't have been there.*

Providing accommodation for the men becomes a way of relieving financial stress during times when violence escalates and it is Sahaayta's *follow up* that makes the time away from each other more helpful by ensuring intervention support is available after the crisis of violence and police intervention. Zhi told us that her partner *stayed at the men's house, one or two days,* after their flatmate called the police:

> *I was so thankful for that, I was kind of happy that he was gone. They started contacting me and encouraging me to come. So, I did start coming here, which it was kind of nice to talk to someone about it and he had his counsellor, but it was hard. It was like he didn't open up and I don't think he went to a lot of sessions, which I wish that he did, because they would have been beneficial for him. They coached him to go and board at his workplace outside of Auckland, so that the tension wasn't there anymore, which I was grateful for.*

Zhi's story speaks to the relief she felt as her partner had somewhere to go, after the police intervened. She engages with Sahaayta and although counselling for her partner proves disappointing, the strategy Sahaayta use to support her husband with maintaining his employment, provides Zhi with more time and space away from him and more opportunity to make decisions for herself about her future. Although Zhi's circumstances change again when her partner moves back home and child protection intervenes, Sahaayta keep working with her to navigate her changing conditions of safety and security.

Men can go to a Gandhi Nivas home, where they can be materially and emotionally supported, rather than escalating violence to the point of police intervention where they may be taken into custody that prevents them from attending work for a period of time. Given the kinds of employment that migrant men who come into Gandhi Nivas are engaged in, missing a shift could be catastrophic, resulting in a loss of desperately needed pay, or even the loss of the job, which, from our conversations with women, would amplify the contexts that produce violence in their families. We recall how Chatura told us that she had *settled* bills her partner could not pay at times of unemployment. For her there are consequences of *situations* that increase the financial strain when she is aspiring to improve her career opportunities:

> *My money has all gone because of some situations. So even last year, I started my course. I couldn't continue because I had to go overseas suddenly, and I did use some money. I didn't participate in my course because I have gone overseas because of that situation, but I had to pay for all semester. So my money's gone. This was only one month before final exams, so I had to start from the beginning and I had to pay again. Now I am working and paying payments.*

After Elei began engaging with Sahaayta, she became increasingly independent and responsible for the financial security of her family as her employment conditions became significantly more secure:

> *I'm working for a new company, Yeah. I love it. My old workplace wasn't very good for me, so I went to the new company. I only just started there recently. I'm pregnant, 4 months, 21 weeks. I don't know which way it goes. It was hard when I told my manager. She was like, "You know, if you want to quit your job you can. If you want a day off, just ring up."*

According to the women we spoke to, taking men into Gandhi Nivas can help to maintain the connection the men might have to their work or study and encourage them to stay engaged by addressing men in their precarious contexts as well, knowing that the men's precarious employment

produces further insecurity for women and children. As previously discussed, alcohol was often involved when the women's partners or sons were unemployed and violent at home.

Esin's partner had begun drinking when he came to Aotearoa New Zealand, initially alone. After Esin arrived her with her children, *at first*, *he worked but he left because of his drinking*:

> *it was only when there was the problem of addiction, that things went bad. He did not work* after he left, so 18 years, *we didn't do anything. He was too sick, and we managed on the benefit.*

Esin and her family began their migration as refugees and her husband's alcoholism was understood as a response to his suffering. In this situation, medical intervention addressed his depression. Sahaayta works with men to address alcohol issues and women told us stories of successes when men engaged with the support they were receiving. Aroha told us there were *some good things that have come out of* her son's engagement with Sahaayta:

> *he's not drinking; he's trying not to drink. He's stopped drinking. We had a talk about that; it is a slow process. We had a talk about that one day when he had a drink and, as soon as he gets drunk he wants to have a fight with his mates and then he'll come in, gets home, and it all comes out.*

Aroha is optimistic for her son's future now. *He's getting some skills now and he's working where* she's *working:*

> *not in the same place, next door. So, he gets a free ride to work, gets a free ride home - still not standing on his own two feet yet.*

After an overnight stay at Gandhi Nivas, Fulli's partner does not engage further with the support he is offered, and his drinking continues to trouble her safety and security. On a further occasion, she tells us:

> *The police could not take him to Gandhi Nivas 'cause he was drunk. So he had to be kept with someone else. But I was worried because I had called the police. I was worried about how he would behave after that.*

Using the skills she has learned, reporting further incidents to police is complicated as she both takes responsibility for her safety by contacting the police, yet she fears her partner's response to the intervention. Although the police become necessary for her safety, the conditions for security are barely transformed. With Sahaayta's support Fulli continues to call for help, protection, and support, widening a network that secures her ongoing safety:

I got a lot of help, because of calling the police, and it's ok if it took a long time. But I did the right thing, otherwise it would have become a habit with him, he would have continued to beat me. Because I'm a member of the church, I would go with this problem to the church, I used to share it with them, and I used to get help from them. Because I'm a Christian woman, I'm a part of the church, and there was help from there too. The Plunket nurses who used to come home, I told them too, I told them, "I'm new to this country and this is happening to me." And they helped me, they supported me too. And coming [to Sahaayta] *I've gotten my life back, I've learnt how to live life here in Sahaayta. I got out of a prison and I learned to live here.* [Name of staff] *helped me a lot, the path that she showed me, I don't think I would have reached here without her help.*

While Fulli and her partner do not separate, that she reported his violence began a process of recognising the patterns of coercive control and violence, and also enabled her to use the resources in her community for support. Sahaayta has helped Fulli learn how to recognise her entrapment and to live free from violence.

Sahaayta staff understand and work with simultaneous gendered and cultural contexts that shape expectations about family life, and how they complicate relationships for migrants. They work to shift expectations and change understandings of how migration and the conditions of living in Aotearoa New Zealand might be better supported. Sahaayta staff shape their responses to those contexts through hearing the needs (emotional, physical, financial, practical) of families, particularly where women and children might be insecure and unsafe. Greetha's partner has been to Gandhi Nivas more than twice, and it is this continuity of support and recognition that supports the process of safety:

The first time he went to Gandhi Nivas for a day, and then I think the last time when things went really sour, he was taken away for five days. Yes, it's happened several times and then once in between when things went sour, because he was so nice and because we were undergoing counselling they said, "You come any time." So, he took the liberty of going and checking himself in. That was very nice. When you don't have extended family and sometimes it's a bit difficult, just encroaching you know. Even if you have good friends, it's a bit difficult for him to just walk in and say, "I'm sleeping here for the night," because there is a lot of judgement and things like that. So I thought Sahaayta was the place where I felt safe, he felt safe

and, I tell you, it is a blessing in disguise - the guys are great, very, very passionate about what they do.

Greetha makes clear that the housing Gandhi Nivas provides for her partner provides respite at times when tensions mount and her partner becomes violent. His voluntary stay comes after he engages in counselling and begins taking responsibility for removing himself from the home when he feels unsafe.

Violence and entrapment complicate the precarious conditions of everyday life especially where marriage is intricately woven into the social and the cultural, and the dissolution of marriages can intensify social, financial and physical isolation. Chatura had been abandoned by her husband, leaving her in social and financial peril. Her personal money, given to her by her family before her marriage, had been used to facilitate the marriage, spent in an attempt to engage her new husband in their new marriage and in starting a family:

Last July, they [Sahaayta] *contacted me, and I thought, this is the last option, couples therapy. She said, "okay, I will arrange – so we can do individually first and then we can do couples therapy." He refused – he didn't do that therapy* and *I only participated in one session…*

When the incident happened, I thought I must do something. It come from my instinct, because I thought I must call, and they were in here, and even I needed someone to talk to about my *feelings that time. In that time, I did need someone who I can trust; to express my feelings to know what is right or not, and they were really helpful at that time, because sometimes it's hard to get to, because I did love him; so it was too hard. I think emotionally it was just too hard to tell it, and for this to share it was really hard.*

Chatura spoke of her anger and distress after being abandoned by her husband. Understanding how she is now socially positioned in her community, both here and in her home country, as an unsuccessful wife is an ongoing painful struggle for her. Sahaayta have supported her with employment and further education opportunities as she navigates her independence and public life. She says:

At that time, they were a strength for me. They were really a strength for me, what really happened for me. Even like here, that time, I don't want to be a victim. Really, I want to be a survivor and help others. So, I'm happy now I'm here. I must start my study again. They were the strength for me to undertake *my plans.*

Chatura speaks enthusiastically about the strength Sahaayta bring her:

> *Even in that time, I didn't understand. I didn't love myself, actually, I was only thinking about what happened to him, but after those sessions happened, I started to love myself. I'm planning to do things myself and they guide me. I say what I am trying to do and they say, "You must do it." If I have already planned it, they say "That's good!" It's like teamwork.*

Sahaayta's counselling and praxis have brought Chatura into a process of understanding the consequences of her subjugation and through guidance a new pathway is opened, albeit one of independence. The relationships formed between women and Sahaayta staff enable highly specific responses to women and their families that are responsive to the inequitable conditions of everyday life. Chatura, for example, remains connected to Sahaayta staff after being abandoned by her husband, while other women continue to work with Sahaayta to stay within their relationships in various ways.

Moreover, Sahaayta staff also engage with the whole family, an approach that is definitely needed as evidenced by the inclusion of two mothers in this research who had engaged with Sahaayta and Gandhi Nivas through their sons' violence at home. Attending to the whole family, rather than just marital relationships within the family, enables Sahaayta staff to work more specifically with the family contexts that women are embedded in, and perhaps also helping to challenge violence for younger (and older) generations within extended families and communities.

Through sharing with us their stories of marriage and family life, many of the women across the group, despite their varying family circumstances, cultural contexts and current situations detail lives steeped the precarious conditions of violence – where their social, economic and health contexts are always 'on the edge', unstable, unsafe and insecure for multiple family members.

Greetha values education and her commitment to mothering means that she celebrates her daughter's schooling success, in the face of the violence her father threatens in their home:

> *I salute my daughter, I salute my girl with all of this. Yesterday it was the senior prize giving award and she took away the trophy for the best girl in the entire class, academic. I was humbled, but I was very happy for her because it was a very prestigious trophy and she worked for it, she worked very hard. I salute her and how my husband would drink, abuse, shout, and I would take her in the car and leave the torch on, she would study. Sometimes I would take my dinner in the car and study and feed her. Her exam time. And, yes, the last time he got a PSO she*

had her assignment, a very important assignment; she was struggling. She needed mum - I don't help her otherwise, but sometimes when she's stuck, she'll ask because I've got a bit of medical background, so she comes to me.

