



Patterns of victimization in Ghana's Senior Correctional Center: The experiences of juvenile offenders

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ABSTRACT

Victimization is considered a serious issue which affects children across the globe and this is particularly accentuated in the prison environment. Research on prison victimization and psychological health however, has primarily focused on adult prisoners. There is little documentation on how victimization impacts the psychological health of juvenile offenders in correctional facilities. This article therefore explores the experiences of victimization among juvenile offenders in the Senior Correctional Center, Ghana. A total of 20 juvenile offenders were purposively sampled from Ghana's Senior Correction Center. Using thematic analysis, three themes were generated and discussed: *forms of victimization, causes of victimization and impacts of victimization*. It was revealed that, besides taking the form of either direct and or indirect physical assault, victimization also manifested in the form of verbal assault. Moreover, victimization was found to usually occur when young offenders direct their built-up frustrations at others or when victims possess specific attributes that make them targets. The various forms of victimization experienced by these young offenders impacts their well-being physically, psychologically and socially. It is recommended that stakeholders should practice stress management exercises, and establish a buddy system for juvenile offenders in the correctional facility.

1. Introduction

Victimization is a serious public health concern which affects adolescents across the globe. Victimization occurs when an individual, referred to as the victim experience physical, sexual, verbal and psychological assault (Muratore, 2014). Globally, victimization leads to 200,000 death each year among individuals aged between 10 and 29 years (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020). The World Health Organization [(WHO, 2020)] considers youth violence (including victimization and fighting) as one of the top four causes of adolescents death. Studies have also shown that victimization engenders grave psychological and physical conditions alike among adolescents (e.g. Hatchel et al., 2019; Hong, Espelage, & Rose, 2019). Adolescents who get victimized subsequently experience psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempts (Baldry, Sorrentino, & Farrington, 2019; Duru, Balkis, & Turkdogan, 2019; Hatchel et al., 2019). Besides the psychological impact of victimization, some adolescents experience physical symptoms such as skin problems, headache and muscle tension, fatigue,

stomachaches, pains, and heart diseases (Baldry, 2004; Kowalski & Limber, 2013). The impact of victimization is particularly accentuated among adolescents in prisons or juvenile centres. A study by Ireland (2005) for instance, points out that young offenders who happen to be mainly victims or both victims and bullies are more likely to report symptoms associated with somatic concerns, depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

Several stakeholders around the world advocate against victimization toward adolescents. The protection of children from several forms of violence is a basic right guaranteed by the Convention on Human Rights of the Child and other International Treaties (United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). In a bid to address the phenomenon of victimization, the United Nation (UN) captured it in the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) as Goal 16.2 to put a stop to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms abuse against children by 2030 (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020). To meet this target, Ghana, a member of the UN, has strengthened The Children's Act (Act 560, The Children's Act, 1998) by putting systems in place to curb any form of correction that is "unreasonable in kind or degree according to

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age, the physical and mental condition of a child" (p. 8).

Despite the implementation of various policies to take on the menace of victimization, the phenomenon among children continues to be a widespread phenomenon regardless of economic, social, ethnic, religious, and cultural background. (Ortiz-Ospina, 2017). Prison victimization has been largely attributed to high population density, social hierarchy, inmate subculture and attitude of peer groups in the facility (Ireland, 2000; South & Wood, 2006). The nature of various prison environments determine to a large extent the degree of vulnerability for victimization. For instance, inmates found in prison centres that house more violence-prone inmates are more likely to be vulnerable to victimization than inmates housed in prison centres with fewer violence-prone inmates (Steiner, Ellison, Butler, & Cain, 2017). Social hierarchy in prisons has also been implicated in prison victimization (South & Wood, 2006). Social hierarchy is highly regarded within the prison centres, and victimization is perpetrated as a means of maintaining the status quo (South & Wood, 2006).

