BROKEN LIVES, BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS: THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN A GHANAIAN PRISON.

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research, carried out in the Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, under the supervision of Prof. Kodjo Senah and Dr. Kodzovi Akpabli-Honu and that all sources that I have used or quoted in this work have been fully acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that as far as I am aware, this work has not been submitted to any academic institution for a certificate or a degree.

Finally, I declare that I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings or misinterpretation of parts that may be found in this work.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and siblings, Mr. Samuel Anku, Mrs. Happy Anku, Esenam, Eric and Nikoe who have been my strength throughout my academic journey. God bless you for the financial, moral and spiritual support given me throughout these long years of education.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION...........................................................................................................................................i
DEDICATION...........................................................................................................................................ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT...........................................................................................................................iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS...........................................................................................................................iv
LIST OF FIGURES.......................................................................................................................................vii
ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................viii

CHAPTER ONE...........................................................................................................................................1
CONNECTING THE DOT.......................................................................................................................1
1.1. The Motivation of the Study...........................................................................................................1
1.2. Problem Statement.........................................................................................................................6
1.3. Objectives of the Study .................................................................................................................9
1.4. Significance of the Study ..............................................................................................................9
1.5. Scope of the Study.........................................................................................................................10
1.6. Outline of Chapters.......................................................................................................................10

CHAPTER TWO.........................................................................................................................................12
REVIEW OF LITERATURE....................................................................................................................12
2.1. Introduction ..................................................................................................................................12
2.2. Conceptualizing Family ...............................................................................................................12
2.3. Women and Family......................................................................................................................13
2.4. Women and Crime.......................................................................................................................15
2.4.1. Why women commit crime? Traditional Theories ..............................................................15
2.4.2. Why Women Commit Crime: Contemporary Theories .......................................................18
2.5. Behind Bars: The Prison Experience of Women .........................................................................20
2.5.1. The Prison Environment..........................................................................................................21
2.5.2. Separation from Family ..........................................................................................................22
2.5.3. Health.....................................................................................................................................24
2.6. Coping Mechanisms....................................................................................................................26
2.7. Collateral Effects of Female Imprisonment ..................................................................................29
2.7.1. On the Family.........................................................................................................................29
2.7.2. On Romantic Relationships ..................................................................................................31
2.7.3. On Children ...........................................................................................................................32
2.8. Theoretical Framework................................................................................................................34
2.8.1. Social Stigma..........................................................................................................................35
2.8.2. Family Systems Theory............................................................................................................36
2.9. Conclusion....................................................................................................................................37

CHAPTER THREE.......................................................................................................................................39
PRISONS IN GHANA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ..........................................................................39
3.1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................................39
3.2. Penal Justice in Pre-Colonial Ghana............................................................................................39
3.3. Prisons Under Colonial Rule and their Orientation ....................................................................42
3.4. Prisons in the Post-Colonial Period: 1957 - 1966 .......................................................................46
3.5. The Nsawam Prison.................................................................50
3.6. Conclusion................................................................................51

CHAPTER FOUR.................................................................................53
CAN YOU DO IT? DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES..........................53
4.1. Introduction..............................................................................53
4.2. Research Paradigm.................................................................54
4.3. Research Design.....................................................................56
4.4. The Study Area.......................................................................57
4.5. Data Sources...........................................................................58
4.6. Sampling Technique and Sample Size....................................58
4.7. Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure......................59
4.8. Data Management – (Data Coding and Analysis)....................61
4.9. Reliability and Validation.......................................................62
4.10. Ethical Consideration.........................................................63
4.11. Field Experience.................................................................64
4.12. Conclusion............................................................................65

CHAPTER FIVE.................................................................................66
INMATES’ EXPERIENCES WITH FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS.................66
5.1 Introduction..............................................................................66
5.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Inmates......................66
   Ages of Participants....................................................................67
   Religious Backgrounds..............................................................67
   Nationality / Ethnicity...............................................................68
   Level of Education....................................................................68
5.3. Incarceration Information.........................................................70
   Offences....................................................................................70
5.4. The Nature and Quality of Pre-Prison Relationships...................71
5.5. Imprisonment: Strains or Promotes Familial Relationships.........73
   5.5.1 Imprisonment and Romantic Relationships.......................74
   5.5.2 Imprisonment and Familial Relationships............................78
   5.5.3. Children of Incarcerated Women.......................................86
5.6. Changes in the Family Resulting from Incarceration..................87
   5.6.1. Role Taking......................................................................87
   5.6.2. Financial Strain..............................................................88
   5.6.3. Stigma............................................................................89
5.7. Coping Strategy......................................................................90
   5.7.1. Religion..........................................................................91
   5.7.2. Support Groups.............................................................92
   5.7.3. Pre-Prison Characteristics...............................................95
   5.7.4. Encouragement from Others Experience..........................96
   5.7.5. Maladaptation...............................................................96
5.8. Conclusion..............................................................................97

CHAPTER SIX...............................................................................99
REFLECTIONS...............................................................................99
6.1. Main Findings..........................................................................99
6.1.1 Nature of Pre-prison relationships .........................................................100
6.1.2 Nature of Familial Relationships During Incarceration .........................100
6.1.3 Coping Strategies ..................................................................................104
6.2 Recommendations .....................................................................................106
6.3. Study Limitation and Gaps for Further Research .....................................107
6.4. Implication to Research ...........................................................................108

References ..........................................................................................................109

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE .................................................................123
PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM .......................................................................123
INMATE INTERVIEW GUIDE .........................................................................126
PRISON OFFICERS INTERVIEW GUIDE ......................................................127

APPENDIX B – GHANA PRISON SERVICE APPROVAL.................................128

APPENDIX C – UNIVERSITY OF GHANA ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL ....129

APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION .............................................130
Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristic of Participants .................................130
Table 2: Incarceration Information .....................................................................132
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: A map showing the location of prison establishments in Ghana 49
ABSTRACT

The prison has emerged as an object of attention and criticism in the works of sociologists and criminologists. However, among this diverse body of works, little research has been undertaken which interrogates the very different experience of men and women prisoners. In particular, there is a paucity of research that adequately explores how women experience their family relationships while in prison. Considering the fact that a significant number of female prisoners in Ghana come from impecunious family backgrounds the need to understand female criminality and its gendered effects on prison experiences become paramount. This study examines how imprisonment affects the way female inmates experience family relationships as a consequence of deprivation of liberty and the coping mechanisms adopted to deal with this phenomenon. It therefore deploys a qualitative phenomenological approach to collect data using in-depth interview from thirty female inmates and five prison officers at Nsawam Female Medium Security Prison. Over the course of the interviews participants gave full and rich accounts of their families and relationships which were most often unstable and broken, but some are at times maintained and strengthened in spite of their imprisonment. However, for many others, this topic was difficult and sensitive to discuss as the feelings of separation, stigmatization, sadness and regret were expressed during the interviews. The findings suggest that incarcerated mothers sometimes lose their children and the mother identity. The study also revealed that the incarceration of women has a repercussion on family relationship, which includes role-vacuum, financial strain and stigma. It further observed that essential to coping with this phenomenon was religion and appropriate support from officers and inmates who help to limit the deleterious effects of imprisonment. Regarding originality and value, the study develops new understandings in the Ghanaian context about the ways in which female inmates construct and maintain family relationships both within and outside the prison and
how gender impacts on the prison experience. The study therefore concludes that for most female prisoners in Ghana familial relationships is greatly altered as a result of incarceration.

It is recommended that the Ghana Prison Service and its stakeholders revise their Ten-Year Strategic plan and to address some of the issues concerning incarcerated women
CHAPTER ONE
CONNECTING THE DOT

1.1. The Motivation of the Study

This thesis is about women in prison, with emphasis on the effects of their deprivation to liberty. The study seeks to investigate how imprisonment has affected the way women experience family relationships and the strategies they adopt to cope with the pain of being separated from their children, spouse and other family members.

In 2005, the American television show ‘Prison Break’ hit the screens. Watching the first season intrigued me about the background stories of the inmates. Prison Break tells the story of how Michael Scofield designed an elaborate plan to get his brother, Lincoln Burrow, out of Fox River Penitentiary. The TV show presented several characters and scenes that speak to the diverse issues of family relationship during incarceration. These issues coupled with others provided a drive for the eight Fox River Prison escapees. The episodes are unfolded in the four fictional character expositions below to provide an insight into the focus of this study.

Lincoln: Lincoln Burrow was falsely and blatantly accused and sentence to death. He was required to deal with the issue of having his brother committing a crime and imprisoned so as to help him escape. Prison visits by his lawyer and estranged son presented some pain. While in prison, he is required to serve as a mentor to advise his son against delinquent behaviour. His lawyer who initially doubted his innocence was his ex-girlfriend. She also presented some erotic memories and agony. These all-important persons in Lincoln’s life were in danger from the same people who set him up for the crime. This provided the motivation for escaping.

T-Bag: Theodore Bagwell (alias T-Bag) was a rapist and murderer. Known for his witiness, he blackmailed his way into the escapee group as the plan was hatched to break out from prison. T-Bag had an unpleasant childhood including
sexual abuse from his father. Prior to imprisonment he found himself deeply attached to Hollander and her children whom he describes as his ‘salvation’ family. T-Bag is heartbroken when his family rejected him and the only prison visit from Hollander was characterized by outrage and insults. Bagwell also learns in prison that his cousin and his son had been killed and this deeply upset him because he felt that the Bagwell bloodline would die with him. Vengeance was cultivated and a motive to escape was hatched.

C-Note was dishonorably discharged from the US military for involvement in black market activities. Jobless, he resorted to transporting stolen goods and was arrested and sentenced. Due to the shame, disappointment and pain, he told his wife and daughter that he was getting back to Iraq for military duties, as he had not even told them of his discharge from the Army. Sharing the need to see and reunite with his family again he joins the escape group.

Fernando Sucre, also an escapee was the cellmate of Scofield. He ended in prison after attempting to rob a liquor store to get enough money to pay for an engagement ring for is beloved girlfriend. After his incarceration, Sucre had conjugal visits from her girlfriend but was occasionally worried about her seeming indecision about her future with him, as she is contemplating dating another person. Motivated by saving his relationship, he escaped with the others.

These characters’ experiences in prison consist of emotional distress, denial, stigmatization and bringing to the fore the feelings of separation, sadness, regret and often damaging impact of imprisonment upon families. Lessons from this TV show also lucidly demonstrate how family relationship could be an important element to inmates and how it adds up to their prison experience. The lessons from the scenes continued to hit me and it is not surprising that I developed the interest in issues concerning imprisonment and crime. However, my first trip to the Nsawam Medium Security Prison during my undergraduate study was a grave disappointment, as I did not see the likes of Scofield but rather conventional people, who could easily pass as family members. Even though Prison Break provided a vivid understanding, it did not
tell the full story. The scene was even more disturbing when the group entered the female facility. I could not fight back the tears any longer and I began to wonder what crimes these women had committed and the whereabouts of their family and children, how their family members were coping and how the inmates were dealing with pain of separation and stigmatization associated with imprisonment.

This set the stage for more reading and investigation to better appreciate the phenomenon of female criminality, imprisonment and coping with familial relationship.

As early opined in the exposé above prison generally presents some magnitude of hardship. Sykes (1958) refers to the hardships as “the pains of imprisonment”. He argued that the prison has a history of inflicting physical pain on inmates. However, in the modern prison, pain exists emotionally through the deprivation of certain comforts. According to Sykes, the pains of imprisonment include (a) the deprivation of liberty. This includes the restriction to move around as a result of being confined in a building and most importantly the cut-off from family, relatives and friends; (b) the deprivation of goods and services which is the inability of inmates to own or have very little possessions whiles imprisoned; (c) the deprivation of heterosexual relations prevents inmates from having intimate relationships with the opposite sex; (d) the deprivation of autonomy comes along with the overly controlled nature of the prison and (e) the deprivation of security because inmates are imprisoned with others who are also criminals and in most cases, have histories of violence and aggression, exposing inmates to these aggressions (Sykes, 1958).
The questions guiding this study are informed by the deprivation of liberty as some studies have attested that the most painful deprivation is that of liberty (Jardine, 2015; Braman, 2002). Coyle (1994: 27) explains, that this deprivation has the potential to cause the greatest distress and “losing one’s liberty is one of the most traumatic experiences any individual is likely ever to undergo”. The deprivation of liberty is thus a double deprivation as prisoners are restricted both to and within an institution. Overtime, the inmates can lose their connection to free society outside the prison walls and this, sometimes, interrupts their social ties, family relationships, employment opportunities and other social capital investments (Mears & Cochran, 2015; La Vigne et al, 2006). The inmate’s ego is also threatened both by their moral rejection and stigmatization from society and the various forms of degradation that imprisonment comes with.

However, the way inmates experience this deprivation is gendered. In the first place, issues of crime and imprisonment, until a few decades ago, were seen as a male phenomenon. This explains the application of male focused theories in describing female criminality. It was believed that only men were capable of engaging in criminal activities and therefore, women caught engaging in criminal activities were believed to have had their personality and physic dominated by male characteristics (Herrington and Nee, 2005). This belief was premised on the fact that women were socialized to be non-aggressive, caring and law abiding and therefore are expected to be more norm-compliant. Today, crime is no stranger amongst women as this is made evident in the rising numbers of women in prison. The World Female Imprisonment List (2015) shows that, the female prison population has seen about a fifty percent increase from 466,000 in 2000 to about 700,000 in 2015. As largely observed, women
are imprisoned in environments designed for men and thus, they suffer a multitude of pains and mortifications that go beyond those experienced by men (UNDOC, 2008; Worrall, 2006; Carlen and Worrall, 2004).

Additionally, because women play crucial roles in the family their experience with deprivation of liberty is distinct. Women most often are the primary caregivers in their families (Freitas, Inacio & Saavedra, 2016; Ackermann, 2015 and Gowland, 2011). Their responsibilities include socializing the children, providing meals and also working to contribute financially to the upkeep of the family or household (Aborisade & Balogun, 2016). When women commit crimes, their imprisonment is seen not only as a deviation from the norms of the society, but also as a gender. In this case, they are stigmatized twice as compared to their male counterparts. In addition, women as a result of deprivation of their liberty, experience a multitude of unique challenges. These include deterioration of physical and mental health as they experience separation from family and role strain (Sutherland, 2013; Foster, 2011) and psychological distress during postpartum period where the child is separated from the incarcerated mother (Martin, Lau, & Salmon, 2013).

The above discourse therefore shows that differences between male and female prison experiences are best understood within the context of structural and cultural influences, such as historical imbalances in priorities given to male prisons, differential cultural and societal expectations (prior to and during imprisonment) to women and theoretical tenets that influence the treatment of male and female offenders. Thus, as imprisonment becomes a gendered experience, the fast-expanding
population of incarcerated female becomes a complex and intersectional social phenomenon that can no longer be ignored.

1.2. Problem Statement

Women inmates face a lot of difficulties. Gender specific pain for most female inmates include the deprivation of gender identity, self-determination, deprivation of femininities, bodily or emotional privacy and familial contact and role (Rowe, 2012; Worrall, 2004). Researches in the area of women in prison have, however, specifically focused on issues like mothering and pregnancy in prison (Harris, 2017; Stone, Liddell & Martinovic, 2017; Freitas, Inacio & Saavedra, 2016; Gowland, 2011), the impact of parental incarceration on children (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko & Kanwetuu, 2015; Asomaning, 2013; Celinska & Siegel, 2010) and also the characteristics, behaviors and diagnoses of female prisoners prior to and after incarceration whereas the actual experiences of incarceration and its implications on familial relationships is under examined.

The family advances from a set of accepted behaviour and maintaining the same pattern of behaviors may lead to a balance in the family as a unit. However, when deviations leading to events like imprisonment take place, these may lead to a dysfunction (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko & Kanwetuu, 2015; Asomaning, 2013). Therefore, there is the need to understand how women in prison experience family relationships. This is because it has been suggested that individuals can be understood not in isolation but rather as a part of their respective families and communities (GenoPro, 2012). Despite the imbalance experienced by imprisonment of a member, members of
a family are expected to respond to each other in times of crises through support (financial, emotional, material, visit). This does not come easy especially for women.

Women who assume the principal burden of care and domestic work in the family are expected to be conformist (Aborisade & Balogun, 2016; Gowland, 2011). As a result, their criminal behaviour and incarceration are difficult to accept by members of their families, and their absence may also alter the family relationships and structure (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko & Kanwetuu, 2015). It is argued that a male offender’s home for the most part are sustained while he is in prison; the women care for their children, maintain their homes and visit them in prison (Corston, 2007). However, this cannot be said for women in prison. In fact, their children are more likely to experience disruption in living arrangements than if their father were incarcerated (Dallaire, 2007).

Again, women in general seek interpersonal relationships by the maintenance of familial relationships during incarceration. This is very important to allow for the sustenance of social identity and a sense of security for women (Hairston, 1991). This reduces rule breaking within the prison environment and decreases recidivism (Taylor, 2015; Yu-Shu, 2015; Siennick et al, 2013; Chen & Lin, 2010). On the contrary, other studies have reported some negative effects with prison visits (Jiang et al, 2005). Family contact is associated with high rates of self-harm for incarcerated women (Houck & Loper, 2002; Jiang et al., 2005) and prison visits negatively affect well-being of some women prisoners (Houck & Loper, 2002). This conflicting evidence also draws attention to the importance of studying family relationships...
during imprisonment, especially considering the difference in social context of incarceration.

Furthermore, the study of female inmates and how they experience familial relationships are crucial. The extant literature has observed that for most female inmates, the problems that arise from interpersonal relations within families or domestic relationships are responsible for the majority of the crimes committed by them (Ackermann, 2015; Barzano, 2013; Pandey & Singh, 2006). On the other hand, it is observed that many female inmates, prison is a place of recovery and to escape harsh life. For some relatives or social networks of the incarcerated, imprisonment offers relief from violent or difficult behavior at home. The need is more exacerbated in the Ghanaian context where impoverished family background, inadequate education, abusive parents, broken homes, perceived imminent loss of valued interpersonal ties (especially a romantic relationship) and unemployment are identified as some of the characteristics of female offenders (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko & Kanwetuu, 2015; Agboka, 2008). These experiences of women in prison raise some questions. For instance, how do female inmates experience relationships with their family members during incarceration? How do incarcerated females cope with these challenges?