Greetha's story tells of the responsibility she takes to protect her daughter, enacting a safety plan that removes them both to the car, where Greetha can drive away quickly if her husband leaves the house. Even while she is enacting a safety plan, she is supporting her daughter to study, by torchlight and she is proud of her mothering success. She also speaks of her partner's abuse and shouting, from which she and her daughter seek refuge in the car. While material precarity is manifestly interwoven through women's stories of becoming safer and more secure, the conditions of violence within their homes is shared at the heart of each of their narratives of Sahaayta's intervention to support them.

Navigating systems responses

Alongside the complexities of precarious material conditions and social relationships governed by norms of successful marriages, families and children, Sahaayta support the women's safety through the inevitable involvement of Western systems of policing and child protection once the men have been referred to Gandhi Nivas.

For some women, Sahaayta not only clarifies the role of police, but also offers women and their partners and families an alternative intervention to the police before violence escalates. For example, once the women and their partners engage with Sahaayta, they can become skilled at contacting them for help as they recognise tensions rising between them and their partners. Navjot was in touch with Sahaayta *occasionally:*

When it was too much. When he was drunk and when the neighbours started complaining about the noise. Or when he would remove his clothes and just be drunk, and there would be a lot of trouble. So yes, I would call the police then. Then they took him away. And then my contact with people like Sahaayta or [name of staff] *increased. People who are helping those who are actually suffering has value, which is what these people have done for me. Supporting someone, that's a big deal.*

Navjot is explicit about her suffering and the value of the support she's received from Sahaayta. She is now confident to ring for support and to ring for the police, and the differences in their response. She explains that Sahaayta also supported her when she went to her *lawyer.* A particular staff member would accompany her, and she says:

I had a feeling that I was supported, that someone was there behind me.

Becoming confident of the supportive intervention of Sahaayta enables Navjot to engage with Western institutions of justice that she needs to engage with because she's been victimised by her partner. The kinds of assistance that Sahaayta provided for Zhi, whose husband's unwelcome return home brought her in contact with the institutional response of child welfare social workers, served to strengthen her relationship with Sahaayta, who understood why she felt the injustice of bearing the sole responsibility for her safety alone. Sahaayta's praxis of care for the particular situation of the women, whether in relation to institutional responses, or the social norms of family responsibilities that entrap women, enable women to navigate the predominant assumption that separation is a solution to the safety threats facing their families.

Through Sahaayta some women and their partners have learned to recognise the signs of tension, abuse and violence as they become troubling, and contact Sahaayta as a source of help before violence escalates. Anika told us that, for the sake of her son, she reunited with her husband and Sahaayta:

> *They talk to me, we not over here to separate you people, we are not that kind of persons; we are here for you to be you live happily. We can help you out". And they said, "you start counselling and these things". Yeah, I talked to them, I am still talking to them; I talk if I need help or anything. And, she used to call me, ask me if everything is going okay.*

Access to Sahaayta staff is complemented by calls to Anika, which provide opportunities for safety checks as well as deepening the trust that Sahaayta establish through respecting and dignifying Anika's goals for her family to live safely and securely. Sahaayta's contextual understandings of violence help women to navigate systems more effectively and ways that better fit their family, where Sahaayta staff, who know the women and their family's stories well, can respond to the needs of the women and their families as their lives shift. The women spoke of how Sahaayta has helped them to understand and navigate these relationships, particularly through advice and direct intervention of Sahaayta staff who know the systems, know the women's stories, and therefore know how to get the best possible advice for their families. Navjot specifically recalled how she felt when Sahaayta staff were with her when she met her lawyer:

> *When I met* [name of staff] *and my lawyer used to be with me, I had a feeling that I was supported, that someone was there behind me. Even when I used to send a letter to him and I would send a message through someone to, for him to look at*

the letter, he wouldn't, and he wouldn't respond. His ideas were different, he thought that these people were bad, they break homes. But I think I view them as someone who supported me, and because of them I could move on, move ahead in my life.

Since her partner was uncooperative with the legal process that Navjot engaged to enable her family's safety, Sahaayta's guidance and support through the system helped her to move through the process. Although her partner saw Sahaayta as breaking their home, Navjot felt their support and trusted that she was becoming safer as she navigated the system to enable her separation from him. Navjot's parents supported her leaving her partner and continued to support her divorce.

As well as complex family contexts, the women we spoke to bring with them complex immigration histories that have been a source of confusion and stress. For many women, their partners or family members are in control of the family's immigration processes, and women can be denied access to information about their own immigration status. In some instances, immigration complexities can be used to coerce women into marriage (for example, Elei's marriage to ensure her family's respectability), or to control their movements within their new country. In other studies (Ingram et al., 2010; Jelinic, 2019; Kapur et al., 2017a; Voolma, 2018), it has been clear that information about the new country's laws and legal processes might also be withheld from women, producing a significant barrier for accessing help when they might need it. Fulli recalled how her husband controlled her immigration processes, and the subsequent problems with her status after violence:

He was going and doing his job, and he paid for everything at home, everything that the baby needed, I could shop as much as I wanted. He paid for the immigration lawyers, fees, etc… When he was violent, he went for counselling, and then we went to the church, and they asked me to forgive him, and I did. All this news had gone to the immigration people. And so there was a problem with my application at that time and they wanted more proof, and so it took a long time for all that process to happen.

Because of all this violence, I hadn't gotten my resident visa then, because there were delays. My application was rejected and we had to give them a lot of proof in order for me to get residence. So people had told me not to leave NZ until I was a resident, and that happened after six years. You can apply for residence after you've been married for a year, after you've been together for a year. But he became violent seven months into that year. So all this thing came out, all this

thing about the violence. I didn't think of my visa or anything at that time that I called the police. It wasn't right, he couldn't beat me.

For Fulli, police and community intervention into the violence she was experiencing placed her in immigration peril. As she states, she was concerned with her immediate safety, not about her immigration status. Fulli's story calls into question, though, how women who are denied immigration knowledge might be unable to make decisions about their safety and security, particularly if their families in their countries of origin are financially dependent upon the Aotearoa New Zealand-based family, or if the Aotearoa New Zealand-based family is under intense pressure to 'succeed' in Aotearoa New Zealand for the social status of multiple extended families. Sahaayta know how women in Fulli's circumstances might need to negotiate the immigration system after violence is reported to the New Zealand police or other services. For some women, the threat of being sent back to their country of origin may outweigh the effects of reporting immediate violence, as 'being sent back home' brings with it other violences, like violence from extended family (physical violence, ostracism and so on), social violence (oppressive social constraints like the lived effects of rape culture) or even state violence (like fleeing war, highlighting the precarity of migration). Enabling women to understand and gain access to information about their immigration status and rights in Aotearoa New Zealand is critical for removing immigration complexities as a barrier for reporting violence and engaging with services in Aotearoa New Zealand. Women have repeatedly through our interviews stated that Sahaayta have helped them to navigate complex and alien systems, and immigration is no exception.

One of the women we spoke to, Shirim, lives in Aotearoa New Zealand with her husband, while her two young children remain in India. The family is hoping to bring the children to Aotearoa New Zealand, but the complexities of such a task are complicated further through their history of intimate partner violence now recorded through police. She mentions her families' advice to stay out of trouble in order to build a life in Aotearoa New Zealand that their children can later join:

They just asked, "Don't do those things; if you're there, just make a future. Just hard work; don't do stupid things."

The message to Shirim and her husband was clear: do not be violent, because it jeopardises the 'ideal life' in Aotearoa New Zealand. The idea that violence should stop because it attracts attention, rather than because it is harmful, presents a particularly dangerous scenario where women may become less likely to contact help when they are experiencing violence for fear of jeopardising their immigration status, their partner's status, and their chances of bringing their children and other family members to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The support that Sahaayta provided the women to navigate systems responses that are alien and most frequently assume that women are able to take responsibility for their own safety, as well as the safety of their children, was informed by the social conditions of entrapment that each woman specifically faced. Their responses to the women's situations flexibly guided them through processes of reconciliation or separation, towards becoming safer at home and more secure within their family and community relationships.

Analysis: Ethic of Care in Coercive Contexts

Transforming women's social relationships

Many women we spoke to talked of limited social connection beyond their husband and their wider family members, particularly those women who were unemployed or not in study, describing isolated daily lives. Chatura didn't *have any friends here: His friends are also* her *friends,* and she knows few people from her ethnic community. Her husband's friends where mainly from *his workplace and things.* Chatura's social relationships depend on her husband's social relationships. After an incident in which she was injured, she told us:

> *I needed someone to talk about my feelings to that time, I did need someone I can trust; to express my feelings to; to know what is right or not; and* [Sahaayta staff] *were really helpful at that time… they were a strength for me.*

Chatura trusted Sahaayta's responsiveness to disclosing her experiences of violence that she hadn't disclosed to others. With the dignifying strength of their support, she began a journey to reclaim her independence. While Chatura's social isolation was embedded in her everyday life with her husband, and represented the extent to which her partner exercised coercive control over her access to social relationships, Navjot explicitly linked her social isolation with her husband's physical and sexual violence towards her:

> *And then he started drinking. And then because of that, there were a lot of problems. He used to beat the kids, he used to force me for anything, sexually and beating, and saying things to his mum and dad. He would ask me not to go out of the house, not to speak to my friends. Not to speak to anyone, not to meet my friends. This was going on for about three or four years.*

Navjot's social relationships transform as she engages with Sahaayta. At the very beginning of her interview, she told us:

> *Until two years ago when there was a police case, and the police got involved and I found out about, found out about him. And* [name of staff]*, I came to know* [name of staff] *and she helped me. And eventually I had a bit of a friend circle.* [Name of staff] *helped me, she guided me. Whether it was going to a lawyer or protection for the kids, she helped me a lot.*

Navjot's connections with a friendship circle are facilitated by Sahaayta, who have also helped her to understand – to *find out about* – the pattern of violence in which she was entrapped. Navjot too has

undertaken a journey of changing her social relationships, supported by Sahaayta. With each of the women who experienced and understood social isolation differently, Sahaayta respectfully navigated a pathway to restoring the women's social connections, strengthen their safety, their protection, and their social standing with others.