Besides environmental factors accounting for victimization in prisons, individual characteristics also play a significant role. Research has considered demographic variables such as age, offence type, criminal history, race and employment history as predictors of prison victimization (Teasdale, Daigle, Hawk, & Daquin, 2016; Wooldredge & Steiner, 2013). Thus, inmates either with certain characteristics or having engaged in some form of activities are more likely to be exposed to victimization. For instance, inmates are more likely to be physically assaulted if they have any of these attributes: young, single, prison naïveté (first-time incarcerated), convicted of minor property infractions or sex crimes (Kuo, Cuvelier, & Huang, 2014; Teasdale et al., 2016; Wooldredge & Steiner, 2013).

Given the myriad of possible causes of victimization, it is no surprise that UNICEF (2016) emphasized that 87% of children between the ages of 2 to 14 years are subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/ physical assault in Central and West Africa. That of the Middle East and Southern Africa is 83%. The impact of these victimization behaviours has received some attention; however, its documentation is underreported (UNICEF, 2016). This is mostly ascribable to the fact that victimization against children is socially accepted and most of the victims are reluctant to report such victimization experiences (UNICEF, 2016).

On a global scale, numerous studies have been done on victimization and its consequences on the psychological well-being of individuals. Despite the plethora of research done most of this literature entirely focuses on adult prisons (Allison & Ireland, 2010; Crewe, Liebling, & Hulley, 2015; Tyler, Kort-Butler, & Swendener, 2014), resulting in a gap, the inadequate focus on juvenile centers, that cannot be ignored. Researchers who focus on juvenile offenders skew their attention on how victimization predicts recidivism (Wylie & Rufino, 2018).

To the best of our knowledge, only two studies (i. e Kilpatrick, Saunders, & Smith, 2003; Ireland, 2005) have investigated the consequences of victimization among juveniles in correctional facilities. Kilpatrick and colleagues however, excluded the role of verbal assault on the psychological well-being of juveniles. Besides, while these studies provided valuable information, the datasets for both were from 2003 to 2005 hence making their dataset old. Looking at the dynamics of victimization, it will be difficult to generalize their findings in the current trends. Considering these limitations of the two aforementioned studies the consequences of victimization among juveniles in correctional facilities, researchers must focus their attention on this also important area to find out the current trends.

1.1. Research question

The study set out to answer the following: (a) what are the forms of victimization behaviours inmates experience in the facility? (b) What are the causes of victimization behaviours? (c) How do inmates feel when they are victimized?

2. Methods

2.1. Design and participants

A descriptive qualitative approach was used to explore juvenile offenders' experiences of victimization. This approach is suitable for studies that aim to explore the lived experiences of phenomena (Bradshaw, Atkinson, & Doody, 2017). The current study sought to explore in details, juvenile offenders' experiences of victimization in the correctional facility. This approach is relevant since information is needed directly from participants (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Qualitative designs to a large extent provide information about people's subjective experiences and underlying reasons for such experiences (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

The current study was conducted in the Senior Correctional facility, Ghana. The facility houses 198 male inmates ranging in age from 14 to 20 years. Young offenders are imprisoned for a variety of offenses, including defilement, theft, armed robbery, murder, possession of stolen goods, and fraud. The maximum sentence for a juvenile committing a serious crime is usually 36 months (Juvenile Justice Act, 2003). Based on the literacy levels, the young offenders are enrolled in the basic education or vocational skills programme. The prison occasionally engages the services of NGOs to offer psychological support for young offenders on a temporary basis (Ashiabor, 2014); however, no mental health professional (psychiatrist or psychologist) has been permanently stationed in the correctional facility to provide psychological support for young offenders who have been traumatized or severely affected as a result of victimization. Before conducting the study, we announced in advance, via brochures and regular intercom announcements, that researchers would be conducting interviews the following week. The advertisement assured residents that the information in the study was confidential and that they had the right to refuse any question. To be included in the study, the individual had to be below 18 years and should be willing to partake in the study. In all, twenty (20) juvenile offenders responded to our invitation and were individually interviewed. This sample size falls within the recommended sample size for qualitative study since Baker and Edwards (2012) assert that saturation is reached after fifteen interviews.