Accordingly, this research seeks to find answers to these questions and bridge the gaps by employing a qualitative exploratory approach that will look into how women in the Nsawam Female Medium Security Prison experience familial relationships during imprisonment, so as to enhance the literature and knowledge on the phenomenon.
1.3. Objectives of the Study

Main Objective

The main aim of the study is to investigate the experience of women regarding familial relationships and the strategies they adopt to deal with separation from their families.

Specific Objectives

In furtherance of the major objective, the study specifically aims to:

1. Explore the quality of relationships that existed between female inmate and their family members prior to incarceration.
2. Examine how inmates experience relationships with their family members during incarceration.
3. Identify the strategies female inmates adopt to cope with separation from their families.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study presents a number of significant contributions to the field of criminology and is useful in adding to existing knowledge on the experiences of women in prison. As female prison populations continue to be drawn from already marginalized groups, it is imperative that the voices of female prisoners are heard. The relevance of this is underscored considering the growing academic and policy discussions surrounding families and relationships affected by imprisonment.

This study has been able to throw light on the structures of pre-imprisonment relationships between female inmate’s and members of their families and mechanisms of coping in events of disruption of these relationships. It also has developed new
understandings about the ways in which female inmates construct relationships and maintained family ties both within and outside the prison and how gender impacts on the prison experience.

Finally, even though this study is to fulfill a part of an academic requirement for a master’s degree, findings from the study is also useful to policy makers to consider when implementing policies concerning female prisons and prisoners in Ghana. Specifically, the study hopes to bring to the forefront of policy discussion and also to public officialdom the issue of family in rehabilitation of women in prisons in Ghana.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is to examine the relationship that exists between imprisoned women and their family members before and during incarceration as well as the strategies they adopt to cope with the pain of being separated from the family. Although there are countless experiences of women in prison, the study specifically focuses on their experiences with family rather than general experiences. The geographical context for the study is Ghana. The institutional scope of the study is the Nsawam Medium Security Female Prison since it is the largest facility in the country and holds the largest number of female inmates.

1.6. Outline of Chapters

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter presents the motivation of the study and sets the stage for the investigation into a gendered focus in understanding how female inmates experience familial relationship in Ghana. This chapter also includes the problem statement, objectives, significance and scope of the study.
The second chapter discusses existing literature in the area of women and crime and women and the family. It also discusses a theoretical framework that underpins the study.

The third chapter provides a historical background of the prison system in Ghana and showcases how women criminality and punishment manifested during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.

The fourth chapter presents information on how data was collected. It explains the reasons for deploying a qualitative research methods and arguments that support the selection of participants for the study. It also outlined how data was collected and validated, field experiences and ethical considerations that were established.

The fifth chapter offers an analysis of the material gained from interview and discussion with female inmates in Nsawam Medium Security Prions.

The sixth chapter provides a summary of the study findings and some thoughts on the implications for research, policy and practice as well as recommendations for further studies.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

The world prison population is believed to be growing but more rapidly among the female population (Walmsley, 2015). Despite this growth, the female population remains low in comparison with that of male, representing between 2% and 9% of the world prison population (Penal Reform International, 2015). The same can be said in Ghana where women represent 1.4% of the prison population (Ghana Prison Service, 2016). The low numbers of women in prison may suggest that they are properly cared for. However, this is not the case. Studies have shown that because of their small numbers, issues concerning them are largely overlooked; they experience a great deal of discrimination and hardships in prison (Harris, 2017; Aborisade, et al, 2016; Ackermann, 2015 and Townhead, 2006).

This chapter reviews literature on women and crime. It covers issues concerning the roles women play in the family, reasons why they commit crimes, how they experience imprisonment, how they cope with the separation from their family and the effect of their incarceration on themselves and family. The chapter also delves into the theoretical notions of family theory and symbolic interaction to position the study on family relationship and prison experiences of women.

2.2. Conceptualizing Family

The family is the smallest but most important unit of every society and every individual comes from and belongs to a family. Yet there has been little consensus on how to define family. According to Baker (2009) this is because definitions have
focused on its structure, legality and functions. Most scholars have highlighted that
the nature and composition of family varies in every society and so no particular
definition has been able to capture the entirety of the concept (Nukunya 2016; Baker,

In Africa, and for that matter Ghana, the family is generally extended where as in
Western societies family is conceived to be nucleated (Siegel, 1966). Many scholars
have demonstrated that as a result of modernity, the Ghanaian family system is
becoming more nucleated (Abotchie, 2017; Nukunya, 2016 and Assimeng, 1999).
However, this nucleation is only evident in the living arrangements where people may
prefer to live only with their spouse and children in a household but still hold strong
ties with members of their extended family.

Despite the numerous definitions of family (Nukunya 2016; Burgess and Locke,
1961; Colson, 1958 and Mair, 1951), for the purpose of this study, the family includes
“a group of individuals who are united by consanguinity (blood), marriage or
adoption and the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of
children” (Nukunya, 2016:61). It will further extend to include any sexually
expressive relationship and friends that the inmate shares a special bond with.

2.3. Women and Family

The family, like all other institutions, has specific roles to play to ensure continuity of
the society (Nukunya, 2016; Abotchie: 2016; Bowen, 1974). These roles can be
categorized into primary and secondary functions (Abotchie, 2016). The primary ones
are the fundamental functions and they include procreation, maintenance through the
provision of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, identity and status
ascription and socialization of members into the society (Abotchie, 2016). Secondary
functions of the family include the political functions, religious functions, education, providing healthcare to members, marriage and institutionalized modes of socialization (Abotchie, 2016).

Family members also have specific roles to play and rules to observe. As an occupant of a status in the family, certain responsibilities are expected. Lantara (2015) asserted that the role of a woman in the family can be grouped into external and internal functions; the external functions are arise as a result being part of a society, the internal functions are due to her membership of a household (Lantara 2015). Aside her most important biological role which is to bear children, the responsibilities of the woman are unending. She is also expected to nurture and provide physical care. A woman is expected to provide training such as weaning the child and teaching the child language to be able to communicate with the society. Also importantly, she is to socialize the child by transmitting cultural and subcultural goals and values and also promoting interpersonal skills, motive, and modes of feeling and behaving in relation to others (Leflore & Holson, 1989).

Moreover, the role of women as primary care giver and housekeeper in modern society has been further extended to her engaging in the labor force to contribute financially to the economic sustenance of the family and society at large. As a result, the absence of a woman in the family poses threats to the family itself leaving her roles abandoned. The imprisonment of a woman is therefore detrimental not only to the woman but to the family and society.
2.4. Women and Crime

Historically, men were known to be pioneers of criminal activities in the society but in recent times the numbers of women involved in crime is increasing rapidly (Marcus-Mendoza, 2004). Early theories such as Strain Theory, Differential Association Theory and Social Bond Theory that were developed to explain the causes of crime were therefore centered on male offending (Bloom, Owen & Covington, 2004). In cases where women were caught up with the justice system, they were believed to be criminal because of the presence of excess male hormones. This view leads to works that review the issue of gender gap in explaining the reasons why women commit crime. It draws tenets and empirical findings from both the traditional and contemporary theories.

2.4.1. Why women commit crime? Traditional Theories

The General Strain Theory by Robert Agnew postulates that women experience strain when they are not able to maintain interpersonal relationships or achieve financial success, or the threat to lose these interpersonal relationships or financial success creates negative emotions that may lead to criminal behaviour (Agnew & Broidy 1997).

Sutherland (1939) on the other hand developed the Differential Association Theory on the idea that criminal behaviour is learned from interaction with others who values, attitudes, techniques and motives for criminal behaviour is positively sanctioned (Kubrin et al., 2009). In furtherance of this, Kubrin et al. (2009) indicated that how an individual perceives the legal codes of the society has a role to play in his engagement
in criminal behaviour. If he or she believes in it, he/she is likely to conform if not, there is the likelihood of deviation from the norm,

The Social Bond Theory by Travis Hirschi suggests that criminality in women may occur when social bonds are weak or absent. Lindberg et al. (2017), Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) added that there are three major components to criminality, which are self-control, parental management and opportunities for deviance. To them, a woman, who has experienced poor parental management tends to suffer from low self-control and as a result, when she is faced with the opportunity to engage in criminal activity, there is a higher likelihood to offend.

The works of Adler (1975) brought attention to the issues of women and crime (Islam et al, 2014; Proctor, 2004). This new area of study brought up deliberations on whether there was the need to formulate new theories to explain female criminality or whether to use the traditional theories to explain female involvement in crime.

However, Proctor (2004) argued on the contrary that there was no need to formulate new theories to explain female criminality and therefore conducted a study, aimed to find out if the three major past theories of crime could explain female criminality. Using a thorough approach, she analyzed data collected from two studies, which were done fourteen years apart. The study found that the best traditional theory of crime that could explain female criminal behaviour was Agnew’s general strain theory. She concluded that females engage in criminal behaviour as a strategy to cope with negative emotions that arise from physical or sexual abuse or the failure to achieve certain desires (Proctor, 2004).
In an attempt to test the general strain theory, Sun, Luo, Wu and Lin (2015) also examined the impact of strain and negative emotions on the level of criminality among incarcerated Chinese women. The study confirmed that women who experienced physical abuse and gender discrimination were more likely to have a higher degree of involvement in criminal behavior. However, their age and level of education were predictive of their criminal behaviour. They also found that to cope with this traumatic sexual and physical abuse, young girls and women were forced to run away from home and engage in coping criminal activities such as prostitution and using and selling drugs. These factors are consistently described as high levels of victimization that subsequently lead to trauma, higher levels of mental illness and of substance use. These factors are seen to be interacting and interconnected.

Taylor (2015) referred to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics and found that between 40% and 57% of female inmates were sexually or physically abused prior to the age of eighteen. Similarly, profiling women prisoners in Spain, Almeda (2005) found that 88 per cent of women reported having experienced some form of abuse as an adult or in their childhood. Half of the women surveyed had experienced abuse in both childhood and in adulthood.

Despite these findings, coupled with the dominance of men-opined theories, it is evident that women have shown keen participation in criminal activities and hence the drastic rise in the female prison population. This has, therefore, deepened the call for new theories some of which are further discussed below.
2.4.2. Why Women Commit Crime: Contemporary Theories

There are several contemporary theories to explain female criminality. These theories include masculinity, opportunity, marginality and chivalry theories (Marcus-Mendoza, 2004). These theories recognize the changing role of women in society as the major reason for their engagement in crime. For example, Adler (1975) theorized that female roles have moved from their domestic or household caregiving to be more economic oriented. In her masculinity theory, she argues that as a result of these changing roles, women have become more aggressive (which is a male trait) and this makes them criminal (Adler, 1975).

Similar to the masculinity theory, Simon (1975) is of the view that women’s involvement in criminal behaviour increases when they are exposed to different opportunities other than their traditional roles of childbearing and rearing. She agrees that women in recent times are beginning to have more access to the labour market as skilled labourers and occupy highly specialized positions in the job sector. These opportunities according to Islam et al. (2014) exposed them to commit more employment related property crimes just like men.

However, Marginalization Theory and Opportunity Theory expand the scope and combine the ideals of Marxism and feminism. The Marginalization Theory postulates further that although the changing roles of women has given them the opportunity to work, these opportunities tend to marginalize them through low paid salaries, inadequate jobs and therefore cause high level of unemployment and family victimization, among others (Islam et al., 2014). These, therefore, become a motivation to engage in criminal behaviour. According to Marcus-Mendoza (2004)
this behaviour is a rational response to their economic and financial insecurity. With regards to Opportunity Theory, Steffensmeier (1993) asserted that several other factors that can help explain increases in female crime for property offenses, include the increased formalization of law enforcement, increased opportunities for "female" types of crime and trends in female drug inebriation.

These theories have been the basis for some empirical studies. Chukezi, (2006) adopted the Masculinity Theory to examine the historical development of female criminality in Nigeria. The study found that during pre-colonial times, women were restricted to the traditional roles of caregiving and living exemplary lives. Internal and external mechanisms of social control also helped to keep the level of criminal activities by women low. However, the introduction of a money economy and the emergence of private property during the colonial period encouraged some women to seek employment outside the home. This brought to them the opportunity to participate in criminal activities (Chukezi, 2006). Likewise, drawing on these contemporary theories to explore the profile of women in prison in a number of African countries, Ackermann (2015) found that across South Africa, Zambia and Malawi, violent crime was relatively high. However, this was perpetrated in the context of domestic relationships sparked by domestic arguments relating to property rights, etc. with the victim being a close relation of the offender.

While the scale of the empirical data collected to test these theories are undoubtedly impressive, it also highlights the need for a degree of caution when applying these theoretical concepts in a modern context, given the social changes discussed above.
2.5. Behind Bars: The Prison Experience of Women

Classical works of Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) have shown that inmates experience countless hardships in prison. Sykes (1958) typifies the prison with deprivations of certain comforts while Goffman in his work on “Asylums”, referred to the prison as a ‘total institution’ in which there is a barrier to social interaction. Inmates live a controlled and monotonous life of sleep-play-and-work (Goffman, 1961). He further argued that the prison environment often subjects inmates to humiliation, what he referred to as the ‘mortification of the self’ (Goffman, 1961). Sykes’ “pains of imprisonment” sums up prison experiences. In his book “The Society of Captives”, he argued that the prison no more inflicts physical pain on inmates but a more excruciating pain is experienced emotionally from the loss of liberty, the deprivation of goods and services, the frustration of sexual desire and forced separation from loved ones.

It has been largely observed that men and women experience imprisonment differently (Coyle, 2005; Carlen and Worrall, 2004; Ash, 2003). Some scholars have further argued that women in prison face more difficulties than their male counterparts because of their femininity (Gowland, 2011; O’Brien 2001; Richie, 2001). As suggested by Townhead (2006), women in prison experience a lot of discrimination. Currie (2012) also added that women receive different and disapproving treatment in comparison to men due to the profoundly gendered nature of female imprisonment. Their specific needs are overlooked and are mostly afterthoughts and so their issues were addressed inadequately within the ‘male dominated’ prison environment. The Quaker United Nations Office (2008) also
confirmed that these discriminations are the effect of the prison system being designed for men.

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), takes into account the frail nature of women and provides a standard of how women found within the grasp of the justice system should be treated specifically focusing on peculiar issues common to them (United Nations, 2014). Ackermann, (2015) concluded that most African countries were in non-compliance with these standards and reported that these issues were unmet. There were inadequate policies directed to the apportionment of resources to understand and even to prevent the longstanding social and economic outcomes of female imprisonment (Ackermann, 2015).

These issues peculiar to women prison experiences are further interrogated in the sub sections below.

2.5.1. The Prison Environment

The prison environment is characterized by an autonomous and a severely controlled life. Foucault (1979) shows that even the architectural structure of the prisons depicts its controlling state. The prisons are built in such a way that inmates are constantly being watched or think are being watched. Their actions are, therefore, controlled.

Another form of discrimination women go through is strip-searching. Research has shown that, most incarcerated women have been victims of sexual or physical abuse prior to imprisonment (Estrada & Nilsson, 2012). The practice of strip-search,
therefore, affects these women and may stimulate some memories (Currie, 2012; Townhead, 2006).

Plugge et al. (2006) have also indicated that the prison environment itself has poor standards of hygiene and diet and opportunities to exercise. It is argued that there is often limited access to personal hygiene products and restricted access to bathing and shower facilities, which was found to be particularly problematic for women especially during menstruation (Currie, 2012). Women, especially during menstruation need access to running water, clean toilet facilities, sanitary towels and also privacy. However, this is not the case in most prisons. Samakaya-Makarati (2003) reported in a much vivid way that women in a Zimbabwean had to improvise with newspapers, tissue paper or pieces of cloth prison as a result of limited access to sanitary towels. In other instances, these women did not even have underwear.

2.5.2. Separation from Family

For most women, separation from their family and loved ones is the most painful experience in prison (Jardine, 2015; Braman, 2002). Agnew and Broidy (1997) assert that women have strong desire for interpersonal relationships and therefore the failure to achieve this stirs up negative emotions. Townhead (2006) indicated that irrespective of the length of the prison sentence, the effects are still so harsh that intense family disruption could occur. While in prison, inmates depend largely on their families on the outside for emotional, financial and caring responsibilities (Naser & Visher, 2006). However, the location of female prison further away from home makes even visitations financially burdensome for their families to give these support. Weaver and Nolan (2015) in their study also noted that some family members were
discouraged from prison visitation because the prison officers demand bribe from the families when they visit.

Although women may be taken away from numerous relationships, they find the separation from their children to be the most difficult (Agboola, 2014; Patryka, 2001). Most incarcerated women were primary care givers of their children before their arrest (Harris, 2017; Townhead, 2007; Robertson, 2007; Okwendi, Nwankoala, & Ushi, 2014). Corston (2007) argues that women are far more likely than men to be primary care givers of young children and this factor makes their prison experiences significantly different. Corston further argues that when men are imprisoned, the women in their lives sustain their home outside: they care for the children, maintain their homes, visit them in prison and send them money (Corston, 2007). However, the situation for women in prison is very different. Their imprisonment leaves the care of their children in the hands of other family members or social welfare department or sometimes the children are displaced (McDonald, 2016; Musengzi & Staunton, 2003; Taylor, 2004; Healy, Foley, & Walsh, 2012; Otu, Otu, & Eteng, 2013).

La Vigne, Brooks, & Shollenberger (2009) and Richie (2001) show that women are inclined to lose their children while in prison. The mothers in prison are powerless to help or intervene with issues concerning their children and this can make the prison experience even more difficult. In Africa, the Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention (2012) noted that prisons ignore the importance of the mother-child relationship when designing policy for women in prison. An empirical study by Aborisade, Olukunle and Balogun (2016) indicated that, imprisoned women
in Nigeria lacked contact with children because of the stigmatization and superstitious beliefs attached to children visiting the prison.