Some of the women were part of small faith communities who connected with each other through churches, temples or gurudwara. Avana had friends in Ōtautahi Christchurch but since she moved to Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, she and her partner *have no time to* socialise, *six days* they *work; one day* they *stay home, do the housework, rest*. They do have friends, but only see them when there is an *occasion, birthday party, any prayer ceremony, any wedding.* In Avana's faith community, she had friends she could turn to for support when the police were called to intervene in her partner's violence towards her. With neighbours, she said:

> *we didn't talk about it. We're neighbours, hello and hi, that's all. Sometimes, we discuss,* with [friends and] *also get help from them. So not hidden, Indians know when they are drunk, they make a drama.* I *just contacted my husband's sister, that your brother has done things; so we get help from* [Sahaayta]*, they learned something from that.*

Since Avana's partner's violence is linked with his drinking, Avana is able to talk about the 'drama' of his violence within her friendship group. She and her husband's family and friends have learned from Sahaayta's support and understanding. After counselling with Sahaayta, Avana and her husband are reconciled, and he doesn't drink so much. For Avana, Sahaayta:

> *change*d *my life. We learn something new. Just like in our country 80 percent of wives don't work; stays home, looks after the kids. We don't have any money. And here we work, we get money. Yeah. If you have to buy something, we have to ask the husband: "Give the money, we want to buy this thing, that thing." In New Zealand, we work, we get our pay; so, we don't have to ask.*

Affirming her financial independence and social acceptance of women's autonomous decision making in Aotearoa New Zealand, Sahaayta provides the support for Avana to transform her *life* so that she maintains her social standing as a wife and mother, while becoming increasingly independent and connected to support within her social relationships. Although she still worries about her partner drinking heavily on occasions, like Christmas, she tells us "*I'm strong enough"* and she knows that she can turn to Sahaayta when their understanding, care and expertise is needed.

Other women told stories of how their faith communities typically encouraged silence in response to domestic violence. For example, Zhi mentions that when she approached her church about her husband's violence, the church supported her husband, not her. Zhi told us she could talk to family and her closest friends about incidents of violence she experienced:

> *I would always* contact *his mum and dad and say, this is what's happening. They completely know what was said, what's happening. I keep them updated just to keep myself safe. I wasn't hiding anything, all my close friends knew what was happening.*

Zhi's partner had few friends while Zhi was well connected with social relationships through her Church: *It was really awesome and I had good friends there.* But her partner *started throwing things and stuff* at Church, so they *moved on from the good church.* Although Zhi was able to disclose violence to those close to her, her partner's public humiliation of Zhi in her church community meant that she shifted away from her support network:

> *We ended up going to a smaller church which was even worse, and because I was quite a strong Christian at this point, I said look, support him. I have really long-term Christian friends, he doesn't have many friends, and he was just starting a friendship with these people.*

After connecting with Sahaayta through her husband's referral to Gandhi Nivas by police, Zhi was supported through counselling, education, and practical help with her Protection Order and financial security. Zhi has separated from her partner, and tells us that now:

> *I'm living a wonderful life with my kids. I'm still staying at the same place but at the same time I am thinking about the future of what I want. I am enjoying being a solo and I'm self-learning. I have this big concept of being a solo mum. I'm still learning as I go and it's not a new concept to me. What I want to say, I have friends, mum, who have been through it. I'm working full time: for me, choosing myself, is something new.*

Zhi's experience of moving from her community to one that was intended to provide social support for her partner, speaks to how she had previously put him first, whereas now her safety and social relationships are restored, she is well supported in her new life as a solo mother.

Zhi had friends and family she could talk with but many of the women mention that their friend groups, families and communities told them to stay silent about the violence they experience in their relationships. Tiaho talks of the violence she experiences from her partner as *our situation* that:

has been going on for 2 years, since I met him. Nobody knows because I don't want burdens to affect us. Not even my sisters and my best friends know. I don't feel alone, but when drama and conflict tend to happen, I feel very alone.

Tiaho is deeply embedded in her faith community, yet despite strong connections she says:

I don't share anything. I know that when I need help, or when I want to say anything, I cannot, because it's not my place. I was always raised like that. I always show respect for others, or I put everything else before myself.

Sahaayta staff offer women relationships outside of their immediate families and communities that help women to recognise violence, understand their experiences of violence, and how they can respond to violence, in ways that sustain safety. Just as Chatura found that at Sahaayta she could speak of her experiences with staff she trusted, Zhi found Sahaayta:

really helpful because I have never experienced that before, for them to listen. Extremely helpful for someone to understand and really understand. So it was helpful.

Knowing the women, their families and their communities, Sahaayta staff also help women to navigate new forms of relationships with their husbands. In Aotearoa New Zealand and other colonial nations, the dominant response to domestic violence is that women should leave the relationship and the home – a response that positions women as responsible for their own safety by reducing possible responses to binary categorisations of 'staying' or 'leaving'. The women we spoke to share stories that attest to the complexity of women's lives that explicitly highlight the problems of the 'simple' solution of leaving, particularly as they navigate lives in new countries and cultures with unfamiliar social norms.

For Tiaho, whose faith community isn't open to talk of domestic violence, Sahaayta opened possibilities for her to continue living with her partner:

we've taken up counselling together as a couple. Other than that, there's Tutaki, the Social Work thing; they come and see you daily, because it's the safety for baby and that. So we go every Wednesday to [partner]*'s counselling session together. For me, it's good that we come in as a couple. We both put our misunderstandings and miscommunications on the table, where we both vent it out, and share it where we both understand outside the home.*

Counselling sessions enable Tiaho to safely bring up concerns she has, particularly with her partner's drinking. With Sahaayta's support she learns the value of being heard:

> *I know that my troubles and burdens needed to be heard, and to be addressed with someone, because I know that's it; you just face each other, but we don't mean less. I have to see the changes in him to actually answer if there's any change.*

Tiaho draws our attention to the process of accountability that Sahaayta put in place in their counselling practice with her and her partner. Facing each other, talking, and hearing each other, gives Tiaho and her counsellor the opportunity to witness changes her partner is willing to make.

While Tiaho was still involved with counselling, some of the women spoke about how they negotiate their relationships *after* Sahaayta's intervention, having stayed in their married relationships to maintain the social norms of their own communities. Women's partners are referred to Gandhi Nivas through PSOs that help to challenge the myth about women and children needing to leave their homes for the sake of their safety. Sahaayta staff engage with men at Gandhi Nivas, while simultaneously engaging with women and the whole family through Sahaayta's responsive service[4]. The focus on the men through referral to the Gandhi Nivas houses brings the men into view, to hold them accountable for the threat they pose to their families. Responsibility for preventing violence and ensuring safety is no longer solely located with the women who experience the harm. Sahaayta helps.

While the focus of the Gandhi Nivas intervention into family violence is on the men and their violence, our conversations with women suggest they still carry the burden of responsibility for sustaining safety in the home. Most of the women expressed some form of concern that their partners or sons were not fully engaged in change and that their apparent participation in the change process was not 'real'. Elei told us that despite her partner's claims to changing:

> *He always makes it like I have to change… I have to be someone else that I'm not. I always say "hi'' to people, and now I don't. When I'm not with him, I'll be myself, but when I'm with him, he's always like, "Are you looking at that guy?" We'll all be in the food court, and I'll be like, "Oh my gosh, what am I supposed to do; look up?" He's like, "Yeah, you're supposed to look at me."*

[4] Removing men and providing them with a safe space to stay also helps to address precarity: women and children can stay in the home, avoiding disruptions to school and/or work and maintaining access to their daily resources; and eliminating the burden of accommodation costs of moving men (or women and children) into hotels/motels or into the homes of other family members or friends.

Concern over men's problematic engagement is juxtaposed by the women's committed, continued work on safety with Sahaayta staff. For some of the women, engagement with Sahaayta has helped them understand their men's lack of engagement. The women's own engagement continues to strengthen them should ending the relationship become the only pathway to safety given the men's lack of commitment to change. The women have come to understand their engagement with Sahaayta as connected to, but distinct from the men's engagement (or lack of it). So, while preferences for how to move forward look different for each family, like staying together, separating or renegotiating their family household, the women we spoke to understand that Sahaayta can and will remain a support for them to achieve and maintain safety in whatever form it may take for the women and their families. The women we spoke to remain engaged with Sahaayta and feel comfortable in their engagement with Sahaayta, no matter how their men engage with the service.

Negotiations between the women, their men and Sahaayta can produce very different experiences of safety for these families in their different contexts. Two women, Jumari and Esin, described how they still live with their husbands, but they have re-negotiated their responsibilities as wives. Esin in particular ensures her and her husband occupy separate spaces in the home, and she does not engage in care work for him. But outwardly, the couple maintain their marriage, avoiding the social stigma of having an unsuccessful marriage, that extends into family relationships and future generations. She says, for example:

> *… and then sister* [Sahaayta staff] *she said she will help me. I had a lot of complaints before, but now I have none. I don't have a relationship with him anymore… He's at home, but I have no relationship with him… My daughter-in-law sometimes gives him something to eat or drink, or water. But because of my kids I have allowed him to be at home. So, I'm here, I'm at home for the sake of my kids, and I'm comfortable.*

For Esin, the face of their marriage is maintained. For the sake of her children, she continues co-habiting with her husband, without any commitment to the responsibilities of a wife. Esin explicitly links an earlier decision to stay with her partner after a drunken incident to her social context when she says:

> *what am I going to say to society? They're going to say, this is the man who brought you here to NZ, gave you a good life, a house. You and your children are here because of him. Nobody would trust me.*

Sahaayta staff have helped Esin to make decisions about her safety that privilege her circumstances – working with what matters to her and her family to maintain their relationship with their community. Through her supportive relationship with Sahaayta staff, Esin is able to maintain her social position in the community by retaining the public face of her marriage while renegotiating her relationship with her husband in a way that protects her from his violence. Sahaayta work with Esin's husband too, and she tells us *he's left all the things that he used to do before, like drinking. It's been two years, he doesn't do any of those things*. And she recognises patterns of coercive control and physical violence. There are no longer any expectations that he has access to Esin as a wife since she does not engage in traditional wife work for him, like cooking for him and sharing the marital bed with him. For Esin, staying married, but ending the relationship of husband and wife, has made her feel safe and happy at home. Indeed, she says she has *allowed him to be at home* – an assertion of her independence in her (non)relationship with her husband. For Esin's family, maintaining the outward-face of the intact family is critically important within their small community in Aotearoa New Zealand. The shame of divorce, particularly for women is potent – the social 'failure' of wife and mother, the economic 'failure' of the family/extended family, and in some communities, the inability/ineligibility to get remarried are crucial social norms for the women and their families, in the present and in the future (see for example, Ali et al., 2021; Chiu, 2017; Inman & Rao, 2018). Sahaayta's support of Esin's decision to break off the husband/wife relationship, but retain the marriage outwardly enables Esin and her family to sustain safety by working with how the family can best move towards social and economic stability and freedom from violence.

Many women we spoke to are still engaged in their marital relationships with different kinds of commitments for the future of their partnerships and families. For some, the social and cultural importance of maintaining the marriage, as well as the continued personal desire for successful marriage, is critical for their safety, particularly if they have children. Most of the women we spoke to were especially concerned about financial issues (like paying rent/mortgages, the cost of transport etc), employment issues (their own, or their husband's/partner's/son's) and, for some, educational issues (their own and their children's). Staying in a relationship with their partners was a priority for some of the women, as the relationship breaking down could mean the women (and their children) could struggle even more financially. One woman, Fulli, told us that she has no money to pay the mortgage, and has been unable to access her husband's retirement savings. She works, as a housekeeper, but her husband is an alcoholic, and has become increasingly unwell, draining the family resources:

He went to counselling, he went to all the places that were suggested for counselling. He went to the church, got baptised. And I went back, but after all that, he couldn't stop drinking.