The 20 participants comprised of 14 (70%) Christians and 6 (30%) Muslims. The participants were aged between 15 and 17 years, and they were all males. Around 13 (65%) received the maximum prison sentence for a juvenile (36 months), while 7 (35%) were sentenced to the correctional facility for 24 months. In terms of the number of months offenders had served in the correctional facility, 9 (45%) of the young offenders had been there for 6 to 12 months, while 11 (55%) had been there for 13 to 24 months.

2.2. Procedure

The study commenced right after the researchers gained ethical clearance from University of Ghana's Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH: 033/17-18). We also obtained permission from Ghana Prison's Service to meet potential participants. The administrators of the Senior Correctional Center gave informed consent, as a proxy for parental consent. Moreover, participants were briefed about the requirements of the study and were informed of their autonomy to quit at any point with or without any reason. Participation was entirely voluntary. These juveniles participated in the study during their free periods (usually during their school or workshop break periods) in the correctional facility. Other ethical issues that were addressed in this study were confidentiality and anonymity of participants' identity as well as their responses. Participants were given total assurance of the secrecy of whatever information they were providing to the researcher and his team. For this reason, participants were not required to provide their names but were required to provide other forms of identification. However, this information was not communicated to a third party.

A face-to-face semi-structured interview was used to explore young

offenders' victimization experiences. The semi-structured interview provided flexibility to probe accounts of the juvenile offenders. In assessing victimization experiences, we focused on three aspects. The first was to identify the most common types of victimization experienced by juvenile offenders. Initially, we wanted to look into not only physical and verbal assault, but also sexual assault within the correctional facility. However, due to confidentiality concerns, we decided to limit our investigation to physical and verbal assault. The second aspect was to look into potential factors that could lead to victimization in the correctional facility. Third, we investigated the potential consequences of victimization. The time frame for all the interview sessions was between 30 and 50 min. The researchers further ensured that these interviews were out of reach and hearing of prison officers and other inmates in the facility. In the course of the interview, the emotional state of the participants was considered. In situations where the participant cried for more than 2 min, the interviewer asked if they were willing to continue. This was done to ensure that participants were not exposed to any psychological harm in the process of collecting data.

2.3. The trustworthiness of the results

To ensure the validity of the results of the current study, Shenton (2004) recommended procedures for guaranteeing the trustworthiness of qualitative results to be followed. Shenton (2004) suggests that the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the qualitative study is very critical. Hence, credibility was ensured by documenting initial codes so as to help revisiting and checking over of time. Also, due to Ghana Prison rules and protocols, all the interviews were manually recorded. Based on manual recording procedures, participants' thoughts and ideas during the interview process were reechoed or reflected onto them to ensure that their precise accounts about the events were well captured. Participant validation sessions were later held with participants who were readily available and willing to partake. To ensure honest responses from participants, the interview was conducted in a silent room, free from prison officers and other juvenile offenders. This was done to ensure that these participants would not feel intimidated to speak due to the presence of the prison officers and other juvenile offenders.

To ensure transferability, interviews were manually recorded and read over several times. This allowed for familiarization with data and the production of detailed descriptions of phenomena. Confirmability was ensured by engaging all the authors in the analysis. This limited the possibility of an individual's views dominating the interpretation of participants' responses. Moreover, dependability was addressed by evaluating the effectiveness of the processes used in the study.

2.4. Data analyses

This study strictly followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommended stages of thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes within the responses. The authors immersed themselves in the data by personally transcribing the interviews and reading through the transcripts. Afterwards, initial codes were generated. During the immersion stage, the authors discovered a repeated reference to hitting, insulting, noise-making and being a "fresher" in participants' experiences of victimization. More so, direct, and indirect physical assault, and verbal assault emerged as a means by which these juveniles are victimized. These forms of assault were found to have some significant influence on participants' psychological health. Moreover, various rationales as to why juveniles are victimized were identified.