According to Das (2003) this situation tended to affect these women such that in many cases they became depressed. Aborisade, et al. (2016) also found in their study that the women experience anger, depression and frustration because of this separation and also regret their inability to fulfill their role of giving care to their children. Currie (2012) also noted that the frustration and anger accumulated as a result of this might also manifest in breaches of prison discipline, self-harm or suicide.

2.5.3. Health

The poor state of prisoner’s health globally has been commented on by numerous studies (Van der Bergh et al, 2011, UNDOC, 2008). Prison related health issues transcend to areas such as mental illness, depression, substance abuse and communicable diseases. Although women and men in prison face similar health problems there is a significant difference in the nature, intensity and complexity of the problems in the gender groups (UNDOC, 2008; Carlen and Worrall, 2004; Ash, 2003). Additionally, female prisoners face other issues unique to them as imprisoned women such as pregnancy.

The health of female prisoners has often been compromised prior to their imprisonment as a result of financial hardship (Khalid & Khan, 2013). In addition, some of the other pathways of females into crime, including physical, sexual and drug abuse (Lopez & Miller, 2012; Estrada & Nilsson, 2012) contribute to the deterioration
in the health of female prisoners before their incarceration. Furthermore, women confined to prison have been shown to have a much higher incidence of mental problems (i.e. depression and distress) than their male counterparts and the general public (Heilbrun et al., 2008). Women in prison also report massive weight gain during their imprisonment, which has been attributed to the metabolic changes of drug withdrawal, high-carbohydrate prison diets, methadone maintenance, prison canteen options limited to high-calorie snacks, boredom and inactivity (Martin et al., 2012; Nolan and Scagnelli, 2007; Khavjou, et al., 2007).

Spjeldnes et al (2014) examined the needs of 2,386 men (81.5%) and 542 women (18.5%) in US jails. They found that women showed much greater health needs than men and in most cases the women were more positive and open about expressing their needs. Similarly, Wolf et al (2007) argued that gender differences in mental health are informed by women’s difficult history of physical and sexual abuse. However, Currie (2012) opposes and explains that women are more willing to seek help and this may be translated into having a lot of demand for health care. Likewise, because of the abusive pre-prison experience of most incarcerated women, mental health issues are more prevalent among their population (Currie, 2012: Staton, Leukefeld, & Webster, 2003).

Nevertheless, the experience of women in prison can be exceptionally difficult in the case of pregnancy. Being pregnant for most women is difficult let alone being pregnant in prison. Currie (2007) articulates that pregnancy requires special care, balanced diet, hygienic environment, exercise, clothing and most importantly medical care. However, for most women in prison these vital things are not in existence. For
example, Modie-Moroka and Sossou (2001) reported that in Botswana, the requirements for a healthy pregnancy, such as adequate nutrition, exercise, fresh air and reasonably sanitary conditions were not being met for female prison inmates. For Again, isolated cases of women giving birth in cells in Mozambique and Zimbabwe have been reported (Samakaya-Makarati, 2003). This clearly differentiates the experiences of women from men in terms of nature, intensity and complexity of health problems faced in prison.

2.6. Coping Mechanisms

Irrespective of the length of prison sentence, women still suffer the pains as they are faced with a lot of stressors. According to Partyka (2001:3) “stress generally occurs when an individual is placed in a situation where his or her prior experiences or background do not easily lend themselves to interpretation of the current situation.” Although stress is experienced from the prison environment itself, empirical studies in the area of women and prison have affirmed that the most painful prison experience for women is the separation from their loved ones (Natako, 2017; Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Partyka, 2001). In order to survive life in prison, these women tend to adopt coping strategies. Coping is defined by Lazarus & Folkman (1984:141) as “the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”.

Early studies on coping in prison are traced to the work of Donald Clemmer (Paterline & Orr, 2016; Dhami et al., 2007). His concept of ‘prisonization’ was used to explain the process by which inmates adjust to the prison community. According to Clemmer
(1958) inmates tend to accept the subcultures of the inmate social system. Folkman & Lazarus (1985) identified two types of coping as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Whereas the former is aimed at problem solving or actively doing something to alter the source of stress, the latter deals with reducing or managing the emotional distress that results from the stressor.

Two models of prisonization come up when discussing coping in prison. The Deprivation Model (also referred to as the Indigenous Model (Dhami et al. 2007) and the importation model.

The Deprivation Model of prisonization addresses negative adjustment to prison (Clemmer, 1958; Sykes, 1958). It is believe that the prison deprives inmates of certain comforts they used to enjoy outside the prison and it is this hardship that shapes the way they cope. Inside the prison, they are met with a strictly regulated life and a lot of rules to abide by and this violation leads to harsh penalties. Consequently inmates act aggressively and become targets of others (Natako, 2017).

However, the importation model focuses on the idea that one’s pre-prison criminal values and personal characteristics that they import into prison affect how they adjust (Natako, 2017; Paterline & Orr, 2016; Dhami et al., 2007; Irwin, 1970; Irwin & Cressey, 1962). According to Van & Klebe (2010), the prison is characterized by dishonesty, deceit and aggression; inmates also lose their identity by being identified by numbers instead of names.

Paterline and Orr (2016) attempted to measure the models of prisonization (deprivation and importation) with self-attitudes and self-identities to find out if individuals with particular personality characteristics or self-conception cope with the
prison environment. The study concluded that the prison environment re-socializes inmates so they tend to lose their pre-prison identities. In order to cope and survive, they take on new roles such as “punk”, “merchant”, “outlaw”, or “politician” (pp. 76).

Inmates may adopt positive or negative coping strategies (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Geer, 2002; Negy, 1997). Adam (1992) asserts that women sometimes have maladaptive responses in the earlier stages of their incarceration in the form of self-mutilation, emotional disorder or even suicide. Geer (2002) also found that some of the positive coping skills are prayer/religion, humor, reflection and analysis of one’s problem while negative coping skills included watching television, playing cards and in some cases inmates shut down their emotions completely. Those who adapt positively are believed to have acquired these skills before their imprisonment and those who adapt negative strategies are said to have had a history of suffering anxiety, low self-esteem and depression prior imprisonment (Negy, 1997).

According to Partyka (2001), spirituality (attending church, reading the Bible, prayer, meditation, and introspection) was the first category of coping strategy adopted by women in a female prison in the Midwestern United States. Other coping mechanisms included support from special programs, individual or group therapy and medication, peer and family support from the inmate’s family or friends outside the prison or even other inmates or activities like exercising or sports. She also identified some negative coping strategies like smoking, oversleeping, lashing out, isolation, suicide attempts, giving up, and a general inability to cope. Similarly, Ofori-Dua et al. (2015) found in this study that in order to cope, prisoners might look within spirituality or turn outwards the family and friends or other support groups such as religious bodies.
Studies by Owen (1998) Fox (1988) Mann (1984) and Giallombardo (1966) also found that women imported relationships they have outside into the prison through the creation of pseudo/surrogate families with other inmates. Fox (1988) showed that these families are constructed to meet the needs that could not be obtained in prison. According to Mann (1984), this is a response to loneliness and can help to create a sense of belonging, security and emotional support. He also suggested that these families help in the socialization of the inmate in prison behaviours.

2.7. Collateral Effects of Female Imprisonment

Imprisonment is meant to punish the offender, lock him or her up to prevent causing more trouble, to rehabilitate him or her to live a crimeless life and also to deter potential criminals from engaging in crime (Abotchie, 2016). However, imprisonment indirectly affects the family members of the incarcerated (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015; Weaver & Nolan, 2015; Asomaning, 2013; Breen, 2008). Even though the collateral effects of imprisonment are experience by both men and women the following discussion will be on women.

2.7.1. On the Family

Imprisonment of a person regardless of the length of prison sentence results in crisis for members of his/her family, especially in the case where the imprisoned is the bread winner in the family or a primary care giver in the household (Corston, 2007). However, in some cases, the imprisonment of a member may not necessarily be a calamity but rather good news, if that member was seen to be abusive or trouble-maker (Ofori-Dua, et al., 2015). Many studies have found that the unintended consequences of imprisonment are normally negative and demoralizing on the
imprisoned and their families such that family ties are weakened and many marriages and intimate relationships end as a result (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015; Breen, 2008; Travis & Solomon 2005). Despite this assertion, Weaver & Nolan (2015) have argued that family ties may not necessarily be disrupted as a result of imprisonment but these ties may be improved or even unaffected and in some cases all three may be experienced.

Imprisonment causes economic strain on families. Many studies have testified that the imprisonment of a family member especially a parent causes financial difficulty on other members (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015; Dickie, 2013; Breen, 2008; Smith et al. 2007). Breen (2008) revealed that this happens especially in the case where the imprisoned spouse contributed positively to the economic sustenance of the family. In the absence of the contribution of the imprisoned member, the family is burdened with providing the needs of the other family. In some cases, elder children also have to quit school to work to be able to bring in some income. Aside this, the inmates also tend to look up to their families for support (Naser & Visher 2006), notwithstanding the cost that comes with imprisonment (Arditti, 2005). They include the additional costs associated with arrest and imprisonment, including attorney fees, collect-calls from prison, and the expenses of travelling to the prison and providing material goods for the inmate.

Family members who decide to still keep in touch with the imprisoned family member also experience extra financial cost as well as extended pains of imprisonment. Keeping in touch with the inmate entails prison visits and telephone communications, which are very expensive (Light and Campbell 2006). Family members are also faced with living with the stigma and shame emanating from the criminal act (Condry, 2007) and in their case the experience is more severe because
they live with those Goffman (1963) termed as normals or human beings, as compared to the imprisoned who finds himself in a sub-group of people with the same attribute. Comfort (2008) and Loucks (2004) indicate that the shame and stigma may be so intense that it could cause these family members to isolate themselves from the wider community. Codd (2008) establishes that in some cases, the family may try to manage the stigma by keeping the situation a secret but this can further lead to distress because they live in constant fear of the threats of disclosing their secret.

The imprisonment of the woman also means emotional support in the family is absent and her roles as primary caregiver and household keeper left behind has to be reorganized. In many instances, the non-incarcerated spouse takes up these roles (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015) or other family members like sisters, aunts, grandmothers or mothers also take up these roles (Hairston, 2001). According to Jardine (2015), Moore and Convery (2011) and Loucks (2004) these stresses experienced by family members of the incarcerated breed negative emotions like sadness, confusion, fear, anxiety, anger, loneliness, jealousy, shame, guilt or even relief.

2.7.2. On Romantic Relationships

Most marriages and romantic relationships are greatly altered as a result of imprisonment. Research has shown that most women lose their marriage when they are imprisoned as compared to men (Salmon, 2007). Codd (2008) established that romantic relationships experience a great deal of stresses in the form of disappointment, shame, stigma or anger as a result of the criminal act. Other stresses also come from the high cost of phone calls, the cost and distance of travel to the prison and also supervised and time bound visits. The low level of contact also incites
negative emotions, which may be detrimental to these intimate relationships. Few
prisons allow conjugal rights and as shown by Travis and Solomon (2005), the
absence of frequent day-to-day contacts combined with absence of sexual intimacy
between such partners makes it difficult for them to maintain relationships. It is also
opined that some of these intimate relationships are curtailed as a result of the inmate
trying to cope with stresses arising from the prison experience. They tend to express
distrust and fear that may arouse insecurity and in turn affect their relationships.

2.7.3. On Children

Many women in prisons are mothers and their children cannot be left out of the
impacts of imprisonment. Ofori-Dua et al. (2015) reported that a child who loses a
parent as a result of death or divorce receives sympathy and opportunities from
others. However, in a case where the child’s parent is imprisoned, the issue is not
discussed and such children are left to deal with their loss in silence.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in 1989
with others like the European Convention of Human Rights serves as a guide to how
children should be treated. Article 9 of the UNCRC establishes:

1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her
parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to
judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures,
that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.
Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one
involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the
parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child’s
place of residence.
2. In any proceedings pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all
interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the
proceedings and make their views known.
3. States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests. (Article 9)

This article is important because it emphasizes the opinions of children about the issue at hand before sentencing is carried out to ensure their wellbeing. However, it is not the case. Extant literature on children of incarcerated parents shows that their wellbeing is greatly affected by the absence of the parent (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015; Ackermann, 2015; Otu, Otu, & Eteng, 2013).

Ackermann (2015) strongly opined that children whose mothers are imprisoned are the ones who experience the true impact of imprisonment. Studies have also shown that children with imprisoned fathers tend to stay with their mothers, whereas in cases where the mothers are incarcerated, the children tend to be in the care of extended family members, foster care or are displaced altogether (Otu, Otu, & Eteng, 2013; Healy, Foley & Walsh, 2012; Taylor, 2004 and Musengzi & Staunton, 2003).

Asomaning (2013) also revealed that some of the effects of incarceration on children included trauma and psychological problems associated with the arrest, social stigma and subsequent redrawal, poor school performance and high school drop-out rate, substance and alcohol abuse as well as changes in family composition and weakened parental ties. Ofori-Dua et al., (2015) similarly asserts that the children may experience trauma, especially if they were present during the arrest of the parent, peer isolation and depression, school related problems and problems with peer relationships. One of the key findings in Ofori-Dua et al., (2015) was that, these
children mostly withdrew from the company of their peers and other social networks for the fear of being labeled and stigmatized.

Weaver and Nolan (2015) articulated that the effect of imprisonment on a child was not constant but depended on a large number of variables. Some if these variables include their age when the parent was arrested, the gender of the imprisoned parent, the kind of relationship that exist with their parent, the nature and frequency of contact they had with imprisoned parent, what they are told about their parent’s absence, the nature of the parent’s offence and attributions or perceptions of stigma (Weaver and Nolan, 2015). Breen (2008) suggested that in most cases, these children end up committing crimes as well.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2009) proposed that the use of theoretical underpinnings in research is necessary. A theory provides a perspective that shapes the questions that drive the research. It also informs how data are collected and analyzed and provides a call for action. He defined theory as “an interrelated scheme of beliefs or ideas that is used to give explanation to behaviour and attitudes (Creswell, 2009). Roberts (2002) has indicated that in explaining social behaviour, a single theory is sometimes not capable of giving ample explanation; two or more concepts from different theories could therefore be used.

In agreement with this, the study adopts two theories - the concept of social stigma from the symbolic interactionist perspective and the Bowen’s family systems theory. These theories are relevant because they elaborate on how one’s identity affects association with others and how this affects the functioning of the family.
2.8.1. Social Stigma

The concept of social stigma is derived from the broad symbolic interactionist perspective and is underpinned by laid on the assumption that human beings constantly creates meanings of social life through interactions meanings are created. The idea of social stigma began from Èmile Durkheim in his work on deviance. Durkheim believes that when people violate social norms, society perceives them in a less desirable way. Further work on the concept is attributed to Erving Goffman who sees stigma as a mark of disgrace or a phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute that is deeply discredited by his or her society is rejected as a result of the attribute (Goffman, 1963). Among the types of stigma he mentioned is ‘blemishes of individual character’ (Goffman, 1963:3) that could include, bad behaviour (criminal behaviour) and when this is publicly known such that it affects social interaction, then that person has been stigmatized. For Goffman, it is not the undesirable attributes alone that count but the language of relationships after it is known publicly (Goffman, 1963). Stigma can, therefore, be categorized as discredited or discreditable. The former refers to stigma that is clearly known or visible to others whereas the latter is stigma that is unknown but if known, will be discredited. The concept of stigma has been used in diverse ways but for the purpose of this study, it concentrates on how external events like incarceration affect the definition of roles or even brings stress or conflict that may affect the attitudes of others in the family. Going by Goffman’s postulation, an incarcerated person has failed to conceal his criminal behaviour and therefore is attributed with a discredited stigma. As suggested by Goffman (1963) it is the attitudes ‘we normals or human beings’ have towards an attribute that counts and in this case, they have been relegated into a subgroup from typical society.
2.8.2. Family Systems Theory

Bowen’s (1974) family systems theory is built on the ideas of the general Systems Theory. System theorists envisage society as a system with interrelated and interconnected parts that play specific roles to ensure continuity (McGoldrick, 1988; Bowen, 1974). It is, therefore, problematic to study individuals in isolation of their family. The family system explains the family as an emotional unit with members occupying different statuses with specific roles and responsibilities (Bowen, 1975). Members of the family are expected to respond to each other in ways based on their statuses and roles (GenoPro, 2012). However, there would be numerous reasons why a person is unable to perform his/her roles and incarceration is one. Brown (1999) also indicated that the absence of a family member or the inability of the family member to perform his specifies roles tends to bring about apprehension amongst other members leading to instability and ushers the family into a state of disequilibrium. Incarceration removes a person from the family and confines him/her under law resulting in the possible disturbances and dysfunction of the family.

Whereas other social occurrence such as death, divorce or ailment tends to attract the sympathy and help from others, that cannot be said in the case of incarceration. In this event, members of the family tend to disassociate or ignore the incarcerated member. This negative attitude from a criminal attribute does not only affect the criminal, but also others associated with him or her, especially family members. Family members may decide to disassociate themselves from the stigmatized as a result of the feeling of betrayal or disappointment or to escape stigma by association and this in turn leads to the breakdown of familial relationship.
Despite these misgivings, the family systems theorists also believe that the family with time tries to find a way to establish equilibrium. In this case, Bowen’s exposition of emotional triangles as the basic building blocks of families and of how a third person helps to stabilize inherently unstable dyads, is seen as central (Bowen, 1978). Under stress, the triangling process feeds on itself and interlocking triangles are formed throughout the system (Bowen, 1975). This can spill over into the wider community when family members find allies or enemies to unite against, such as doctors, teachers and therapists.

The fundamental question that can be raised from this is: How can equilibrium be established between a prisoner and the family? The prison system naturally establishes a barrier that does not encourage reconciliation and further increases withdrawal. Thus, under prison-related separation or disequilibrium, triangulation as espoused becomes a daunting task for the parties in the family.