Fulli's employment does not give her financial independence, complicated through her relational commitments to her husband's illness and to her faith, increasing her precarity. Sahaayta's intervention helps her to stay safe working with their conditions, including providing assistance in negotiating complex financial issues produced for families through chronic unemployment, underemployment in low wage jobs, and alcohol abuse.

As a further example of how women still largely bear the burden for their safety, Esin and her family, including her husband, are on anti-depressant medications that make work, education and mundane, daily activities very difficult. Esin discussed with us an incident where she crashed her car, driving despite being on medication that precludes it. For Esin, the capacities for her family to work and study are constrained through medically-sanctioned drug use that contributes significantly to the precarity they experience in their everyday lives – driving is essential for the family to engage in activities that help to alleviate employment, education, financial and social entrapment, but is also an activity of greater risk for Esin than for other women we spoke to due to the side effects of her medication. When she drives, she risks her life (and the lives of others). When she does not drive, her family's situation becomes even more precarious. As Esin and Fulli's circumstances show, Sahaayta staff are working with the vastly different ways women and their families are negotiating the multiple inequities of daily life – helping women and their families to negotiate safety, preserve stability and sustain security in complex contexts. Sahaayta's attention to the women's specific stories hears the conditions of their everyday lives, enabling the processes of relationship building that dignify women, moving them beyond the binaried categorisations privileged by Western institutions, like 'staying' or 'leaving' and opening space for multiple ways to become safer. Many of the women we spoke to told us of the ways in which they now challenge violence using the knowledge and confidence they have built through their relationships with Sahaayta staff. Such challenges include, for example, Avana gaining the confidence to make decisions about where she goes and what she does without asking for her husband's permission:

We want to go and watch a movie, any good movie, then we go. Before that, we have to ask the husband; if he gives us the permission then we go. Now I can make my own decisions.

With Sahaayta's support, Avana's newfound autonomy, her independence from her husband's role as the authority in her home, challenges the social norms that entrap her in obedience to her

partner. From within an entrapment framework, we understand Sahaayta's praxis as caring for the women's particular situations, their family circumstances and the ways in which the women's social relationships entrap them in unsafe and precarious conditions. Fulli and Esin have renegotiated their marriages to ensure the safety of their families' social positions. Tiaho and her partner are engaging with counselling that enables him to be held accountable for his violence towards her. His authority to 'discipline' his partner is challenged by the arrangements that Sahaayta make to ensure that Tiaho is able to bear witness to her partner's change process, for the sake of her ongoing safety decisions. Understanding the social norms and social relationships that entrap clients within unsafe and insecure intimate relationships, requires Sahaayta staff to spend time listening, building trusting relationships based on dignifying the values, whether of faith or ethnic communities, and supporting transformations through processes of ongoing negotiation of social and personal expectations for women and their families

Listening and responding respectfully

Sahaayta's flexibility and understanding of the coercive contexts in which women clients are embedded, finds support in the research literature. Women need violence intervention services to be flexible to their individual circumstances, particularly in terms of cultural needs (Kiamanesh & Hauge, 2019). It has been identified that providing culturally sensitive services helps immigrant women to share their experiences of violence and find support (Kapur et al., 2017b). There can be fears that with small immigrant communities, women using domestic violence services that include members of their culture might know directly or indirectly people who work for the service, or might try to encourage the women to not violate any cultural expectations and pressure women to stay with their abusive partners (Kapur et al., 2017b). Trust in the intervention services was key for some women, given the emotional complexity, including shame of talking about the violence they were experiencing from someone they love or remembered loving. Fear of judgement, particularly after experience stigma or shame when talking about the violence with family, friends and religious organisations, was an important opening for women as they engaged with Sahaayta. Chatura needed someone to trust:

> *to express my feelings to know what is right or not, and they were really helpful at that time, because sometimes it's hard to get to, because I did love him; so it was too hard. I think emotionally it was just too hard to tell it, and for this to share it was really hard.*

Chatura's struggle with disclosing the circumstances of her injuries is entwined with her emotional connection, her love, for her husband. She recognises:

at that time we get emotional, we need some strength, because they were really helpful that time. They're a real help.

For Ilihia, the experience of her mother's support to stay with her when she temporarily left her partner was limited because she felt she could not safely disclose all that happened between her and her partner:

even if I tell my mother I did not tell her everything because she would say, "Well, 50 percent is your problem; 50 percent is his problem." She tries not to be all on my side.

Ilihia is inhibited by knowing her mother's own understanding would blame her for her victimisation. When Sahaayta calls her, she is grateful:

I thank God that she called, because I was telling everything was pouring out and it made the burden I was carrying just a bit lighter. I felt that she was not judgemental, that everything that I say to her she would respond in a way that I would understand a reality - in a reality, not a fairy tale kind of way.

That Ilihia could pour out her story without fear of judgement, was significant for her comfort in disclosing *everything*. She explains Sahaayta's response as understanding her reality so the conditions through which she was experiencing violence were heard and responded to without blame. She appreciates the depth of Sahaayta's experience when facing the *impossible* burdens of responsibility for her own safety and security:

it's always good to talk to someone who is down-to-earth I would say, that had known what others had gone through before me, and tried to put that reality in what is so impossible, at that time to me.

Women spoke to Sahaayta staff because they trusted them, and their trust was premised on the respectful and knowledgeable responses Sahaayta provided them – and the consistent sense that they cared. Fulli powerfully calls on the image of a mother as she explains the significance of Sahaayta's care for her:

he would chase us out of the house. He would tell me and my daughter to get out of the house. And when we would go out of the house, he would stand upstairs and look and be happy about it. And this wasn't right, so I used to call the police. And so I came here and I got a lot of support from [name of staff]*, who was like a mother to me, who supported me, who cared for me.*

The comparison of Sahaayta's care with a mother's, draws on dominant social expectations of mothers as unconditionally caring affirming that staff were both attentive and responsive to Fulli. Aroha spoke as a mother herself about the care Sahaayta provided for her son after she called the police. Aroha didn't feel that she needed the support of Sahaayta herself, so much, but:

> *I don't know about a partner situation but for the mother of a son, even though it's an adult son, you sort of think, "Oh yeah they're right." They cared; they really cared. You don't always get to hear that though because a lot of counsellors ...I've heard from people I've spoken to is some of them don't care; or they really are not good for you. I suppose it depends. I think they spoke to me on the phone a couple of times. They're caring people; it's obvious that they care.*

Aroha makes a comparison between the care her son received from Sahaayta and the reputation of other counsellors who *don't care*. In whichever ways Aroha understands that counsellors are sometimes *not good for you*, we recognise that caring is linked with Aroha's sense of the changes she has seen in her son, although she spares some scepticism for the 'sob story' she knows that Sahaayta has heard:

> *So you go from this good and bad environment - well, it's a good environment at home but a bad situation - to a relaxed situation at the place in Ōtāhuhu where they had people, where he could just be free and relaxed; and he had people listening to his sad sob story. He fell back into the situation where it was just all negative again. But there have been some good things that have come out of it. He's not drinking; he's trying not to drink. He's stopped drinking… He's getting some skills now and he's working where I'm working.*

While Aroha remains unconvinced of the benefits of Sahaayta's *listening*, she trusts that the staff who have heard him provide the support for the benefits she confidently sees in her son, now. Zhi is quite explicit that Sahaayta staff listen to her, linking their helpfulness to their understanding. She said:

> *I think it was really helpful because I have never experienced that before, for them to listen. Extremely helpful for someone to understand and really understand. So it was helpful.*

Zhi experiences care too through the relational understandings achieved in the process of being heard that then enable the practical benefits that unfold:

They could understand or relate to what I was going through, but more so understanding the Protection Order. I didn't know what Work and Income does. I know what CYFS does. I now know how to contact them, what they do, and stuff like that. They were really helpful with that… She has just been able to listen. She understands where I am because she understands even the legal, she will say, "you should see this person" or "you should think about this" and she knows my situation. She knows I've got three kids. So she'll say, "maybe if you think about this." It's not just the emotional support, it's a practical thing. I really appreciate that.

Trusting Sahaayta staff becomes possible for the women through a praxis of care in which listening and responding respectfully, with advice and support and practical assistance, guides them to building social relationships and navigating institutional systems that complicate their safety and security. Trust was also built through the women feeling confident that their information would be kept confidential. Women were concerned about information being shared with their partners, but Sahaayta's processes eased those tensions for the women.

Confidentiality

The women we spoke to were clear in the significance they gave to how Sahaayta staff build relationships that prioritise confidentiality – the women were deeply concerned that their involvement with Sahaayta remain completely confidential. The assurance of confidentiality helped to produce conversations with Sahaayta staff as safe spaces for women to talk about their lives and experiences of violence, possibly for the first time. Greetha said:

I always managed to contain my emotions, and no-one would ever know what is going on. I think part of is also the culture, but part of it is also me. I feel very safe talking to people in Sahaayta because I knew that things were confidential. I just knew that they understand because they are dealing with such circumstances all the time.

Greetha no longer needs to contain her emotions in her interactions with Sahaayta. Like Ilihia who poured out her story and felt lighter, Greetha is able to speak how she feels in the safety of Sahaayta's confidentiality. Confidentiality was particularly critical for some women because the Sahaayta staff were also talking to their partners, which raised concerns about how information might be shared with him in ways that might jeopardise their safety or their relationship. Ilihia was initially reluctant to talk with Sahaayta, but staff's reassurance of the confidentiality of the service, and the continual demonstration of that confidentiality through ongoing relationships, has helped:

The second time she called and she'd kind of like go through the process and give me a confirmation of about whatever I say will stay confidential, and that she will not tell my husband. Now because I know she had spoken to with my husband, that was the reason why I was reluctant to talk to her. Somewhere down the line I felt in the way she talked to me and helped me through the process, it gave me some, like, assurance, everything would be alright whatever I say to her. And it turned out really good. At that time when I finally gave a 'yes' to talk to her, it felt like I had offloaded a lot.

Through prioritising confidentiality, Sahaayta staff and the women and families they work with can engage in trustful discussions of their experiences, needs and desires. Fear of judgement individually, interpersonally and from the wider community appeared to be a major barrier to accessing help. As trust was built through Sahaayta staff's commitment to working with the women's specific circumstances, the women began to form relationships. Staff were listening to the women's needs and wants, not judging or criticising their social contexts, while also prioritising ongoing, negotiated privacy. The Sahaayta staff's commitments to privacy contributes to women becoming safer by keeping a confidential line of communication open for the women to use whenever they may need, and particularly as they may continue to experience violence.

