UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

LIVED EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF FEMALE

SURVIVORS OF ABUSE IN SEKONDI-TAKORADI METROPOLIS,

GHANA

BY

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DECLARATIONS

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………   Date……………………

Name: ……………………………………………………………………..

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down in the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature…………………… Date……………………

Name: …………………………………………………………………

Co-Supervisor's Signature…………………………. Date……………………

Name: …………………………………..…………………………………

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and coping strategies of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. The phenomenological research design rooted within the qualitative approach was used in the study. Thirty female survivors of abuse who were all married were interviewed from the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis and data collected were analysed using thematic analyses. The study found that the usual types of abuse experienced by the female survivors of abuse were emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. The study also showed that the abuses suffered by the female survivors were caused by multiple factors. These causes included immaturity on the part of their husbands, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, negative peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse by their husbands. The study further revealed that most of the respondents were living in constant fear and discomfort because of their abuse experiences. The main forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in their experience of abuse were their friends, families and agencies such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU). It was recommended that Government should through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection provide financial and economic assistance for women who report abuse cases.

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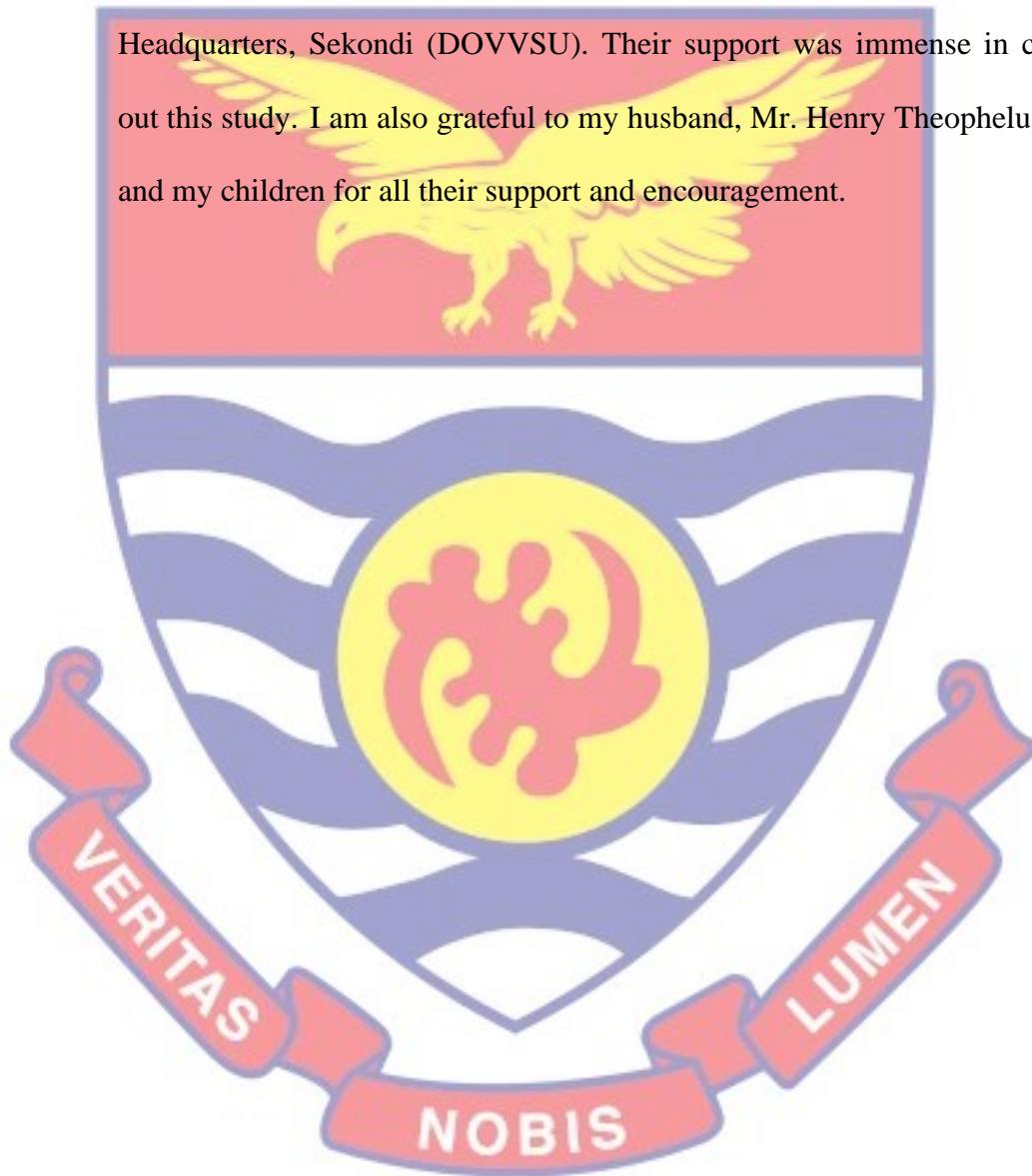
DEDICATION

To my family.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Abuse is a universal concept which involves acts of physical, sexual, and psychological control, intimidations, violence and battering (Gopal & Nunlall, 2017). Violence has been recognized as a major issue that women all over the world are confronted with as evidenced by the statistic that 35% of all women worldwide may suffer some form violence in their lives (Chikhungu, Amos, Kandala & Palikadavath, 2019). Abuse against females is wide spread and can take a variety of forms or manifestations (Avdibegovic, Brkic, & Sinanovic, 2017). Research over the past ten years demonstrates that abuse against females covers but not restricted to issues relating to sexual harassment, sexual violence and abuse against girls, and domestic violence (Guruge, Roche & Catallo, 2012). However, the most familiar kind of abuse that women suffer has to do with domestic violence which has been recognized in the literature to have an increasing prevalence (Avdibegovic, Brkic & Sinanovic, 2017).

In 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that about 30% of women globally suffered some form of violence and abuse from their partners or from other people within the society. This was similar to the report in 2016. In 2016, it was reported by the WHO that 35% of women globally had endured some kind of abuse, with most of these abusive experiences coming from the husbands or partners of these women. These statistics indicate that abuse against women is not receding in spite of the numerous efforts by civil society organisations.

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Abuse against females is seen as an issue of grave concern in relation to the health of females (Hakimi, Hayati, Marlinawati, Winkvist & Ellsberg, 2001; WHO, 2005). García-Moreno and Stöckl (2013) noted that abuse against women has been related with direful health conclusions and a vast scope of adverse health effects. This has been confirmed by Avdibegovic, Brkic, and Sinanovic (2017) that women who experience abuse exhibit significant emotional numbing, avoidance of interpersonal relationships and cognitive changes. Gopal and Nunlall (2017) opined that violence renders females even more helpless and in most situations attempt to demoralise them. However, when these women are able to survive and are out of the abuse experiences, they come out stronger. To be able to go through the challenge, however, support is key.

Women who have survived abuse have discovered family and social support as significant factors that assisted them to manage unceasing hardships, especially after leaving the abusive relationship (Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani & Hill, 2009). Religious engagement or participation in religious activities and the social support brought forth by members of religious communities also help in the survival of women who have once been sufferers of abuse (Alim et al., 2008). However, aside the emotional support given by those within the close contact of the women, a place to stay, childcare, practical support such as financial help and transportation to and from court and/or work also aids in gaining total relief from the aftermath of the abuse (Karim, 2011).

Because of the fact that women come from different backgrounds with different cultural and traditional orientations, the abuse they experience are

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diverse and may be perpetrated by a wide range of people both within and outside the person's family. This is why Kalokhe et al. (2015) revealed that culture render an important contribution in abusive behaviours. This notwithstanding, men have been recognized as the principal culprits of abuse against women (Bhatta, 2014). Globally, studies have revealed that numerous components such as home, financial and cultural background, past experience and history of abuse involving both the victim and perpetrator, as well as their individual behavioural and relationship characteristics put women at risk of abuse (Abramsky et al., 2011; Campbell, 2002; WHO, 2005, Xu et al., 2005).

Abuse of women takes place in all countries, however, its nature and occurrence changes significantly throughout the world and even within the African terrain (Andersson, Ho-Foster, Mitchell, Scheepers, & Goldstein, 2007; García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2005). In Ghana, Act 732 of the 1992 Constitution views abuse as a function of previous or current relationships. The view depicted in the constitution of Ghana gives the impression that acts of pestering, provocations, intimidations or danger to individuals are likely to lead to physical, verbal, economic, emotional and sexual abuse (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016).

Act 732 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana defines the various forms of abuse in various ways. Specifically, physical abuse is seen as the use of physical force and inhumane treatment against an individual aimed at taking away the individual's rights to basic human needs such as food, water, clothing and shelter. On the other hand, sexual abuse is depicted as the use of brute and pressure to force someone into acts of sexual nature without the consent and voluntary involvement of the said person. Also, economic abuse

denotes acts that seek to prevent or restrict the acquisition and usage of financial and economic resources by an individual who has the right to such acquisitions and usage. Finally, acts that seek to make individuals feel shameful, worthless, fearful and humiliated on a continuous basis fall into the categories of emotional, verbal or psychological abuse.

Statistics in Ghana reveals that 31 to 32 % of females have ever suffered abuse in their relationships (Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU), 2020). In schools in Ghana, it has been shown that between 14% and 52 % of girls are sufferers of gender-based abuse mostly with a sexual nature (Lithur, 2013). A key point to note, however, is that these estimates may be a tip of the iceberg as abuse against women stay a largely concealed challenge that only a small proportion of have the boldness to report or talk about (Bacchus, Bullock, & Sharps, 2014; Puri, Misra, & Hawkes, 2015).

Considering the evidence of the high prevalence of abuse against women, attempt has been made in Ghana over the last three decades to reduce this prevalence (Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) & Associates, 2016). Darkwah and Prah (2016) have revealed that in West Africa, out of 16 countries, only seven had passed domestic violence legislation. However, as of 2020, there were still some countries in West Africa which had still not made specific rules in connection to domestic violence (Oche, Adamu, Mallam, Oluwashola, & Muhammad, 2020). Of the countries with domestic violence legislations, some had yet to fully make practical their legislations. The legislations exist but the mechanisms to fully roll them out do not exist. Only countries like Cape Verde, Senegal, Sierra

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Leone and Sao Tome and Principe had their governments fully putting in practical mechanisms to ensure that domestic violence regulations were followed. The rest, of which Ghana is included, depended on civil society organisations to administer regulations and outreaches in connection with domestic violence. In Ghana, Darkwah and Prah indicated that there are still no decrees to make certain of the full execution of the Act was passed in 2007.

In Ghana, people who suffer abuse are not medically and psychologically taken care of adequately (Boateng, 2015). Treatment opportunities are either restricted or beyond reach to sufferers, principally due to the cost involved. Two major agencies have been set up to give support to the sufferers of domestic abuse are DOVVSU, set-up in 1998 as (as WAJU), a subdivision of the Police set-up in Ghana and the Social Welfare Department. DOVVSU particularly is supposed to have counsellors and clinical psychologists in its offices throughout the nation who are tasked with rendering counselling and support services to people who experience abuse at no cost (Boateng, 2015). The unit also has the responsibility of sending abused people to the appropriate units to receive help when the help is beyond the scope of the unit such as medical assistance. However, by reason of inadequacy of resources like lack of equipment, small office space and inadequacy of trained and qualified personnel, there has been some ineffectiveness in the work of the unit (Boateng, 2015).

The only effective and reliable forms of support for women who have experienced abuse therefore rest with the support from families and friends. Since the early 1990s, abuse against women has become a pivot of international consideration and concern and is being regarded as a major

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public health and social challenge as well as an issue against basic human dignity (Ellsberg, 2000). It is against this background that the study was carried out.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, there have been some studies which have focused on abuse against women using mainly qualitative approach (Cordero, 2014; Loke, Wan, & Hayter, 2012; Zink, Regan, Jacobson, & Pabst, 2003). In Africa, some studies on abuse against women were carried out in the 1990s in Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Tanzania (Hodgson, 2002; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Watts, Osam, & Win, 1995). Specifically, Ofei-Aboagye revealed that abuse against women was high in Ghana while Watts et al. noted that women in South Africa suffered a lot of abuses.

In Ghana, there have been studies carried out in the past to explore abuse and violence in Ghana. Some of these have been conducted broadly on violence against women like the study by Mitchell (2011). She addressed domestic violence matters, DOVVSU and found that a significant proportion of women had positive legal experiences after they were abused. Researchers like (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016; Amenga-Etego, 2006; Amoakohene, 2004; Boateng, 2015; Forde, 2004; Mitchell, 2011; Tenkorang et al., 2013) did same.

Forde (2004) studied the impact of sexual abuse on Ghanaian school girls and found that sexual abuse creates significant trauma on school girls and as such abused girls need helping in coping with the abuse. Tenkorang, Owusu, Yeboah and Bannerman (2013) also examined the root of domestic abuse in Ghana and noticed that the levels of education of women importantly predicted the extent of being abused in their marital homes. In like manner,

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Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) aimed to identify elements that gave rise to domestic violence among Ghanaian married women and found that family history of violence, residential location and alcohol use by husband led to domestic abuse.

All of these studies focused on domestic violence with the exception of that of Forde's (2004) study which focused mainly on girls who had been sexually abused. The current study goes beyond these and expands that of Forde by focusing on the experiences of women survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The study bridges the gap in the literature since the researcher does not focus on only domestic abuse as has been done by most of the previous studies.

The researcher also observed that no study of this nature has been carried in the Western Region. This is in spite of the continuous media reports of abuse against women in the region. The researcher sough to obtain empirical data on the abuses that females in the Metropolis suffer since no study had sought to ascertain this. By such data, proper recommendations can be made to help

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and coping strategies of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis (STM) in the Western Region of Ghana. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to identify the:

1. types of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana,

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2. causes of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana,

3. actual experiences of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana,

4. forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana, and

5. coping strategies of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in the study:

1. What are the types of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

2. What are the causes of abuse encounters by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

3. What are the actual experiences of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

4. What are the forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

5. How do female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana cope with their abusive experiences?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study would be of significance to policy makers such as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. They would be enlightened as to the actual experiences of women who have suffered abuse. This will inform their policies on helping women survivors of abuse.

The results would also be significant to DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service. They would be equipped with knowledge on how to fully assist women who have suffered abuse. The results would also help the Social Welfare Department in the discharge of their duties since they would have knowledge of the abuse encounter of women. The outcomes of the study will also be significant to counsellors by empowering them with the empirical knowledge of the lived experiences of women who are abused. This will help them as they seek to provide assistance to women suffering abuse. The counselling provided will be based on knowledge of actual situations of the women in my target group. Finally, the outcomes of the study will contribute to the literature on abuse against women in Ghana.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited in its stretch of coverage. Particularly, the study will focus on only females who have suffered abuse for at most five years preceding the study and are living in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The study was opened to uncover the experiences that the participants have had, regardless of the nature or the type of abuse.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in the sense that generalization of the study was not possible because of the qualitative nature of the study. This is because qualitative studies use smaller sample sizes and as such may not be broad based to a larger population. Also, the study was limited in the sense that from the start of the interviews, some of the participants felt hesitant at first but after making them aware that the study was for academic reasons, they opened up. This was a challenge because it delayed the data collection period.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in the study are defined as they are executed in the context of the study.

Abuse: In this study, it is used to refer to intentionally inflicting pain and discomfort to individuals.

Survivors: This is used in the study to refer to women who are having strength to cope and deal with abusive situations.

Victims: This word is used in the study to refer to women who are the target of abuse and are experiencing abuse.

Perpetrators: This is used to refer to refer to the people carrying out abuse or inflicting abuse on the victims and survivors.

Organisation of the Study

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter dealt with the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms and the organisation of the study.

Chapter Two of the study deals with the review of related literature. It is made up of the theoretical framework, conceptual review and the review of related empirical studies. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the study. It involves the research design, study area, population, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures and the data processing and analysis.

The fourth chapter deals with the results and discussion of the collected data. It covers the presentation of the results, the interpretation and the discussion. Finally, chapter five covers the summary of the research, the

conclusions, recommendations, implications for counselling and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the literature evaluation of the study. The literature was reviewed according to the following; i) theoretical framework, ii) feminist theory, iii) resilience theory, iv) conceptual framework, v) concept of abuse against women, vi) types of abuse, vii) domestic violence/ abuse, viii) causes of abuse against women, ix) effects of abuse against women, x) concept of coping with abuse legal issues concerning abuse against women in Ghana and xi) empirical review.