2.9. Conclusion

In summary, the family system’s theory provides the general outlook for explaining the operation of the family and how the displacement of a member can result in role vacuum and instability. Although, the displacement of a family member in some cases such as ill health or death may attract sympathy of others, the case of imprisonment is different because it comes with the status of ‘criminal’, which is seen as a form of discredited stigma. This may affect the stigmatized person’s relationship with his or her kin group as well as other social relationships. As Goffman (1963) suggests, what counts is how the stigma affects the social relations of the individual.
The existing literature shows how the imprisonment of women presents a unique situation in the maintenance of familial relationships as it causes substantial emotional, financial and practical difficulties to members of the family and the offender herself. The literature also identifies different positive and maladaptive coping mechanism that could be simultaneously adopted by inmates. The general effect of imprisonment on the family is impressively investigated in developed countries. However, this cannot be said for developing countries like Ghana. Considering the importance of social context in familial relationships the quest for such study is paramount.
CHAPTER THREE

PRISONS IN GHANA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1. Introduction
In order to understand the experiences of women in prison, it is relevant to gain some insight into the penal systems of Ghana and how it pertains to issues of gender. This chapter, therefore, presents the historical background of the penal justice system in Ghana and brings to light what existed before the advent of the modern day penal system in Ghana. The chapter focuses on the penal justice system in pre-colonial Ghana, the birth of modern prisons during the colonial era and the nature of the penal system in post-colonial Ghana. The severity and certainty of legal punishment in these three eras are described and explained as well as the punishment procedures and sentencing patterns. Highlights on female criminality and punishment during these periods are described to provide the historical setting for the study on female imprisonment in Ghana.

3.2. Penal Justice in Pre-Colonial Ghana
Earliest records of prisons are traced to Egypt and Mesopotamia, where they were built underground to keep the guilty or suspected offenders while they awaited a command either to be executed or to become slaves. Modern prisons originated from London and are attributed to Jeremy Bentham, an English philosopher, who promoted the concept through his architectural design of a building called the panopticon (Foucault, 1979). The panopticon is a circular building with a tower in the middle where the guards stood to watch the inmates. It was designed such that the inmates could not see what was going on in the tower so they did not know at what point they
were being watched or not. This idea was intended to instill discipline in the inmates (Foucault, 1979).

In Ghana, however, it was not until the nineteenth century that the modern system of imprisonment reached our borders. Prior to that, there were some forms of social control and justice specific to the indigenous people. These included ostracism, fines, spiritual sanctions, whipping, public ridicule, physical dismemberment and execution. However much of the evidence on the pattern and procedures for punishment are not properly documented and studies are usually informed by oral and anecdotal information. Nevertheless, the little historical evidence accessible on the patterns of punishment and imprisonment during pre-colonial era provides relevant reference for discussion.

Firstly, it is central to note that pre-colonial Ghana was guided by its own traditional religions as compared to present day religiously diverse and highly Westernized society. The traditional religious values in that era engendered strong bonds of moral solidarity among members of the society. The violation of these moral bonds was grounds for inflicting punishment. However, the intensity, severity and certainty of such punishments of violators in that era were influenced by the crime committed.

Slinn, Hatchard and Coldham (1996) for example wrote that offences were categorized and crimes like theft and homicides were settled by compensating the victim or victim’s family for their loss. However, crimes against the well-being of the community such as witchcraft or breaking taboos or sacred codes were deemed to be very serious offences.
These crimes attracted stricter punishments such as social isolation (ostracism), fines, spiritual sanctions and physical punishment including, whipping or publicly placed in the pillory, physical dismemberment (mutilation) and execution (Addo, 2018; Hynd, 2015; Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995). It may seem senseless to punish someone for breaking a taboo more severely than one who has committed murder.

Durkheim explains this in his work on Division of labor (1985). Durkheim reasons that traditional societies are characterized by mechanical solidarity which exhibits high level of collective conscience. An offence of the norm is seen as an offence against the entire community. This arouses agitations and calls for instant and punitive justice as compared to a crime against a person.

The trokosi system is an example of a traditional religious and social control mechanisms used in pre-colonial Ghana. This practice dates back to the seventeenth century and is common amongst the people of the West African Coast (Akpabli-Honu, 2014; Ameh, 2001). The trokosi system confined young unmarried girls who were mostly virgins to serve in these shrines to atone the crimes of a family member. According to Ameh (2006) these crimes range from stealing, adultery and failing to redeem a pledge to a deity. Vetten (2008) argues that the system of trokosi could be likened to imprisonment because, these girls serve time for crimes although not theirs but someone else’s.

In terms of procedures it has been noted that a person who offended went through trial (Hynd, 2015). The trial constituted a panel of chiefs, queen mothers, elders and other interest groups. In most situations these cases were tried by ordeal or mystical means (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995). Until the coming of the Europeans, the idea of modern
prison was alien to Ghanaians. Nonetheless, some form of confinement was practised which rather served as a holding place for offenders awaiting trial or punishment and not as a form of punishment itself as was used by the Europeans. These places of confinement were mostly located in chief’s palaces. Additionally, in some societies persons who offended were thought to have offended the gods, ancestors and the unborn.

Pre-colonial Ghana, therefore, adopted a multifaceted approach to punishment but their sameness of morality influenced by religion created a high level of consciousness among members. Punishment was administered in the event of violation. However, as we will see in the next sections, punishments were more severe in the colonial era than in the pre-colonial period, because it was geared toward exploitation and legal punishment was a mechanism through which the colonialists maintained control over the territory. The form and the transformation of the modern prison system during the colonial era are discussed below.

3.3. Prisons Under Colonial Rule and their Orientation

The scramble among Europeans for territories in Africa reached a high pitch at the Berlin Congress in 1885. However, prior to that, the people of the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana) had interaction with Europeans through trade and warfare. The Europeans upon reaching the coast established forts and castles for their trading and administrative work. Some of these forts and castles had dungeons underneath them and were actively used to confine slaves in shackles until they were ready to be transported to the Americas in the sixteenth century (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995). After the abolishing of the slave trade in 1807 these dungeons were transformed into prison
cells to keep offenders (Hynd, 2015). Therefore, it is said to be a ‘colonial institution’ (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995; Seidman, 1969).

According to Bernault (2007), early imprisonment in colonial Ghana was not aimed at maintaining discipline amongst the local people but was used as to serve as a tool for the colonial administration to maintain social order to enable it carry on with its human conquest and exploitation of the colony. Bernault (2007) also argued that prisons in Africa have emerged from three main sources: the jails the Europeans set up in their forts and castles, the bodily and physical confinement they employed during the slave trade and the military lock-up deployed during colonial conquests (Bernault, 2007). By 1841, the Europeans had formalized the modern prison system with the first prisons located in the forts and castles. These prisons were used to confine debtors.

In 1844, the British and the Fante chiefs came into agreements for the British to protect them from other ethnic groups. This became known as the Bond of 1844 and the genesis of colonial rule under the British. The bond of 1844 granted special rights and liberties to the British and placed the indigenes in a binding agreement under the British. The bond also took away the rights of the chiefs to constitute their own courts and gave the British the right to introduce the Westminster system of administration of justice and holding of cases in the British jurisdiction (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995).

Initially the British gave the chiefs the authority to punish criminals. However the fear of the chiefs resorting to unacceptable methods of punishment discouraged the British from supporting chiefs to enforce sentences. These were carried out in the forts in order to supervise the process (Hynd, 2015). Eventually, the Foreign Jurisdictions Act
24, 1843 was authorized by the Queen to control the colony and gave power to the Westminster courts to deal with all criminal and civil offenses while the local chiefs dealt with customary law. Under this new dual system of administration of justice, the British could prosecute a person for doing an act considered normal under customary law and vice versa (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995). Additionally, in 1850, the Europeans introduced prison labour. Inmates in the prison cells began to engage in labour, which included repairing public roads and making straw hats for the public and earned nothing (Salifu, 1980).

By 1860 the colonial government had established the Prisons Ordinance that was promulgated in 1876 leading to the birth of the Prisons Department in Gold Coast (Salifu, 1980). The prisons were initially put under the responsibility of the Police Service and were managed by the Gold Coast Constabulary. However, as a result of the unsatisfactory state of the prison under the management of the Gold Coast Constabulary, the authority of the prisons was handed over to the Commissioner of Police. Later in 1920, the prisons department expanded and was therefore separated from the Police Service to form its own department that was headed by Captain Cookson, who became the first Inspector General of Prisons in Ghana (Ghana Prisons Service, 2011; Salifu, 1980). Salifu (1980) showed that by 1947, prisons existed in Accra, Sekondi, Cape Coast, Kumasi, Obuasi, Tamale coupled with smaller prisons at Yeji, Salaga, Bole, Wa, Lawra, Navrongo, Zuarungu, Gambaga and Bawku. By 1948, a prison was opened at Ankaful for criminals suffering from leprosy or tuberculosis. All executions by hanging took place at the James fort in Accra and the industrial institutions also received boys between 16 and 21 (Salifu, 1980).
Apart from the geographical expansion and administrative maneuvering the focus of the prison also shifted from custodial to a punitive purpose in order to deter colonist from offending. Nevertheless, the prison system failed to deter individuals from offending because they were mostly imprisoned for trivial issues, which were not regarded criminal but rather as merely deviance or simply disobedience (Hynd, 2015). Hynd (2015) concluded that the lack of criminal instinct amongst the local people created no associated disgrace or stigma to ex-convicts. However, this cannot be the case because crime is relative and perhaps obviously what was criminal in the Ghanaian context was not the case to the British.

Female criminality was usually limited to stealing, minor assaults and offenses involving prostitution. Seidman (1969) noted that the data regarding sentences of imprisonment on female offenders in the Gold Cost were statistically insignificant. The length of imprisonment for these women was between 3 months to 3 three years. However, the numbers involved were, of course, much smaller than those for men. Lower numbers were recorded in the Northern Territories (Seidman, 1969). The reason for this difference in numbers of women imprisoned in the north might be partly due to the northern social construct which confined women to domestic roles thus their reduced opportunities for committing crime. It may also be alluded to the religious dogma of the Muslims that does not allow women’s engagement in economic activities and socialization (Seidman, 1969).

Generally, when released, both male and female were welcomed back into society even though the society saw their imprisonment as bad luck. The ex-convicts also suffered unemployment and this led them to re-offend increasing the rate of
recidivism. These issues led to the adoption of the reformist discourse and in 1927 the Governor F. G Guggisberg started the local reform in the prisons. The focus of the prison shifted from being punitive to more reformative and this was made possible through trade training (Hynd, 2015).

3.4. Prisons in the Post-Colonial Period: 1957 - 1966

Like most of the colonial legacy, the British penal system was sustained after independence in 1957. However, the state in which it was left has undergone several reforms. In 1958, the Prime Minister Dr. Kwame Nkrumah passed the Preventive Detention Act. This Act arose as a response to the several attempts to assassinate the Prime Minister (Nelson & Gyamerah, 2009). Despite the aim to control terrorism, the government gained power to arrest and imprison people for duration of five years without trial. As stated by Gomda (2017), Kwame Nkrumah used this power to also mute people who he saw as a threat to his political ideology, using the Preventive Detention Act as a tool to maintain control and power in the country. In 1959 and again in 1962, the Act was amended and detention became indefinite without trial. The prison at this time was used for political persecution.

In January 1964, the Prisons Department ceased to be part of the Civil Service and became independent and renamed Ghana Prisons Service (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015). The end of the twentieth century came with the end of the punitive focus of the prisons and the adoption of a more reformative approach aimed at treating criminals to reintegrate into society.
Between the second the third republic, the country was faced with political unrest hence there was no significant development in the prison system. The period from 1966 to date however was very significant in Ghana’s criminal and justice system. This period saw two decades of political instability with different military regimes administrating the affairs of the country at one point. The regimes established quasi-military and extra-legal institutions, such as the People’s Defence Committees (PDCs), Workers’ Defense Committees, Citizen Vetting Committees (CVCs), and public tribunals. These bodies exercised quasi-judicial and law enforcement functions that often complemented and in some cases attempted to supplant the functions of the regular law enforcement agencies and courts. Additionally, pattern of episodic raiding of homes and offices, arrest and detention was a key characteristic of these military regimes (Gyimah-Boadi & Rothchild, 1982). This was not only limited to members of the political elite of the erstwhile governments but also it extended to market women and traders. For example, under the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) regime in 1979, market women were accused of driving up prices and hoarding of essential communities. The army stormed the markets, searched the homes of these women and seized everything in sight. There were arrests and public floggings of market women during this period (Clark, 2010). The period also saw other atrocities but the lowest point to the justice system was the gruesome murder of the three judges.

Rationality is the goal of present-day punishment, basically due to modernization and economics. In present-day Ghana, technical relationships have tended to replace moral relationships and therapies have replaced judgments. Thus, sciences have
occupied spaces that were moral and religious during the pre-colonial and colonial eras. Punishments are calculated based on the reflected knowledge of the courtroom workgroup. Person found guilty of criminal offence are either fined or placed in the prison system. The Ghana Prisons Service is now backed by seven (7) legal mandates, which are: The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, Prison (Declaration of Prisons) Instrument; Prisons Service Decree 1972, NRCD 46, Prisons Standing Orders, 1960, Prisons Regulation L.I. 412/58, Prisons (Amendment) Regulation, 1970 (L.I) and Prisons Service Scheme of Service Administration.

The core functions of the Ghana Prisons Service in post-colonial Ghana include the safe custody of prisoners and the welfare of prisoners and the non-core function is to ensure reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners (where practicable). The Ghana Prisons Service is currently made up of forty-five (45) establishments all over the nation. There are the Prisons Headquarters and Prison Officers’ Training School (POTS) in Accra with the sole objective of ensuring human resource development of the Ghana Prisons Service and a Senior Correctional Centre (Borstal Institution) for efficient rehabilitation of offenders in Ghana. Senior Correctional Centre (for juveniles). There are seven Female Prisons, seven Central Prisons, thirteen Local Prisons, three Open Camp Prisons, nine Agricultural Settlement Camp Prisons, One Medium Security Prison, One Maximum Security Prison, One Contagious Disease Prison (CDP) (Ghana Prisons Service, 2013). The regional distribution of these facilities is provided in figure 3.1 below.
Figure 3.1.: A map showing the location of prison establishments in Ghana

Out of the entire forty-five establishments in the country, female establishments are only seven. These female prisons are all attached to the male prisons apart from the Nsawam Prison.

In performing their mandate, the Ghana Prison Service is confronted with a lot of challenges. Notable among these are prison congestion, poor quality of meal, extreme deprivation, low officer-to-prisoner ratio, limited budget allocation, inadequate accommodation for officers and the unwillingness of society to support prisoner’s rehabilitation and resettlement (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1995)). The congestion in Ghanaian prisons leaves much to be desired. The Prisons Service is currently housing close to 15,000 inmates as opposed to the intended capacity of 9,000 (Ghana Prison Service, 2014) This increasing prisoner population is also partly due to the incidence of re-offending among ex-convicts and over-stayed remand prisoners. Overcrowding affects the quality of life of prisoners and accounts for inhumane conditions in Ghana’s prisons. These challenges coupled with poor ventilation causes the spread of communicable and airborne diseases among the inmates.

3.5. The Nsawam Prison

The study was conducted at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison in Ghana. The Nsawam Medium Security Prison was built in 1960 by the then Nkrumah Government. The prison covers a one-mile square parcel of land located about two kilometers along the outskirts of Nsawam Township in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The Nsawam Township itself is approximately 40km North West of Accra and located on the main Accra-Kumasi Highway. Aburi borders it on the east and on the west, the Adieso traditional area, in the north by Teacher Mante and in the south by
Medie. Nsawam is heterogeneous in nature; most of the residents are natives of the land and a few have migrated from the communities nearby. A significant number of people in Nsawam are from the suburbs in the Eastern Region. Nsawam is also the capital of the Akuapem South District in the Eastern Region. The town is very popular, because one of the nation’s largest prisons (Nsawam Medium Security Prison) is situated there.

The Nsawam Medium Security Prison has the male and female prison with each surrounded by a high wall topped with barbed wire. The study focused mainly on the female inmates. In the female prison, besides the three dormitory-like cellblocks, there are other structures located in the prison. These include the administration block, a school, library, sickbay, child friendly unit (for nursing mothers), a church, a praying room for Muslims, a kitchen, administration block, workshops and a payphone for inmates to call their family and friends outside. The administration block is a two-story building, facing the prison yard, so that there can be constant observation of the inmates. The administration block has a visiting room with a provision of not more than 6 visitors at a time. The Nsawam Medium Security Female Prison is noted for providing rehabilitation and vocational programmes for inmates. Vocations such as dressmaking, basketry, soap-making, hairdressing (wig caps), baking, tie-and-dye and batik and formal educational programmes such as junior high school, senior high school and Information Communication Technology.

3.6. Conclusion

The foregoing describes how Ghana has moved through the various phases of criminal justice and punishment. The Ghana Prison System has evolved since pre-
colonial times. In the pre-colonial era the fundamental nature of social rules was not simple, as in other mechanical societies. The era saw witchcraft as the crime for which the most severe punishment, the death penalty, was inflicted on offenders. As juxtaposed to the colonial period, where treason and treachery assumed first rank as the criminal summon. In the present postcolonial context, premeditated murder and armed robbery are punished by death. The periods also saw the construction of female criminality. The changes that also occurred express a particular tilt on how human action are labeled and reflect the tendency to safeguard the survival and well-being of whoever has the controlling power in the society. Yet, the prevalence of crime requires continues reforms and addressing of challenges in the penal justice system of Ghana. This provides avenue for more prison studies. The next chapter discusses the data collection method used in the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

CAN YOU DO IT? DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

4.1. Introduction

Studies on prisons have always presented peculiar problems because of the research subjects and the controlled environment in which such studies take place. Therefore, from the onset, the idea of conducting a prison research brought some anxiety to the researcher. This swayed the choice for this chapter heading “Can you do it?” Initial discussions of the study focused on the method which included gaining access to the Nsawam Medium Security Prison, construction of research concepts and instruments, inmate identification and the influence of the Ghana Prison Service. Fortunately, an existing relationship between my supervisor and an officer at the Ghana Prison Service Headquarters made access to the Nsawam Medium Security Prison relatively easy. A letter from the Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, along with my data collection instrument and a personal letter of intent was sent to the Ghana Prisons Service Headquarters in Accra. The letter sought permission to conduct the study with inmates and officers at the female section of the Nsawam Medium Security Prison.