Help that focuses on the specific contexts of the women and their families seems critical for helping women to gain (and regain) confidence, particularly when navigating complex institutions that can require a high level of understanding of complex processes, as well as a high level of access to resources such as phones and computers or printers, and time. Such navigations can be of particular stress to migrant or refugee women who might be struggling with understanding institutional systems within their new country, sometimes exacerbated by life-long restrictions to their education. The women we spoke to often mentioned the help Sahaayta staff in dealing with other agencies (like WINZ) for clarifying issues and moving their cases forward, particularly when the complexities are overwhelming and family and individual circumstances shift through violence, or issues such as changes in employment or housing. An ethics of care that flowed through their interactions with clients, and attention to the women's needs and aspirations guided respectful, non-judgemental listening and specifically designed practical assistance to support the women's journey's to becoming safer and more secure.

Analysis: Changing understandings of domestic violence

In our earlier discussion of women's aspirations to become good wives and lead good lives with their families and in their communities, we understood that many of the participants were shocked at their partner's violence. Their expectations of marriage included gendered responsibilities for the care and provision of the household. They were not expecting violence. Many did not recognise coercive control and had not recognised patterns in their partner's relationship with them until they were victimised physically. Sahaayta helped them understand how their experiences of physical and sexual violence were embedded in other patterns that prohibited the women's independence, their freedom of movement and access to familial and social relationships.

Recognising patterns

Assessing outcomes of advocacy or intervention can be difficult to do, as the breadth and variety of outcomes is complex to quantify, or even explore qualitatively (Rivas et al., 2016), particularly in the context of vast cultural differences and different goals or desired outcomes for families. Interventions have helped the women we spoke to emotionally and practically navigate their experiences of violence with support. For Aroha, the intervention that Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta provides was seen as a way to pull violence to the surface and address it before more serious legal interventions:

> *Though it's good in a way because it brings everything to a head; so you either take one direction, the other from there. Or the next step is jail. So, you've gotta really seriously think about it.*

Referring her son to Gandhi Nivas enabled a space for change before the spectre of prison is raised as a judicial response to his violence. It opens a pathway not otherwise available for mothers concerned for their sons' futures as well as their own safety from what Aroha described as *an outburst:*

> *quite aggressive: blamed me for everything, I just let him go for it. As long as he doesn't destroy the house or attack me, or anything - not that he ever has - but it's been close.*

Aroha draws the line with her son's aggression that she knows comes *close* to her understanding of violence as material damage to property or an attack on her person. Prior to engaging with Sahaayta, the women usually understood domestic violence stereotypically as physical violence. We recall Zhi's surprise at her partner's physical violence the context of a relationship where she understood her partner was not *a violent person and she didn't think twice about noticing he was obsessed and*

jealous. Zhi hadn't recognised her partner's jealousy and obsession within a pattern of controlling coercion that inhibited her freedom, and which escalated after their marriage. She tells us that she did not know a *control* tactic, responding to her partner as if all her experiences of victimisation aside from physical violence were normalised; she *didn't even think it was not normal.*

In Greetha's situation, there was a time she could recall when she and her partner had ordinary *ups and downs* in their relationship, but after his mother died:

> *my husband took to alcohol big time and it was really bad. I just didn't want him around; he was ugly to be with. He would snap at anything; his temperament was so* variable - *I'm his best friend one minute and then I'm a leper the next minute. So, I didn't know. If I wished him good morning he would say, "What's so fuckin' good about the morning?" So, I didn't know how to talk to him, how much to say, when to say, what to say. And then of course things went pretty sour and the police were called.*

We notice how the unpredictability of responses Greetha receives from her partner, the variability of his affection and abuse, silence Greetha in the context of their relationship. For Greetha her partner's referral offered a pathway to change:

> *this PSO came through and I must say that the lady outside who brought us in was very good. She has a lot of serenity in her; her talking and the way she explains things, she was able to get my husband's ears. That was very important, and she kind of earned his respect. That was again very important. She did not only speak with him, but she went out of her way to talk to me, to listen to me, because at the time I was so shattered.*

Sahaayta heard Greetha's voice that had been silenced by her partner's coercive control. The serenity that Greetha feels in the company of Sahaayta staff reassures her and she witnesses the respect her husband shows towards those who are hearing and caring for her. Sahaayta support Greetha to rebuild from a shattering experience of victimisation that has been ongoing for about 10 years.

Elei is far more recently married, but alcohol plays a part in her experience of her partner's violence too:

> *He'll always be like, "Oh, I don't like it how you tell me not to drink." I was like, "I don't like it how you tell me I can't wear lipstick, but I don't go complaining about that." Obviously at work, you've got to look nice, you have to look nice. He'll be*

like, "Why do you wear lipstick?" I'll be like, "Why do you drink?" He'll be like, "Na, that's not important; why do you wear lipstick?" I was like, "What?" That's how much we butt heads.

In Elei's account, when she challenges her partner's drinking, he attempts to assert his authority to make decisions, including demands that she stop wearing lipstick. Here there is a tension, a butting of heads, and as she resists his authority police intervention becomes necessary.

Elei's partner had returned to Gandhi Nivas again in the week that she spoke with us. Counselling hasn't been helpful from her perspective because her partner is putting pressure on her to change. Elei is beginning the process of recognising the ways in which she resists her partner's coercive control, acknowledging the difference between how she feels when she's with him, and on her own:

I don't feel myself right now. I don't feel like I'm myself; I have to be someone else that I'm not. I always say hi to people, and now I don't. When I'm not with him, I'll be myself, but when I'm with him, he's always like, "Are you looking at that guy?"

Elie recognises that her partner is using counselling to pressure her to accept his drinking. She is beginning to recognise the patterns of coercive control, of jealousy and obsession with monitoring her movements and expressions, her make-up and conversations. She is recognising how his control is affecting sense of herself, and her social isolation when she is with him.

Participation in counselling has often helped the women to understand the violence they had experienced in the context of gendered power relations, where men's emotional lives have traditionally been prioritised over women's. When a woman "does not perceive a situation as abusive, she is less likely to seek help for the abuse or to encourage a victim of abuse to seek help" (Ahmad et al., 2004, p. 264). Advocates in Kapur and Zajicek's (2018) study suggested that the spectrum of abuse that the women were experiencing had been normalised as part of their role as wife, particularly if they were not well educated, so that information readily available to others was more easily withheld from them. In our study, many women commented on circumstances they now understood and challenged as abusive with the help of Sahaayta's intervention. Women in our study came to understand the normalisation of violence against women through their traditional social, culturally informed hierarchies, suggesting shifts in their understanding of violence against women post-intervention in their local context.

Resilient resistance

Through intervention, women can come to understand how violence is shaped through power, rather than blaming themselves for their victimisation: "The resilience and strength of the participants were

also demonstrated in the ways that many of the women were able to identify that they had not done anything to deserve the abuse and ascribed the blame to their abusive partners" (Ahmad-Stout et al., 2021, p. NP1955). Some of the women we spoke to came to understand this and thus have begun to challenge such power. When Chatura told us how she came to love herself, after previously only focusing on *what happened to him*, we heard that with Sahaayta's support, she was building resilience in the face of social expectations that she should *only think about him.* Instead, she is making plans for herself, with Sahaayta's guidance.

Ilihia initially resisted contact with Sahaayta and she began the process of engaging with their services, sceptical of marriage counselling:

> *He had also put that in his affidavit to court in the court application, that he wants us to go through marriage counselling. To me, personally, I felt that way but now I don't. Before I felt that what's the point of going through marriage counselling if, deep inside your heart, you do not want to give up the things that causes the other person to confront; or to point out the one thing that you're doing that irritates the other person.*

Through engaging with Sahaayta, and pouring out her story, the trust that she built with the staff enabled her to change her approach to marriage counselling:

> *But now, I think marriage counselling is not just about us going through and telling our story, but it's also for that person - and hopefully it's an older person with a lot of wisdom - that would, even me saying out my side of the story and he would stand back and say, "Hang on a minute, there's something wrong with you as well," and he would point it out, because I cannot see what I'm wrong at. For us to get back together and not fall back on square one; and that square one is, I would say, is marijuana, texting, lying, cheating - me, physical assault, like, I'm throwing in punches, be easily irritated, in this square one. I do not want us to go back there and point the finger, "You are the one who's doing what..."*

Recalling that Ilihia did not disclose everything to her mother because of the possibility that she would be blamed for her victimisation, her willingness to hear the mistakes that she may be making, in the safe context of culturally sensitive, confidential counselling builds her resistance to blame, so that she can learn and change. For Ilihia, Sahaayta's counselling begins a process of change between her partner and her in which they do not blame each other as conflict between them escalates so much so that:

if things arise again, like, disagreements between me and my husband, he will try to call his counsellor and I would call my counsellor, just to try to resolve any disagreements. It's always a help to ring someone.

Through confidence in Sahaayta's ongoing support, Ilihia is able to live more safely with her partner, and their negotiated reconciliation preserves their status within their families and faith community.

In Tiaho's narrative, motherhood changes her so that she wants a safe, secure future with her partner:

In order for me to move forward, what I want in the future is to be married. I know we can only be stable if we trust and love each other. If there was no love, we couldn't have baby. So whatever problems I have in my situation now, I hold it all in, until I can't handle it, where I turn to 111, the police because I don't want my family to get involved.

Police intervention and ongoing support for Sahaayta enable Tiaho to protect her family within the context of social relationships where domestic violence remains a private burden for women to bear. She has also found ways to resist her partner's abuse by recognising the value of her role as their daughter's mother:

Baby means the world to him. She's daddy's girl. Every incident that's occurred, he's missed baby so much. He says it's made him realise, but he should think, I'm the mother of his child, so if baby means the world to him, he can also think about me, because I think about him. At the end of the day I just want to be safe, and he should be thinking, 'okay, I shouldn't be saying those words to the mother of my child.' That's the only reason I do what I do, is to be safe, otherwise we can sort it out; we're both grown people.

By connecting with her shared love of her daughter, Tiaho holds her partner accountable for the abuse he subjects her to in their process of counselling, prioritising her goal of safety for the sake of the family that she, her partner and daughter are embedded within.

For Chatura, Ilihia and Tiaho, Sahaayta's counselling services built their resilience and resistance to violence and abuse within the specific circumstances of the women's social and familial expectations. While Ilihia and Tiaho reconciled with their partners, Chatura separated with her family's consent. Their journeys to safety respond to their everyday conditions and with Sahaayta's support they build resilient resistances that enable changes within the process of becoming safer and more secure.