Theoretical Framework

This section reviewed theories that were relevant in the study. The feminist theory and the resilience theory were the main theories reviewed in the study. The feminist theory focuses on the circumstances that perpetuate abuse and violence against women in society while the resilience theory focuses on understanding how women adjust and cope with abusive situations.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory situates violence against women in the political and historical settings where women have been allowed to be systematically dominated (Lenton, 1995). Feminist theories further argue that most domestic violence in families results from the inequity of power between men and women (Natarajan, 2002). This theory argues that men's execution of violence in families is a means to control women that is male supremacy and female subordination (Straus, 1994).

Feminist theory therefore underscores the function of gender and power variances. In societies dominated by men, the system and the structures

restrict and hinders female participation in social and family life. Men profit from free domestic labour given by women and use violence as one of the means to verify and sustain their supremacy (Giddens, 2004). It is agreed that it has been that abuse against women has always been ignored as a main social challenge and therefore its fundamental is yet to be understood (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999). The major aim of the feminist theory is to change the social conditions that facilitate, breed and maintain all kinds of abuse against women. In the current study, the feminist theory is relevant because it explains abuse from the perspective of men abusing women because of the power imbalance. The experience of abuse is also related to the structures in society that do not favour women. Based on this, the theory provides reasons for why women suffer abuse in the current study.

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory, has developed since the 1950s and has profited from renewed interests in the past 20 to 30 years (Vera, 2012). It began as a query into the foundations of resilience by tracing the background of individuals and has developed into a comprehensive and interesting field which has generated a lot of research into the lives of both the young and the old within the context of their homes, workplaces and the society as a whole (VanBreda, 2001). Resilience theory focuses on how people make it despite difficult circumstances and encounters.

At the centre of the theory is the assumption that people are active and have significant control over their experiences and their immediate while using their strengths and abilities to deal with any challenges that they may encounter in life (Vera, 2012). In the early years of research on resilience

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theory, the major position was that people have the capacity to be strong and overcome their challenges on their own. Most of the previous studies on resilience was focused on the experiences of abuse and ill-treatments of individuals and how individuals felt during their abusive experiences in connection to the forms of support available to them (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1982). Resilience was thus generally viewed as relating to the capacities and strengths of individuals as unchanging traits.

However, from the 1990s, the very fundamentals of the theory has changed and moved in the direction of gaining insight into the factors that can help individuals recover and adjust to normal life after bad experiences. Continuously, resilience has gained prominence as comprising variety of factors and processes that enable people to overcome challenges instead of been seen as a specific central trait that does not change (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Roisman, 2005; Rutter, 1999; Wilkes, 2002).

Harvey (2007) suggested that there is a necessity to expand research on the origins and factors associated with trauma and resilience so that it can be possible and easy to create situations that will bring about resilience in the lives of individuals who have had bad experiences in society. Thus there is the need to identify what leads to a "successful" and "well-adjusted" person. The literature on resilience have largely been focused on the factors and elements which assist individuals to adjust and continue their lives in spite of the great stress in their lives. This is because resilience is not an unchanging trait, rather a combination of factors and elements which may change as circumstances changes (Phasha, 2010).

The theory is relevant in the current study because the study focuses on how women who are abused cope with the abuse experience. Their ability to be strong and resilient in the face of abuse determines their state of comfort or otherwise. Based on this, the theory was considered relevant to the current study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research was designed by the researcher by making reference to the main variables in the study. This is shown in Figure 1.
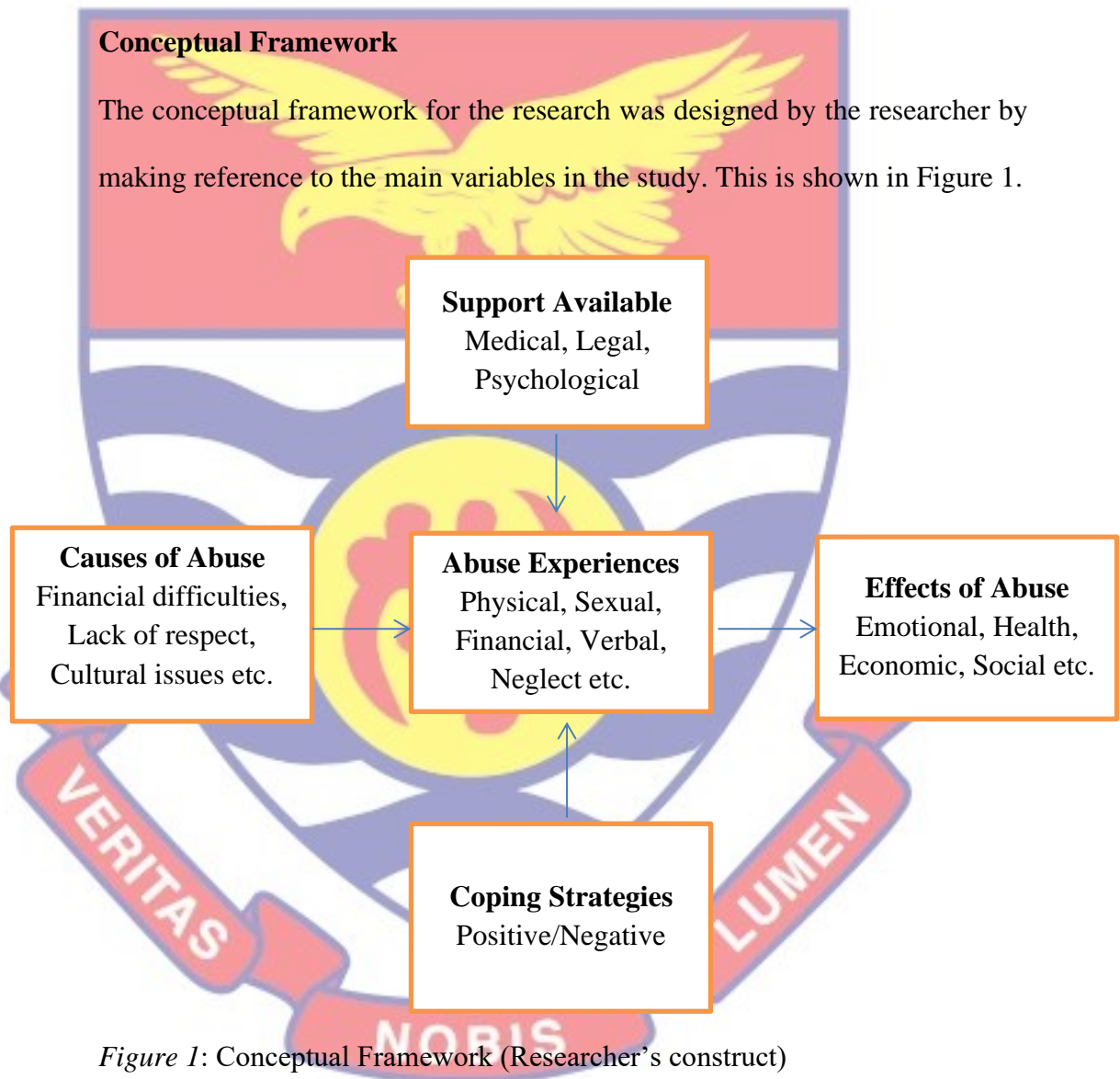

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Researcher's construct)

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic presentation of the conceptual framework of the study. It can be seen that financial difficulties, lack of respect for women and a culture that perpetuates abuse can create several abusive experiences for women. As the women experience these abuses, they will

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naturally adopt some means for coping with their experiences. These can be positive or negative. During the time of abuse, it is imperative that women are provided with some forms of support. The support can be medical, legal or psychological or all of these. The way the individual copes with the abuse as well as the support given to the individual determines the ultimate effect that the abuse experience will have on the person.

The framework as explained above is clearly connected to the objectives and research questions of the study. In relation to the objectives and research questions of the study, it can be seen in Figure 1 that the abuse experience of women are caused by some factors and can affect the individual in diverse ways. The experience can however be dealt with or managed depending on the support available and coping strategies of the women. All of these are related to the objectives and research questions of the study.

Conceptual Review

The key theories in the study are evaluated in this sector.

Concept of Abuse against Women

Abuse is a universal expression used to outline the maltreatment of an individual by another person. It is the deliberate execution of brute, strength, or power which may be either meted out or predicted against an individual or group of people and can lead to injuries or in some situations death (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg & Zwi, 2002). The United Nations General Assembly (1993), Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women provided a contextual definition of abuse against women as any gender-based action of aggression and force that lead to or may result in damages and harm on women in relation to their physical, emotional or sexual lives. Abuse against

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women can also involve use of coercive force or intimidations to gain control over the lives of women either in their public or private lives.

Abuse in relation to women can therefore be conceptualized as involving physical, psychological and sexual violence taking place in the family, such as battering, dowry related violence, sexual abuse of female children, marital rape and other traditional and cultural customs and practices that are detrimental to women. It also covers violence not perpetuated by partners such as physical, psychological and verbal abuses which are usually common in the community, at the workplaces and in school settings. Forced prostitution and women trafficking carried out or disregarded by the state, wherever it takes place, can all be found under the umbrella of abuse against women.

Cordero (2014) opined that women who have experienced abuse are now being described as "survivors" rather than "victims," even though it has been contested. In the U.S., victim discourse has been mostly used for individuals adjudged as worthy of consolation and kept for the "morally good" who are tainted by means of the errors and mistakes of others and not theirs (Leisenring, 2006). Leisenring viewed 'a victim' as: (a) an individual who has no power over the bad experiences they go through; (b) a person who is worthy of some form of solace or relief and needs help regarding their abuser; (c) a person who cannot be blamed for the things he or she has gone through; and (d) a person who is helpless and without strength. Even though women are of the opinion that they have been treated badly, the negative implications of the term "victim" have been largely unaccepted. The term "survivor", however, gives a description of the person who has been victimised in a

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positive light (Cordero, 2014). The use of the term 'survivor' denotes that the person at the receiving end of some ill-treatment has the strength and capacity to adjust, survive, overcome and recover from the bad treatments (Dunn, 2005).

Types of abuse

Cordero (2014) identified some key types of abuse. They include the following; (a) physical abuse, (b) emotional abuse, (c) verbal abuse, (d) sexual abuse, (e) financial abuse and (f) domestic violence or abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse involves using elements of violence or brutality by pushing, slapping, moving, stinging, hurling objects at another person, striking, punching, choking or attacking another person with some weapon (Rohrbaugh, 2006). Polsky and Markowitz (2004) also expounded physical abuse to be the deliberate execution of violence on a person with the likelihood of leading to death, harm, incapacitation or damage. It also covers any unintended harm to the physical health of an individual. This may comprise causing pain or damages of any form, electric shock injuries, scorches, scalds or any hostile and undesirable feeling. Physical abuse also consist of any physically aggressive behaviour such as hitting, pushing or pinching. Cordero (2014) opined that withholding of physical necessities such as indirect physically harmful behaviour, interrupting sleep or denying medical help or threat of physical harm also form part of physical abuse. If any woman is exposed to any of these actions, it can be said that she has suffered physical abuse.

Emotional abuse

Polsky and Markowitz (2004, p. 2) explained emotional abuse as "involving (emotional) trauma to the victim caused by acts, or coercive tactics." It covers any behaviour that takes advantage of other people's insecurity, liabilities or behaviour (Cordero, 2014). These behaviours consist of constant demeaning, manipulation, threats, or bullying of another person. It can comprise of threats to murder either the individual him or herself, another person or both persons, insults or criticisms that undermine self-confidence and using lies and deceptive means to bring misunderstanding or self-doubt and fear. By implication, harassment, failure to interact with a person, bullying, manipulations and threats of coercion and violence as well as failure to acknowledge an individual's all form part of emotional abuse. This may also comprise of depriving cultural or religious needs and preferences. This type of abuse is rarely recognized by the perpetrators. Isolation is also a kind of emotional abuse that involves abusers controlling an individual's life to the point that the abused cannot live an independent life but is under total control of the abuser (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, n.d.). Emotional abuse can cause someone to feel worthless. In essence, emotional abuse put women in situations where they cannot have the confidence to do anything on their own.

Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse is a key element of emotionally abusive relationships. The abuser frequently makes statements that negatively tag a person. This has a serious influence on the confidence and self-esteem of the person suffering the verbal abuse. The perpetrators of this abuse can utter some words to

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offend, degrade or demean their victims to feel some sense of insecurity and self-doubt (University of Michigan Health System, 2007). This type of abuse therefore comprises words used to embarrass, belittle, or intimidate the abused such as defamation, teasing, rampaging, screaming and shouting at, shaming the abused as unwanted, and warning to damage or offend friends and family. Verbal abuse makes victims feel broken, ashamed and worthless particularly when the words used are very personal.

Sexual abuse

This involves using an element of sexuality as a tool to exploit other people. Sexual relations of any form between adults and children usually below 16 years old as well as sexual relations between adults without consent or under compulsion, threats, or in an involuntary fashion can be viewed as sexual abuse (Polsky & Markowitz, 2004). Sexual abuse thus includes unsolicited sexual affairs with children and adults and can be in the form of rape or incest or any other form of sexual contact.

Sexual abuse by a married partner or relationship partner can involve rejection of pregnancy, derogatory name calling, using objects, toys, or other items, intentionally creating undesirable physical pain in the course of sexual intercourse, and intentionally infecting partner with sexually transmitted infections to cause injuries, hurts, pain, humiliation and shame. Historically, this is the form or type of abuse that women particularly find difficult to discuss openly since rape in marriages were not recognized as a crime in some parts of the world such as England and Wales until 1986 (DIPEx, 2019). Most sufferers of abuse see it as difficult to decline and reject sexual relations

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because this may affect them negatively in society. This type of abuse against women is therefore very significant.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse is viewed as seeking to make people continuously financially dependent on the abuser. As per the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (n.d.), financial abuse is the reason for most abused people becoming unemployed. By creating a situation of unemployment and financial dependency, the individual can be controlled through personal influence over the financial resources of the abused person by denying the person access to any form of economically profitable activity. It also covers the inappropriate use of the resources or assets of other people in an indiscriminate manner usually without the permission of the other person. This is one of the very common abuses suffered by women, especially in marriages.

In financial abuse, the abusers potentially have the power to control the economic situation in their families. Some of the common examples of economic abuse include stealing from the victim, workplace harassment and punishing victim through varied physical or sexual means of extortions because some money cannot be found. The abuse affects individuals at varied levels of income. Economic abuse can extend to cover emotional abuse (Smith & Segal, 2010).

Neglect

This refers to unceasingly failing to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a person ensuing in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect often takes place at the same time as other types of abuse (Rees, Stein, Hicks & Gorin, 2011). Neglect is hard to explain as it is

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difficult to expound the absence of something such as attention or love (Daniel, Taylor & Scott, 2011). Daniel et al indicated however that, in practical terms, neglect may involve an individual's failure to:

1. provide sufficient food, clothing and shelter,

2. safeguard the woman from physical and emotional danger or harm and

3. make certain the woman earns appropriate medical care or treatment.

Neglect can include the following but this list is exhaustive:

Physical neglect: This involves refusal to give food, place of stay, protection, clothes, security, direction and health care to individuals thus putting them at risk of dangers in their environment (Smith & Segal, 2010). Thus, this form of neglect has a physical nature.