However, because research of this nature puts additional demands on staff for escort and security. Thus, it took some weeks before permission was granted. Upon the approval of the study, the researcher proceeded to the Nsawam Prison to arrange the research process with the senior officer in charge of the female facility. However, the approval letter (See Appendix B) had a condition, which was a major blow to the study. The approval prevented the researcher from using any tape recorder during the interview. Electronic devices, such as computers and cell phones, are not allowed within prisons in Ghana. Thus, all data collection must be hand-written. Following
that, a research assistant had to be engaged which placed additional financial burden on the researcher.

This chapter presents the research methods underpinning the study. It discusses the justification for the research approach employed. The chapter also touches on the research design, the instruments for data collection and sampling procedures. The data management procedures employed is also discussed as well as information on ethical considerations and quality control procedures adopted. The primary focus of the methodology was to explore, describe and explain the challenges female prisoners in Nsawam MediumSecurity Prison face relating to family relationship.

4.2. Research Paradigm

Paradigms play an important role in social science. Kuhn (1970:175) defined a paradigm as “a set of beliefs, values and techniques shared by members of a scientific community, and which acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them.” In general, a paradigm is best described as a whole system of thinking. The elements of ontology (nature of reality) and epistemology (what can be known) are therefore crucial for social research. Ontology refers to the basic belief the researcher has of the form and nature of human beings whereas epistemology is a philosophy that addresses how the researcher obtains valid knowledge given his/her ontological assumptions (Kubrin et al., 2009). These two elements define the researcher’s worldview on what knowledge is and it leads to the methodological question of how the research will be carried out.
In this study, the researcher’s ontological point of view regarding how women experience deprivation of family ties as a part of prison existence, is one consisting of individuals possessing different views regarding familial relationships that are continually being shaped or influenced by attributes that the inmates bring with them to prison (pre-incarceration experiences) and inmates’ experiences and activities during incarceration (environmental influences). In respect to epistemology, the researcher is of the view that the study contributes to the construction of knowledge about the deprivation of family ties and coping strategies by incarcerated women. Therefore, the philosophical assumptions underlying this study come mainly from a qualitative interpretive/constructivist approach. This paradigm allows the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences of female prisoners with regards to family relationships and how they cope.

Qualitative research involves the use of ‘soft’ data in the form of gestures, verbal impressions and symbols of respondents (Neuman, 2003). With such attributes of this paradigm, the researcher is able to make very strong interpretations from the interaction with the respondents. Creswell (2009) has also argued that a qualitative study provides an assortment of information sources that are very interactive and humanistic. Thus, the researcher sought to interact with female prisoners from the Nsawam Medium Security Prison and this made the qualitative approach most appropriate.

The choice of a qualitative approach also allowed respondents to speak broadly on the issues bringing out their experiences and understandings. With this approach, their emotions, sentiments, frustrations as well as gestures were captured and interpreted to
give more meanings to the study. Generally, qualitative studies are not for
generalization but to explore and explain the experiences of female inmates. Thus,
their family relationships among imprisoned women and the coping strategies they
adopt in dealing with this important deprivation while in prison is given in-depth
analysis. Deprivation of familial relationships or social ties has much to do with
experiences and attitudinal posture of prisoners. Therefore, to effectively understand
such phenomenon, it was appropriate to adopt a qualitative interpretive approach so
that informants could really tell their stories and experiences for the researcher to
draw meaningful inferences.

4.3. Research Design

Depending on the study under discussion, the design of a research should be in such a
way as to elicit key information relevant to the research problem identified, and that
such information is obtained through objective procedures (Smith & Albaum, 2010).
In effect a good research design clearly outlines the methods and procedures for
acquiring the information needed to execute the objectives of the study. It stipulates
the information to be collected and from what sources as well as the procedure. After
reviewing the various qualitative approaches, a phenomenological study using in-
depth interviewing was chosen as the design for gathering data for this study.

The phenomenological study approach is mostly used to highlight instances when
“how” or “what” questions are being posed, when the researcher has little control
over events and when the focus is on a phenomenon with some real-life experiences
(Creswell, 2009). A phenomenological methodology was appropriate for this study
because it enabled the researcher to seek to understand their meanings that
participants attributed to their actions - their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds. The researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction. This design is also appropriate to delineate the meanings of lived-experiences for respondents (Creswell, 2007). The objective of the study was to focus on what participants had in common - the shared, lived experiences of prison life (Creswell, 2009).

It is therefore important that in conducting research, the researcher is value free, keeping his perceptions and biases out of the research while trying to understand the life experiences of the participants. Again, the primary goal of a phenomenological approach as stated by Marshall and Rossman (1999), is to encapsulate the full meaning of the participant’s experiences as shared in their own words. Therefore, the researcher was able to collect information in a comprehensive and systematic manner that ensured in-depth information about each objective set out to be investigated. This method gave more room for participants (inmates) to describe their experiences and thoughts in their own words and language rather than from the prison of the researcher.

All these considerations informed the choice of the qualitative phenomenological study design.

4.4. The Study Area

Earlier, allusion has been made to the Nsawam Medium Security Prison. Hence this section will focus on the justification for the choice of the study area. The choice of Nsawam Medium Security Prison was motivated by the fact that it used to be the largest prison in Ghana before the establishment of the Ankaful Maximum Security
Prison in 2011. However, it is still the most popular prison with the largest number of both male and female inmates in Ghana. It also accommodates diverse categories of inmates ranging from those on remand to those convicted for offenses against the state, persons, property and offenses against public order. It further accommodates offenders sentenced to shorter sentences as well as to life imprisonment. As at the end of March 2016, the male section of the prison had an inmate population of about three thousand four hundred and sixteen (3,416) inmates, while the female section housed about one hundred and twenty (120) inmates. Male and female prisons included Ghanaians and other nationals like Nigerians, Togolese, and Kenyans among others.

4.5. Data Sources

The data needed for this study were collected through the primary sources. An interview guide was used in collecting the primary data. Primary data for the study were obtained through one-on-one in-depth interviews using an interview guide (Appendix A). The in-depth interviews were conducted to gather the experience and views of respondents in relation to the research objectives. Respondents were allowed to share and express their thoughts without many restrictions.

4.6. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Generally, prisons are unique, restricted, and at times, unpredictable environments. They operate in a security setting where each group has a well-defined, discrete role. This setting created some challenge in adopting a probability sampling technique. Therefore, a convenience sampling method was adopted based on the regulations of the prison regime. However, the researcher had control over the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were all inmate female convicts regardless of
their socio-demographic characteristics, type of crime committed or length of sentence. Women on remand were excluded because they had not yet been tried and therefore did not have the status of criminals. Prison officers who had worked in the female prison at Nsawam for more than two years were also included. This is because they would have had some level of experience and therefore reliability of information can be ensured. The selection of officers was also based on those who had close contact with the female inmates. This meant the researcher had no decision aside from the choice of participants. The prison administration assisted the researcher to select the participants based on the stated criteria.

Polkinghorne (1989) cited in Creswell (2009) recommended that researchers in phenomenological studies could interview between 5 and 25 individuals who have all experienced a phenomenon. To ensure that the research went beyond the point of data saturation, it was decided that between fifteen (15) and thirty-five (35) respondents should be involved in the study. In all, a total number of thirty (30) inmates were successfully interviewed representing forty-one percent (41%) of the female convicted population. These female inmates were imprisoned for various offences: robbery, assault, fraud, murder, narcotics, trade malpractice.

4.7. Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure
An interview guide was developed and used during the data collection process. This was largely influenced by the extant literature and captured the research objectives. However, the instruments were unstructured and therefore, not restrictive and this gave room for probes. The aim of the interview guides was to help gather data that will lead to a textual and structural description of the respondents’ experiences and
provide understanding of the common experiences of the respondents. These instruments were very appropriate in that they facilitated gathering of detailed information from informants and ensured that they do not deviate from the subject matter.

Data collection method used was the in-depth interview to solicit information from the inmates and prison officers. The inmate interview guide was divided into four sections to capture information on the background of participants. Other themes on the interview guide were experiences with family relationships prior to and during incarceration, the coping strategies. There were thirty-three (33) questions in all. The prison officers interview guide was divided into four (4) sections. Basic information such as position in the prisons and length of service in the prison were asked. Other themes included inmate experiences with family relationships during incarceration; coping strategies. (See Appendix A).

A pilot interview involving three respondents was done to ensure the data collection instrument was appropriate for the study. My supervisor and a peer reviewed the pilot instrument and provided a basis from which the fieldwork could develop. The interviews were carried out in the church hall of the female prison. Each interview lasted between twenty-five (25) and thirty-five (35) minutes. The interviews were conducted in English, Twi and Ga and the conversations were recorded verbatim in English by the researcher and her research assistant. Some phrases were captured in the local language because they gave more emphasis to the feelings the respondents expressed. At the end of each day the handwritten notes were merged and typed into Microsoft Word 2013. In the mornings before beginning the day’s interviews, the
previous interview transcripts were thoroughly read to make sure the notes reflected what actually transpired. The data collection was undertaken in two months (February 2018 – April 2018).

4.8. Data Management – (Data Coding and Analysis)

The qualitative thematic approach was used to analyze all data generated from the interviews and observations at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison. Qualitative data for this study included verbatim handwritten notes from interviews, researcher's reflective or jotted notes from observations made during the data collection period. The observation largely covered the observed inter-relationship among inmates and between officers and inmates. This non-participant observation was made during the waiting times at the female prison’s administration block. The experiences narrated by the key respondents (inmates and officers) were handwritten verbatim and the researcher’s personal observations were all keyed into Microsoft Word 2013 to identify common themes, patterns and inter-relationships.

The researcher used detailed readings of raw textual data to derive concepts and themes. Through this, interpretations were made from the raw data. This was achieved through highlighting significant statements made to provide understanding of how the inmates experienced deprivation of liberty. This led to a textual and structural description of the experiences and provides an understanding of the common experiences of the respondents. These textual data were analyzed inductively using content analysis to generate categories and explanations. From the textual description, the researcher was able to write a composite description of the experiences based on the following sub-headings.
4.9. Reliability and Validation

In order to ensure data reliability and validity, the researcher incorporated the following mechanisms.

Firstly, the strategy of repeated question sequences and inter-subjectivity allowed the researcher to incorporate credibility procedures during the interviews to ensure the quality of data. Such approach ensured that there was internal consistency of the narrative accounts shared by the female inmates.

Secondly, even though a convenience sampling technique was used, maximum variation of respondents’ characteristics in terms of ethnicity, offense, sentence, and time served also helped to achieve great diversity of comparisons for further insight into the phenomenon.

Thirdly, brief demographic information which was captured during the interview, was triangulated with participants’ official record at Nsawam Medium Security Female Prison. The information included age, ethnicity, crimes committed and the length of sentences. This type of corroborating evidence increased the validity of responses for greater consistency with the interview data (Creswell, 2009). Again, interviewing officers at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison gave another level of opportunity for data comparison and to triangulate the experience shared by the female inmates.

Lastly, reliability of data collection was enhanced by researcher’s careful attention to the verbatim notes taken during the interview. As mentioned earlier, the researcher and her assistant took the notes differently. In addition, thoroughly constructed field notes were kept to record some nonverbal nuances that are important to data validity.
4.10. Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Humanities at the University of Ghana, Legon (See Appendix C). As mentioned earlier permission was also sought from the Ghana Prisons Services Headquarters in Accra. The study was conducted in an atmosphere that respected the rights and dignity of the female inmates. Thus, voluntary participation, informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality, anonymity and the absence of invasion of privacy and deception were ensured (See Appendix A). Respondents were debriefed at the beginning and at the end of the data collection on their rights. Appropriate language and words were also used. Pseudonyms have been used in this report to protect the identity of the respondents.

The researcher also assured respondents that the study was strictly academic and that utmost confidentiality would be observed. Besides, no participant was forced to provide information unwillingly. The data collected and used in this study were anonymously coded so that no information could be traced back to individual respondents.

In reporting ethical issues most social sciences researches focus narrowly on the rights of the participants. However the researcher encounter numerous ethical issues in the field. During the interviews when inmates were questioned about their experience with separation from their families, they often burst into tears. However the researcher was able to manage these emotional scenes by giving them some time to recover their posture and then would ask other harmless questions to ease the pain before coming back to the questions on separation.
4.11. Field Experience

Generally, the study interviews were carried out smoothly without any human or material hindrance. Going to the field, one major consideration was how to handle language barrier. Contrary to my poor estimation, most of the inmates could speak English – a situation that was confirmed by the prison officers. Nevertheless, mostly the research assistant interviewed those who could not speak English in Asante-Twi or Ga because the researcher as it occurred, was not too fluent in these. The interviews in the local Ghanaian language were translated into English after the days’ interview although some expressions were kept to emphasize the experience in their own words.

Although the prisoners were very enthusiastic about the study, the researcher had to frequently give assurances about the confidentiality of the information that inmates provided. A few interviews became unpleasant because some prisoners tried to transfer their frustration onto the researcher and her assistance and occasionally would digress from the subject matter. Again the sensitive nature of the study- incarceration and separation from family- made most of the inmates shed tears.

There exists limited research-based data and relevant literature on the issues under study especially in the context of Ghana. Despite the approval of the Ghana Prison Headquarters to collect data, management of the Nsawam Medium Security Prisons was reluctant to release critical official records for the study due to fear of possible legal implication. However, the researcher did well to overcome these challenges by explaining the essence of the study to records officials and all the respondents. Overall, the inmates appeared very open and willing to provide information.
4.12. Conclusion

In summary, the chapter discussed issues regarding the data gathering process. A qualitative phenomenological approach was found to be the most suitable method for the reason that the researcher aimed to describe and explain the challenges women experience relating to familial relationship. There were a number of challenges encountered in the process including the period the data was collected. Despite the challenges, the measures adopted by the researcher were able to mitigate these problems to ensure that the findings of the research were not affected by those challenges encountered. The procedure of analyzing data and the methods of reducing the threats of validity and reliability were mentioned. The next chapter provides the findings from the data collected.
CHAPTER FIVE

INMATES’ EXPERIENCES WITH FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 Introduction

The primary goal of the study was to explore the experiences of familial relationships by women in a Ghanaian prison. Specifically, the study sought to explore the pre-prison relationships between the inmates and their family members, examine their relationships in prison and to identify the coping strategies they adopt in dealing with the pain of being separated from their families. Based on these objectives, the researcher used in-depth interviews to gather primary data from thirty women and five prison officers in the female section of the Nsawam Medium Security Prison.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study, using a qualitative thematic approach. The discussions begin with the presentation of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. It is followed by the nature of participants pre-prison relationships, their experiences with these relationships while serving time and the coping strategies they adopt to cope with the separation from their families. The following themes will be discussed in this chapter largely drawing on theoretical underpinnings and extant literature.

5.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Inmates

The socio-demographic characteristics are presented in this section. In criminological studies, ‘causes’ of crime have sometimes been attributed to particular characteristics. It is therefore critical to know the characteristics of female inmates in the Nsawam Female Prison as this brings out trends in the disposition of criminal behaviour and any specific characteristics. This study, the socio-demographic characteristics largely
give readers an idea of the kinds of women who were studied. This section focuses on their age, nationality, religion and their level of education, occupation and marital status. *(See Appendix D Table 1)*

*Ages of Participants*

The age of the participants gives an idea of the age groups disposed to crime as well as the types of crimes common to people of particular age groups. In the Nsawam Female Prison, the ages of the participants were wide-ranging from the youngest, eighteen years to the oldest who was eighty-four. A significant finding was that the majority of these women were between the ages of twenty and fifty-five years, which cohort falls within the working class population. It was also found that women who were above fifty-five were reported to have already spent a number of years in prison making it arguable that elder women were also imprisoned within that age group. This finding is in line with the marginalization and opportunity theoretical perspective that posits that female criminality is prevalent amongst the economic active population (Islam et al., 2014; Marcus-Mendoza, 2004).

*Religious Backgrounds*

It was realized that a person’s religion might also have probable connection with his/her crime. Christianity, Islam and traditional religion were the religions prevalent in the prison. Most of the participants (77%) were Christians whereas 16% professed Islam and 3.3% were traditionalists. One participant however indicated that she did not belong to any religious sects. There seemed to be more Christians in the prison is because as shown by Antwi (2015), 63% of the Ghanaian population are Christians,
21% traditionalists and 16% are Muslims. These were representative in the prison as well.

**Nationality / Ethnicity**

With the exception of three prisoners who were from Kenya, Morocco and Cameroon, the rest of the participants were Ghanaians. The Ghanaians came from various ethnic groupings. They included the Akan, Ewe, Ga, Ga-Adangbe and Dagomba. It was found that there were more Akan (26.6%) than any other ethnic groups. However, 20% were Fantes. 16.7% were Ewes, 12.5%, Gas and 3.3% each were Dagarti and Dabgaani.

**Level of Education**

It is believed that one’s educational level affects his/her propensity to commit crime. Most of the inmates (37%) were uneducated. Twenty percent (20%) stated that they had been to primary school and therefore had little education. Thirteen percent (13%) however attended junior high school and seventeen percent (17%) were to senior high school graduate while and thirteen percent (13%) had a first degree. The study found that although women with varied levels of education were in prison however the majority were those with lower educational background. It was also found that uneducated women committed more violent crimes as compared to the educated who engaged in crimes that involved more calculation such as fraud and smuggling of narcotics. This finding implies that women with lower levels of education commit more crimes as compared to those with higher education. However, the crimes committed by the former are violent whiles the latter committed non-violent crimes.
**Occupation**

The occupation of the women prior to imprisonment was necessary to find out the circumstances that led to their incarceration. The study found that participants were engaged in multifarious economic activities. They included farmers, dressmakers, restaurant managers, a baker, fishmongers, house help, a private security officer, a microfinance director, a real estate agent and traders (in bags, wigs, eggs, foodstuffs and bottled water). A participant attested to trading in narcotics as her occupation whiles another indicated that she was unemployed. All except one of these women had other obligations in the economic sector aside their care giving roles. This shows that crime is more prevalent amongst women who work or engage in economic activities, affirming Simon (1975) observation that the opportunity to engage in economic activities other than their traditional roles of child rearing and home keeping is the cause of women’s criminality.