Upon the discovery of some methods of assault at the initial phase of the data analysis, particular attention was paid to the forms of victimization and its impact on ones' wellbeing. Initial codes were generated by reading through the transcripts to identify sections where a reference was made to assaults such as being punched, hit, kicked, insults, name-called, embarrassed/humiliated and being coerced to stand, sit, or lie in

awkward positions. Following the initial coding, the authors described in detail and classified the codes based on their relationship with victimization and psychological health. Peer checking was used throughout the process to ensure credibility of the data. Back-and-forth engagement was also done between the various authors to refine the codes and themes generated.

3. Result

Participants answered questions which focused on their views about victimization within the juvenile facility. Three major themes (forms of victimization, causes of victimization and impact of victimization) were generated. In terms of forms of victimization, some of the participants used gestures and demonstrations to give a vivid explanation, particularly of instances where they were coerced to sit, stand, or lie in awkward positions such as, "abodwe down", "adanko de ka", and "pump" (see Table 1). The researcher then observed these demonstrations and manually recorded them by putting these illustrations in writing.

3.1. Forms of victimization

The findings from the study showed that within the correctional facility, various forms of victimization behaviour are meted out to the juvenile offenders. From the study findings, the subthemes generated were direct physical assault, indirect physical assault and verbal assault. These emergent themes are described below.

The narratives by the juvenile offenders indicate that they encounter numerous direct physical assaults ($n = 14$) in the correctional facility. The correctional facility is primarily known to be an open facility. As such, most of the inmates have the opportunity to buy stuff especially during periods of workshop and school. Some of these inmates take advantage of this open facility to either hit, punch, or knock their victims with several objects. The objects used by the perpetrators include hairbrushes and bathing cup among others. Other perpetrators leave long fingernails and use them as tools to mete out physical assault to

Table 1
Themes and subthemes of victimization experiences.

Theme	Subtheme	Description	N
Forms of Victimization	Direct Physical Assault	Being punched, hit, kicked, "atweratwere" [Victims would bend their elbows and place their palms on the back of their heads. The perpetrators would then strike the victims' elbows with a hair brush], and "black hammer" [Perpetrators would hit the victim's head with their elbow followed immediately with their fists.]	14
	Indirect Physical Assault	being coerced to stand, sit, or lie in awkward positions such as, "abodwe down" [Victims would lie on the floor prostrate with bent elbows against the floor and raised hips], "adanko de ka" [sit-ups with ears pulled in a crosswise fashion] and "pump" [The victim is instructed to push out his cheek by filling it with air, the perpetrator would then use his fingernails to hit the victims' inflated cheeks]	17
Causes of Victimization	Verbal Assault	Insults and name calling	8
	Displacement of frustration	Displacement of anger due to prison deprivation	8
	Possessing certain attributes	Being a fresher and hailing from a geographic area	6
Impacts of Victimization	Physical Effect	Permanent bruises and scars	11
	Psychological Effect	Sadness and loneliness	16
	Social Effect	Social withdrawal	12

their victims. In most situations, juvenile offenders who have been in the facility for quite longer, popularly called “senior men”, indulge in these victimization behaviours to establish a sense of hierarchy or chain of command each individual ought to adhere to. The account of participant 15 and 2 below reflect this observation:

A senior man coerced me to do black hammer because he asked me for tomatoes... once I told him I don't have, He hit me (Participant 15, 16 years).

When you are in the dormitory, senior men could give you pump. Sometimes you won't do anything but the senior man wants everybody to know that he is the boss in the facility (Participant 2, 17 years).

Sometimes if you don't do what the seniorman wants, he will force you to do “atwereatwere” (Participant 1, 16 years).