Passive neglect: This is the decision to hold back willfully the requirements of life comprising clothing, food, place of stay or health care.
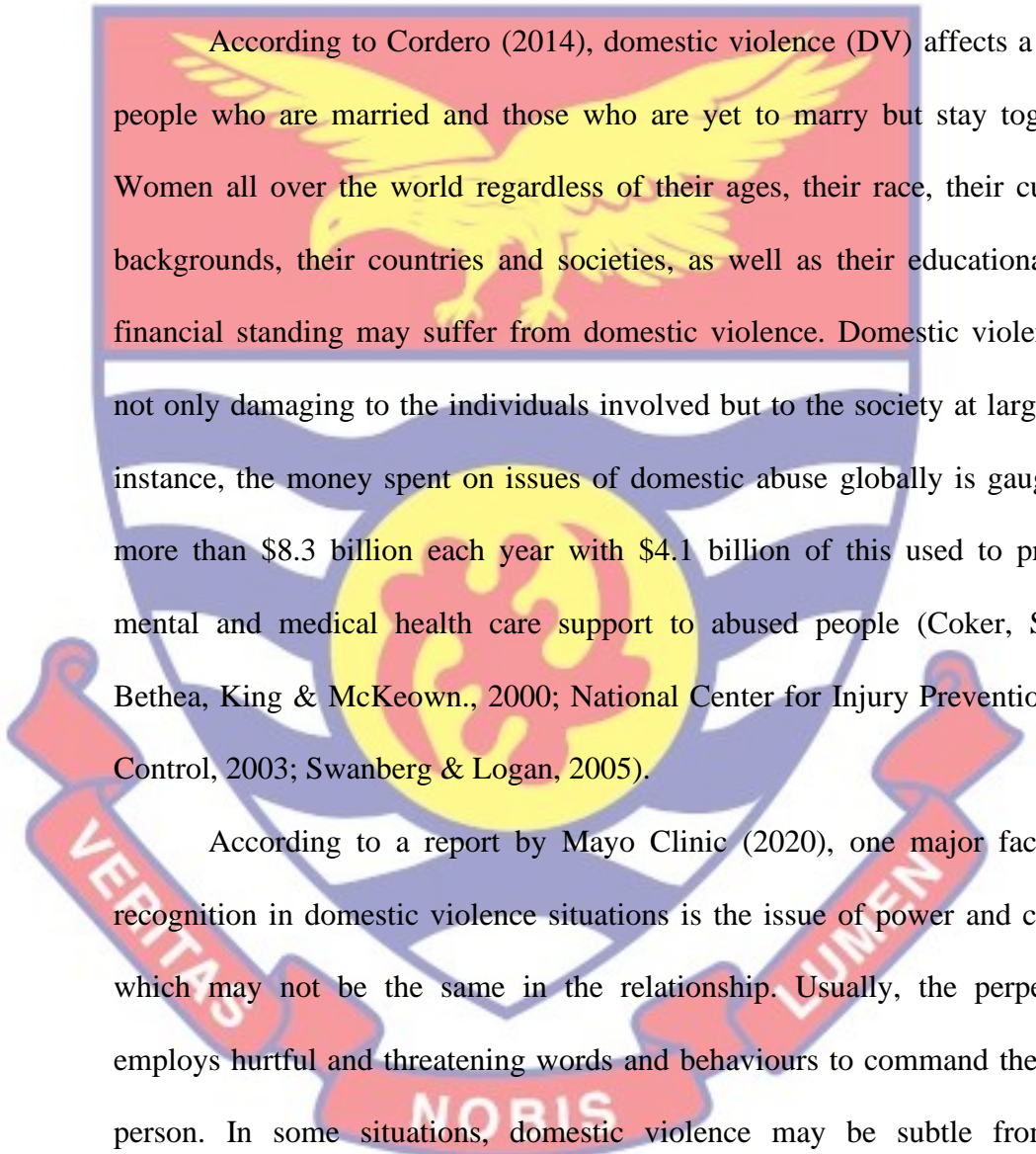
Willful deprivation: This implies that an individual willfully denies someone by reason of years, physical condition or incapacity, some things needed for life such as food, quality health care, place of stay or any other form of help, essentially leaving the person at the mercy of physical, emotional or mental dangers or hurts (Smith & Segal, 2010).

Emotional neglect: This refers to the negligence of providing the stimulation or nurturance needed for the intellectual, personal-social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of an individual.

Domestic Violence / Abuse

Domestic violence is a prevalent and complex social challenge related to important damage to the physical and psychological lives of abused persons (Loke, Wan, & Hayter, 2012). Giddens (2004) defined domestic violence or

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abuse as the form of abuse administered by one person in the family against others or another. Clinically, domestic abuse comprises aggressive and/or forceful actions which may be physical, psychological, sexual and financial which seeks to damage one partner significantly rendering the said partner incapacitated in life (Schechter & Edelson, 1999).

According to Cordero (2014), domestic violence (DV) affects a lot of people who are married and those who are yet to marry but stay together. Women all over the world regardless of their ages, their race, their cultural backgrounds, their countries and societies, as well as their educational and financial standing may suffer from domestic violence. Domestic violence is not only damaging to the individuals involved but to the society at large. For instance, the money spent on issues of domestic abuse globally is gauged at more than $8.3 billion each year with $4.1 billion of this used to provide mental and medical health care support to abused people (Coker, Smith, Bethea, King & McKeown., 2000; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003; Swanberg & Logan, 2005).

According to a report by Mayo Clinic (2020), one major factor of recognition in domestic violence situations is the issue of power and control which may not be the same in the relationship. Usually, the perpetrator employs hurtful and threatening words and behaviours to command the other person. In some situations, domestic violence may be subtle from the beginning but may become more overt as time goes on. Meanwhile, there is evidence of abuse from the beginning of some relationships which may get more serious with time.

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The report by Mayo Clinic shows that domestic violence is present if an individual is in a marital relationship with someone who does the following;

"(i) defames, denigrate, demean and makes the other person feel inferior; (ii) hinders and restrict movement to work and school as well as prevent visitation to friends and family; (iii) seeks to financially control and be the sole decider of how the person uses financial resources; (iv) is the sole decider of the person's movement, medications, and clothing; (v) displays and exhibits inappropriate and possessive warmth and envy with regular accusations of infidelity; (vi) displays anger and aggressiveness under the influence of drugs and alcohol; (vii) seeks to dominate and control health care access; (viii) uses varied forms of weapons and aggressive means to warn and make threats; (ix) hits, kicks, shoves, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts the other person, the children and pets, (x) forces the other person to have sex or engage in sexual acts against their will, (xi) blames the other person for their violent behaviour or indicates that the other person deserves the violence act or (xii) threatens to tell friends, family, colleagues or community members about sexual orientation or gender identity" (p. 13)/.

Women are the main people who suffer domestic violence or abuse. This is because women are likely to play submissive roles in relationships while men are likely to seek to be the controllers and dominators in relationships. In Ghana, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2008 revealed that 38.7% of women who have ever been married and were between

the ages of 15 and 49 years were more likely to have experienced some form of abuse perpetrated by their husbands at some point in time. It is however not only women who have experienced domestic abuse since 27.6% of Ghanaian mean indicated having encountered some forms of violence perpetrated by their wives or partners (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Ghana Health Service (GHS), & ICF Macro, 2009). In recent times, Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) have revealed that the domestic violence incidents have been occurring at an alarmingly higher rates with the effects varying from death to serious injuries. Overall, it can be said that the experience of domestic abuse is a very damaging and hurtful period in life (Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Högberg, & Emmelin, 2013).

Causes of Abuse against Women

There is no single element that accounts for abuse perpetrated against members of a particular home (UNICEF, 1999). Previously, there has been the view that domestic violence was rooted in poverty and illiteracy of men. However, this view has been found not to be correct since abuse of women happens even among the middle class (Jackson, 2007; Karimu, 2017; Morris, Horsman & Hofer, 2002). However, financial difficulties can be a major cause of abuse. Women who are not financially sound may fall victims to abuse from well-to-do people, either men or women. Some of the major causes of abuse are reviewed in this section.

Alcohol abuse

One common cause of abuse against women supported by several studies is the influence of alcohol and drugs (Fitzpatrick & Thorne, 2010; Karimu, 2017). The view of these researchers was that when men abuse

alcohol or drugs, they are likely to lash out physically against their wives or any other female counterpart, particularly, when the female contradicts his position (Fitzpatrick & Thorne, 2010; Karimu, 2017).

The extent to which alcohol relates to domestic abuse has not been consistent, however, after controlling for the influence of some demographic characteristics, it is clear that there may exist some form of relation between alcohol usage and domestic abuse (Leonard & Blane, 1992; Leonard, 1993). The relationship of alcohol to violence is a compounded one, including physiological, sociocultural and psychosocial factors. Even though the exact results of alcohol have been inconsistent in the literature, there is some evidence that alcohol may interconnect with some neurotransmitters like serotonin, which can significantly lead to aggressive behaviours (National Research Council, 1996). There is also evidence that alcohol abuse is connected to antisocial behaviour (Reiss & Roth, 1993). All these give insight into how alcohol abuse is connected to abuse against women.

Generally, alcohol may impede the thinking patterns of individuals so that men under the impact of alcohol may have higher probabilities of neglecting and rejecting social cues to be disciplined and act in aggressive and assaultive manner in relation to women (Abbey, Ross & McDuffie, 1995). Overall, alcohol abuse is seen as a major cause of abuse against women.

Psychopathology and Personality Traits

Many researchers have discovered a high occurrence of personality and psychopathology disorders, particularly, borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder to be common with abusive husbands (Hamberger & Hastings, 1991; Hart, Dutton

& Newlove, 1993; Dutton & Starzomski, 1993; Dutton, 1994, 1995). A huge range of personality and psychiatric disorders have also been recognised among sexual abuse perpetrators with the most common being antisocial personality disorder (Prentky, 1990). In profiling the personalities of rapists and other sexual abusers, it has been revealed that there are some personality disorders connected to being a rapist (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979; Abel, Rouleau, & Cunningham-Rathner, 1986), and batterers (Geffner & Rosenbaum, 1990).

Lack of Respect for Women and Show of Power among Men

Another view on the causes of abuse against women is the lack of respect for women. Phorano, Nthomang and Ntseane (2005) revealed that abuse against women is associated to the lack of respect for women. In most societies, women are belittled, with men seen as the people with authority and as such can do whatever they want even if the rights of women are infringed upon (Mushibwe, 2009). This connected to society's belief that men are the breadwinners and as such they determine what happens to women.

Abuse against women is also largely thought to be inspired by the necessity to overtop women. This perception implores the idea of a man who is influential commanding authority and using aggression and assault to overcome women and display their dominance of women (National Research Council, 1996). The use of dominance and force by men to consistently demean their wives has been found through the literature to be related to the desire to exert control as well as a form showing that they are in charge usually developed in response feelings of inferiority (Browne & Dutton, 1990).

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It has been proven that men are likely to view the use of force to dominate women as a means to getting their way with women (Abbey, 1991). For instance, sexually abusive men are more likely to be in favour of rape as a means to enforce personal control over women than men who are not abusive (Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes & Acker, 1995). The abusive men are also likely to device varied means to enforce their control over women. Similarly, traditions in society and cultural values have created some ideas that men and husbands have some control over their wives and so they can do whatever they want in their matrimonial home and be justified without questions (National Research Council, 1996).

Imitation

Social Learning Theory propounds that people acquire social behaviours by discerning the behaviours of others and the impact of such behaviours, formulating thoughts about the behaviours which are proper, engaging in those behaviours and finding out there are positive outcomes (O'Leary, 1988). From this perspective, violence is not seen as unavoidable, but rather as a social behaviour that is observed and copied from the environment and developed by the consequences that follow the behaviours (Lore & Schultz, 1993). Based on this, it is clear that men become aggressive and violent against women because the observe it from the society and learn from such violent behaviours through their varied interactions in the environment (National Research Council, 1996).

Media

In many cases of abuse, especially, sexual abuse, several researchers have indicated that the media uplifts viewing women as sex objectives who

can be treated anyhow without regard for the lives of the women (Dworkin, 1991; Russell, 1993). For instance, exposure to pornography has been discovered to give rise to violence against women from the perspective of the men who watch such videos (Linz, Wilson & Donnerstein, 1992). Such violent acts are usually internalized and shown in times when the men are angered or provoked.

Also, there are a lot of video scenes in Television shows and movies where women are maltreated, tortured, injured, raped and even killed which can have very permanent effects on the tendency of individuals to be aggressive (Huston et al., 1992). A meta-evaluation of 188 studies revaled that there was a significant relationship between viewership of violent and aggressive movies and television shows and the exhibition of violent behaviours (Paik & Comstock, 1994). This particular relationship has been explained to be caused by the tendency of viewers of violent images and videos to become less empathic about pain in others and as such become more likely to exhibit violent actions without remorse (Murray, 1995). Generally, videos of aggression and violence in the media seem to send the signal that violence is a means to achieving things that may not be possible without violence. Thus, in summary, the depiction of violence and aggression against women in the media creates a sense of acceptance that violence can be accepted as long as it leads to achieving some set goal (Donnerstein & Linz, 1994).

Effects of Abuse against Women

Abuse against women can affect women in diverse ways. These effects have been the subject of research by several researchers. Some of the common effects identified in the literature have been discussed in this section.

Emotional Effects

Regardless of the type of abuse, there is a direct effect on the victim's overall functioning, self-efficacy, and self-concept (Cordero, 2014). Avdibegovic, Brkic and Sinanovic (2017) opined that women who have suffered some forms of abuse can experience issues in their thinking and emotions. Specifically, abuse against women can make victims less sensitive to pains in later life. Traditionally, a characteristic associated with women who have survived abuse was that they have experienced learned weakness and therefore have the feeling that they do not control and have no way to overcome their abusive experiences (Miller, 2006). Learned weakness as a concept has therefore been used to offer explanations for the experience of abuse among women and to give indications of why women who are abused may prefer to remain in the abusive relationships (Miller, 2006).

Parks, Kim, Day, Garza, and Larkby (2011) have indicated that women who have suffered some forms of abuse or maltreatment as children have a higher likelihood of suffering domestic violence as adults compared to women who have not had any experience of abuse as children. This is connected to the perception of learned helplessness (Miller, 2006). Thus, from this view, women with history of suffering abuse during childhood are probable to be found in abusive relationships as adults.

Abused victims usually internalize the feelings during the abuse and as such stay away from any forms of support (Cordero, 2014). This can help give strength to the abuser and the abuser keep abusing the victim. Initially, the isolative behaviours are interpreted as possessive love that calls for the abused people to choose how to spend their time. In due course, the abused person is left isolated without any support system to be able to overcome the difficult situations. By implication, women who have suffered abuse are left isolated.

Physical Effects

According to WHO (2000), the impact of abuse on a woman's wellbeing is huge and has many consequences. Abuse may result in irreversible impairment, contraction, abusing alcohol and engaging in unprotected sexual activities (WHO, 2013). Some women who are not able to cope with abuse may resort to the abuse of alcohol and drugs (Tolman & Rosen, 2001).

Again, it has been revealed that physical abuse can lead to concussion and even traumatic brain injury (Smith et al., 2017). These are likely to happen in cases where women are hit on the head or hit their heads while falling. Such women are more probable to suffer several health complications in the wake of suffering abuse. A woman is in no doubt to be harmed if she is exploited by a sexual partner more than by an external person (Bachman & Saltzman, 1995). In most cases, people who have suffered physical abuse can have physical injuries from beatings, shoving, cuts and scratches. Also, there is the likelihood of having miscarriages, gunshots wounds, and permanent damage to hearing or vision, joints, or internal organs and even death.

Economic Effects

Since there are types of abuse connected to the financial lives (financial abuse) of individuals, abuse can affect the economic lives of women who suffer these abuses. Limiting the economic advancement of women brings with it some negative effects on women's overall ability to fully function in their society. Men who abuse women employ a number of means to frustrate the economic lives of women such as restricting and determining the kinds of work that women do and how much time they spend at work (Adams, Tolman, Bybee, Sullivan, & Kennedy, 2012). In this regard, women are mostly kept second fiddle to men in terms of financial standing.

Women who suffer abuse, are restricted in the number of hours they work (Karimu, 2017) and may be mostly absent from work (Reeves & O'Leary-Kelly, 2007). Abuse against women therefore affects the financial power and economic standing of the women who suffer these abuses.

Health Effects

A victim's state of health can also be influenced by abuse. People who have been abused who are more likely to sustain several injuries which may lead to various health challenges and ill health. This is connected to the physical health of the abused people. Regarding the emotional lives of individuals, it is likely that an abused person may experience stress, anxiety and feelings of depression (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). Some health impacts such as sexually transmitted diseases and brain damage are undying (World Health Organization, 2002). Wisner, Gilmer, Saltzman, and Zink (1999) proclaimed that females who are victims place a major

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emphasis on healthcare premiums than individuals who have been experienced abuse.

The act of domestic violence can be detrimental to the health of victims mentally (The Ripple Effect, 2002). There are some other mental health issues reported in people who have suffered domestic abuse involving shame, guilt, stress, anxiety and post-traumatic disorder among other things (Winfield, George, Swartz & Blazer, 1990; Herman, 1992). The effects of abuse on the mental health of abused people can linger through the years even after several years have passed. These can include major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, abuse of alcohol and drugs, extreme forms of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (National Research Council, 1996; Winfield et al., 1990).

Concept of Coping with Abuse

Coping has been viewed by some of its earliest researchers to cover a scope of various thinking patterns and behaviours employed to control the inner and outer elements of threatening or stressful experiences (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It may involve the tactics executed characteristically as answers to a diversity of difficulties and issues and measures employed to deal with specific issues that may bother individuals (Walsh, Fortier, & DiLillo, 2010).

Even though coping mechanisms can be recognized and grouped into diverse aspects (Cohen, 1987; Holohan & Moos, 1987), one usual means of categorization ranks coping as comprising either behavioural or cognitive responses to a particular stressful situations (Holohan & Moos, 1987). Cognitive coping measures involve efforts to change an individual's views of

a situation, while behavioural coping involves specific behaviours engaged in to curb the impacts of stress resulting from situations (Walsh, Fortier, & DiLillo, 2010). For instance, concentrating on positive aspects of experiences can be viewed as aspects of cognitive coping, whereas participating in the abuse of drugs or isolating oneself from people and situations can be considered as behavioural coping.