**Marital Status**

Most of the participants reported to have been divorced before their imprisonment while others said their husbands were deceased. Some women also reported to have been married. However, for most of them, as a result of their incarceration, they were divorced. A few of the women indicated that they were single while the rest explained they were in concubinage relationships before their incarceration. One noteworthy finding was that women who reported to have deceased husbands were committed into prison for the murder of their husbands. This finding is in line with Ackermann (2015) who explained that the victims of violent crimes committed by women are mostly people they share close relationships with.
5.3. Incarceration Information

This section throws light on the type of offending and the length of sentences imposed on respondents. It also discusses specific characteristics that were found to be common to particular crimes.

**Offences**

The offences committed by the participants included assault, child stealing, child trafficking, trade malpractice, fraud, murder, narcotics and robbery. Of the various offenses mentioned, the study found that the most common were narcotics, murder and assault followed by robbery and fraud. Child trafficking and child stealing were the least common crimes committed.

The study found a connection between educational level and the types of crimes committed. Violent crimes like assault and murder were found to be prevalent amongst women with low educational backgrounds and these crimes mostly involved victims that were closely related to the women (their husbands or siblings). This also confirms Ackermann’s (2015) view that crimes amongst women are induced by their domestic relationships. Women with higher levels of education engaged more in crimes like fraud and narcotics. This finding agrees with the marginalization and opportunity theories of offending that suggests that the changing roles of women has given them the opportunity to engage in economic activities however, they experience different forms of marginalization such as low salaries and unemployment and these motivate them to engage in criminal behaviours.

It was also found that most women in concubinage relationships engaged more in robbery while foreigners tended to committed more drug related crimes. Most of the
women reported to be first offenders except two who indicated that they were serving
their second prison sentences.
The prison sentences were varied and ranged between three months to death. The
sentences were dependent on the type of crime committed. Murder and narcotics had
the longest sentences. Whereas women convicted for murder where on death or life
sentences, those who were in for narcotics where serving a minimum sentence of ten
years. Sentences for other crimes depended on the severity and where therefore
varied.

5.4. The Nature and Quality of Pre-Prison Relationships
As a result of the difficulties in the conceptualization of family, the researcher
explored who the participants referred to as family in order to understand the concept
of family in the context of the participants. The interviews revealed that the term
family even to the participants presented some challenges and inconsistency. Most of
them when asked who their families were strictly referred to members of their nuclear
family. However, it was found that they talked about the members of the extended
families passively. This attests to the fact that families in Ghana have become more
nucleated but people still hold strong ties with members of their extended families
especially in time of hardships confirming (Abotchie, 2016; Nukunya, 2016 and
Assimeng, 1999).

In the attempt to understand the changes that have occurred in the relationships of the
female inmates and their family members, it was critical to understand the nature of
their pre-prison relationships. This knowledge was before imprisonment was needed
to enable the researcher assess the effects of imprisonment on these familial relationships.

Participants were asked to describe the nature of the relationships they had with their family members before their incarceration. The women responded differently. While most of the participants reported to have cordial family relationships, others disclosed broken relationships. Below are narratives from some of the women. Amarkie convicted for fraud narrated:

…My parents, siblings and my son are my family. I’m not married but I had a boyfriend. Even till now, I have a very good relationship with my whole family. My brother is a police officer so when the incident happened he really helped but it didn’t work out… [Amarkie]

Baaba was imprisoned for assaulting her sister. However she indicated that her entire family were on good terms with her before her incarceration. She said:

I have ten siblings. We were fine before we fought. Every Christmas, they come home. We were very okay. I stayed on the same compound with my sister. Even the one I fought with we were on good terms… [Baaba]

Respondents, generally, reported to have cordial relationships with their family members. However some participants who attested to having good relationships with their families specified that this cordiality existed only with members of their nuclear family. They explained that it was a result of unresolved family disputes with their extended family. Adukwei convicted for fraud reported:

My family is nuclear and we are very close. For other relatives because of litigation on my father’s property, our relationship isn’t good [Adukwei]

Likewise, Selima expressed similar sentiments:

My family is just my mother and daughter. They all live in Cape Coast. Before the incident I’ve always lived in Tema with my boyfriend and my child is with my mother. I don’t visit them I used to send them money... I don’t talk to my father. He’s remarried with three sons but we don’t have
any good relationship even when I was a child. My other relatives claim my mother and me are not good so we haven’t been in any good relationship [Selima]

A few participants on the other hand indicated that their relationships were broken before they were imprisoned. Aba narrated:

Before prison I was alone. I wasn’t free with anybody. I had issues too with my husband. My husband and I used to be very good friends, we were tight like brother and sister but along the line things got worse. I mean we were both cheating. In fact I did not regard anyone as my family [Aba]

According to Naa:

My siblings, none are fine with me even before prison. My parents are dead. However, I have other family members but we are not close [Naa]

Pre-prison relationships were experienced differently. While some enjoyed good relationships with members of the families, others had their relationships disrupted. These disruptions however sprouted mostly as a result of family issues as indicated by Selima, Adukwei and Aba.

5.5. Imprisonment: Strains or Promotes Familial Relationships

The second objective sought to examine what has come of these relationships between the inmates and their families since their incarceration. Some studies (Ofori-Dua et al., 2015; Breen, 2008; Travis & Solomon 2005) indicated that when a person commits a crime and is incarcerated, it leads to negative consequences for members of the family such that familial relationships will be disrupted. However, Weaver & Nolan (2015) have argued that incarceration may also maintain or even strengthen these relationships and not necessarily destroy them.
As suggested by Naser & Visher (2006) it was found that the female inmates depended on their families outside the prison for caring and emotional support. They receive support through phone communications and prison visits. When asked about the relationships during imprisonment they all measured the quality of relationship using the nature of their phone communications and the frequency of prison visitations.

The following section explores the relationships with romantic partners, family members and children. It also highlights the changes that have occurred in the women’s family as a result of their incarceration.

5.5.1 Imprisonment and Romantic Relationships

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (Appendix E: table 1) demonstrated that several respondents were divorced before their incarceration. Nevertheless, the majority of them were involved in romantic relationships either as married couples or in a concubinage relationship before their incarceration. The study found that there was an uneven spread in the nature of these relationships. While some participants had experienced a disruption in their relationships others explained that their partners were still being very supportive despite their incarceration.

Dufie, sentenced to death for murder and had spent nineteen years in prison expressed her view thus:

… My husband and me were very fine. But hmm “bɛrima deɛ, sɛ asem tu woa bɔa kakraa pɛ na wa jai, na wa wari fofro… [Dufie]

(Translation: when there is a problem, a man only sticks around for a short period, then he leaves you and goes to marry another woman)

The foreigners in the Nsawam prison experienced their relationships more painfully than the nationals. They indicated that they barely had contact with their family
members because they were unable to make international phone calls and could not be visited because of the distance. Most of the foreigners attested to having broken relationships with their husbands. Makena, a Moroccan who had served six of her ten years sentence for smuggling narcotics into the country narrated:

… I was married for eleven years but I’m here, I’ve not heard from my husband (in tears). I don’t know, my mother told my husband but I haven’t heard from him since I came here …[Makena]

Despite their new status as criminals, other participants reported that they were still in good relationships with their husbands. Sentenced for 7 months and had done 3 months, Baaba who assaulted her sister said that her husband was not happy about her incarceration but their relationship was still intact and he was even visiting her the next day. Adukwei who had served two months of her three years sentence for fraud also testified to having her husband support her during her incarceration. Adukwei stated:

… Since I was arrested, my husband has been very supportive. He visits me a lot, about once a week and he’s the one taking care of the children in my absence… [Adukwei]

It was observed that the women who claimed to have their spouses still being supportive had short sentences. However, for those serving long sentences, as Dufie expressed, the men came during the early period of the imprisonment but later, they moved on to remarry. Probably, the reason for their good relationship could be attributed to the time they had spent away. As was also the case with Fernando Sucre (as presented in the fictional character exposition in chapter one) his girlfriend was supportive and even paid him conjugal visits. However, after sometime, she had to marry someone else.
Another observation made was that these women where committed to prison for less serious crimes. In the case of Baaba to be sentenced to seven months meant her crime was not severe. However, despite her husbands discontent, it could be argued that he still supported her because, it was not reasonable to throw away a twenty-one years old relationship when she only had 7 months to serve.

Women in concubinage relationships prior imprisonment all experienced disruptions in their relationships. Whereas a few indicated that after arrest their boyfriends cut off communication, others indicated that they were arrested with their boyfriends and were all serving prison sentences.

As portrayed in the case of Selima, she was arrested together with her boyfriend for robbery and was jailed for eleven years and had served 8 years. She said that she was uncertain about their relationship because she had not communicated with her boyfriend since he was also serving time in the male yard. However, she expressed her intentions to end the relationship because she felt he was the cause of her imprisonment and was bad company for her.

One interesting finding was the situation of Aba. She indicated that she and her husband were separated prior to her incarceration. However, her husband has been supportive during her incarceration. Aba was imprisoned for car robbery and is serving two years of which she has done a year and six months. She narrated:

…My husband has been here. Hmmm… he’s very stupid oo! He comes here every month. Even this Friday, he’s coming. “As for Lai momo diëe!!!” (Meaning: as for old firewood)... Ohh! He comes here; he brings me lots of things. Oh assorted things! Drinks, food from perfect touch… [Aba]

When asked if they were getting back together, she responded thus:
... I don’t think we are coming back. The last time I called him I heard a baby crying so I know that he’s moved on. I think he just comes because of sympathy... [Aba]

One issue raised here is that imprisonment breeds negative emotions such as distrust and insecurity, which may lead to the breakdown of relationships as suggested by Codd (2008). While some romantic relationships experienced disruptions, others were sustained. Participants who reported to have experienced disrupted relationships were noted to be inmates with long prison sentences and had served a long time in the prison. For participants who expressed their partners were very supportive, they had spent only a few weeks in confinement and also had committed non-violent and trivial crimes.

Intimate relationships were also strained by the lack of frequent contact. As mentioned by Travis and Solomon (2005), the lack of frequent contact compromises intimate relationships and the non-incarcerated spouse may move on as was seen in the case of non-nationals.

Also women in concubinage relationships were found to be more likely to experience separations following their incarceration than married couples because their relationships has no cultural sanction. However, for many of the women in this kind of relationships, they said they were arrested together with their romantic partners as accomplices to robbery.

For others, their disrupted intimate relationships were a result of distrust and insecurity. As explained by Codd (2008), the strategies that the women adopt to cope with the prison environment are what ruin their relationships with their non-incarcerated relatives. These women despite the support they still get from their husbands said that they knew their husbands had moved on and found themselves
other women. In a case like Aba, she went on to express that it was only because of sympathy that he was still supportive.

In conclusion, the study found that incarceration destroys romantic relationships. However, it is dependent on the type of offence, length of prison sentence given and served, and the type of relationships (married or dating).

5.5.2 Imprisonment and Familial Relationships

When participants were asked to describe the relationship with members of their family during incarceration, their response was a fair mix. Confirming the finding of Weaver and Nolan (2015), while some had experienced broken relationships other relationships were rather strengthened and some participants had maintained the nature of their pre-prison relationships.

**Broken Relationships**

Imprisonment affected the relationships of some participants negatively. The reasons for these disruptions were varied. Participants who reported broken relationships explained that before their incarceration, the relationships with members of their family were cordial but have since experienced a downturn in these relationships. Below are narrations from some of the prisoners.

Having served thirteen years of her death sentence for murder, Koshi described her relationship with her family as broken. She stated:

...I was married but after my issue, we are no more. I’ve spent thirteen (13) years here. I was sentenced to death but now I’m a lifer. My husband never came to visit I always called him (using the payphone). He says he will come, he will come and he never came. Now we are no more. When the issue came my father came to bail me at the police station. But since I came
here, no one comes. They say they will come, they will come, but they don’t come. I wish I got visited... [Koshi]

Similarly, Ofiebea also experienced a negative change in the relationships she had with her family. Ofiebea had served one year of her five years sentence for child trafficking. She narrated that she gave out one of her children to a woman to be sold into child slavery. On their way, the woman and her child were caught by the police, who invited her (Ofiebea) to the police station and upon arrival she was arrested and jailed for child trafficking. Ofiebea however expressed that her relationship with her husband’s family was good and they supported her despite her incarceration. However, she was unhappy because her own family members were unsupportive, and they had abandoned her although their previous relationship was good. She stated:

> I had a very good relationship with my family member. This issue has spoilt the relationship. All my relatives are in Winneba. It’s only my husband’s relatives that come to visit me. My family members haven’t come, they are angry with me.... I worry because the man’s relatives come but not my own people hmm. They have neglected my children and me. It worries me [Ofiebea]

Boatema assumed that it was because of the beliefs her family members had about the prison that discouraged them from visiting her. She has done one year of her ten years sentence for narcotics. She narrated:

> …We were okay. When I got my case, I don’t know how my family took my arrest. They haven’t come to see me but they know I’m here. My child told them but it is the way they haven’t come here that is worrying me. My sons can’t come because they are in school. I think it is the stories about prison life that is deterring them from coming. When I was in police cell for one month, my children used to come. The police called them to tell them I was sentenced for ten years in Nsawam. Since I came I’ve never spoken to them. Their numbers when I call, it doesn’t go through again… [Boatemaa]

Akua indicated that after a long time in prison, her family members visited after seeing her on TV. However she explained that in her earlier years of incarceration
they visited but then they stopped because they thought she had been executed until
the interview. Serving a death sentence, Akua had served 9 years in the Nsawam
Prison at the time of her interview. She stated that:

…Me and my family were cool. Even when I first came here I used to hear
from them. My parents never visited because they were too old. My sister too
used to come but now not anymore. My elder children also used to come but
for like 2 years they haven’t. My relatives thought I was actually dead until
they saw me on TV being interviewed. Then they came here to look for me to
see if it was real. After that no one has come again… [Akua]

Akelo, a Kenyan asserted that her family was supportive. However, she complained
that she was not able to communicate with them because the prison did not have
provisions for international calls and she did not receive any visits because of the
distance. She sadly said:

…When they heard of my arrest, my family was devastated! They didn’t
know anything like this would find me. My mother was supportive when I
called her. It took a long time to know I was here because no phone… Since I
have been imprisoned we don’t talk because no international calls in the
prison. I have not been visited too because it’s far and expensive… So it’s
hard. It’s like punishment… Once in a while an officer can call for me using
her own phone but it is not consistent. If she would, like twice in a year. A
woman also comes and write letters for her to send. We are allowed to
write like 5 and she would send and they will reply. But its just once a year!
When I came, it took a long time for them to know I was here because no
phone…. (Sighs). Maybe if I was in my country like they could come but
where I am it is very far. It’s not easy. Sometimes you feel like suffocating or
screaming. Life is hard… [Akelo]

Lawra a pregnant inmate also reported that she had no contact with her family. She
bitterly articulated her ordeal and expressed how she had lost a child and has no
contact with anybody:

I have one child and I’m pregnant. I will give birth next month. They
sentenced me for 5months I’ve done 2 weeks. I hear he’s (her son) been taken
to the village but I don’t know… My CID says he will take him to my
boyfriend’s brother. When I asked him again he didn’t mind me. I don’t have
any money the CID took my two hundred (200) cedis that he will give it to
them to look after my child, he didn’t and he didn’t give me back my money. I
A good number of participants experienced broken relationships during their incarceration. One major factor that affected these relationships was the type of crime and the length of the sentence. The women who committed offences such as murder and narcotics largely experienced these negative outcomes. This can be attributed to the fact that, women imprisoned for murder serve life sentences and therefore the choice to support such person is unending. Also in the case of narcotics, the minimum sentence given is ten years. As stated by Light and Campbell (2006), the issues of stigma and financial implications for supporting a family member in prison become unbearable that most families decide to neglect the inmate.

The myths of imprisonment also were a factor that affected these relationships. Participants felt that the stories about the prison system were the cause of their strained relationships. It is no surprise because most of the participants who reported these disrupted relationships had very low or no education at all.

Lack of communication according to the participants also led to some strain on these relationships especially in the case of the non-national inmates. They are unable to place international calls to their families and do not get visited because of the distance. Although they reported to have good relationships with their families, the quality of these relationships had been compromised because of the lack of contact (communication and visitation).
Familial relationships were therefore strained by the type of crimes committed as well as the length of the sentence, the absence of frequent contact and the perceptions of the prison environment.

**Strengthened Relationship**

The study also found that relationships were rather strengthened as a result of the incarceration of a family member. Aba attested to having a strained relationship with her family members prior her imprisonment. However, she said that her imprisonment rather strengthened her relationship with her mother. She was imprisoned for robbery and had served a year and six months of her two years sentence. During her interview she said:

…Right now my mother is everything I’ve got. Because of prison, our relationship has become very good. It’s strengthened our relationship. I didn’t regard anybody as my family. So when it happened, I didn’t call her till after two weeks. I realized I couldn’t do it on my own. I needed someone to confide in. When I told her, my mother collapsed! Emotionally she was not okay. She used to visit but I stopped her. She used to come once a month. When she comes she cries a lot and it makes me sad. It breaks me down. I have to encourage her… [Aba]

Although some female inmates experienced disrupted relationships prior to imprisonment, their family members came through for them during difficult times.

**Unchanged Relationships**

Some of the participants reported to have sustained their pre-prison relationships with their family members.

Aku described her pre-prison relationship as broken. She reported that her incarceration had no effect on her familial relationship. She explained that her family members including her children disowned her for leaving her first marriage to marry
another man. However, she and her new husband were arrested together for murder and were given death sentences. Her relationship had not gotten better even after serving 24 years. Aku bitterly said:

I was married. We were both arrested. My husband died in prison. My children don’t mind me because they said I left their father and married someone else. They have neglected me. Life here is difficult. I don’t have any family… [Aku]

On the other hand, it was found that two main factors influenced the sustainability of good pre-prison relationships. These were the degree of culpability and reciprocity. Below are narrations from some inmates.

Talata was jailed for the murder of her husband and was given a death sentence. She said that her relationship with her family is still good. She indicated that, her family questioned her after the charge. However, they believed her innocence because of the kind of person she was (pre-prison behaviour) so they support her.