Some of these victimized inmates are sometimes beaten up by the mob. They are punched, kicked, and hit by several juvenile offenders when they make attempt to resist punishment meted out to them by the perpetrator. Most of these victims become emotionally hurt about the physical assault meted out to them.

Participant 8 narrated that:

Sometimes I feel sad and it hurts a lot. This is because some of the senior men can even fall asleep after they have punished you. When you stand up, all the inmates in the dorm would beat you up and they call this “Duka” (Participant 8, 17 years).

Also, from the narratives, these juvenile offenders expressed that they experienced some form of indirect physical assault ($n = 17$) from their co-inmates. This assault is termed indirect physical assault because perpetrators do not make any conscious effort to overtly hit, punch or kick their victims. These perpetrators rather force their victims to experience other bullying acts which cause pain and discomfort to the victims' body. For instance, victims are coerced to stand, sit or lie in awkward positions for unusually longer periods of time. These victims are sometimes assaulted for the mere fact that they were making noise in the room. Below are accounts of two of such participants:

When you are in your dormitory and you have nothing doing, the seniorman can easily punish you. They will punish you to do “abodwe down”. (Participant 2, 17 years).

This is school dorm and as such, you are supposed to read when you are alone or have nothing doing. When the seniors say quiet and you still make noise, you will be made to do adanko de ka for several hours (Participant 3, 18 years).

With regards to verbal assault been one of the subthemes generated from the study, these juvenile offenders expressed that they are exposed to name-calling, curses and insults from their co-inmates ($n = 8$). These victims narrated that they are sometimes ridiculed and given names based on the type of crime they were charged with. They normally experience this kind of assault when they are in groups. Participant 3 and 5 emphasized that they are sometimes verbally assaulted:

I have also been called some names before. Some of my mates call me names like “the guy who rape boys”, that is “OPD”, because I was charged for raping someone. They call me this name frequently whenever we are playing together... When someone eats a lot, my friends and I normally describe him with “he eats like a dog. (Participant 3, 18 years).

Sometimes they call you by your nicknames. Other times they ridicule you based on the type of case you were charged with. For instance, in case you were charged with defilement, they laugh at you with it. (Participant 5, 17 years).

3.2. Causes of victimization

Within the facility, a juvenile offender could be victimized and or punished by their counterpart for varying reasons. The main subthemes generated from the study were displacement of frustration and possessing certain qualities.

These perpetrators sometimes experience frustration and anger due to the pains of imprisonment. Their frustration stems from the fact that the correctional facility deprives them of a sense of security and independence. Hence, they victimize their counterparts as a way of displacing these aversive feelings toward the vulnerable group. Below is an extract of participant 4 about the extent to which some perpetrators displace their anger and frustration toward their victims due to the pains of imprisonment:

During bedtime, some of our mates are so disturbed about the fact that they have been jailed. The seniorman is having difficulties sleeping. He is so bothered about the fact that he can't do the things he wants in the facility. As such, he can easily slap you when you make the slightest noise (Participant 4, 20 years).

Another major subtheme generated from this study was that some of the perpetrators deliberately target their victims who possess unique qualities. Most of these victims are deliberately targeted by the perpetrators for reasons such as being a fresher, hailing from a specific geographic area and sometimes for no apparent reason.

Within the correctional facility, it is hard for a fresher to escape an assault. The experienced juvenile offenders repeatedly mete out varying forms of assaults to freshers as a way of ushering them into the facility. In light of this, meting out such assaults, has become a norm and tradition one ought to endure. Participants 1 and 7 ardently indicated that newcomers are exposed to indirect physical assault:

Some of the inmates too, they call themselves “senior men”. When you are a newcomer, they would punish you, the little thing you do... When you are a newcomer, you will be coerced to scrub. Sometimes they will wake you up at dawn to scrub and if you don't do it, your mattress would be wet. Other times too they would wake you up to do abodwe down and the rest for no reason. (Participant 1, 16 years).

We have a punishment when you are a newcomer. Thus, 15 punishments, the senior man would show you all of them. (Participant 7, 17 years).