Challenging normative coercion

Ahmad et al. (2004) found that South Asian immigrant women "who agreed with patriarchal social norms were less likely to see spousal abuse as abuse" (p. 275) and therefore are "at greater risk for continued abuse" (p. 275) and might not seek help as the violence is normalised culturally, socially (within families and across friends) and, in some instances, legally. As we have heard from the participants, women can be deeply embedded within social and familial cultural contexts that legitimise violence against women, producing such violence as a normal part of marriages where women are subjugated: "Denial by some friends, family and services reinforced the perpetrators' tactics of telling the participant her experiences were not so bad, or that she deserved it" (Bostock et al., 2009, p. 101). Sahaayta's intervention is key here as it has helped the women identify abuse and challenge it in everyday contexts, not just the more explicitly violent events. While the women in our study had already reached out for or at least accepted offered help for coping with their circumstances, they have talked at length about Sahaayta and Gandhi Nivas helping to identify abuse, challenging it and preventing it the future within their relationships. Some women described precise instances where they and/or their partners began to fight but reached out to Sahaayta and/or Gandhi Nivas in order to prevent an escalation of the fight. Greetha's partner has drawn the attention of police for his violence against her on *several* occasions, and the relationship with Sahaayta and Gandhi Nivas provided an opportunity to learn about safety:

> *So I thought Sahaayta was the place where I felt safe, he felt safe and, I tell you, it is a blessing in disguise - the guys are great, very, very passionate about what they do.*

For Greetha, the respite that Gandhi Nivas offers provides her with space in times of tension, when the normalisation of her social relationships involves settings where domestic violence is regarded as a private matter and calling on friends for support risks social sanction. He has referred himself to Gandhi Nivas *several times,* providing respite for her and support for him at the home. Sahaayta's passion for engaging clients with opportunities for change enables both Greetha and her partner to seek support. The respite of Sahaayta's safe support enables Greetha to resist the normalisation of coping alone with domestic violence in her community. In Greetha's experience, the safety Sahaayta provided for her was also experienced by her husband, with the initial crisis of police intervention becoming a pathway for them to both access the *blessing* of Sahaayta's open door for help.

However, some women we spoke to suggested that their experiences of the interventions were fundamentally different from the men's experiences, with men more tentatively experimenting with

implementing changes, and women more ardently implementing processes, and valuing the care and assistance that Sahaayta provides. Of their marriage counselling, Tiaho said:

> *I think the more we come here, the more I would see the changes in him. Right now, it's only a trial for him. Not so much for me, because I'm the one that needs comfort and help at the end of the day.*

Tiaho bears witness to her partner's engagement as a kind of *trial*; not so much an ordeal or a judgement of his violence against her as a test of the changes he is prepared to make to ensure the safety and security of his family. Tiaho distinguishes her position from his because of her need for his violence to stop, and to feel the *comfort* of Sahaayta's care in the wake of her victimisation.

For Jumari, her partner's residence at Gandhi Nivas is *little bit working*, while she has gone on to further counselling where she feels *proud* because she is valued for her *independence and understanding* of domestic violence. While she is journeying towards safety, and committed to her marriage, she also appreciates Sahaayta's persistence in contacting her partner and continuing to provide him with opportunities:

> *He stayed there* [Gandhi Nivas] *one week, one week I think. It did. It did help. It did help because he stayed with other people, but the counselling also helping him. One good thing is really like* [name of staff] *rang up and she want him to be, because those kinds of people, they start running away from the situation. I said to him, "Look, I'm not breaking the marriage or anything. I'm not having an affair in India or anything like that. I wanna try to do something good for other people. So I'm here. So if we want people to love, we have to learn how to love." So I said, "do you wanna get that?" I can't be his teacher. He won't learn from me. But they just keep knocking on his door, it's little bit working.*

Jumari trusts Sahaayta to support her husband, who will not *learn how to love* from her and *isn't doing counselling there*:

> *He's supposed to. I think he should, at least once a month, he needs to work with that.*

Jumari's distinction of her own path from her husband's rests on their individual engagements with counselling and with Sahaayta. For both Tiaho and Jumari, the care and opportunities Sahaayta provide them enable them to recognise abuse and resist the normalisation of violence that sustains their victimisation when their partners' are less committed to change.

Within social relationships, victimisation often brings shame and blame for the violence where women's subordination to men's authority is a social norm. Even in the context of shelters established as refuges for women's safety, being identified as a 'victim' brings with it the discomfort of knowing how the social status of 'victim' might shape shelter workers' views of the women they encounter (Guha, 2019). Listening to and understanding the women's stories, contexts and desires becomes important for understanding how to help women and their families and create change. We recall how Chatura did not want to be a victim, and coming into Sahaayta remains a struggle for her:

> *Yeah, they asked me to come, but it feels like when I come; I feel like I'm a victim, and I've got not the same situation. It's like put me down again. I don't want to do it, because at that time they was strength for me. They were really strength for me, what really happened for me.*

She has experienced Sahaayta as a strength for her and simultaneously coming into the offices to see staff re-creates her sense of carrying a burden of victimhood. Making sense of the notion of victim, while understanding the strength of the support offered at the time of her involvement with services is difficult for Chatura, and yet she continues to engage with Sahaayta to understand the complexities of her migration and her safety. Since Sahaayta *follow up* with Chatura, her engagement becomes:

> *like team work. Even my parents didn't get what happened to me, even my father. So I have no one here to make sense of my things* [experiences]. *They* [Sahaayta] *were the only ones who were with me and continue to offer me any help.*

The trust that Sahaayta builds with Chatura through their careful collaboration with her, builds her the confidence to follow through on her plans and she is about to begin studying when she speaks with us. Participants in Ahmad-Stout et al.'s (2021) study reported feeling low in confidence while being abused. Anika spoke specifically of re-gaining confidence through Sahaayta's services:

> *If I'm gonna survive in this thing then I will be more strong. I told him, we have to do it; I'm getting bored. Why I'm here I'm getting advice, I'm getting more confidence and it push me. I'm back to my study again. That's why I'm not coming here again, you know, for counselling.*

Anika reconciles with her husband and tells us she is glad that he is again the man she married:

> *He's alright now, he's better, I got him back. I am very happy I got my old husband back; that is nice. It happened just because of these people.*

Esin also spoke explicitly of the confidence she gained from engaging with Sahaayta. Esin still lives in the same home as her husband, but with Sahaayta's help and support she has negotiated to no longer play her role as his wife. She does not even cook for him:

> *because of my kids I have allowed him to be at home. So, I'm here, I'm at home for the sake of my kids, and I'm comfortable. And* [name of staff] *sister has given me a lot of confidence. She tells me not to hide anything and that I can tell her anything, if anything happens, that there's no need to hide it from her. She came home and had a meeting with me and told me that I can tell her anything without hiding anything.*

Such confidence gained is critical for women to begin to challenge the violence they experience within contexts where coercive control is unrecognised, and stereotypes of violence and victims serve to entrap women in social relationships where they bear the burden of protecting themselves alone. Whether in the context of reconciliation for the sake of their families or occasionally their earlier, happier relationships, or in the context of separation or abandonment, challenging violence involves caring support while navigating normative coercion and providing practical pathways to safer more secure homes.

As we hear the women tell us of their changing understandings of violence, their resilient resistances and the challenges they navigate in their specific social and family relationships, we notice how Sahaayta's ethics of care moves with the women's journeys of change. Sahaayta staff follow up, they call and visit homes, they counsel, advise and support safety planning. They listen respectfully and with acute sensitivity to the constraints of the women's safety in both their families and their faith and ethnic communities. We notice how Sahaayta's expertise in Southeast Asian diasporic languages, cultures, faiths and social norms travels through the serenity, compassion and companionship they offer to women, their partners and sons. Care flows through their communities as Sahaayta visibly advocate for women and children's safety and support the women whose partners and sons have been referred to Gandhi Nivas when police have issued a PSO for their protection.

Analysis: Reconstituting Dignity in a New Place

The women who participated in our study had all engaged with Sahaayta's services and volunteered for the research to tell us their stories of how Sahaayta changed their lives. Each of the women needed protection from men who were violent in the homes: sons and young men in early relationships, husbands and partners who had committed to the responsibilities of men within the social norms of their communities. Sahaayta's contact with the women begins when police intervene in the family, which violates social norms of silence about victimisation at home. Many of the women we spoke to were embedded within social relationships where police attention for family violence brings shameful social sanctions. Some women were isolated, and others did not tell friends of previous violence they experienced. As the women engaged with Sahaayta, their need for protection is neither stigmatised nor silenced. Rather than minimising the women's experiences, Sahaayta staff listen and talk with the women about patterns of harm and coercive control. They make safety plans that take account of the women's needs to preserve their social standing, as well as their needs for immediate protection. They make sense of safety and wellbeing within each women's specific situations and circumstances, supporting material needs and the women's aspirations for financial security alongside responding with caring respect to their dreams and their challenges. Sahaayta's ethics of care, and the trust they build with the women who spoke to us, travel with the women as they become more confident, safer and more secure.

In his writing on coercive control, Stark (2009) conceives of the pattern of men's abuse as a 'liberty crime' because it violates rights to autonomy and dignity. He argues that it is critically important to understand that responding to coercive control involves an affirmative concept of freedom: it involves not only an ending to physical and sexual threats and harms, but also the restoration of dignity and the right to make independent decisions. Building on the confidence of being heard when they engage with Sahaayta staff, the women in the current study begin taking action to rebuild their lives and Sahaayta support the restoration of their dignity and the realisation of their plans in diverse ways.

Being heard

At the start, the women come to Sahaayta in a time of crisis, where their victimisation has become visible, often shockingly. We recall that the women dreamt of successful families, and many hoped for a better life on their migration. They did not anticipate violence. Whether or not police had previously been involved, the women's contact with Sahaayta began through their experience of a humiliating crisis in their home: an experience Greetha described as shattering. Chatura said she *was in zero point* at the time.

In crisis, and with the intervention of police and other institutions to navigate, having one person knowing their story well was a relief. Zhi told us:

> *It's nice to have someone to hear my story and someone who knows my story. I think she has been really good. She has just been able to listen. She understands where I am because she understands even the legal, she will say, "you should see this person" or "you should think about this" and she knows my situation. She knows I've got three kids. So she'll say "maybe if you think about this" It's not just the emotional support, it's a practical thing. I really appreciate that.*

The one person who works with Zhi understands her because she listens to the conditions of her everyday life. She refers, she advises, offering practical and emotional support as Zhi needs to make her way through legal processes and encounters with child services. Not having to repeat their stories to multiple people was important for the women, particularly in the context of their experiences of violence, their at-times distressing family contexts and the need for confidentiality to protect their social standing. We recall Esin referring to the staff member who worked with her as *sister*, and Fulli saying her advocate *was like a mother.* Trusting relationships become possible and close support is available, through responses to the women that are caring and dignify their status as women, wives and mothers.