…When it happened, they were all surprised. They know how I am so… yes. But my family questioned me. In fact my children questioned if I did it. I said no and they believed me. They have supported me all the way. I spent almost 8 months in police cell. They always came there. They always come here too… [Talata]

Mamle also said that her cordial relationship with her family members was maintained because of her pre-prison character. She had served six (6) years of her ten (10) years sentence for fraud. She also narrated that:

…I have a big family very extended and I’m on good terms with all of them. I lived in the US with my nuclear family. I was only here for a business trip when this happened. Even after, we are okay. They have been very supportive. They know me so this is just an incident… Oh a lot of people come and visit me. I’m even expecting visitors this afternoon. Last year my name came up for amnesty my son even flew all the way from the US to pick me up he stayed here for two weeks but unfortunately I didn’t get it. This year too I thank God my name has come up again and he’s going to come I pray that this time around I’ll get it… [Mamle]
The degree to which members of a family believe in the innocence of the inmates was a key factor in maintaining their cordial relationships and being supportive when incarcerated. These narrations show that the degree of culpability was focused on the pre-prison behaviours of the offenders. If the offender was well behaved the family tended to believe in her innocence and even when guilty, they attributed the situation as just an occurrence or a life test.

A re-offender Adzovi imprisoned for fraud, and had served a year of her two years sentence stated that, she still had good relationships with her siblings. She however indicated that she was the one who took care of her siblings and still takes care of their children so although she is a reoffender, they still support her. She narrated:

…I recognize my sister and brother and their children as my family. All my other relatives are dead. I don’t have a husband. I’ve never been with a man and I have no child but I was taking care of my sibling’s children. Before I came here we were all fine. When I was sentenced again, it hurt them but what can they do? My sister used to follow me to court and all... She comes to visit once a while. My brother has come once. I brought them up so yea they come... [Adzovi]

**Concealing the Truth**

One noteworthy practice of some inmates was that they kept their incarceration a secret. Like C-note (from the fictional character exposition in chapter one) the women tended to conceal this information from their family members mainly to prevent shame and stigmatization of themselves and their family and to avoid disappointing members of their family. In most cases, they confided in one or two people who they knew would be supportive and most importantly are discrete about their imprisonment.

Janice, a Cameroonian imprisoned for robbery and has served seven months of her ten years sentence indicated:
...They (family members) know I’m in Ghana but not in prison; only my sister knows. I will never tell my mother. God! She will die. My sister has been very supportive. She is the only one who knows I’m in prison and we intend to keep it like that... No one knows I’m here... [Janice]

Yaa, after serving a month of her three months sentence for assault also stated:

...Only my sister knows I’m here. My mum doesn’t know. I don’t want them to know. My mother will tell people if she knows. She can’t keep quiet… [Yaa]

Aba also reiterated Yaa’s view. According to Aba:

... It’s only my mother and sister and husband who know I’m here. No one knows. My mum says I should keep it confidential because of what people might say. The other relatives think I’m in school in Kumasi... [Aba]

Codd (2008) established that in some cases the family might try to manage the stigma by keeping the situation a secret. This practice was common amongst the participants. They concealed their incarceration from their families and maintained good relationships as a result. The reasons given were to prevent disappointing their family members by their actions and the avoidance of stigmatization. The inmates themselves or their family members, who are aware of the situation, in most cases suggest keeping their incarceration a secret.

This finding can be explained using Goffman’s concept of discredited and discreditable stigma (Goffman, 1963). The incarcerated in order to avoid the disgrace and stigma that comes with incarceration resulted in hiding this information from their family members. In cases where the family members knew, they enforced that the information is kept secret because they were also likely to experience stigmatization by association.
5.5.3. Children of Incarcerated Women

As suggested by many studies (Jardine, 2015 & Braman, 2002), the participants in the Nsawam Prison established that their main source of stress in the prison was from the separation from their families and loved ones especially their children. Interviews from the prison officers also confirmed that the pain that worries most of the women was the separation from their children. Sergeant Kotey narrated:

… As for the women as soon as they arrive right in front of the prison at the reception, you will see how they start to weep and hold their stomach (moaning) my children my children…. [Sergeant Kotey]

Few of the participants had older children whose relationships have already been explored. However, the majority of them had younger children. It was found that, except those who were imprisoned in the presence of their children, the rest were not told of their mother’s incarceration. When asked the reason, their response was that the children were too young to know and understand the situation. In many cases the children were told their mother (inmate) had travelled. For example,

Selima stated:

… My daughter knows I’ve travelled to Tema. I talk to her when I call my mother using the payphone. I keep telling her that I will come and visit her soon… [Selima]

Taani arrested for narcotics and was five years through her ten years sentence also indicated:

… My kids don’t know I’m here. They think I’ve travelled. When I call them, they ask when I’m coming and ask for toy cars but now they are grown so they ask for laptops (Laughs with tears)… My sister came here with my eldest daughter. It was a surprise; she was asking too many questions so she brought her… We have been crying…[Taani]

The narrations also showed that the incarcerated mothers however, tried to keep constant communication over collect phones with their children. This helped to
maintain a good relationship with these children and also to prevent them from the unintended consequences of their incarceration. As Weaver and Nolan (2015) articulated, the effect of imprisonment on a child varied and was dependent on a number of variables including the nature and frequency of communication as well as what the children were told about the parent’s incarceration.

5.6. Changes in the Family Resulting from Incarceration

Participants of the study corroborated that their incarceration had caused a lot of changes in their families. They identified the reorganization of roles as a result of their absence, financial strain caused by their inability to work and contribute financially as they previously did and the stigma that their family members were subjected to because of their criminal behaviour and incarceration.

5.6.1. Role Taking

An important change that had occurred in the families of the inmates was role taking. The women agreed that other family members had to step in to play their roles as primary caregivers in their absence. This finding is in line with findings from Ofori-Dua et al. (2015) that showed that in the absence of a woman, their emotional and caregiving roles left behind are reorganized. Role taking also confirms the Bowen systems theory (GenoPro, 2012). The women’s role in the family is very delicate and crucial. Her imprisonment distorts the family system and creates disequilibrium in the family. Hence in order to prevent the disruptions of the family, other members are compelled to reorganize their roles to take on the roles that have been left behind in order to maintain the family system. Most of the participants however reported that, their sisters, mothers and sometimes husbands subsequently took up these roles. In
most cases, the family members had to give up some of their activities to be able to play the roles of the incarcerated or reorganize their roles to take up the roles left behind by the incarcerated woman. It was also found that the participants whose mothers played the role of primary caregiver of the incarcerated woman’s child indicated that their mothers were already caring for the children before their incarceration.

5.6.2. Financial Strain

Participants indicated that their incarceration had caused financial strain to their families (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko & Kanwetuu, 2015; Dickie, 2013; Breen, 2008 and Smith et al. 2007). These women were aware of the financial implications of their incarceration on their families. Before their incarceration, they had some form of employment (see appendix E table 1) and were contributing to the economic fortunes of their families. Their imprisonment has, therefore, discontinued this flow of income and has also put more stress on what is left to be spent by the family. Notwithstanding, as suggested by Naser & Visher (2006) the inmates also look up to these same financially handicapped family members for support in prison.

A critical effect of the financial difficulty the inmates worried about was that their children had to drop out of school. The inmates also worried about the burden on the other family members who have to take care of their own children, feed and care for the inmate’s children as well as the inmates herself. As a result, the women sometimes discouraged prison visits from these caregivers and request that the money be used to cater for their children instead. However, this was also found to be a way to
avoid the shame and frustration and regret the experience of not being able to provide for their children (Olukunle and Balogun, 2016).

5.6.3. Stigma

The participants articulated that their criminal behaviour and therefore imprisonment had brought about shame to their family members. Confirming what Condry (2007) suggested, family members also face stigma and shame emanating from a criminal act. Comfort (2008) and Loucks (2004) indicated that shame and stigma might be so intense that it could cause family members to isolate themselves from their peers. One of the key findings of the study of Ofori-Dua et al. (2015) was that the children of the incarcerated mostly withdrew from the company of peers and other social networks for the fear of being labeled and stigmatized.

Makena bitterly expressed how her incarceration has destroyed the relationships in her family. She explained that although her mother and children are supportive, as a result of her imprisonment her parent’s marriage is broken. This is because her father believes her mother spoiled her. She also indicated that her mother has isolated herself from other family members because they talk about her incarceration. Makena further explained that her daughter dropped out of school because of the fear of being stigmatized by her peers. Makena narrated:

…My daughter feels bad. She said she would not go to school again. People will tell her, her mother is in prison. Hmmm she feels bad… My mother is no more with her family because they talk about me. Like I disgrace them. My problem causes a lot of things. It broke my parents relationship. My father says my mum spoilt me… [Makena]

Shika reported that she was a very well respected person in her community and shared her worries about the stigma she has subjected herself and family to. She stated:
... People in my area know I’m here. I’m not happy because people respected me very much. I’m ashamed of myself, children and area people… [Shika]

Naa, however, indicated that because she had disgraced her family members, most of them had disassociated themselves from her. She expressed:

...Those who love me come and see me; those who don’t, don’t come! But I’m not angry! For me, I even want to go and beg them because “miwo amehe muji” (I have soiled the family name) if not for my bad friends like I wouldn’t have disgraced them… [Naa]

As outlined in the theoretical perspective of the study, stigma played a major role in the relationships of these imprisoned women. Stigma not only from possessing a criminal attribute and incarceration, but stigma of association is a factor that affected these relationships. Family members of the incarcerated tended to experience stigmatization even more than the inmates. This is because the inmates found themselves in a subculture of people with the same attribute whereas in the case of the family, they live with this attribute in the society of what Goffman (1963) refers to as normals. For most of the family members this stigma either drives them to break ties with the incarcerated altogether or keep these ties and rather isolate themselves from people in the community or keep the stigma secret.

5.7. Coping Strategy

The prison environment deprives its inmates of many comforts (Sykes, 1958). In order to cope with the stress the prison comes with, the women adopt certain strategies. Although the focus of the study was on coping with separation from family, it was found that the inmates did not have specific coping strategies for specific stresses. They used the same type of coping strategies for all the stresses they faced in prison. The participants also attested to the use of varied strategies to cope in
prison. The coping strategies they adopted included the use of religion and spirituality, support from organizations, their families, prison officers and other inmates and motivations from themselves and the experiences of others. Most of the coping strategies adopted were positive. However, some participants also resorted to isolating themselves in order to avoid bad company.

This section will highlight the coping strategies the women adopt in prison.

5.7.1. Religion

Similar to Partyka (2001), the study found that religion and spirituality was the first category of coping strategy for most of the participants. Religion plays an important role in the Ghanaian society and for most of these participants religion was their main source of inspiration in prison. Religion presented itself as opium to suppress their pain. The women reported that they cling to the word of God and pray for God to forgive them their sins or vindicate them from their atrocities.

Akelo stated:

… I get comfort from the word of God. I also read inspirational books in the library that motivates me, like Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen…[Akelo]

According to Shika:

…I pray to God. Every day I pray. I pray hard to God because he gives me life. I believe that everything will be okay. Everything has an end…[Shika]

Some of the women also indicated that they engaged in religious activities because of boredom and also to get access to the gifts items these religious group bring. Although Christianity, Islam and traditional religions were prevalent in the female prison, the most active religion was Christianity such that some Muslims also took part in Christian activities as a way to while away time. Religion was, however, used
as a tool to comfort the troubled women and also as a distraction to while away time in the prison.

5.7.2. Support Groups
Participants admitted that they got a lot of support from organizations and churches, their families, the prison officers and their prison mates. It was found that most of these support tended to satisfy the most basic needs of the women. As Maslow (1954) suggested, all human beings have needs. In his work ‘Motivation and Personality’, he outlined five basic needs that are essential to humans in hierarchical order. The first in this hierarchy is physiological need, which includes the provision of basic needs such as food, water, clothing and warmth. The second is safety, third, the need for love and belonging, the forth is the need for esteem and finally, the need for self-actualization. These groups supported the women with food and other basic needs (the organizations and churches) but most importantly counsel them.

Support from Organizations and Churches
The women expressed their gratitude to the authorities of the Ghana Prisons Service for allowing these churches and organizations to come into the prison. They explained that the churches and organizations helped them cope with the general stresses of the prison. They admitted that these organizations bring them food and basic needs that they needed thus meeting their physiological needs. Below are narrations from Makena and Aku.

Makena reported that organizations and churches come almost every Saturday to bring them basic needs. She expressed:
… People come here. Visitors will come and come and give us food and talk to us... Christians also come to ask how many inmates and bring everyone things. Every Saturday they come… [Makena]

Aku also testified that she has only survived in prison because of the support from the organizations and churches. She stated:

… Aha dierrrr enda fom” (this place is not easy) I have survived because of the churches and other organizations…[Aku]

**Support from Prison Officers**

Participants reported that they got a lot of support from the prison officers. They affirmed that these support came in the form of pieces of advice and encouragement in times of distress. Makena expressed:

…Some officers advise me. Officers help me. They told me here is like family. If I have any problem I should come to them … [Makena]

The officers also attested to this. When interviewed, Sergeant Kotey narrated:

…We counsel the women a lot. Right from the day they enter the gate of the prison we talk to them, we advise them and we encourage them… [Sergeant Kotey]

Corporal Owusu also said:

…For the inmates, we help them a lot. When they have issues, they come to us and we advise them. We try to be their friends so they come to us all the time with their worries… [Corporal Owusu]

**Support from Inmates**

Participants also attested to getting support from their peers. Some admitted that when they were down, some of the inmates came around to comfort and motivate them. However, other participants reported that they refused help from their peers because they were not trustworthy and ended up talking about the issues they share with them with other inmates. Makena narrated:
…As for inmates, if you live in prison you will know how they behave. For fellow inmates, if you tell them your secret they will insult you with it but if you tell an officer no one will know … [Makena]

Creation of Surrogate Families

Another significant finding was that, participants also got support from other inmates through the creation of pseudo or surrogate families in the prison. Confirming studies by Mann (1984), Owen (1998) and Fox (1988), the women admitted that they constructed family roles that existed on the outside within the prison. Thus, they had prison mothers, sisters, children and cousins. They reported that they were introduced into these families when they arrived into the prison. They also explained that members of their prison family helped them adjust and socialize into the prison culture satisfying their need for love and sense of belonging as stated by Maslow (1954). Aba and Akelo stated:

…Surrogate families exist here, when I came someone offered to be my mum until I got used to the place then she let go. It was very helpful… [Akelo]

…We have surrogate families here and they help us cope in the meantime. We have mothers and sisters as well. When I came, Akelo, one of my cellmates was my mother. She helped me with dealing with things here. She taught me a lot… [Aba]

Clemmer (1958) suggested that inmates import certain characteristics from outside to help them cope in the prison. This is made evident in the study as women imported these family constructions and roles into the prison. Their role of caregiving and socializing is not left outside the prison doors but taken in with them and is channeled into socializing new inmates into the prison subculture, what Clemmer referred to as prisonization.
For other participants, they believed that these pseudo families were not helpful but were a source of trouble in the prison. The explained that if the family you belong to was made up of inmates with bad behaviours; this could land you in many bad situations in the prison. They therefore opted out of this families and support group altogether.

Amarkie indicated:

… People have surrogate mothers and sisters but I don’t! Because it is worrying… Especially when the mother is ‘basa basa’. You find yourself in that group and find trouble for yourself… [Amarkie]

(‘Basa basa’ meaning anyhow)

**Support from Family**

Some participants especially those who still had good relationships with their family members reported that their families helped them cope in prison. They explained that they sought encouragement and comfort from their families back at home and whenever they missed their children or other members, they called using the payphone and talk to them. Hope and Selima stated:

… It is hard here and I miss my family. But when I think about my children, I just call my mother and I speak to them then I’m ok…[Hope]

…I called my mother three days after my arrest. She encouraged me and told me to keep praying and that everything will be fine… [Selima]

### 5.7.3. Pre-Prison Characteristics

Many studies (Natako, 2017; Paterline & Orr, 2016; Dhami et al., 2007) found that one’s pre-prison characteristics affect how one adjusts to prison. This was also the case in this study. Some inmates attested to coping with the prison as a result of innate characteristics they had. Naana and Aba narrated:
… Over here it is your attitude that makes you survive. Some come with bad behaviour or come and learn bad behaviour here but it’s a good behaviour that helps you cope easily. Both staff and inmates help a lot. But it’s your character that helps you… [Naana]

For me I am an extrovert, very jovial and I like to make friends. When I entered I knew I would cope… [Aba]

5.7.4. Encouragement from Others Experience

Whereas some people depended on religion and spirituality, their families and other inmates, others reported that they encouraged themselves by comparing themselves to other inmates or people who had been to prison before.

Hope believed that once other people were coping, she could also cope. She stated:

…eye nipa na waha. (It’s human beings that are here). I just had to see it as its human beings that are here, so I if they are coping, then I can also cope...

[Hope]

Amarkie looked to Great men who had been to jail and believed that God had a better plan for her. She expressed:

As for me I believe a lot of great people went to prison. See Joseph, Nelson Mandela so I believe when I go out God won’t make me ashamed...

[Amarkie]

Serwaa also compared herself to other inmates and believed she was in a better situation and this gave her hope. She said:

… When I see people here with ten years and fifteen years then I know I’m better so I just stay strong…[Serwaa]

5.7.5. Maladaptation

Partyka (2001) identified that female inmates sometimes adopted negative coping strategies. This was true among the participants of the study. It was found that these
participants isolated themselves to avoid having problems with other inmates. Amarkie stated:

…Over here I keep to myself and don’t make friends so I’m at peace with everyone… [Amarkie]

…I encourage myself and stick to myself… [Adukwei]

According to Adam (1992) female inmates experienced maladaptive responses in the earlier stages of their incarceration in the form of self-mutilation, emotional disorder or even suicide. The participants confirmed this. Makena and Dokua narrated:

…The time they arrested me it was something. I was thinking about killing myself… [Makena]

…The first day I was jailed, I wanted to die. I told my CID he should buy me medicine to die, but he told me to be strong… [Dokua]

The participants of this study adopted diverse coping strategies to cope with the pain of being separated from their families and loved ones. The coping strategies were mostly positive although there was evidence that inmates also adopted some maladaptive strategies. As contained in the literature, Ofori-Dua et al. (2015) and Partyka (2001) established that, inmates resorted to religion and spirituality or depended on support groups like the family, their fellow inmates and other organizations to cope. Also, affirming the importation model of prisonization (Natako, 2017) it was found that these inmates created their own pseudo families to help them socialize into prison life.