Further another means of coping has to do with either approach coping or avoidance coping (Holohan & Moos, 1987; Roth & Cohen 1986). Thus, it makes reference to alternating between approach coping and avoidance coping. Approach coping entails ventures to integrate hurtful material while avoidance coping includes ventures to safeguard oneself from a threatening event. Roth and Cohen (1986) opined that approach coping paves way for direct action in ventures to control stressful situations while avoidance coping aims at preventing negative emotions from getting out of hand, by permitting distance from the stressful situations and in essence dealing with the stress.

Moos (1995) suggested that cognitive-behavioural and approach-avoidance coping measures can be viewed together when dealing with coping mechanisms. Moos proposed that the cognitive-behavioural construct displays the "method" of coping, while the approach-avoidance distinction refers to the "focus" of coping. This implies that people adopt either cognitive or behavioural method in coping while focusing on either to approach the situation or to avoid the situation.

Some studies have conceptualised coping as an interchange of chances and defensive elements on personal and societal levels (Gopal & Nunlall, 2017). At the personal level, coping is essentially at the inner level as have

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been argued by some authors that those who adjust rigorously to extreme levels of stress possess some traits such as intelligence, high self-esteem and individuality (Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, & Egolf, 1994). Therefore, it can be inferred that the ability to cope with situations varies over time and differs among persons. At the environmental level, researchers established connections between the threats and defensive elements in the society (Valentine & Feinauer, 1993). From this, it can be inferred that individual and family factors work together to determine the coping strategies that people adopt to survive abuse. For instance, if the community that an individual resides in condones abuse of women and the person being abused does not have the strength to exit the abusive relationship, the sufferer of the abuse is probable to stay in the abusive relationship.

It has been argued that coping is an essential factor in gaining insight into the personal capacities of people who have experienced abuse (Walsh et al., 2010). In this regard, people who assist women should focus on understanding how women who have been abused can be assisted to get better (Carlson, 1997; Truman-Schram, Cann, Calhoun, & Vanwallendael, 2000). Thus, women's coping needs critical evaluation as it influences the forms of assistance that women really need (Campbell, 2002).

Aside the cognitive strategies which centers on the constructive measures and strategies, there are some destructive behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual behavours, are in some sitautions conceived as coping mechanisms (Filipas & Ullman, 2006; Ullman, Filipas, Townsend, & Starzynski, 2005). These are negative coping strategies.

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However, when women suffer abuse, they are likely to adopt some of these measures to cope with the fallouts of the abuse.

Legal Issues concerning Abuse against Women in Ghana

It takes a long period to be able to get laws passed because of the long protocols needed to be able to get the law approved. In most societies, the state has a major role in the writing and passing of laws through the parliament even though civil society organisations have their part to play and getting laws passed (Darkwah & Prah, 2016). In Ghana, the legal process encircling abuse started in 1998 with acknowledgement from civil society organisations that and the Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa (LAWA) that there was too much violence against women and so there was the need to advnce course for a law dealing with violence against women (Adomako-Ampofo, 2008).

Other civil society organiations such as the International Federation for Women Lawyers (FIDA), pressed on this in the subsequent year, as did the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre that led a research on the issue of domestic abuse in Ghana. Their research, being the very first of its nature, provided empirical proof and evidence that there was the need for a law dealing with domestic abuse.

Darkwah and Prah (2016) revealed that several murders of women in the year 2000 attracted nationwide consciousness to abuse against women and raised a lot of awareness about protecting women. However, the bill to deal with such violence was only passed into law on the 21st of February, 2007. This happened after six years of the first draft of the bill. However, in relation to the first and earliest discussions on the bill, it had been nine years. It has

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been indicated that the delay in getting the bill passed into a law was due to the government resisting attempts and demands of civil society organisations which the government felt would undermine the validity of the Bill (Adomako-Ampofo, 2008; Hodzic, 2009). The government then made some claims as to why they resisted passing the bill into a law. They argued that laws against domestic violence was a foreign concept, could be a threat to the long standing traditions and cultures of marriage in Ghana, was out of the system of civil law and could be handled or managed by traditional leaders. However, women's rights activists and other civil society organisations had to oppose these arguments by the government by venturing a nationwide circulation of what the bill contains to get the views of the ordinary Ghanaian on the bill. Therefore, currently, the most essential law regarding abuse in Ghana is the Domestic Violence Act.

The opposition of the law on domestic violence was not peculiar to Ghana but also evident in other African countries. For instance, in Zimbabwe, Christiansen (2010) revealed that opposition to the law on domestic violence was based on arguments such as: conservative Christian views on inequity between the husband and the wife; the idea that the state should not interfere in issues of families and the view that domestic violence legalization is a foreign concept that will destroy traditional and cultural values.

Domestic violence legislation has been found to be very useful (Giridhar, 2012). In the view of Adomako-Ampofo (2008, p. 14), domestic violence legislation "provide[s] unequivocal statements on what a nation considers as violence against its citizens, even in the so-called private sphere.

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The singular act of passing a domestic violence law changes societal attitudes for the better even if implementation is weak".

In Africa, Darkwah and Prah (2016) revealed that there are 20 countries which have regulations specifically made to curb domestic abuse but not all of them have made it possible to abide by the law fully. Nonetheless, over the last decade and a half, there have been several efforts on the part of the governments of various countries to ensure that laws barring domestic violence are adhered to and services are rendered to people who have suffered domestic abuse. Sardenberg (2011) averred that for laws barring domestic abuse to work effectively and efficiently there is the need to ensure that the laws have preventive, protective and punitive features.

The preventive features focus on "potential perpetrators and are aimed at reducing the likelihood that potential perpetrators will act in a violent manner and may include educational campaigns about the content of the domestic violence law and/or about alternative ways of resolving conflict in domestic situations" (Sardenberg, 2011, p. 6). The campaigns can be made specifically for use in communities or in schools. In Africa, some countries have established such campaign activities including Rwanda (Odhiambo & Omollo-Odhiambo, 2011) and Ghana (Ackatia-Armah & Darkwah, 2013).

The protective measures focus on "how complaints are received and support provided in accessing other services such as healthcare or financial and housing assistance, as well as assistance with initiating legal action" (Sardenberg, 2011, p. 6). These issues are covered in the legislations of domestic violence.

On the other hand, "the punitive components of domestic violence legislation are designed to discourage perpetrators from continuing with their violent behaviours" (Sardenberg, 2011, p. 6). They focus on making domestic abuse a criminal activity that demands criminal prosecution. These include specialized courts or police units. On this basis, countries set up special law courts that focus on only dealing with domestic abuse issues. The setting up of these courts is to ensure the reduction in the time spent on court cases for domestic abuse issues.

Specifically, Ghana has its own domestic violence court, even though its effectiveness is yet to be assessed (Darkwah & Prah, 2016). Also, there are mechanisms in place to ensure that survivors of domestic violence, mostly women, are provided with the best services and protected with full security mostly manned by female police staff. Usually, the staff who are in charge of taking care of domestic violence cases are responsible to taking in complaints, assisting survivors to receive support in terms of medical, financial, shelter and legal. These are common in some African countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda.

After years of implementation of the legal issues concerning domestic violence in Ghana, Ackatia-Armah and Darkwah (2013) revealed after an interview survey of groups of people in different societies and analysis of the contents of the quarterly reports of domestic violence that there had been reduction in the cases of domestic violence within communities. Also, there were reports that marriages and relationships are a lot better since the enforcement of domestic violence laws. This implies that legislations about

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abuse and violence against women can help in reducing the occurrence of such abuse.

In Ghana, even though there is no specific agency handling only abuse against women cases, the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service is responsible for handling all domestic violence cases. Usually, the officers in this sub-division, work from the perspective that the culture in Ghana favours family-based solutions when in domestic violence cases. In this sense, all the activities of DOVVSU are carried out with the intention of helping the survivors deal with their experiences with the prosecution of perpetrators being a secondary matter. An observation however, is that the survivors of domestic abuse who report to DOVVSU mostly prefer not to prosecute the perpetrators. This view was expressed by Mitchell (2011) that people who have been abused domestically usually prefer not to pursue punishment of the perpetrators but are interested in getting their families together again.

Empirical Review

Some of the previous studies relating to the current study are reviewed in this section. The review is done according to the research questions which were explored in the study.

Types of Abuse and Experiences of Women

The types of abuse and the specific experiences of women have been researched by several researchers with varying results. Chikhungu et al. (2019) employing the 2015 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey data, explored the types of abuse that wives experienced. It was revealed that the married women experienced different forms and types of abuse. These types of abuses

were shown in order from highest to least. The common abuses were being forced and controlled by their spouses, physical abuse, emotional abuse and a mixture of different forms of abuse. In terms of the factors influencing the experience of abuse, it was shown that alcoholism, race and employment status of the woman significantly predicted abuse against women. These factors therefore increased the extent to which abuse was experienced by women. However, age and religion did not predict abusive behaviours against women. On each of these elements, the odds of suffering abuse was low in terms of husbands being controlling but was high in terms of husbands inflicting physical aggression and emotional or psychological abuse. Based on the results, it can be inferred that excessive alcohol consumption, working status of women and marriage type were predictors of domestic violence or abuse against women. Thus, it was recommended that there should be measures that need to be set-up to help deal with husbands abusing their wives by reducing alcoholism, encouraging economic independence and discouraging adultery and multiple marriages.

Guruge, Roche and Catallo (2012) assessed the history of abuse and how abuse affects the physical and mental health of women in Canada. The study was focused on 60 women from Iran and Sri Lankan Tamil dominated areas in Toronto. It was realized that the women suffered varied forms of abuse in their lives. In terms of the specifics, it was identified that psychological abuse was very common for the women. They were mostly intimidated, insulted and unnecessarily critiqued. Apart from the psychological abuse, there were also indications of physical abuse in the form of shoving, spanking and beating and sexual violence in the forms of forced

sexual intercourse and sexually degrading acts by their husbands. Also, it was discovered that a significant number of those involved in the study had encountered physical and mental health disability, which were outcomes of the diverse forms of abuse they had suffered in their life time. From the study of Guruge, Roche and Catallo, it is evident that physical, verbal, psychological and sexual abuse were usually encountered by women living in communities dominated by Iranian's and Sri Lankan's in Toronto.

Sethi, Watts, Zwi, Watson, and McCarthy (2004) sought to identify the frequency of domestic violence (DV) among women. The target of the study was women who were been treated at the emergency unit of hospitals. Respondents from 22 different nursing shifts were involved in the study using purposive sampling procedure. In all, 198 women voluntarily decided to be part of the study and were therefore given the questionnaires. It was concluded therefore that the frequency of DV among women was high. Among the women receiving treatments at emergency unit there was a preference for being asked about their experiences. This is because the women did not favour voluntary confession of their abuse experiences. From the findings, it was recommended that health workers taking in details about women at the emergency unit should be more empathetic because of the issues of the women.

The study of Loke, Wan, and Hayter (2012) was aimed at gaining an enhanced insight of the living moments of female survivors of domestic abuse in Hong Kong. The research embraced an exploratory qualitative design. Data was collected from nine women survivors using interviews. These women voluntarily decided to be part of the study after they were sampled at the

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emergency unit of a regional hospital in Hong Kong. Thematic analysis was used in analysing the data in the study. The findings showed that victims were often uncomfortable and abashed to reveal their circumstances and also unwilling and hesitant to ask for support or help because of the feeling that they might not be helped or they might be mocked or teased. The experience of abuse also made the women have low sense of self, feel depressed and have suicidal ideations and intentions. The study also showed that women were hesitant about escaping an abusive relationship or marriage and so lived through abusive occurrences silently until they could not put up with the experiences and thus sought assistance at the emergency unit of hospitals. However, the women had negative encounters in seeking for assistance since the support systems available to them such as family and health workers disregarded their experiences because of cultural perceptions about marriage.

Cordero (2014) sought to give an enhanced insight of the experiences of women who had abusive relationships. In this study, the researcher aimed at having an accurate picture of what the women actually experienced in abusive relationships. Such knowledge and awareness can help identify means to properly assist women in abusive relationships. The sample comprised 13 women of different background characteristics ranging from their educational qualification, ages and socio-economic background who indicated that they had experienced abuse in their homes. Data was collected using interviews and focus-group discussions.

Cordero's (2014) discoveries showed that the women experienced different forms of abuse which increased as time went on in their relationships. During the abuse, the women basically stayed in the

relationships because they felt vulnerable to their abusers but because of their own resilience they were able to stay. The women indicated that there several barriers to leaving abusive relationships but as and when they overcame the barriers they were able to leave the relationships.

Astbury et al. (2000) also conducted a study on domestic violence issues and came out with some findings. They revealed that there was comprehensive proof of the various impacts of domestic abuse among people of different age and cultural characteristics. They found that the effect of domestic abuse can be long-term and cover the physical health, emotional health and other interpersonal relationships. They noted that health workers should have knowledge of the complexities of how abuse affects people taking into consideration age and cultural issues. In addition, Astbury et al. found that shame and isolation militate against disclosure of domestic violence. Based on the findings they recommended that helpers who work with abused women should consider the cultural undertones of the experiences of the women so that they can effectively help the women.

Khan (2015) also explored the outcomes of domestic abuse among women in the rural parts of Bangladesh. The study was phenomenological in nature and data was collected using interviews from 39 women who had survived the experience of abuse in their homes. It was discovered that the experience of abuse in the home affected the overall health and wellbeing of women as well as their immediate relationships such as their wards and other relatives. For the women, the major abusive experiences were physical, psychological sexual and socio-economic. For the wards of the women

survivors, outcomes were mostly behavioural and psychological, meanwhile, for relatives, the experiences were mostly socio-economic and psychological.

Huth-Bocks, Levendosky and Semel (2001) evaluated the effects of domestic abuse on young people's mental abilities. The effects included both direct and indirect ones. The participants in the study were 100 women with their children who were not older than 5 years of age. It was revealed that a little less than 50% of the women experienced domestic abuse in the year leading to the study. The abuse experienced was mostly physical meted out by their husbands. For the children who lived in homes of domestic abuse, the experience of domestic abuse affected their reasoning and intellectual capabilities. Also, the children were affected in ways which restricted their development.

Poutiainen and Holma (2013) examined the degree to which the outcomes of domestic abuse are seen in the quality of life and wellbeing of abused women receiving mental health treatment at the hospital. Data were collected by using questionnaires. In all, 530 people were surveyed. It was found that most of the participants had experienced domestic abuse. In terms of the effects of the abuse experience, it was revealed that the wellbeing and quality of life of the women. Based on the findings, it was concluded that regular investigations can help bring out the experience of abuse among women and can help prevent further pain caused by violence.

Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Högberg, and Emmelin (2013) aimed at gaining insight into the experience and coping strategies in relation to abuse among women in Java. The focus was on how women who were abused and were adjusting. The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological design.

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This helped to gain an insight into the lives and experiences of the women. The study discovered that the experience of domestic abuse affected the private lives of women. The major areas affected were the physical, psychosocial, mental and economic lives of the women. In dealing with the experience of abuse, the women adopted various coping mechanisms which may be within the women and external to the women. These coping mechanisms made the women seek help and assistance to deal with the abuse experiences. There was however tension in deciding whether to stay in the abusive marital relationships or not. Thus, there was a struggle whether to adjust and stay in the relationship or to be decisive and leave the abusive relationship.

Hayati et al. (2013) concluded that women who have survived abuse in Purworejo faced an inadequacy of support from institutions established to support women who have been abused. Also, some cultural beliefs and traditions restrained women from seek active means of overcoming abuse from their husbands. A significant point to note however is that, even though the participants in the study of Hayati et al. had high levels of education and socio-economic status, they lacked the support needed to overcome their experience of abuse. This was attributed to stereotypical gender biases which favoured abuse against women. Thus, the conclusion connotes that internalized gender norms play significant roles in women's encounters of abuse.

Avdibegovic, Brkic and Sinanovic (2017) sought to evaluate the experience of emotional abuse among women. The prevalence of emotional abuse among the women was explored. In terms of the participants, the study

surveyed 169 women. Regarding the prevalence of abuse, about 66% of the participants had experienced abuse while about 34% of the participants had not experienced abuse. The data collection instruments were Plutchik's Emotions Profile Index (EPI) and the Modified Inventory of Domestic Violence. It was discovered that essential variation existed between women who experienced abuse and the women who did not experience abuse in terms of their emotional lives.