Another participant pointed out that some of the inmates are sometimes victimized for the mere fact that they come from a specific region or area where a popular figure met her demise.

In groups, my friends and I who came from Brong Ahafo Region were punished by some senior men for the mere fact that Ebony (Ghanaian artist) died in a motor accident in the Brong Ahafo Region, hence, we are the ones who killed her. We were asked to do abodwe down from 9:00 pm to about 4:00 am. (Participant 11, 15 years).

3.3. Impact of victimization

These victimizations experienced by the detainees have several negative effects on their physical and psychological health. Based on the findings, the main subthemes generated are physical effect, social effect and psychological effect.

In exploring for the physical effects of victimization, some of the detained juveniles narrated that these physical assaults resulted in permanent bruises and scars on victims' body.

Participant 4 stated:

You come to this facility with no marks or bruises on your body, but by the time you are out, you would have some marks or bruises. You saw one of the inmates who came wearing a yellow shirt with bruises

on his forehead? One of his fellow inmates hit his forehead with a bathing cup and this led to open wounds on his forehead (Participant 4, 19 years).

Narratives from juvenile offenders allude that offenders who are exposed to various forms of victimizations tend to have several emotional reactions toward the act. Some of these negative emotional reactions include sadness, anger, fright, thoughts of escaping, remorsefulness, loneliness and difficulty trusting people.

Some of the young offenders mentioned that they experienced negative emotions such as being angry and sad, frightened and had thoughts of escaping when victimized. The account below is an excerpt from the comments of participant 1 who expressed feelings of sadness, anger and anxiety whenever victimized:

I don't feel happy when victimized. I become sad. I sometimes become very scared to even go to the dorm. Sometimes, you think about it and a whole lot of things come to mind. You become so disturbed... Several thoughts run through my head about escaping from this place (Participant 1, 16 years).

Other detained juveniles tend to experience loneliness due to being victimized. They end up being hard on themselves because they blame themselves for been the correctional facility. They usually experience this because they believe they have lowered their standards to allow someone younger to victimize them. A 17-year-old participant commented:

I blame myself when I realized it is a "small boy" but due to prison rules, he is punishing me. Sometimes I feel lonely and experience sleepless night for doing "adanko de ka" throughout the night (Participant 7, 17 years).

Another central subtheme of the negative impact of victimization has to do with its social effect. Narratives from these detained juveniles indicated that being subjected to direct and indirect physical assault and verbal assault, could have negative social effects on victims. The main negative social effect generated from the study was social withdrawal. Some of the victims of the various forms of assault tended to withdraw socially from several activities. They had a general perception that they might be victimized when they engage in activities with their seniors. Hence, these individuals try to avoid senior juvenile detainees by any means necessary and this manifests predominantly as social isolation.

Participant 8 narrated that:

I sometimes do not want to engage in any activity and even play with some of them because a senior man can easily force you to do abodwe down and adanko de ka for no reason".

(Participant 8, 17 years)

4. Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study presented above. The current study aimed to investigate the experiences of victimization among incarcerated juveniles. Other studies have pointed out that the common forms of bullying behaviour as including physical assault, psychological assault, verbal assault, theft-related and sexual assault (Ireland & Qualter, 2008; Sekol & Farrington, 2010). This current study found that direct and indirect physical assault, and verbal assault alike were the most common form of victimization used by the juvenile detainees. Interestingly, most studies that have reported on physical assault (Ireland & Qualter, 2008; Sekol & Farrington, 2010), pay little regard to indirect physical assault. Indirect physical assault in the current study however, was found to be considerably prominent to not give ample recognition to. This is most likely due to the related sub-cultural dimension. Within the African setting, parents try to use indirect physical assault as a form of punishment toward their kids (Danvers & Schley, 2016). Hence, direct and indirect exposure to this form of

violence leads to externalizing behaviours (Fleckman, Drury, Taylor, & Theall, 2016).