The women we spoke to also highly valued the accessibility of Sahaayta staff, where they knew that Sahaayta staff would be available to talk on the phone if any problems arose within their violent relationship, their family or with other parties like lawyers. Having one person to hold their stories helps women to negotiate those complex institutional interventions that throw their lives into chaos, and helps to develop the care relationships with Sahaayta staff that enable transformational change for women as they maintain safety through those developing support structures with Sahaayta and their wider community.

With safety as a focus, at home and in the community, the women begin learning how their legal protections work, with their Sahaayta staff. Alongside supporting the women as they navigate systems responses to their victimisation, like Zhi's experience with child protection, Sahaayta staff inform the women of their rights under Protection Orders and how to use them for their safety. Usha had experienced violence and police intervention involving both her husband and her son:

> M*y son took out the knife and said, "I'll kill you." With my husband,* when I called the police, *they just took him away. He was away for four days and then there was*

a little bit of a hearing in the court, and then he was back home. But with my son there was a protection order.

Since her son was referred to Gandhi Nivas, Usha connected with Sahaayta and after engaging with the support she was offered, practical help and advice means she moves from a crisis in which she needs protection, to the confidence she is supported to meet her family's needs:

And someone from Sahaayta, [name of staff] *from Sahaayta called me the next day. They helped me in a lot of ways. Like they helped me, and my son look for a job, and yeah. So yeah, and I was studying before and now I'm looking for a job. So I'm hoping that I can find a job, and they can help me find a job now*

The women spoke of their time with Sahaayta staff in ways that suggested new experiences of dignity along with their growing confidence, whether they were moving forward within their relationships or out of their relationships. Many of the women spoke of what they had learnt from Sahaayta staff. We remember Fulli comparing her previous life to a prison from which she's released:

I got out of a prison and I learned to live here. [name of staff] *helped me a lot, the path that she showed me, I don't think I would have reached here without her help.*

Fulli's metaphor of imprisonment is powerful when speaking to the coercive control, social and institutional entrapments she's experiencing. Where she is living at the time of the interview is no longer in the humiliating place of a prisoner. Her new life is lived with dignity. Usha too speaks of a new life, and not *dwelling in the past*:

I know that I can contact them any time. I have [name of staff]*'s number and I know that I can call her. They helped me a lot, they talked to me. They talked to my son as well, and they told him about his anger and how to manage it. So, they helped a lot. He doesn't talk about what happened and I don't ask him, because there is no point in dwelling in the past.*

We notice how Usha emphasises staff availability and connects her sense of moving on without needing to talk with her son to the confidence she has in the help Sahaayta have provided them both. Usha's optimism as she turns her attention towards employment and financial security is sheltered in the connections she has built with Sahaayta for her protection and safety.

Becoming independent

As the women's understandings of violence changed, and their practical needs were met, their goals and aspirations became the focus of Sahaayta's advocacy, advice and support. Becoming independent was critically important in the women's journeys to safer and more secure homes. As we traced the women's stories of becoming independent, we noticed movements towards freedoms that had previously been controlled within coercive intimate and social relationships.

While some of the women came from backgrounds where education and employment were highly constrained, others were well educated and able to support themselves financially. Chatura tells us she was *independent* in Sri Lanka, before she married and came to New Zealand. At her *zero point:*

> *At that moment I thought, 'I must live independent like before.' So, I start everything, and I managed to find a place. Even with the hand I… it was so painful when I had the meetings everywhere, and with Work and Income. I arranged everything, and find a place. They were helpful that time too, and then I managed to do everything.*

Everything needed for Chatura's independence, including accommodation and income support, she manages to achieve with Sahaayta's help. Chatura's independence enables her to gain some confidence navigating new freedoms as she moves forward with her life.

Anika tells us her mother was not independent and valued her daughter's education for the independence it provides her. She is rebuilding her relationship with her partner when we speak with her, forming a new relationship with him that doesn't mean she needs to leave him to become independent and safe:

> *They told us, you can say when you got a new relationship, that doesn't mean you're going to leave the older ones, you can learn to put them together; and this is how the family works… If I think now, I will be alright, I will be more independent. I will be more financially strong and my baby will be growing up, and then I feel, I can leave my family or husband now; if he gonna leave me, I don't care, no, no. It's not like this. Leaving the things on one side if you're not using them, that is not like, "Oh you, I don't use this thing; oh, throw it away."*

For Anika confidence in her independence, should her partner leave her, underscores her decision to engage marriage counselling for the sake of making her family work. Anika's values and aspirations for the success of her family mean marriage is not disposable. Change becomes necessary because

she doesn't want to continue the former relationship characterised by her partner's violence towards her. Sahaayta are responsive in supporting her with counselling:

> *If we* get *angry, or the one person is like quiet, then we sit and talk. We're not repeating the same things. No, no, we don't repeat, whatever happens. They teach us…. We're trying, we're both trying, to make our relationship work. I will still keep in contact with them* [Sahaayta] *because I know somebody is there for me; I'm not alone.*

As she takes up the challenges of maintaining her family life in the aftermath of crisis and police intervention, Sahaayta's accessible support ensures that Anika is socially safe from isolation. Confident of becoming independent, Sahaayta's support gives Anika the opportunity to fulfil her aspiration for a safe and secure family.

Avana also learns of independence within her relationship, from a different starting place where her dependence on her partner was a social norm for them both. Avana was socially expected to show her husband obedience:

> *I* also *learnt we have* an *independent life, not just listen*ing *to what the husband says.* Before *it's like, if my husband says anything, we just better keep quiet; but now I open my mouth. If my husband says something, I just answer him back. He just keeps quiet because they said, "If you just want to live like a Kiwi." I said, "No life chains, we are not slaves." I feel better, I feel much better.*

Avana's husband has changed his drinking patterns now and is not drinking excessively, very often. She is able to speak up in their relationship in a way that was unimaginable to her before she learned that it was possible to be together and still be independent, to think and decide for yourself. With Sahaayta's support, Avana and her husband are learning new ways to communicate that enable her to respectfully speak for herself.

Freedom from violence, and opportunities to speak and be heard were among the forms of independence the women valued. Freedom of movement was also significant. Before coming to Sahaayta, Fulli had never driven a car, so her ability to move freely and independently was inhibited:

> *I had never driven in my life before, so* [name of staff] *said to me; be independent, so that you can do things for yourself. I had never worked and I had never driven. So she encouraged me a lot, a lot. I was really nervous when driving, even if I was not in the driver's seat. It's only because of* [name of staff] *that I'm halfway there*

in learning how to drive. I've got a lot of encouragement from her. This is only, only because of [name of staff].

By Fulli's account it is unlikely she would ever have learned to drive without Sahaayta staff encouragement. She is also working now and her freedom to move is less constrained. Fulli also has aspirations to maintain her relationship and her family while living free from violence:

I want that there should be no violence. I want that he shouldn't drink. I think of how much this man has done for me. He's fulfilled all my wants and needs, and he's paid the immigration and done all that… I got a lot of help, because of calling the police, and it's ok if it took a long time.

In the process of becoming independent, the women we spoke with came to understand that their voices mattered and Sahaayta could be trusted to support them realising their hopes and dreams. For the mothers whose sons had stayed at Gandhi Nivas, the young men's independence became significant in their aspirations. Aroha's son had moved back home, and she says *it's improving, slowly but surely; it's just not quick enough:*

I want him to be independent; that's all I want for him. To be able to take care of himself; that's really all I want. The love will never go away, you don't even have to say it.

Aroha knows that if her son does not take his growing adult responsibilities seriously, she may need to ask him to leave home. He's working now and she is hopeful, even though she realises *it's going to be worse for him* if the improvements she is seeing in his non-violence aren't sustained. Usha too aspires for her son to become a responsible man:

I just want that everything should just go well moving forward. What has happened, has happened, with my older one, but he's okay now, he's studying. And I just want him to finish his course and get a job. He can do what he wants.

Encouraging her son with his studies matters to Usha so that he is able to take up employment and then he can leave home if he wants to. Sahaayta have helped her son with *his anger and how to manage it* and we recall that she is confident now of Sahaayta's support should she need it.

In the process of transforming the conditions in which the women come to understand that coercive control and violence inhibit their freedoms, becoming independent in their decisions is critical to their pathways to safety and security. Being heard and becoming confident in the care and support of Sahaayta staff, enables the women to move into newly renegotiated social and familial

relationships. In the process of caring for *how* the women's social relationships entrap them in expectations of good and successful wives and mothers, Sahaayta value and support the women's understanding and learning of violence and control, so that they are able to make their own decisions about the transformations to which they aspire.

New places of reconstituted dignity

The ways in which the women journeyed through experiences of violence and intervention with Sahaayta were multiple, yet each was a pathway towards experiences of respect and worthiness that transformed the women's fears and their silences towards conditions in which happiness, comfort and even excitement become possible.

Ilihia told us that after the police intervention she stayed with her sister for a while before returning to her partner. She called Sahaayta for support when she decided to return:

> *I was cooled down and then I called her, that I'm cooled down; I'm ready to go back, so I went back. I said to her, "You have no idea how much of a burden I have offloaded to you." And she goes, "That's not a problem, that's why I'm here." I am here today now; I've been asked to come in. I'm feeling really good. If you had called me to come in and this, between me and my husband, was not solved, I don't think I would be sitting happily in front of you - I would be in tears.*

Ilihia herself is evidence of the changes she presents in her interview, talking with us happily about the burdens she has shared – in her words "*offloaded*"- with Sahaayta. Ilihia and her husband are engaging with counselling support that is ongoing for her safety. For Ilihia, Sahaayta's support for her return to her relationship enables her confidence that her decision to make changes together with her partner is a solution to the issue she's seeking to address: the violence in her relationship.