Specifically, Avdibegovic et al. (2017) found that women sufferers of domestic abuse were affected so much in terms of experiencing denial/depression and hostility/damage, whereas the women who had no encounter of abuse did not suffer these effects. Also, it was revealed that violence was related with difficulty in coping as well as independence. The relationship between violence and loneliness and depression was also established in the study. Avdibegovic et al. ended by indicating that women who have suffered abuse had more negative emotions compared to those who had not suffered abuse. The women viewed themselves as being unhappy, indifferent, quarrelsome, isolated, irritated and less friendly. It was noted that that more negative emotional experiences were related to being abused. These negative emotions could lead to more damage in the mental health of women who have suffered abuse.

Giridhar (2012) conducted a study in Malawi to find out the extent to which domestic abuse cases were affected since the law on domestic abuse was made. It was revealed that about 31% of women resisted domestic abuse while about 7% of men resisted domestic abuse. Giridhar did admit, nonetheless, that it was difficult to split up the probable effects of other

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elements such as campaigns against domestic abuse among women on these percentages.

In Ghana, Boateng (2015) conducted a survey to explore issues relating to sexual abuse. Boating used a sample of 72 people who had sexual abuse encounters in Accra. Their reporting behaviours were of great concern in the study. The research discovered numerous reasons clarifying why the women who had experienced sexual abuse reported the abuse to the police. Specifically, the participants in the study indicated that they wanted the perpetrators of the abuse to face the law for their offence. However, a section of the participants were unwilling to report abuse situations because they did not want the offenders to be dealt with according to law since they were related to them and thus wanted resolutions to the problem which were not legal. The study revealed that the attitude of reporting sexual abuse was related to the type of sexual abuse, the level and educational qualification of the victims as well as the age of the victims. The study of Boateng (2015) focused mainly on reporting of abuse. However, the current study will cover the entire experiences of women who have survived abuse.

Mitchell (2011) also organised a research to explore how things were done at the 'Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU)'. In carrying out this study, Mitchell sampled 99 participants (both women and men) who had gone to DOVVSU to make reports of their abuse issues. She found that there was high rate of attrition after reporting. Specifically, 70% of people who were asked to obtain medical report never returned to continue the prosecution. The main reason cited for not returning to continue the prosecution was financial hardships. Also, it was pointed out that the

structures of DOVVSU and how prosecution was carried out put several barriers in the paths of the victims so much that it was impossible for both the officers to offer the best service while making it difficult for the victims to continue. Regardless of this, the victims of abuse who had reported to unit were of the view that it reporting was helpful and as such would encourage people who experience abuse to report to the unit and seek assistance on the way forward. The discoveries connote that women survivors of abuse had positive legal encounters in spite of all the challenges.

Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) aimed at identifying elements that improved the possibility of the occurrence of domestic abuse among married people in Ghana, with particular focus on women. The data examined was secondary data obtained from the '2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS)'. After analysing the data, it was revealed that about 34% of the 1524 participants ('married women') had encountered abuse in their homes. Also, it was found that there was 35% chance of women staying in cities and related places to experience home-based violence. There was also 41% chance that women married to men who witnessed and encountered their fathers battering and aggressively abusing their mothers, to suffer abuse. On the other side of the coin, women who witnessed their mothers abusing their fathers had higher possibility of experiencing abuse in comparison to women whose mothers were not abusive to their fathers. The chance of ever encountering abuse in the home was 48% less possible for women married to highly educated men in comparison to women married to men without education. Further, there was a high likelihood of women married to men who

drank alcohol to have abusive experience and encounters when studied along with women who married men who did not take in alcohol.

From the results, Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) concluded that husbands abusing alcohol, place of residence and historical background of abuse gave rise to encountering domestic abuse among married women. Also, having high level of education was a defensive factor against the experience of domestic abuse. It was recommended that larger efforts should be channeled into curbing abuse against women by adopting carried strategies which involved various stakeholders while at the same time ensuring that the laws against domestic abuse were fully enforced against offenders.

Causes of Abuse Experienced by Women

There have been several studies on the causes of abuse experienced by women. Some of these studies have been discussed in this section. Zink, Regan, Jacobson and Pabst (2003) also studied older women and contended that this population was greatly disregarded and in consequence, domestic violence remained an unsearched subject among the study group. After conducting a qualitative study, diverse results came up explain the reasoning behind women staying in abusive circumstances for several years throughout their married lives. The reasons comprised psychological/emotional connections, absence of awareness of what constitutes abuse, lack of job skills, children, health issues for the couple and a strong pledge and willingness to continue in the relationship in spite of the violence and ill treatment. Moreover, aloneness and fear of being alone were identified to be reasons why these women sought to remain in abusive marriages and relationships.

Kalokhe et al. (2018) carried out a descriptive cross-sectional study to explore the predictors of domestic violence encounters among married women in Pune, India. By using random sampling, 100 participants were selected from a clustered population. It was found that several reasons accounted for the experience of domestic abuse. Some of these were low level of educational achievement of the husband, lower-levels of satisfaction of husband's relations with marriage-gifts from the wife's family, too much respect and inability of relations to manage conflicts that sprout up early in the marriage. These correlates led to recommended tactics that could be added as part of plans to prevent domestic violence in the future. Some of these recommended approaches were ensuring that young people improve their levels of education, dealing with shortfalls of marital gifts and payments challenging norms surrounding domestic violence and increasing conflict negotiation skills.

Yount and Carrera (2006) evaluated issues relating to the experience of domestic abuse among married women in the context of Cambodia. The sample for the study comprised 2,074 married women. It was revealed that the nature of the socio-economic background predicted whether there will be physical abuse in the home or not. This is because the socio-economic background affected the standard living which can generate fights leading to abuse. Also, the level of education of women predicted the experience of abuse. Specifically, women who were less educated than their husbands were more likely to be abused by their husbands. The abuse experiences are mostly physical and psychological. Further, Yount and Carrera revealed that when women have children may experience several physical abuse incidents. However, it was shown that women whose parents were alive and had their

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siblings with them were likely to not be abused. Other factors which influence women's experience of abuse were related to experiences that they had during their childhood. The results underscored the impact of marital background and upbringing encounters on domestic abuse in Cambodia.

Putra, Pradnyani and Parwangsa (2019) explored the issues of physical domestic abuse in married females in Indonesia. The data used for the study was from the 'Demographic and Health Survey' of Indonesia from different years. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were used in the analyses of the data. The study revealed that the women in the study had high likelihood of accepting spousal abuse as part of the marriage experience. Such acceptance was highly prevalent between the years of 2002 to 2012 in Indonesia. The factors responsible for abusive experiences in the home included characteristics of the wife, husband and the home. The results imply that based on the features of the wife, husband and household, some people viewed abuse of women as justified. This does not send a good signal since regardless of the reasons, abuse can never be right.

Younger (2011) explored domestic violence from a male victim's view. The data for the study was obtained from the "Violence and Threats of Violence Against Women and Men in the United States, 1994-1996". This secondary data was taken from 8000 men who have suffered abuse. The study revealed that gender significantly correlated with the experience of abuse. The implication of the finding was that domestic violence was significantly in relation to gender.

Pingley (2017) conducted a systematic evaluation of past studies that focused on the experiences of children who had lived in abusive homes

growing up. Specifically, the study was to bring to light how abuse affects the behaviours, development and adjustment of such children. The study revealed that children who lived in abusive homes were at high risk of developing problematic behaviours in future. Also, it was shown that development of such children suffered because of the abuse experience.

Forms of Support and Coping Strategies of Women who Suffer Abuse

The forms of support as well as the coping strategies of women who have experienced abuse have also been documented in the literature. Bhandari and Hughes (2017) also explored the actual encounters of women who have suffered domestic abuse. The study sampled 21 Indian women from low socio-economic background conveniently for the study. Data was collected using an interview guide. The study focused on the types of abuse, the roles of relatives and significant persons, the effects on children and the neglect or rejection experienced. The results showed that women suffered abuse not only from their husbands but also from the relatives of their husbands. Also, women were required to live through the abuse experience because reporting the abuse was seen as bringing shame and humiliation to the families involved. Further, the study revealed that support, mainly economic and social, were lacking for the women who suffered abuse. This did not paint a good picture for women who experienced abuse.

Barber (2012) explored the encounters and needs of child sexual abuse survivors who have received therapeutic help. The study was to find out how professionals working with children who have experienced sexual abuse can benefit from therapy. The study was mainly qualitative in nature. Data were collected from children who had experienced abuse and professionals who

worked with such children. Using thematic analysis, it was shown professionals who worked with sexually abused children did not need high level of education to be able to assist the children brought to them. The study revealed that there were some characteristics that needed to be in place for the professionals to be able to assist abused children. These characteristics were listening and warmth. The ability of mental health workers to listen and pay attention to the issues of child sexual abuse survivors encouraged the survivors to open up and share their experiences with them. It was revealed in the study again that referral was deemed a challenging task since most of the time the survivors of abuse were not willing to be referred thus creating an ethically confusing situation.

Gopal and Nunlall (2017) explored the support available for women who have suffered abuse. The study was based on "Ungar' Social Ecology of Resilience Theory". Data were collected through an interview guide. From the interviews, it was found that women who were abused were provided with shelter either by social workers or by non-governmental organisations. The discoveries showed also that women who have suffered abuse mostly rely on external support from families, communities and even the state. These things help the abused women cope and be resilient in the face of abuse.

Haeseler (2013) also carried out a phenomenological case study to investigate the coping mechanisms of women who have survived domestic abuse. The study was based on the ecological theory. Data were collected from eight providers of care for abused women. It was revealed that the coping strategies of abused women were complex, idiosyncratic and compounded.

Therefore, the coping strategies of women survivors of abuse could not be easily and simply outlined.

Phanichrat and Townshend (2010) explored the coping strategies of people who have survived child sexual abuse. The study adopted a qualitative approach using "interpretative phenomenological design". Adults who had experiences of child sexual abuse were interviewed. The study showed that the participants usually start with avoidance as a coping strategy but as things progress beyond their tolerance, they begin to adopt more problem-focused approaches. Some of the appropriate mechanisms of coping found in the study were thoughtful thinking, seeking support, seeking meaning, optimistic thinking and self-acceptance strategies. It can be realized from the findings that people who experience abuse should be encouraged to adopt more problem-focused approaches and mechanisms in dealing with the experience of abuse.

In a meta-analysis, Walsh, Fortier, and DiLillo (2010) synthesized the literature on how children who have experienced Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) coped with the experience. A total of 39 studies were recorded and reviewed. The studies were composed of 11 descriptive studies, 18 correlational studies, and 10 exploratory studies which were all focused on the coping mechanisms of people who have experienced child sexual abuse. These studies brought to light issues regarding the first steps that are taken to assist children who have been abused sexually. Nevertheless, the studies was restricted by some theoretical and methodological matters, involving a difficulty to define how coping takes place, an imbalance between theory and research, and restricted practical application.

Further, Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996) conducted a study of abuse among undergraduate students. The study employed a total of 23 students pursuing degrees who have suffered physical, emotional, or sexual abuse experiences as the experimental group and 23 people as the control. Self-reported physical or sexual abuse was explained as "extremely traumatic". The study used the process of narration and fruitful thoughtful scale in gathering data. The study revealed that shunning dwelling on abuse and overgeneralizing was connected to lower psychological distress. The abused group recorded improved psychological affliction, though no diversities were found in coping mechanisms. The execution of "other" pronouns in narratives definitely connected to adaptive methods of coping. Even though the study of Klein and Janoff-Bulman is similar to the current study, the difference in the sample characteristics makes it different. The current study is focused on only females while the study of Klein and Janoff-Bulman was focused on males and females.

Johnson, Sheahan and Chard (2003) also studied coping strategies of abuse survivors. The sample comprised 86 females who had gone for therapy for therapy connected to sexual abuse and undesired or violent sexual conduct. The sexual contacts were fondling, oral sex any other sexual affair. The Coping Strategies Inventory was used in the data collection. The study found that "approach" strategy positively associated with passive aggressive and histrionic personality disorder (PD). The "avoidance strategy definitely correlated with PTSD extent and avoidant, paranoid, reliant, borderline, schizotypal and schizoid PD as well as CSA victims identified with PTSD" (p. 1).

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Brand and Alexander (2003) studied the coping strategies of victims of sexual abuse. The sample comprised 101 female incest victims enlisted through newspaper advertisements. The Ways of Coping Checklist was used in collecting the data. The study found that "emotion-focused" strategy to coping was employed by the participants on most occasions than "problem-focused" coping. "Avoidance" and "seeking social support" were definitely connected with "adult dysfunction", while isolation was related to "less dysfunction".

Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed literature associated with the research.   It reviews the Feminist Theory and Resilience Theory were reviewed. The Conceptual Framework upon which the study was based, designed by the researcher by considering the key variables in the study was also presented and discussed. Concepts relating to abuse against women, types of abuse, causes of abuse against women, effects of abuse against women, legal issues related to abuse against women in Ghana were discussed. Empirical studies related to the study were also reviewed. Generally, it was realized that in Ghana, there was not much done on abuse against women specifically. In this regard, carrying out the current study was considered necessary.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. This chapter introduces the methods employed in carrying out the research. It covered the research design, study area, the population, the sample and sampling procedures, data collection instrument, pilot-testing of instruments, validity and reliability of the instrument, data collection procedures and data processing and analysis.

Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is an approach to research which is systematic and often subjective employed to give description of the experiences and circumstances of people (Burns & Grove, 2003). Qualitative research equips a researcher to investigate and explore the lives of people in order to understand their lives and their circumstances from their point of view with specific emphasis on the context within which participants reside (Yin, 2011). According to Welch, Rumyantseva and Hewerdine (2013), qualitative research permits for a wide approach to gaining insight into a specific occurrence from the views of the people who experienced the specific situations. This means that the researcher can do an in-depth study with this approach. The qualitative approach was adjudged suitable for the research because the focus of the study is on the lived experiences of female survivors of abuse in the study. The approach

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helped discern the meaning partakers express concerning their experience of abuse.

Research Design

The phenomenological qualitative design was adopted for the study. Phenomenology is the investigation into an individual's encounter with a specific phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Phenomenology is "descriptive, uses the phenomenological reductions, investigates the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and provides knowledge of psychological essences (that is, the structures of meaning immanent in human experience) through imaginative variation" (Wertz, 2005, p. 170).

Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action. This design was deemed appropriate because it helped depict a rich and precise description of the experiences of female survivors of abuse.

The phenomenological qualitative design is advantageous in various ways. It helps to gain an understanding of the phenomenon in their naturally occurring context (Patton, 1990) and stimulates respondents' perspectives of lived experiences, while laying emphasis on the richness, breadth and depth of those experiences (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). It also permits the researcher to ask about the subjective, 'lived experiences' of participants in a study

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without looking for specific answers (Wertz, 2005). The major weakness in the qualitative design is its inability to collect data from a large number of people. This did however not affect the current study, since the research targeted at only describing the experiences of female survivors of abuse within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis and not necessarily to generalize the findings to the entire country.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis (STM) in the Western Region of Ghana. The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis covers a land area of 219km2 with Sekondi being the administrative capital of the Metropolis. STM is bordered in the west by Ahanta West District, in the north by Mpohor Wassa East District, in the east by Shama District and in the South by the Gulf of Guinea. STM is situated on the south-western of Ghana, about 242km west of Accra, the capital city. It is also roughly 280 kilometres from the La Cote d'voire border in the west (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2010).

The population of Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, according to the recent Population and Housing Census, was 991,000 (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021). Accident, violence, homicide or suicide contribute greatly to the number of deaths in the Metropolis (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2010). This is relevant because they can all inform the occurrence and prevalence of abuse against women. The metropolis was chosen for the study because of the several media reports of abuse incidents against women. Carrying out this study there helped to obtain empirical data about abuse against women in the metropolis.

Population

The population for the study comprised of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis which is found in the Western Region of Ghana. The target group was made up of females who had suffered abuse experiences. This population was chosen because the study was about abuse experience of females. Therefore, only females who had suffered abuse could be a part of the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample is the portion of the population that is used for the study. In this study, 30 women were used as the sample for the study. This sample size basing on the view of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) that saturation in qualitative studies usually happens when 12 respondents with similar characteristics. Latham (2016) indicated that a minimum of 15 is an appropriate sample for most qualitative interview studies. Latham viewed saturation as a phenomenon where additional participants in a qualitative study do not provide any additional insights. In phenomenology, the focus is on gaining an understanding into the experiences of participants. Therefore, by using a smaller sample, it is easier to concretise the experiences of these participants. Therefore, using a sample of 30 respondents was appropriate for the study.