Furthermore, as a result of their helplessness in the face of incarceration's pains, some perpetrators resorted to physical and/or verbal assault. Perpetrators who resort to violence tend to have low self-esteem and have difficulty expressing their views in decent manner (Walker & Bright, 2009). As such, verbal assaults or insults are used as a medium through which they can communicate with their victims.

The findings of the study further revealed that most of the detainees are victimized for varying reasons. The assertion that bullies displace their frustration and anger toward their victims denotes that some of the perpetrators have the basic urge to have some sense of being in control. These perpetrators engage in bullying to instill fear, gain dominion over their victims and pacify their feelings of helplessness about being incarcerated. This recurrent ideology gives them power and their urge to increase power continually grows which then leads to increased victimization. This finding is consistent with studies conducted by Ireland (2005a), Edgar, O'Donnell, Martin, and Martin (2003), and Listwan, Colvin, Hanley, and Flannery (2010). Edgar et al. (2003) for instance recommended that prison settings provide three conditions that probably engender feelings of fear: exposure to a high-risk situation, a lack of control over one's surroundings and the prospect of serious issues (aggression or violence). Based on this, detainees who do not encounter direct victimization amid their custodial sentence are still apt to witness aggression or bullying of others, which may inspire some level of fear (Listwan et al., 2010) and thus, one would expect that fear of victimization is probably going to influence people's view of security inside the prison.

It was further noted that the mere possession of certain qualities made some detainees the target of victimization. Qualities which could make one a target of victimization that were identified included being a new entrant otherwise referred to as "fresher" and coming from a particular geographic location. This corroborates with Peguero (2012) and Hoff and Mitchell (2009) assertion that individuals are considerably victimized based on their race, ethnicity, gender, immigrant status and sexual orientation.

Moreover, victims of these bullying behaviours are likely to be sad, anxious and suicidal because they constantly ponder over and regret some of their actions that caused their incarceration (Ireland & Qualter, 2008). Others begin to miss their home due to the unfairness within the facility. Due to these feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety, victims are likely to be socially withdrawn from activities they used to like (Vaughn et al., 2010). Thus, they tend to experience severe anxiety and stress since they perceive they might be easily victimized whenever they engage in activities such as sports and other recreational activities (Owusu, Hart, Oliver, & Kang, 2011). Other victims also turn out to be paranoid and have difficulty trusting anyone because a co-inmate broke their trust. Hence, they overgeneralize that all the juvenile detainees within the facility are not trustworthy. Another potential outcome of victimization discovered was its physical effects on victims. Physical bruises or injuries are thus, caused by peer victimization both indirectly (as a trigger for injurious events) and directly (i.e., through intentional physical harm) (Laflamme, Möller, Hallqvist, & Engström, 2008).

4.1. Limitation

The focus of this study did not include other aspects of victimization. There could have been other aspects of victimization that did not emerge in our data. As a result of the correctional facility's confidentiality rules, we were unable to determine a broader range of victimization, such as sexual assault.

4.2. Conclusions and implications for intervention

In an attempt to address issues of victimization in the correctional facility, it is important to understand and take into consideration the

interplay of multiple factors at work as highlighted by the findings of this study. To prevent victimization, stakeholders should create inmate education programs that explain prison policies and practices regarding inmates' rights as well as educate young offenders how to follow up on abuse accusations. Correctional facility stakeholders should also form a disciplinary committee to investigate abuse cases involving young offenders. Given the potential negative impact of victimization, these juveniles would benefit from psychoeducation and assertiveness training, that would equip them with the necessary skills of establishing better social interaction. Buddy system should also be set up in the correctional facility by recruiting buddies (experienced inmates) to train and mentor new young offenders. The Ghana Prison Service should also make a concerted effort to recruit clinicians to teach inmates and prison officers stress management techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, meditation and others.

Declaration of Competing Interest

No conflicts of interest declared.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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