5.8. Conclusion

Relationships between imprisoned women and their families may be destroyed, strengthened or unchanged depending on a number of factors – the crime, length of
sentence etc. Findings from the study indicated that various circumstances affected these relationships. The study also found that as a result of the incarceration, the families had experienced very critical changes. Finally, the study also identified the various strategies these women adopted to cope with these issues. The next chapter summarizes these findings and based on the findings, conclusions will be drawn.
CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS

6.1. Main Findings
Globally, the number of women involved in crime is increasing rapidly and Ghana is not an exception. It has been hypothesized that this is as a result of the opportunity these women have to engage in economic activities rather than their previous caregiving role. Women who commit crime are however seen to have deviated from societal norms as well as their gender. Extant literature also shows that their experience with the justice system is more tend to be more traumatic as compared to their male counterparts (Gowland, 2011; O’Brien 2001; Richie, 2001). The hardships imprisoned women face are many but perhaps the most painful is a break in their social relations network.

The family systems theory explains that the absence of a person in the family creates a role gap and this leads to its dysfunction. In a case where the absence is as a result of incarceration, the family is not only faced with a role gap but also stigmatization. This may lead to a disruption in the relationship with the incarcerated as family members may tend to disassociate themselves from the situation altogether to avoid being stigmatized.

The study was carried out to investigate how women in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison cope with their familial relationships and the strategies they adopt to deal with separation from their families. To achieve this objective, the study was guided by the need to explore the pre-prison relationships between inmates and members of their families (to wit the nuclear and to some extent some members of the extended
family), examine how the inmates experience their relationships while in prison and finally how they cope with the alienation from estranged social network.

Using qualitative methods of research, information was collected using a face-to-face in-depth interview guide. From the interviews with thirty participants (female convicts) from the female section of the Nsawam Medium Security Prison, their experiences with their family relationships while serving their sentences have been captured under the following themes.

6.1.1 Nature of Pre-prison relationships

In attempt to find out the changes in the nature of the relationships between female inmates and their family as a result of imprisonment, the nature of their pre-prison relationship was sought. It emerged that prior imprisonment relationships between inmates and members of their family were generally cordial. However, inmates reported to be on good terms with members of their nuclear family and not extended as a result of pending family conflicts and it was also found that some inmates had disrupted family relationships also of which stemmed from family issues as well as lack of contact.

6.1.2 Nature of Familial Relationships During Incarceration

It was interesting to find that participants had varied experiences of their family relationships while in prison. The study revealed that, not all incarcerated women experienced broken relationships but for most of them, these relationships remained unchanged and a few strengthened. These findings support the assertions by Weaver & Nolan (2015). However, it was discovered that, the relationships were motivated by the type of crime committed, the length of sentence given and served, the lack of
contact as a result of distance or poor communication, the perception of the prison environment, the inmates pre-prison personality and most importantly the issue of stigma.

The participants relied on their family members for emotional support and care. However, in the context of imprisonment they experienced these support through telephone communication. The contact that the female inmates had with their families while in prison were mainly in the form of phone calls (using a payphone provided by the prison) and visits. These women used the frequency of visits and the quality of conversations they have with their family to determine the nature of the relationships with their families.

**Romantic Relationships**

Most participants who were married before their incarceration also experienced broken relationships. Similarly, the type of crime committed, the length of the prison sentence, and frequency of contact influenced the nature of these relationships. A significant finding however was that, some of the participants spearheaded these disruptions through the distrust and insecurities they acquired from coping with the prison environment. Women who were dating were either arrested with their boyfriends or reported that they never heard of these boyfriends since their incarceration. This is because, unlike marriage, these relationships are not backed by any law. In few cases, the female inmates pioneered the disruptions in their intimate relationships especially when they felt the partner was the cause of their incarceration.
Despite the large number of broken relationships, some women indicated that, their spouses were very supportive and came to visit regularly. It was however found that most of these women had been incarcerated for non-violent crimes like fraud, child stealing etc. and had only spent a few months in prison. Meanwhile, for those who had reported broken relationships, they explained that their spouses used to visit and support them in the early months of their incarceration but eventually stopped. Perhaps they still had this support because they had been in prisoned for a short time and yet to experience the worse.

**Familial Relationships**

Participants who reported experiencing disruptions in their familial relationships were serving long sentences and were imprisoned for mostly crimes like murder, and smuggling of narcotics. Some of the women attested to having supportive relationships mostly within the first two years of their sentences but reported that these support nose-dived with time. Some participants expressed that they were unable to contact their families because they did not have the phone numbers or in the case of foreigners could not make international calls to their families and also could not be visited because of the distance. This lack of contact created some apertures in the relationships making it uncomfortable and leading to disruptions in their relationships. Familial relationships were also greatly affected by perceptions family members held about the prison environment. These perceptions deterred the members of the family from visiting or supporting the inmates.

While some inmates experienced broken relationships, others maintained their pre-prison relationships. The study found that the sustenance of the cordial relationships
was based on the inmate’s pre-prison personalities. These good characteristics affected the degree of culpability and also enhanced reciprocity. The study found that women who exhibited good behaviours prior to imprisonment had their families believe in their innocence and even if they attested to be guilty, the family members resulted to assessing the situation as just an incidence. Women who also played major roles in the lives of their family members also had support as payback.

Female inmates also tended to hide the information about their incarceration from their family members in order to maintain their relationships with them. The study revealed that, the women confided in one or two people who they were sure would support them and keep their secret. However, the reason for concealing their incarceration was mainly to avoid disappointing family members and most importantly to avoid stigmatization of themselves and the family as a whole. The women also kept their incarceration from their children with the reason to protecting them from the consequences of their incarceration.

In addition, very few inmates experienced strengthened familial relationships with their family members and romantic partners. However, the participants perceived this turn around was a result of mere empathy.

**Changes in the Family**

The women expressed the consequences of their imprisonment on their families. They indicated that as a result of their incarceration, other members in the families had to take up their roles of caring for their children. It was found that these roles were mostly taken up by their mothers, sisters or in a few cases husbands. Their
incarceration also caused financial strain on the family and as a result some of the women restricted prison visits requested that the monies should be channeled to care for their children. The study found that this was a way these women avoided the unease and shame of not being able to provide and care for their children. One major effect of the imprisonment of these women and their families was stigmatization. This affected the relationships of these family members especially between the immediate family and the members of the extended. In order to cope with this, it was found that some close family members of the inmate isolated themselves from other family members to avoid dealing with the stigma.

6.1.3 Coping Strategies

Coping in prison was important for all the inmates and they adopted different types of coping strategies to deal with the difficulty of being separated from their loved ones. It emerged that the most commonly used strategy was religion and spirituality. Most of the inmates attested to finding comfort in the word of God because it gave them encouragement and hope. They agreed that, the Bible, churches and other inspirational books helped them cope through these hard times. Others also indicated that they engaged in these religious activities to while away time because there was nothing else to do in the prison.

Participants also depended on support groups to cope. They got support from organizations, churches, their families, prison officers and their fellow inmates. Through visits from the organizations, churches and families, the inmates felt loved. They received basic needs such as food, clothes and sanitary products from the organizations and churches regularly. Most importantly they expressed that the advice
and encouragement they got from the churches, organizations, families and prison officers kept them going. The female inmates supported each other. They listened to each other’s problems and encouraged themselves. They also created pseudo families to help new inmates socialize into the prison subculture. However, some inmates showed disapproval of depending on inmates because they believed that the inmates eventually betrayed them and discussed their issues with other inmates when they open up to them. They therefore preferred to depend on the prison officers for these support.

The inmates also agreed that their own innate qualities helped them to cope. They were able to encourage themselves to push on and serve their time. Some inmates also used the experiences of others to motivate themselves to go through these hardships. The knowledge that someone who went to prison came out and made a difference in society and also knowing that their situation is better than others were also forms of motivations they cling on to in prison.

In conclusion, familial relationships of incarcerated women in theNsawam Female Prison were broken, strengthened or maintained. However, these relationships are influenced by the type of crime, length of sentence and length of time spent in prison, frequency of contact, perceptions of the prison environment, degree of culpability and reciprocity and stigma. Secondly incarceration resulted in changes in the family, which included role taking, financial strain and isolation as a result of stigmatization. Finally, women adopted various types of mechanisms to cope with all the stresses they encounter in prison. They include the use of belief in a higher being (religion), support from organizations, churches, prison officers, their families and other
inmates; self-motivations and encouragement as well as motivations they got from other people’s experiences.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

6.2.1 The Ghana Prisons Service and its Stakeholders should revise their Ten-year Strategic Plan (2015-2025) to incorporate issues concerning women; particularly those that address their emotional hardships as primary caregivers in order to lessen their pains in prison. For instance, conjugal visits can be introduced to help married women spend some time with their romantic partners to help preserve their emotional bond.

1. The government in collaboration with the Ghana Prisons Service should offer some counseling programmes to family members of the incarcerated to help them appreciate the prison system and the need for their support toward post-incarceration rehabilitation.

2. The Ghana Prisons Service should reconsider introducing the “Prison Week” to foster better relationship between the people and the inmates.

3. Easier forms of virtual contact or payphones that can make international calls should be introduced to the prison to help foreign inmates keep in contact with their families.

4. Female inmates should be made to engage in commercially viable activities to generate income for themselves and for the prison.
6.3. Study Limitation and Gaps for Further Research

Despite the efforts made to ensure the quality and validity of the results, the study still encountered some setbacks. The primary limitation of the study is that it was conducted only in the Nsawam Female Prison out of the seven female facilities in the country. This means the sample size used cannot be representative and therefore does not permit generalization of the findings, as is the disadvantage of qualitative research. However, the method used was still appropriate because the intent of the study was not to generalize findings but to give an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand.

Another limitation of the study involves the method of recording adopted for the interviews. Since audio recorders were not allowed in the prison, handwritten notes were taken and this may have led to some very important information being overlooked.

Notwithstanding, a noteworthy limitation is that the presence of a prison officer was required during the interviews for security reasons. This may have affected or controlled the depth of information the inmates may have given.

Further studies could focus on other female facilities to conduct a cross-sectional study to include inmates from other female prisons so that findings can be compared and conclusions made. In addition, a similar study could be conducted that focus on the families of the inmates rather like the inmates to understand how they experience living with a family member in prison and how they cope with this loss and stigma.
6.4. Implication to Research

The study has contributed to extant literature on female criminality in general and specifically in the area of women in prison especially in a case where issues about women have been ignored in the discipline and more focus is given to male criminality. The study has also provided in-depth knowledge about the experiences of women in relation to their familial relationships in Ghana. Most literature on the women prison experience has been fixated on developed countries leaving a gap in what pertains in Ghana. This study has therefore contributed to corpus of knowledge on female penology.
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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime


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Wolff, N., Blitz, D., Shi, J., Siegel, J., & Bachman, R.


Yin, R.

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Study:</th>
<th>Broken lives, broken relationships: the experiences of women in a Ghanaian prison.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator:</td>
<td>Deladem Ama Anku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Protocol Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section B– CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

My research is aimed to explore the experiences of women in prison with relation to family relationships. I would like to conduct a thirty minutes interview with you, by asking you questions, about your experience with close family members since your imprisonment and how you cope with the challenge of separation from them.

Your participation will enable me gain insight into some of your experiences as an imprisoned woman, especially with you being separated from your family. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question(s). Notes will be taken during the interview.

Benefits/Risks of the study

This study is an academic requirement for an MPhil degree. However, your participation will provide information to fill in the gap in knowledge in various disciplines (i.e. human rights, sociology, criminology, social work, penology as well
as psychology). It will also provide information for policy makers to consider for reforms in prison management, especially providing avenue for strengthen familial relationship whiles in prison. Participation in this study will not pose any risk to you.

Confidentiality

Information you provide during this interview will be treated as confidential. Anonymity of participants will be strictly observed and participants name or identity will not given or written in any report or final thesis work.

Compensation

Women who participate in the study will be given lunch at the end of the study.

Withdrawal from Study

Refusal to answer any question(s) or withdrawal from the interview will not attract any penalty or adverse effect on the participants.

Contact for Additional Information

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Administrator of the Ethics Committee for Humanities, ISSER, University of Ghana at ech@isser.edu.gh / ech@ug.edu.gh or 00233- 303-933-866.

You can also contact my supervisors:

Professor Kodjo Senah
Department of Sociology
University of Ghana, Legon
Telephone: 0243771545
Email: kodjosenah@yahoo.co.uk

Dr Kodzovi Akpabli - Honu
Department of Sociology
University of Ghana, Legon
Telephone: 0244995481
Email: kodzovi@ug.edu.gh

Below are my contact details:

Deladem Ama Anku
Department of Sociology
University of Ghana
Telephone: 0249583767
Email: daanku001@st.ug.edu.gh/missdeladem.anku@gmail.com
"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

_______________________________________________
Name of Participant

______________________     ______________
Signature or mark of Participant    Date

If participants cannot read and or understand the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits; risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_________________________________________________
Name of witness

__________________________________  _______________________
Signature of witness  / Mark     Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

__________________________________________________
Name of Person Who Obtained Consent

______________________    ______________________
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent    Date
INMATE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant #__________ Date of the interview: ____________
Time start: _____________

Interviewee Information
Age: ______
Religion: Christian/ Muslim/ other _______________________
Nationality: _________________________________________
Ethnicity (if Ghanaian): _____________________________
Occupation before incarceration: _______________________
Marital Status: married/ single/divorced/separated/other_______________
Highest Level of Education: __________________________
Number of children: ____________________________
Type of crime (s) committed: _________________________
Length of prison sentence: _______________________
Time served: _______________________________
How many times have you been convicted of a crime? _________________

Experience with Family Relationships
Who do you consider as your closest family?
Prior incarceration, how was the relationship between you and them like?
What was their reaction when you got arrested and imprisoned?
Do they visit you here?
If yes, how often??
If no, why?
What are some of the general problems you face in here?
Who takes care of your children [if any]?
Do your children know you are in prison [if any]?
How does this make you feel?
How is the relationship between you and your partner [if any]?
How is the relationship between you and your other close family members?
Does this affect you in anyway?
Do you face any challenges as a result?

Coping Strategies
Are you able to cope with this issue?
How do you cope with this issue [if yes]?
Do you get any help to cope with this issue?
Fellow inmates?
Staff?
Other organizations?
Explain the nature of the help you get [if yes]

WAY FORWARD
Would you prefer the relationship to be different?
How would you prefer the relationship to be [if yes]?
Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation! Time ended: _____________
PRISON OFFICERS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant # ______________   Date of Interview: _______________

Time start: ________________

Interviewee Information
Gender ________
How long have you been a staff at the Nsawam Prison? ________________
What is your position here? ________________

Inmate Experiences with Family During Incarceration
What are some of the general problems women face in this prison?
What are some of the challenges they experience being away from their family?
What are some of the challenges you have observed the imprisoned women face with relation to separation from their family?

Coping Strategies
What are some of the ways in which these women cope with being separated from their families?
Are there any organizations that help the women cope with this challenge?
How do they do this [if yes]?
Are there any policies in place to address this issue?
What are some [if yes]?

Way Forward
Do you have any suggestions as to how to minimize the challenges the women face with respect with the absence of family members?
Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation!    Time Ended: ________________
APPENDIX B – GHANA PRISON SERVICE APPROVAL

In case of reply the number and date of this letter should be quoted.

HEADQUARTERS
Ghana Prisons Service
P. O. BOX 129, ACCRA
GHANA WEST AFRICA
TEL: 760093/760094
Fax: 233-302-772865

Email: info@ghanaprison.gov.gh

Your Ref: No. ........................................
My Ref. No. OC/1082/V.1/2018

RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Your Ref: No. A. 24B of 31st January, 2018

Reference your above-quoted letter, approval has been given to Ms. Deladem Ama Anku and her other two/2 team members at the Sociology Department, University of Ghana to collect data at the Nsawam Female Prison for their research on the topic: “Broken Lives, Broken Relationships: The Experiences of Women in a Ghanaian Prison”.

2. The researchers are directed to report to the Officer-In-Charge (OIC) of the Nsawam Female Prison for directives prior to the commencement of their research.

3. The researchers are not permitted to record using a voice tape recorder during the interview. Additionally, they would be required to submit a copy of their research work to the Service for study upon completion.

4. By a copy of this letter, the Officer-In-Charge (OIC) of the aforementioned station will offer the researchers the necessary support without compromising on security.

5. Accept for your information, please.

K K KPELE
DIRECTOR OF PRISONS/HRD
For: AG. DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PRISONS

THE THESIS COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
P. O. BOX LG 65
LEGGON-ACCRA

Cc:
1. Ms. Deladem Ama Anku - Team leader (0249583767)
2. The Officer-In-Charge (OIC) - Nsawam Female Prison
APPENDIX C – UNIVERSITY OF GHANA ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No.………………

21st February, 2018

Ms. Deladem Ama Anku
Department of Sociology
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Ms. Anku,

ECH 117/17-18: BROKEN LIVES, BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS: THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN A GHANAIAN PRISON

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date: 20/08/18
On Agenda for: Initial Submission
Date of Submission: 15/01/18
ECH Action: Approved
Reporting: Quarterly

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Rev. Prof. M. P. K. Okyerefo, Department of Sociology, University of Ghana.

Tel: +233-303933866
Email: ech@ug.edu.gh | ech@isser.edu.gh
APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristic of Participants

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<th>No.</th>
<th>PSEUDONYM</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>RELIGION</th>
<th>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>MARITAL STATUS</th>
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Source: Data from field interviews, 2018
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<th>Time Served</th>
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<td>3 weeks</td>
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<td>5 months</td>
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Source: Data from field interviews, 2018