Purposive and snowball sampling procedures were employed in selecting the sample for the study. According to Degraft-Otoo (2012), purposive (also known as judgmental or subjective) sampling is a non-probability approach in which people are included in the sample based on some specified criterion. In this study, the basis for inclusion in the study was

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females who have survived abuse in the past 10 years at most and reported the abuse to the right authorities such as DOVVSU. The criterion in terms of the number of years was based on the assumption that people who survive abuse are likely to be able to recount their experiences more vividly if it is within five years of their experiences. The criterion in terms of reporting was considered because it is those who have reported abuse cases that the researcher can establish their experiences regarding the legal and psychological supports received.

Kombo and Tromp (2006) posited that the reason for using purposive sampling is based on the assumption that people who are critical and can provide relevant information are sampled. In this line of thought, purposive sampling was adopted to help gain understanding of the experiences of women survivors of abuse.

Snowball sampling refers to the process of collecting information from people by firstly identifying a few participants who then lead to other participants who can give similar information (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Futing-Liao, 2004). After purposively selecting some initial participants, the participants helped identify other participants who had similar experiences.

In using these two sampling procedures, the first few respondents were sampled purposively. After this, the already sampled participants directed the researcher to women they knew to have suffered abuse. This procedure was the snowball procedure. The background characteristics of the sample for the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample characteristics (N=30)

Item	Frequency (f)	Percentage
Age in years		
30 – 40	9	30.0
40 – 50	15	50.0
Above 50	6	20.0
Educational Level		
No education	6	20.0
Secondary	10	33.3
Diploma	8	26.7
Degree	6	20.0
Occupation		
Traders	16	53.4
Teachers	6	20.0
Nurses	4	13.3
Civil service	4	13.3
Marital status		
Married	7	23.3
Separated	14	46.7
Divorced	9	30.0
Duration between abuse experience and interview time		
1 – 5 years	24	80.0
5 – 7 years	6	20.0

Source: Field Data (2020)

Data Collection Instrument

Qualitative approach to research has a preference for 'natural' settings as the primary source of data and aims at a vivid and rich description and explanation of phenomenon with a view to understanding it from the perspectives of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In collecting the data for the study, an interview guide was used. An interview is "an interchange of

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views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social situatedness of research data" (Cohen, Manion, & Keith, 2003, p. 267). Specifically, the semi-structured interview guide was used for the study.

A semi-structured interview is a thorough, inclusive and complete method that gives the researcher the chance to obtain information from the participants. It comprises non-directive and open-ended questions, brought about to obtain quality information (Barber, 2012). Qualitative studies frequently employ semi-structured interviewing style to effectively investigate a broad scope of social issues (Charmaz, 2006). Interviewing is also cooperative in that it makes the participant the center of the issues being investigated and makes the participant the main person to fully describe their issues and circumstances, and not the investigator. This happens because the participant is able to give contextual explanation of their issues and circumstances.

Semi-structure interview permits the researcher to earn well detailed insight into the views, perceptions, characteristics and actual situations significant to the focus of the study without any predetermined bias about the study (Patton, 2002). Since phenomenological design seeks to gain in-depth insight into the personal experiences of individuals, the use of semi-structured interview was deemed appropriate for the current study.

The semi-structured interview guide was designed by the researcher to cover five key areas. These include the types of abuse experienced, the causes of abuse, the effects of abuse, the forms of support available to women survivors of abuse and the coping strategies adopted. Specifically, the

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interview guide comprised 10 questions. The questions were asked to cover the areas already indicated. The interview guide also had a preliminary section which outlined the rationale for the study, ethical issues and ground rules. The interview guide was written in English but was conducted in Fante Language for the participants who could not speak English. Only the participants who could not speak fluently in English were interviewed in Fante. I conducted all the interviews personally. Validation of the instrument was done by establishing the trustworthiness.

Data Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability are viewed differently in qualitative studies. With respect to quantitative data, reliability refers to the extent to which there is consistency in data, whereas validity relates to the extent to which the data covers the objectives of the study. Nonetheless, "reliability in qualitative research refers to the dependability while validity refers to the extent to which a discovery is judged to have been interpreted in a correct way" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 13). This implies that the concepts of reliability and validity are relatively foreign and not a good fit to the field of qualitative research (DeVault, 2018). Therefore, instead of centering on reliability and validity, researchers using the qualitative approach deal with data trustworthiness. Data trustworthiness "consists of the following components: (a) credibility; (b) transferability; (c); dependability; and (d) confirmability" (DeVault, 2018, p. 1).

Credibility: This is the most important criterion in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data and involves the researcher clearly linking the findings of a study with actual situations in order to illustrate the veracity

of the study's findings (Olivia, 2018). In establishing the credibility of data, the researcher used triangulation of sources. This is the means of gathering data from different sources. In this study, I gathered data from varying people at varying points in time and in varying settings. Thus, the researcher did not gather the data from the participants at just one sitting. The different participants were met at different times and at different places. This ensured that information given by the participants were the actual information they wanted to give and not influenced by the views of other people. This helped to establish the credibility of the data collected.

Transferability: According to DeVault (2018, p.1), "transferability is the generalisation of the study's findings to other situations and contexts". Generalization is however limited in qualitative research due to the fact that qualitative studies involve small sample size. Cobbold (2010) opined that researchers who want to make the decision of generalisation must find out the degree of similarity between the study context and the context within which the results will be generalised. In addressing the extent of transferability of the data, the researcher's choice of purposive sampling was helpful. Purposive sampling helped deal with transferability since particular information is maximized in connection to the study's context. Thus, information from targeted group of people is dwelled, rather than the generalized and aggregated information, which is seen in quantitative research.

Dependability: Dependability is significant to trustworthiness because "it establishes the research study's discoveries as consistent and repeatable" (Olivia 2018, p.1). Establishing whether a study's findings would be replicated in a similar study is challenging for qualitative researchers. The reason is that

participants' experience with regard to a phenomenon is likely to change with the passage of time. One major means of establishing dependability of data is to have an outside researcher lead an inquiry audit on the research study. An inquiry audit includes having another researcher other than the main researcher auditing the data collection procedure, data analysis and presentation of results (Olivia 2018). This is done to help attest to the exactness of the discoveries and to ensure the results are supported by the information obtained. In the current study, the researcher's supervisors who have expertise in abuse and research helped establish the dependability of the data collection and analysis procedures.

Confirmability: This is concerned with the faith that researchers have in the results of their study as being a true reflection of the information obtained from the participants (Olivia 2018). Thus, the researcher has to ensure that the data, findings and interpretations made in the study are the true reflections of the intents of the participants and not created by the researcher. In establishing confirmability in this study, the researcher used an Audit Trail. An audit trail involves the researcher detailing every part of the study including the data collection and analysis procedures. In this study, all the procedures included in the study from the beginning to the interpretation of the results are shown in detail. Also, colleague researchers were asked to review the transcribed data, generated themes and conclusions made to determine if they are in line or there are contradictions. Some participants, specifically, 10 out of the 30 were given copies of the transcribed interview for their perusal. This helped establish if the data confirms their intent.

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Pilot Test

The term pilot study can refer to so-called feasibility studies which are "small scale version[s], or trial run[s], done in preparation for the major study" (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001, p. 467) while in pre-test, the researcher only test one or a few components of the research study on a small fraction of the intended sample size. They are sometimes however used interchangeably.

The motive for conducting the pilot test was to throw light on and better the questions, recognizing gaps and areas that needed to be evaluated, and give rise to the trustworthiness of the data. Ten female survivors of abuse in the Cape Coast Metropolis were interviewed for the pilot test. For pilot-tests, about 10% of the population is always suitable (Polit et al., 2001). In this study, the use of 10 participants represents over 30% of the sample for the study and as such was suitable. The 10 particpants were reached through the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) at Cape Coast.

These interviews were conducted in Fante. After conducting this test, some few changes were made in the interview guide. For instance, in the first draft of the instrument there were questions that attempted exploring the feelings of the participants. However, it was realized during the pilot test that all the participants were unwilling to answer and resisted attempts to dig deeper. In the final instrument, the focus on feelings was taken out.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability was also used to obtain a statistical figure showing the percentage of agreement in the transcription of two different raters of the interviews recorded. In calculating this, two different raters transcribed the interviews and the interviews were compared. The number of

statements that were in agreement were counted and divided by the total number of statements multiplied by 100. Since the interview guide had 10 questions each interview guide had on average 10 statements. After comparing the transcriptions, 80% agreement was observed. This implies that the reliability was high.

Data Collection Procedure

In collecting the data, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board in the University of Cape Coast. This gave the researcher the ethical backing to carry out the study. The researcher then obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Guidance and Counselling to be able to carry out the study. The focus of the introductory letter was to seek for collaboration and also to create rapport between the researcher and the participants in the study.

In collecting the data, I introduced myself to the respondents and agreed on dates to conduct the interview. With approval from participants, the researcher recorded the interviews to ensure accurate transcription. A period of four working weeks was utilized in collecting the data. The researcher conducted all the interviews personally. In conducting the interviews, the respondents who could not speak English fluently were interviewed in Fante. However, those who could speak English fluently were interviewed in English. I am Fante who studied Fante Language till the University level and so I have control over the language. The interviews conducted in Fante were transcribed into English. Typically, every interview lasted on average 20 minutes. During the interview, the participants were made aware that if they ever felt uncomfortable about anything, they could decline answering.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, consideration was given to ethical issues such as consent, anonymity, confidentiality and autonomy. The consent of the respondents was sought before the study was carried out. Again, the researcher ensured that the identities of the respondents were kept private. In doing this, pseudonyms were used to represent the identities of the participants. This was to ensure that no one could trace a specific response to a specific participant. The researcher also ensured that the data obtained from the respondents are kept confidential for academic purposes only and not exposed to third parties without the consent of the participant. In ensuring autonomy of the participants, the participants were given the freedom to choose whether to be a part of the study or not. They were also given the freedom to quit the study at any time if they wanted to. Finally, due to the sensitive nature of the study, on a call was a professional counsellor from the Counselling Centre, UCC, who would help participant who felt overwhelmed by recounting her experiences.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis procedure. Thematic analysis is a method for recognizing, analysing, organising, explaining, and recording themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke argued that it is a flexible kind of analysis which deals with a huge range of theoretical backgrounds and viewpoints. The thematic analysis used in the current study was based on the perspective of constructive epistemology. This implies that the process of analysis revolves around generating meaning through personal interactions with participants in order to gain an insight into their lives subjectively (Burr, 2003). Using this

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method was aimed at giving the researcher the chance to gain insight and add to what is already known regarding the lives of women who have experienced and survived abuse.

In doing the thematic analysis, the steps proposed by Kelchtermans, Vandenberghe and Schratz (1994) were followed. These are:

1. *Transcription:* I converted the audiotape recordings into text data. The text data was exact representation of the recorded audio.

2. *Listening to the interview for a general sense:* I listened to all the audio tapes on many occasions and read the transcripts many times so as to gain contextual understanding of the themes in the data. I tried to understand the actual statements of the respondents instead of what I thought they would say.

3. *Clustering units of relevant meaning:* I determined if any of the units of significant meaning logically clustered together and if these units seemed to be themes.

4. *Delineating units/themes of meaning significant to the research question:* Once the themes were observed, I delineated or aligned the themes to the relevant research questions of the study.

5. Themes and sub-themes generated were supported by direct quotations from responses provided by the participants using pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were used to ensure that the identities of the participants were hidden.

Chapter Summary

The study primarily applied a qualitative methodology. The phenomenological perspective rooted within the qualitative approach will be used in this current study. Thirty female survivors of abuse were interviewed from Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The research instrument used in gathering data for the study was a semi-structured interview guide. A pilot test was carried out using 10 female survivors of abuse from the Cape Coast Metropolis. Data trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data collected were analysed through thematic analysis.

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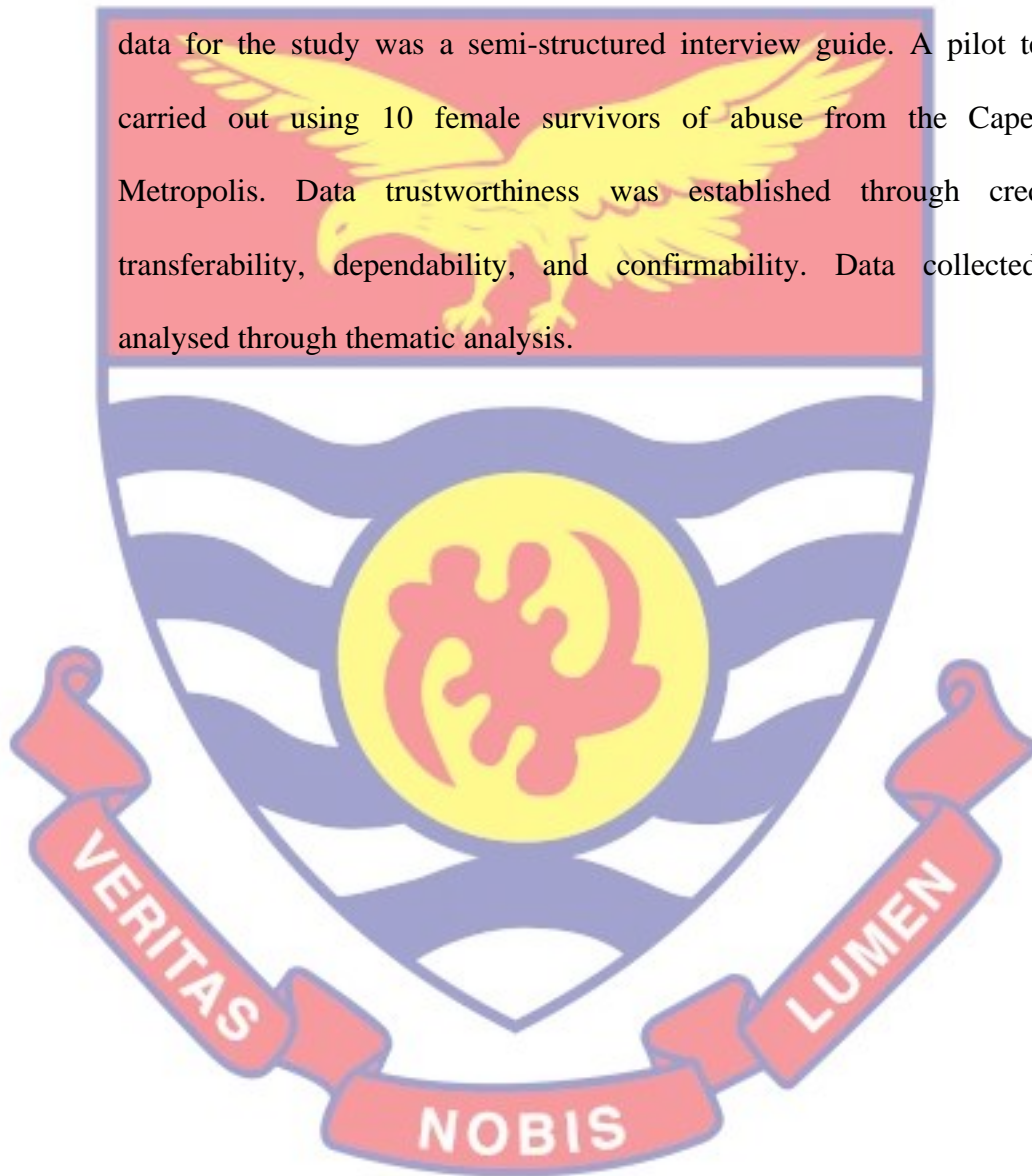
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and coping strategies of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. As a qualitative study, the data was collected through the use of an interview guide. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. This chapter introduces the outcomes and discussion of the reasearch. The results are presented first before the discussion.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study comprised 30 respondents aged 30 years and above. Specifically, nine of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 40 years, 15 of the respondents were between the ages of 40 and 50 years while the remaining six respondents were older than 50 years of age. Regarding educational level, only six of the respondents had never had any education at all. Out of the remaining 24 respondents who had some form of education, 10 of them had up to secondary level education. Again, eight of the remaining 14 respondents had diploma level of education whereas the remaining six respondents had degree level of education.

In terms of occupation, 16 of the respondents were traders. They were mostly engaged in selling of foodstuffs and clothes. Out of the remaining 14 respondents, six were teachers, four were nurses and the remaining four worked in the civil service. This implies that all the respondents were involved in some level of income induced activity.

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Further, the respondents were asked about their marital status, 14 of the respondents indicated that they were separated, nine of them indicated that they were divorced while the remaining seven respondents were still married. Those who separated indicated that they were no longer living with their spouses even though divorce was not finalized. Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate the duration between the time they experienced the abuse and the day of the interview. Out of the 30 respondents, 24 indicated that their abuse experience had occurred within past one to five years while the remaining six respondents indicated that their abuse experience occurred in between five to seven years ago. The demographic characteristics of the respondents give an indication of who the respondents are and as such inform our understanding of their experiences.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What are the types of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?*

This research question sought to identify the types of abuse experienced by the respondents. In answering this research question, the respondents were asked a series of questions.