We recall how Esin renegotiated her relationship, so she no longer played the role of wife though she still lived with her partner. The changes she makes in her willingness to care for him become possible through Sahaayta's intervention:

> *I'm happy at home. My kids are with me. My kids were younger earlier and so I was a bit afraid. My kids know and my husband too, he's left all the things that he used to do before, like drinking. It's been two years, he doesn't do any of those things. He's at home, but I have no relationship with him.*

Happiness in their stories speaks of movement into new places where the women's burdens of victimisation are lifted, and new freedoms from entrapment and control become possible. For

Shirim's renewed relationship with her partner, transformations in the respect she is shown are underway:

> *It's really changed. We are not now angry with each other. We understand what he wants, what I want. Before, like one or two months, we were not living together, because he was working* in another suburb, *but now we are again, together. He had to leave for work at 2am in the morning to start work at 3am. Now, actually, we are spending quality time.*

Learning to understand each other through engaging with Sahaayta's support was one dimension of the ways that Sahaayta helped, because for Shirim, the conditions in which she and her partner were living seriously affected them. Sahaayta's practical support with her visa status was also vital:

> *they helped us a lot I can say, because we are on visas so we're not permanent residents. It's really very hard for us. If it is too much at that level, we can't live here, because you know the rules. They just asked that you can come at any time if you have a problem in the future to help us.*

Greetha speaks of the balance that Sahaayta bring to her renewed relationship with her partner. We recall that he returns to Gandhi Nivas sometimes when things go *sour* between them:

> *As for myself I just think it is very good to know that there is a place like this. There are times when my husband says, "I'm going to go to Sahaayta." I said, "Don't you go there, don't you trouble those people. Deal with your problems here, contain yourself." But it is good to know that there is a place and with a third person, being able to go back and forth and whisper a little bit into his ears, whisper a little bit into my ears, just balances the equation.*

She still maintains hope that they can work their problems out together, laughing that he is 'troubling' Sahaayta with *problems* that are his responsibility. She appreciates the support that Sahaayta provide them both. Earlier in her story, Greetha had not known *how to talk* to her husband*: how much to say, when to say, what to say.* Now she speaks up and she listens for advice Sahaayta whisper to her too. For Greetha, it is her daughter who uncovers the meaningfulness of changes she is making with her partner. Her daughter:

> *would always say, "Mummy, are we going to be okay? Will we be a happy family?" And 90 percent of the time, I said, "I will make it work and we will set it straight. I promise you." I must say, sometimes 10 percent, I would just cry and say, "I give*

up, I can't." But when she sees a steady progress maybe two percent every week, but it's getting there.

Tiaho's relationship with her daughter is also crucial to the hopes and dreams she holds for her family. We recall how motherhood changes her, and she comes to understand the significance, for her, of the roles of husband and wife that she aspires to for herself and her partner:

being man and wife is a role, and it's being a role model for this little girl's life. What we tend to do, is be ready to take that step, otherwise not be ready and just give up on each other. My goal before Christmas, is to already be married. To be a Christian woman, you need that, it's a value. I don't want to live in sin for the rest of my life, and if I'm going to take my daughter to church, she deserves parents that are both willing to have that desire, not just for pleasure, but for eternity.

Tiaho's spiritual values are integral to her dignity within her faith and her faith community. Restoring her dignity means committing to working with her partner towards a marriage in which they are their daughter's role models for a successful Christian Samoan family. With Sahaayta's support she has *stood* her *ground - he knows that he's on his last chance* - in resistance to her partner's violence. She understands that arguing over his drinking is unhelpful and she can be assertive differently:

So what I've learned so far is that I can take charge, but in a simple and understanding way that doesn't affect the both of us, whereas I've learned that I have to explain it more.

As Tiaho journeys towards her dream of a violence free family, her spiritual values are strengthened, her strengths in communication are nourished and her dignity is restored from the injury of her husband's drinking to her spiritual wellbeing, as well as the violence and control injuring her body and her freedom.

Jumari too, is asserting her capacity to take charge of her own life. She has a passion for educating girls in India:

My retirement, I gonna help educate the women and also in the village. I gonna get one education, like in the polytech. In 2*015 I start the programme and last year I met those little girls and I organise in the schools, I buy little chairs for them to sit down and start their education. Because I think those girls are so special. They are so special and I want them to be special, and why not?*

Although Jumari's partner did not like her activism in Indian girls' education and is he not participating in the counselling she believes he should be doing, she has persisted in being involved in improving educational opportunities for girls and wanting *women safe in India as well, they be as safe in New Zealand*. For Jumari, maintaining her relationship with Sahaayta is vital as she becomes more fully involved in advocacy herself:

> *I only talk to* [name of staff] *sometimes, but not anybody else. Yes, I talk to her on the phone. Sometimes I like to, I really like her company and I felt she is* a *very bold and intelligent woman. And she maybe gonna, one day she gonna do way more than me and happily, maybe help more people. I just wanna thank you and Sahaayta. I'm very happy with your services, why I just wanna connect with you guys because what I'm doing in India, I think I need little bit more knowledge.*

The journey that Jumari takes towards strengthening her knowledge and skills for advocacy on behalf of other women and girls brings her to a new place of dignity where her values are mobilised for others and her freedom to act and realise her aspirations is supported.

Zhi and her partner separate, though this is not an aspiration she carried with her when she engaged with Sahaayta. She tells us that she's *finally realised* it is necessary:

> *I'm actually really happy. I'm glad that he is out of the scene and I'm glad I made the choice to move on and there is a point in time I didn't want to do this for the sake of the children. I finally realised, because of the tension, I am willing to make those choices, and I haven't always been.*

Zhi's happiness, now, depends on her enacting a choice she was unwilling to make because of the social implications for her children. We recognise stigma attached to families where parents are no longer cohabiting – discrimination socially expressed within many communities. Zhi's home is the same place as the house she occupied with her husband, but it is now filled with new opportunities in her life as a mother on her own, yet not isolated from support:

> *I'm living a wonderful life with my kids. I'm still staying at the same place but at the same time I am thinking about the future of what I want. I am enjoying being a solo and I'm self-learning. I have this big concept of being a solo mum. I'm still learning as I go and it's not a new concept to me. What I want to say, I have friends, mum, who have been through it. I'm working full time: for me, choosing myself, is something new.*

Navjot too has found new opportunities after separating from her partner. As with Zhi, her journey to restoring her dignity does not involve renegotiating her relationship or her role as a wife. Navjot's partner shows no interest in pursuing his commitments, effectively abandoning her and her children:

> *When I met* [name of staff] *and my lawyer used to be with me, I had a feeling that I was supported, that someone was there behind me. Even when I used to send a letter to him and I would send a message through someone to, for him to look at the letter, he wouldn't, and he wouldn't respond. His ideas were different, he thought that these people were bad, they break homes. But I think I view them as someone who supported me, and because of them I could move on, move ahead in my life. And my kids are happy as well now. I'm happy too. So, these people have supported me. And last February, I got married in India.*

Seeing Sahaayta as home breakers, Navjot's partner breaks his own commitment by refusing to engage with the process of legal redress that Navjot was seeking. With her parents' consent and support she marries and since her first partner was not legally her husband, separating is more easily possible for her than for her friends:

> *I have one or two friends, and they were legally married. And they've said to me, "At least you didn't have to face the struggle that we did." You know, in order to break the relationship. I consider myself lucky that I didn't sign anything with him So that's good.*

Navjot's new husband is *friendly* with her children, and after sorting out some issues with his visa he is due to arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand the week after Navjot speaks with us:

> *The kids are more excited about him coming next week than me. That someone who's going to support them, is going to come. Someone who's going to be with them, spend time with them. My kids are aware of how the first man didn't behave like a father with them, no fatherly behaviour at all.*

Navjot's happiness and her children's excitement speak to the dignity that marriage and the opportunity of a successful family with her new husband provide for her. From bearing the burden of her first partner's drinking and violence for *eleven years*, with no-one in her Punjabi community prepared to help her - *they used to tell* her *to keep quiet* - Navjot is becoming a respectable wife and mother, whose strong support from Sahaayta and her family have made it possible for her to restore the dignity her first partner's violence and abandonment violated. After calling the police on one occasion, she came into contact with Sahaayta and found help:

> *my contact with people like Sahaayta or* [name of staff] *increased. People who are helping those who are actually suffering has value, which is what these people have done for me. Supporting someone, that's a big deal.*

We notice the significance that Navjot gives to the support that Sahaayta give her, and the value she ascribes to those who help others. We recall the *care* the women participants felt in the support they received. The ethical relationships of respectful, dignifying responses to the women's situations of violence in their homes and the circumstances of their social relationships carefully transform their conditions from isolation and dependence to independence and connectedness within the network of social relationships in their communities. With Sahaayta's support these women are journeying to new places of dignity where they are beginning processes of remaking their lives more safely and securely, with more comfort, happiness and even glimpses of excitement for their futures.

Conclusion

Sahaayta's care for the safety and security of families within their communities flows through their respectful, dignifying responses to clients. Care for their communities flows through their home visits, follow ups, open door policy, counselling and social services and a network of local contacts for referrals. Sahaayta work with women clients' in becoming independent and feeling supported to realise their own hopes and aspirations for their lives in Aotearoa New Zealand.

From our collaboration with women who have encountered and engaged with Sahaayta's services, we have learned how Sahaayta understand and attend to what we as family violence researchers conceptualised of as social entrapment and systemic entrapment. Sahaayta address that which socially entraps women in violence, like the embeddedness within family expectations of gendered performances of wife and mother, and the entitlements of men. Sahaayta also attend to the systemic, institutional entrapments that shape the space available for women to thrive, particularly in a new country, like engagements with employment, legal processes and the police. Women's lives are understood through the social interconnections and institutional relationships that shape them to produce both precarious contexts as well as strengths that can be activated to resist violence and move towards families thriving in safety. Sahaayta know and address the mundane, the everyday, day-to-day social and material necessities to maintain a family in Aotearoa New Zealand. Women told stories, differently, of how Sahaayta has enabled them to maintain their families in ways that work for their families. Sahaayta hear the needs and aspirations of women and their families and enable them to move towards them, rather than imposing an idealised model of becoming free from violence. The women who spoke to the research team told us of how Sahaayta understands that safety might look and feel different for their family, bringing together diverse stories of resisting violence and control, and navigating towards safety in the face of persisting social and systemic entrapments.

Key to Sahaayta's care for these women is their commitment to and responsible practice of confidentiality – an issue emphasised as well through our interviews with stakeholders (Coombes et al., 2017). Through Sahaayta's understandings of the complexities of coercive contexts, they practice their care for women and their families confidentially, through listening to and affirming the women's entitlement to live free from violence and controlling abuse within their cultural and spiritual contexts.

The women who spoke to us carry multiple and diverse social, economic and safety burdens – Sahaayta has helped these women to carry these burdens, not necessarily eliminating the burdens,

but helping to carry their weight has their lives transform, sometimes in ways they never imagined, and sometimes into the lives they did imagine.

As we hear the women's narratives of ways in which Sahaayta enables their independence and shares the burden of their ongoing safety strategies, we also hear of the ways in which the women's lived experiences of violence have changed. Most of their partners, though one strategy or another, have desisted from physical and sexual violence against them, yet for all of them coercive control and social entrapment are intertwined in ongoing struggles for safety. For those men continuing to exercise controlling authority over their partners, including through provoking harmful responses from institutional authorities or in social relationships, desistance from physical and sexual violence feels tentative to the women, with the entrapment of gendered social norms reproducing their ongoing needs for safety. Interventions addressing men's use of coercive control and sense of entitlement to women's subservience need urgent attention in support of men's change processes. It is still women who bear the burden of responsibility for safety and security, for themselves and their families, with many also socially responsible for harmony within their homes. Sahaayta share that burden with caring, dignifying praxis, that supports the women to realise their dreams and aspirations through transformations in their everyday lives.

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