Since all the respondents were chosen based on the criteria that they had experienced abuse, they were asked which type of abuse they had experienced. Twenty-eight who were interviewed indicated that they suffered emotional abuse from their spouses. The other types of abuse that the respondents experienced were physical abuse (20 respondents), economic abuse (15 respondents) and verbal abuse (14 respondents). Most of the

respondents experienced multiple types of abuse at the same time. Thus, they were not experiencing one abuse at a time. For instance, a respondent may experience both emotional and physical abuse at the same time.

Some of the specific statements of the respondents are quoted below:

> *I have really suffered oo, can you imagine, my husband will be beating me physically and at the same time, frustrating me emotionally.* (FS 5)

> *I have been abused a lot by my husband mostly he will abuse me emotionally by making me feel like I am worthless and sometimes verbally. He can really insult me and make me feel like I am nothing.* (FS 7)

> *To talk about the abuse, is a whole lot. Because, I have been through the physical abuse like beatings, and emotional abuse like insults and sometimes I get so stressed, I don't even know what to do.* (FS 10)

> *For me I have suffered a lot of emotional and economic abuse. There are several times that I don't even get anything to use to fend for myself and sometimes I have to go beg friends even though my husband is rich. It's not easy.* (FS 13)

The views of the respondents indicate that the common types of abuse encountered by the respondents were emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. Even though other abuses such as psychological and sexual were mentioned by some of the respondents, the common ones were those indicated by most of the respondents.

Research Question 2: *What are the causes of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?*

This research question sought to identify the causes of abuse experienced by the respondents. In answering this research question, the respondents were asked a chain of questions.

The respondents were asked to indicate what they believed caused the abuse they were experiencing. Several answers were given by the respondents.

Among these answers, the common themes derived included immaturity on part of husband, type of upbringing of husband, types of friends of the husband, alcohol and drug abuse, and lack of respect for women. Among these themes, all the respondents indicated immaturity and lack of respect as causes of the abuse they experienced. These are reflected in some of their statements below:

> *My husband doesn't respect me oh. I think he doesn't respect women in general. Even if an issue comes and I say something different, he shouts at me and says I'm a woman and so I should keep quiet and that I don't know anything. Because of this he always shouts at me, insults me and makes me feel so worthless*. (FS 9)

> *I would say one cause is immaturity on my husband's part. He was always influenced by friends and family members and he never listened to me. Whenever something happened, he always reacted angrily by insulting me, hitting me and not giving money in the house. Sometimes after some time, he will think about his actions and then apologise. That's why I say its immaturity*. (FS 3)

The other causes were indicated by specific number of the respondents. For instance, type of upbringing was indicated by 24 of the respondents, type of friends was indicated by 21 of the respondents while alcohol and drug abuse was also indicated by 20 of the respondents.

> *Mmm, I think the type of upbringing of my husband, because when we met, he told me the mother got married to different men and the mother wasn't so respectful to them because the men were not so hard on the mother. So for him, he feels he has to be hard on the woman. As a result, he always abused me*. (FS 16)

> *The main cause in my view is his friends oh. The type of friends he has, they are all bad. Before some of those friends we had peace in this house but now there is no peace at all. All he does is go out with them and drink alcohol and when he comes home, he gives me so much trouble. I'm really suffering…hmm*. (FS 20)

The results show that, to most of the respondents, abuse was not caused by a single factor but was caused mostly by a combination of these factors.

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The views expressed by the respondents show that for the respondents, their experience of abuse is caused by multiple factors. An important thing noticed is that none of the respondents indicated that they did anything to deserve these abuses. Thus, overall, the causes of abuse against women as indicated in this study include immaturity among men, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, bad peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse among men.

Research Question 3: *What are the actual encounters of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?*

This research question aimed at finding out the actual encounters of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. The respondents were required to describe how the abuse experience was to them. Different responses were given by the 30 sampled respondents.

From the responses given by the respondents, some themes were generated about their experiences. Specifically, most of the respondents indicated that they were beaten, insulted, called names and were constantly living in fear. Some also indicated that their husbands are always angry and so the house has always been uncomfortable for them. To the respondents, their abuse experience creates discomfort and fear for them. These experiences made the lives of the respondents difficult. Some of the experiences as described by the respondents are depicted below:

> *It was not easy oo…hmm…at times, I have to leave the house with the kids and sleep on the street. I remember sometime we slept on some corridors so as to calm situations because there was no one to talk to at that moment. So I leave the house till situations come down. Particularly, when he insults me and calls me a witch who wants to destroy his life.* (FS 1)

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The same respondent added that:

> *There was this time he got back from a trip and he wanted to have sex with me but then I was menstruating and he got so angry. The anger was too much that he began insulting me and slapping me. I was having my weave on, he forced to pull it by force, he tried to strangle my neck, he was like, "he was going to kill me", till I found my way to escape out of the room.* (FS 1)

In a similar light, one respondent who had suffered physical abuse described her experience citing an incident that had happened.

> *There was this time that we had a little quarrel about house chores, combining house chores and a two months old baby. I left our kid with a mother who stays downstairs because I was washing a lot. My husband came unannounced from work and he got so furious that I left our kid with a neighbour. I was going for the kid but the baby was sleeping so I decided to eat before but he came and kicked the food on the floor and took the plate to stab me. So I just screamed and called the woman's name and other neighbours to come. So he stopped and he backed off a little, quickly, I rushed out and go for the baby. He said that I was disobedient.* (FS 2)

Another respondent who had suffered psychological abuse described her experience:

> *Psychologically, it has been very bad for me. As I said, I have been married for six years and along the way, my husband goes to have a child with another woman because I have not been able to give him a child. I only got to know this through a friend. It tortures me.* (FS 19)

One respondent who had experienced verbal abuse described her experience:

> *Sometimes, he would shout on me as if I am a kid or I don't know my left from my right. He is always trying to correct me and using all sort of abusive words on me. It makes the house very uncomfortable for me and I feel so bad about myself. I am always trying not to offend him.* (FS 27)

Similarly, another respondent who had been verbally abused described her experience:

> There was one time that we had an argument and he insulted me and said so many things that he wasn't supposed to say. In fact, I was very quiet, I couldn't say a word. So the following day, in the evening, he came and apologized that what he did wasn't too good, he is sorry for that. (FS 29)

In a very long account, one respondent who is married to a foreigner described her experience:

> Hmmm…one day, I told him I was going out with my friends, he accepted and then on my way home, I saw him sending me pictures and I looked at the pictures and then I found out it was my clothes that he was burning. I didn't even think he could do that. So until I got to the house and I saw that it was true and then he took the rest of my clothes from the closet and just went to throw them in the yard. He did this because I went out with my friends which I told him before. He always gets angry at me. (FS 10)

The same respondent cited another abuse experience:

> One day, he threw garbage on my head just because I went to work and I didn't come home early. When those things happen, I feel so helpless, depressed, scared and so broken. I don't try to fight back because I get scared, maybe he may hit me with something. It made me feel so bad about myself. (FS 10)

The views of the respondents imply that most of the respondents were living in constant fear and discomfort. Some were beaten, insulted, called names and felt uncomfortable and as such some had a low self-esteem. Their husbands were usually angry and so they lived in constant caution to ensure that they did not offend their husbands.

Research Question 4: *What are the forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?*

This research question was aimed at finding out the forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. The respondents were asked to specify the support they have received in light of the abuse they suffered. The results obtained are presented in this section.

From the views of the respondents, some common themes were identified. Specifically, the forms of support identified from the views of the respondents include friends, family, DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department. The respondents, 20 of them indicated that during the period of abuse, their main form of support was their close friends and families. Some of the respondents also indicated that DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department have their main forms of support in their experience of abuse.

For those who received support from their friends and families, they were of the view that they were only able to survive the abuse experience because of the support they got from their friends and families. However, for those who did receive support from DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department, they indicated that their friends recommended these agencies to them and that the agencies have been helpful to them. Specifically, the agencies provided some emotional support through counselling and also assessing their legal options. In essence, friends, family and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department were the main forms of support

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available to the female survivors of abuse during their experience of abuse.

Some of the specific statements of the respondents are quoted below:

> *It has not been easy oo…throughout the period of abuse the main support I had was from my family. I think my mother has been very helpful. She kept comforting me and helping me deal with all I went through.* (FS 4)

> *I have this friend, hmmm… I must say she has been very supportive. Without her, I would have given up long ago. She gave me a shoulder to cry on. For me, I would be forever grateful to her*. (FS 10)

> *I have friends; I have good friends, close friends who are there for me. All that I need to do is make them know what I want, and they are always there too*. (FS 13)

> *One of my friends told me about DOVVSU when I told her what I was going through. When I came to DOVVSU, they really supported me. The counsellor who they gave me to supported me throughout the abuse and I was able to manage things because of that*. (FS 21)

The respondents were further asked to indicate if they would need any form of additional support. From the interviews conducted, it was realised that the respondents felt that the government through DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department could do more to make the experience of abuse easier for women. Some of the critical responses are quoted below:

> *I think there should be an open counselling section where people can go, not like you are going to DOVVSU so you are going report somebody. When it is DOVVSU, people may think you are going to report someone. These counsellors can help women experiencing abuse to deal with the experience*. (FS 17)

> *I will suggest that the ministry of gender and children's welfare set up job allocations for women who don't do anything to help them deal with the experience of abuse. This is because if you are not working, it is very easy to stay in abusive relationships*. (FS 20)

> *I think the government should provide some financial and legal support. For instance, my business was not moving and my husband was not helping me even though he had the money to support me*. (FS 24)

In summary, it can be inferred that the respondents indicated that their main forms of support in their experience of abuse were their friends, families and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department. The respondents also felt that there was the need for the government to do more to help female survivors of abuse.

Research Question 5: *How do female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana cope with their abusive experiences?*

This research question sought to find out how female survivors of abuse coped with their abusive experiences. The difference between this research question and that of research question four was that this research question mainly dealt with what the respondents did to cope with the abuse while research question four dealt with what support systems were available to them either from the government or families. The respondents were generally asked to indicate how the managed to survive and cope with their abusive experiences. Different views were expressed by the respondents.

From the views of the respondents, it was revealed that the respondents coped with the abuse experience by looking for aid from friends and families, staying quiet and praying the abuse will end and receiving help from their religious leaders. Most of the respondents (20) indicated that their main way of coping was constant reliance on their friends and families. Their friends and families encouraged them and gave them strength to continue in their marriages even when they were experiencing abuses.

Other respondents suffered the abuse experience in quiet, praying that things will get better. They kept encouraging themselves that things will turn

out better. This helped them endure the pains they were experiencing. For such respondents, their religious leaders helped them cope a lot during their abuse experiences. Some of the direct statements of the respondents are quoted in this section:

> *It has not been easy oh…you just cope, you just wait quietly and pray that he will change and the abuse will end*. (FS 4)

> *I have been coping with help from my family and friends. They encourage me a lot and so I will say that is why I have been able to endure all these pains*. (FS 13)

> *Throughout everything, God has helped me stand. My pastor kept encouraging me and praying with me. That is how I coped with all the abuse*. (FS 25)

From the views of the respondents, it can be inferred that the female survivors of abuse coped with the experience of abuse by praying and hoping things will change and relying on family and friends as well as their religious leaders. These helped the respondents go through the abuse encountered notwithstanding of the pain.

Discussion

Types of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana

The study discovered that the forms of abuse suffered by the respondents were emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. Even though other abuses such as psychological and sexual were mentioned by some of the respondents, the common ones were those indicated by most of the respondents. Thus, by implication, female survivors of abuse mostly experienced emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse.

Cordero (2014) indicated that the experience of emotional abuse was shown in continuous intimidation, degradation, control or manipulation of another. It also included insults or criticisms that undermine self-confidence, threats to kill the victim, self, or both, and using reality twisting statements or behaviours that create confusion or insecurity. Cordero added that physical abuse experienced by people included non-accidental physical injury or injuries to a child or adult. It also included inflicting pain of any sort or causing fractures, bruises, burns, electric shock, or any unpleasant sensation. Physical abuse also consisted of any physically aggressive behaviour such as hitting, pushing or pinching.

The findings confirm the findings of Guruge, Roche and Catallo (2012) that usually reported forms of abuse among women involved criticizing, insulting, and intimidation by partner (psychological abuse); slapping, shoving and hitting (physical abuse); and forced sexual intercourse and sexually degrading acts (sexual abuse) by a partner/spouse. The researchers also discovered that a substantial proportion of the participants also had suffered physical and mental health impairment, which could be an outcome of the diverse forms of violence they had encountered throughout their life time.

In a similar vein, Babović, Pavlović, Ginić and Karađinović (2013) discovered that more than half of women were exposed to physical violence from their partners. In essence, physical abuse by partners was commonly reported by married women. Chikhungu, Amos, Kandala and Palikadavath (2019) also revealed that in Malawi, 42% of ever-married women have suffered some form of violence perpetrated by their current or most recent

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spouse. The researchers indicated that the most usual kinds of abuse encountered by these women included controlling behaviour, physical and emotional abuse. In Ghana, studies like that of Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) Boateng (2015) and Tenkorang et al. (2013) have all found that physical, emotional and verbal abuse are experienced by women. The similarities observed in the literature point to the experience of abuse among women.

Causes of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana

This revealed that the abuses suffered by the female survivors were caused by multiple factors. These causes as indicated by the respondents included immaturity among men, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, bad peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse among men. For most of the women, they blamed the abuse that they experienced on the level of maturity of their husbands. They deemed their husbands not mature enough and as such manhandled them. The respondents also noted that since most of their husbands lacked respect for women and as such did not mind abusing them. In terms of upbringing, it is of certainty that how a person is raised may affect how the person turns out as an adult. Thus, it is not surprising that the respondents perceived the upbringing of their husbands to be a factor responsible for the abuse experienced. Bad peer influence along with alcohol and drug abuse can both influence how men treat their wives. People can be influenced by their friends to take abusive measures in dealing with their wives. Alcohol and drugs can also influence men to be abusive to their wives.

The findings of the current research are in line with the findings of several studies that most abuse is perpetrated under the influence of alcohol

and drugs (Fitzpatrick & Thorne, 2010; Karimu, 2017). The view of these researchers (Fitzpatrick & Thorne, 2010; Karimu, 2017) is that when men abuse alcohol or drugs, they are likely to lash out physically against their wives or any other female counterpart, particularly, when the female contradicts his position. Concerning the influence of alcohol in abuse against women, several other studies have documented partner's use of alcohol as a risk factor in abuse (Babović, Pavlović, Ginić, & Karađinović, 2013; Djikanović, Jansen, & Otasević, 2010). This is so because many researchers are of the opinion that alcohol operates as a situational element, clouding judgement, giving rise to the possibility of violence by reducing inhibitions and impairing an individual's ability to explain cues (Gil-Gonzalez, Vives-Cases, Alvarez-Dardet, & Latour-Pérez, 2006). The recent study of Chikhungu, Amos, Kandala and Palikadavath (2019) in Malawi also revealed that alcohol consumption was significantly associated with abuse among women.

Further, Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) conducted a study targeted at pin pointing elements that gave rise to the possibility of an event of domestic violence as detailed by ever married Ghanaian women. They found that the upbringing of men was a significant factor in them becoming perpetrators of abuse. Adjah and Agbemafle added that women whose husbands drank alcohol were also more likely to experience domestic violence as compared to women whose husbands did not drink alcohol. As a result, alcohol use by husband and family history of violence did increase a woman's risk of ever experiencing domestic violence or abuse. All of these have been confirmed in the current study.

The findings of the study also confirm the finding of Phorano, Nthomang and Ntseane (2005) that violence against women was connected to the lack of respect for women. In most societies, women are belittled, with men seen as the people with authority and as such can do whatever they want even if the rights of women are infringed upon (Mushibwe, 2009).

Actual experiences of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana

The study further revealed that most of the respondents were living in constant fear and discomfort because of their abuse experiences. Some were beaten, insulted, called names and felt uncomfortable. Because of this, they had low self-esteem and did not feel good about themselves. Their husbands were usually angry and so they lived in constant caution to ensure that they did not offend their husbands. Considering the types of abuses that the respondents were exposed to, it is not surprising that they had these experiences. Exposure to emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse has the tendency of making women live in fear and feeling uncomfortable in their homes. Some of the women felt helpless, lonely and frustrated as in not knowing what to do in the situations in which they found themselves.

The findings support the findings of several previous studies. For instance, Loke, Wan, and Hayter (2012) conducted a study aimed at gaining a finer understanding of the lived encounter of female sufferers of intimate partner violence in Hong Kong. Their findings showed that victims were often ashamed and afraid to speak out. The abuse experiences also led to low self-esteem. The study of Loke et al. also showed that women were hesitant about

staying in an abusive relationship and endured violent incidents in silence until they could not tolerate any more and seek help at an emergency department.

In a similar vein, Babović, Pavlović, Ginić and Karađinović (2013) revealed that violence against women by current or former partners had frequent are consequences such as sadness, anxiety, and fear. Zink, Regan, Jacobson and Pabst (2003) also revealed that loneliness and fear of loneliness were also acknowleged in the narratives of the abused older women. These were all confirmed in the current study.

Similarly, the findings of the current study support that of Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Högberg, and Emmelin (2013) who investigated how rural Javanese women coped with domestic violence and discovered that encountering chronic violence destroyed the women's personal lives because of the associated mental and psychosocial impairments. Avdibegovic, Brkic, and Sinanovic (2017) also discovered that women victims of domestic violence had greater outcomes in the dimensions of denial or depression and aggression or destruction. Avdibegovic et al. (2017) indicated that women victims of domestic violence have importantly more thorough negative emotional proportions in comparison to women who were not abused. Women victims of domestic violence with greater frequency of abuse explained themselves as more sad, apathetic, less sociable, angry lonely and quarrelsome. Avdibegovic et al. added that the importance of negative emotions, denial and aggression, can be factor of risk for mental health disorders and for re-victimisation of women sufferers of domestic violence.

Traditionally, a characteristic associated with women who have survived abuse was that they experienced in learned incapability, the feeling of

having no power and faith that one is unfit to breakout from an intolerable situation (Miller, 2006). Thus, the concept of learned helplessness has been used to describe abused women's behaviour and to spell out reasons for remaining in abusive relationships (Miller, 2006).

Forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana

The study found gain that the main forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in their experience of abuse were their friends, families and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department. The respondents also felt that there was the need for the government to do more to help female survivors of abuse. Generally, the support that the respondents gained in the time that they were experiencing abuse were from friends, family and government agencies. For most of these respondents, without these support systems, the abuse experiences would have been difficult.

In Ghana, even though there is no specific agency handling only abuse against women cases, the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service does a good job in handling all domestic violence cases. Usually, the officials in this unit, working within the Ghanaian cultural context, often work with a family values bias, seeking to give the safe keeping of the women and not the pursuance of the offenders. Service users also tended to be more comfortable with safe keeping than to press charges.

The findings of the current study are in line with the findings of Kalokhe et al. (2018) that the main support available to women victims of

abuse had to do with their families and friends. Putra, Pradnyani and Parwangsa (2019) also revealed that women mainly sought support during abuse from their families. These family members remain supportive through the hard times of the women. Boateng (2015) also revealed that in Ghana, DOVVSU particularly had clinical psychologists and counsellors posted in all its offices nationwide who provided counselling services costless to victims of abuse. In the current study, most of the respondents indicated that they sought support from DOVVSU at a point when they could not handle their abuse experience any longer.

The respondents in the current research also revealed that there was the need for the government to do more to help female survivors of abuse. They argued that some form of economic assistance could be helpful for these women so that they could easily deal with the fallout of the abuse they experienced. With a sample of 21 low-income Indian women, Bhandari and Hughes (2017) described the lived encounters of domestic violence victims and showed that social and financial support for abused women was lacking. As a result, there was the need for state agencies to do more for such women. For most of the women in the current study, what they needed most was to get peace restored in their families. This supported the finding of Mitchell (2011) that survivors of domestic violence were not specifically concerned with their partners being punished; their interest was in the peace in their homes being given back.

Generally, it has become evident that the main forms of support available to women experiencing abuse in many societies are their friends,

families and government agencies which handle domestic violence. These have been confirmed throughout the literature.

How female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana cope with their abusive experiences

Finally, the study revealed that female survivors of abuse coped with the experience of abuse by praying and hoping things would change and relying on family and friends as well as their religious leaders. These helped the respondents go through the abuse experience regardless of the pains. Considering that family and friends were among the common forms of support available to the female survivors of abuse, it was not surprising that the respondents coped with the abuse experiences by relying on their families and friends. Again, in our context as Ghanaians where religion is a major factor, women who are abused in marital relationships are mostly assisted to cope with the abuse experience by their religious leaders.

The discoveries are in line with the discoveries of Hayati, Eriksson, Hakimi, Högberg, and Emmelin (2013) that abused women were involved in a long-term process of uncertain between vigorously conflicting the violence and encompassing or permitting the situation, taking after an elastic band that stretches in and out. However, such women most of the time just tolerated the abuse. Phanichrat and Townshend (2010) through an interpretative phenomenological evaluation study investigated seven adult survivors' encounters of coping with childhood sexual abuse and revealed that survivors of abuse go through indistinguishable gradual and dynamic coping processes by initially adopting avoidant strategies before turning to problem-focused ones. They sought support, engaged in optimistic thinking, and seeking

meaning strategies. Further, Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996) conducted a study of abuse among undergraduate students and revealed that abused people coped with the abuse experience by avoiding dwelling on the abuse and holding a positive attitude that it will end.

Chapter Summary

This chapter dealt with the results and discussion of the study. A sample of 30 women survivors of abuse was used for the study. The study discovered that the usual kinds of abuse encountered by the female survivors of abuse were emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. The study also showed that immaturity among men, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, bad peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse among men were the main causes of the abuse experienced by the women in the research.

In addition, the study found that most of the respondents were living in constant fear and discomfort because of their abuse experiences. Some were beaten, insulted, called names and felt uncomfortable. As such the respondents did not feel good about themselves. Their husbands were usually angry and so they lived in constant caution to ensure that they did not offend their husbands.

The study revealed again that the main forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in their experience of abuse were their friends, families and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department. The respondents also indicated that the government should do more to ease the experiences of female survivors of abuse. Finally, the study found that the respondents coped with the experience of abuse through varied means such as praying and hoping things would change and relying on family and friends as well as their religious leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. Implications for counselling as well as suggestions for further study are also given in this chapter.

Summary of Study

The focus of this study was to investigate the experiences and coping strategies of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. Particularly, the study sought to answer five research questions:

1. What are the types of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

2. What are the causes of abuse experienced by female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

3. What are the actual encounters of female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

4. What are the forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana?

5. How do female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana cope with their abusive experiences?

Literature related to the study were reviewed. The Feminist Theory and Resilience Theory were reviewed in the study. The Conceptual Framework upon which the study was based was designed by the researcher by considering the key variables in the study. Concepts relating to abuse against women, types of abuse, causes of abuse against women, effects of abuse

against women, legal issues concerning abuse against women in Ghana. Empirical studies related to the study were also reviewed. It was observed that in Ghana, there was not much done on abuse against women specifically.

The study primarily applied a qualitative methodology. The phenomenological perspective rooted within the qualitative approach was used in the study. Thirty female survivors of abuse were interviewed from Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The research instrument used in gathering data for the study was a semi-structured interview guide. Pilot test was carried out using 10 female survivors of abuse from the Cape Coast Metropolis. Data trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data collected were analysed through thematic analysis.

Major Findings

The study discovered that the usual kinds of abuse encountered by the female survivors of abuse were emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. Other abuses such as psychological and sexual abuse were also mentioned by some of the respondents. The study also showed that the abuses suffered by the female survivors were caused by multiple factors. These causes included immaturity among men, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, bad peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse among men.

The study further revealed that most of the respondents were living in constant fear and discomfort because of their abuse experiences. Some were beaten, insulted, called names and felt uncomfortable. Their husbands were

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usually angry and so they lived in constant caution to ensure that they did not offend their husbands.

The study found again that the main forms of support available to female survivors of abuse in their experience of abuse were their friends, families and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department. The respondents also felt that there was the need for the government to do more to assist female survivors of abuse.

Finally, the study revealed that female survivors of abuse coped with the experience of abuse by praying and hoping things change and relying on family and friends as well as their religious leaders.

Conclusions

Basing on the findings of the study, some conclusions are drawn. In the first place, it is concluded that women mostly suffered emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuse. These abuses are therefore the most common types of abuse that married women in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis suffered. Even though some literature suggested that most females experience sexual abuse, the current study did not find sexual abuse to be a major kind of abuse encountered by the women. This could be because of the fact that the sample of the study involved women who were all married at the time of their abuse experience and so did not consider sexual abuse as a significant issue.

It is also concluded that immaturity among men, lack of respect for women, upbringing of men, bad peer influence, and alcohol and drug abuse among men were the common causes of abuse suffered by women in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Generally, the conclusion supports the majority of literature on the causes of abuse.

In addition, it is concluded that women in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis who suffer abuse live in constant fear and discomfort because of their abuse experiences. They are beaten, insulted and called names by their husbands who are usually angry. Contextualizing this in the larger discussion on abuse, it is clear that the experience of abuse by women is a hugely discomforting one.

It can also be concluded that friends, families and agencies such as DOVVSU and the Social Welfare Department were the main forms of support available to females who survived abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Since female survivors of abuse do not have many forms of support, a lot more support could be provided. Finally, it is concluded that female survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis were able to cope with the experience of abuse by praying and hoping things will change and relying on family and friends as well as their religious leaders. Because of the perceived patriarchal cultural system in Ghana, most married women are probable to keep quiet in marriages despite the experience of abuse, hoping that things will settle down quickly.

Recommendations

Basing on the findings of the research, the subsequent suggestions are made:

1. Government should through the Ministry of Gender provide financial and economic assistance for women who report abuse cases. This can be done through the DOVVSU so that women who report abuse cases can be provided financial relief so that they will not fear for their economic lives when their husbands are punished.

2. DOVVSU should organize intermittent community-based workshops on abuse against women and how support can be provided for such women. Such workshops can equip families and friends to be able to provide effective support for women who suffer abuse.

3. DOVVSU should increase education on the legal options available to women suffering abuse. This can help give any such females an idea of the options they can take.

Implications for Counselling

The following implications are given for the practice of counselling:

1. Counsellors could improve their capacity in handling emotional, physical, economic and verbal abuses to be able to provide effective help for female survivors of abuse.

2. Counsellors can widen their scope of counselling provision to cover female survivors of abuse since the study found that counsellors were not part of the support systems of the female survivors of abuse.

Suggestions for Further Research

The subsequent suggestions are made for additional research:

1. Future researchers could investigate into the experiences of perpetrators of abuse. This can help make recommendations that can help prevent future abusive situations.

2. Further research can also focus on the specific roles played by agencies responsible for issues relating to the abuse of women. This can help make recommendations to make such agencies more effective.

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APPENDICES
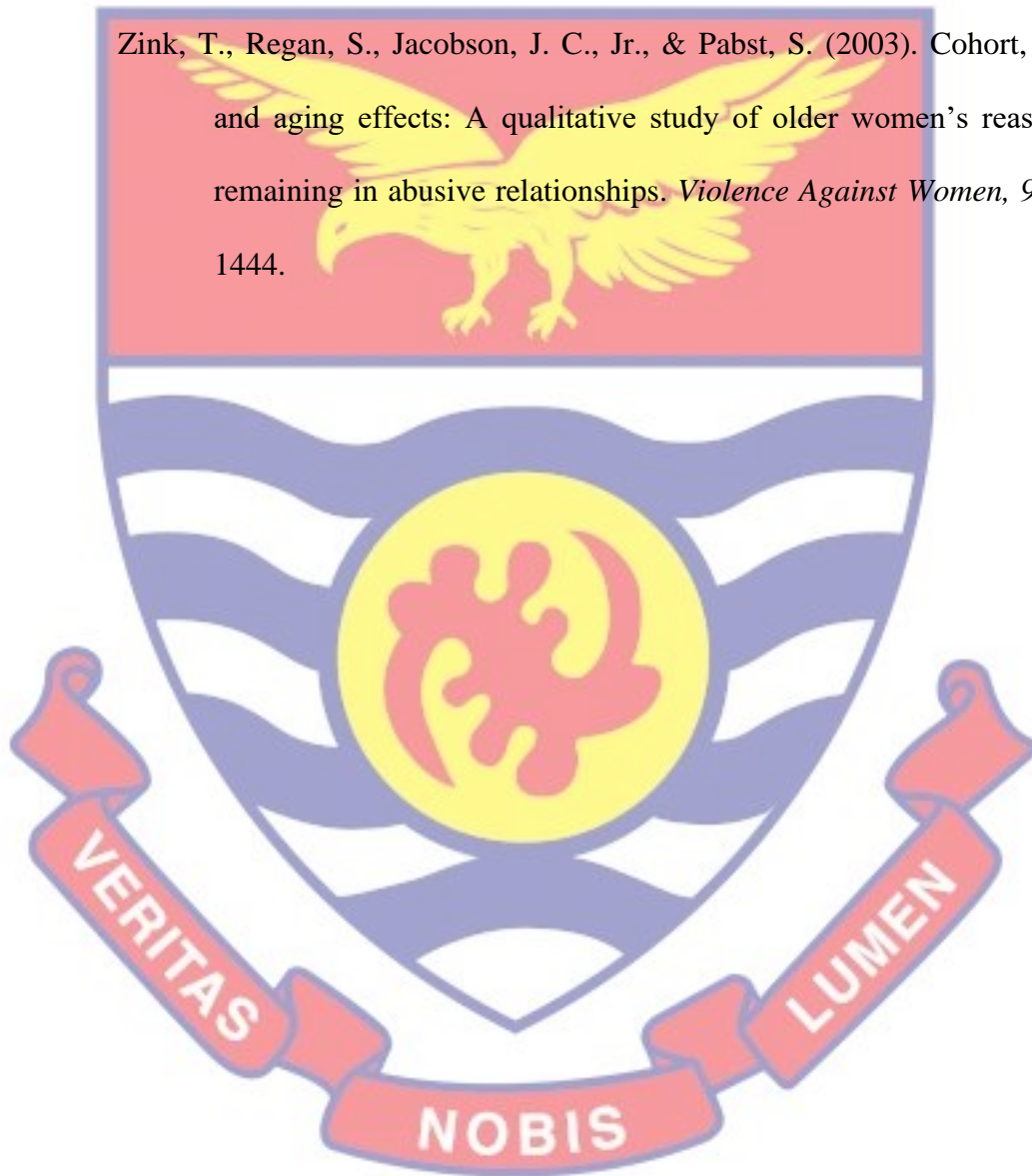
APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Introduction

I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

Rationale

This interview guide is outlined to provide an understanding of the experiences and coping strategies of women survivors of abuse in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. This would help to make recommendations for policy makers to make the lives of women experiencing abuse better.

The whole interview is likely to last for at most 20 minutes. I would like to record this interview with your permission.

Confidentiality

I would like to guarantee you that any information you give during this interview will remain privately and undisclosed.

Reference will not be made to your name if any information you provide is quoted verbatim. Therefore you participation remains completely anonymous.

If you are not comfortable talking about any sensitive issue, you have the right to wave your response. At any time within the course of this interview, you can decide to stop participating and it will be okay with me.

This interview session will be recorded and transcribed.

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Consent

Please you have the right to be a part of the study and also have the choice to withdraw at any time.

Ground rules

Before the interview starts, I would like assure you that there no wrong answers in this interview since it is not a test. Therefore please feel free to voice out your opinion regarding the content of this interview.

1. Please can you tell me about yourself (your age, your marital status and your occupation)?

2. What are some of abuses you have experienced?

3. How was the experience of the abuse like for you?

4. Did you need any form of medical or legal attention?

5. What do you think are the causes of the abuse you have experienced?

6. How did you handle the experience of abuse?

7. Did you receive any form of support (medically, financially, and psychologically) during the period when you were going through abuse?

8. How did you cope with all the difficulties you experienced?

9. Would you need any extra assistance or help?

10. What suggestion will you give to authorities (Ministry of Gender, DOVVSU, Social Welfare Department) to help women who suffer abuse?

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: CES-ERB/ucc.edu/v3/19-61

Date: 24th June, 2019.

Your Ref: ....

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. J. A. Omotosho
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh
0243784739

The bearer, Benedicta O. Biney ....,..., Reg. No. EF/GCT/18/0011 is an
M.Phil. / Ph.D. student in the Department of ..Guidance and.....
..Counselling............................... in the College of Education Studies,
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He / She wishes to
undertake a research study on the topic:

Vice-Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. K. Edjah
kedjah@ucc.edu.gh
0244742357

An exploration of the experiences and coping
strategies of female survivors of abuse in the
Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

Secretary, CES-ERB
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
lforde@ucc.edu.gh
0244786680

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies
(CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirm that the proposal
satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the
study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval
to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would
give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said
research.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

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