

**VICTIMS WITH VOICES: THE CONCEPTUALISATION, LIVED  
EXPERIENCES AND RESILIENCE OF VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE IN THE UPPER WEST AKYEM DISTRICT OF GHANA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, Harriet Jennifer Boatemah Baffoe, do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research work carried out at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, Canada, and the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, Legon towards the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The study was undertaken under the supervision of Prof. Donald Fuchs, Dr. Michael Baffoe, and Dr. Rose Walls. All references cited in this study have been duly acknowledged.

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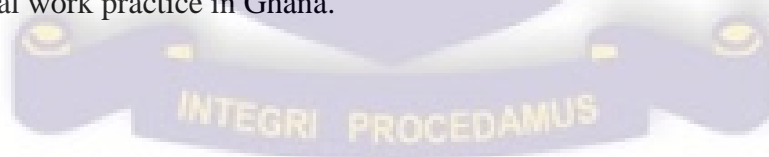
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## ABSTRACT

This is a phenomenological study which explores how rural women conceptualise intimate partner violence (IPV) from their own perspectives. The study also examines the lived experiences and resilience of women who have been victimised in their intimate relationships. Two theoretical strands form the framework of this study and they are, the Integrative Feminist Model and the Strengths Perspective. The research combines two qualitative designs namely, in-depth interviews, and community forum. Data was gathered from sixty-seven respondents specifically, twenty-four IPV victims, three queen mothers and forty other women from the communities. The study was carried out in the Upper West Akyem District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study population is women because research shows that they form the majority of victims of IPV. Also, the focus is on rural areas for the reason that studies on intimate partner violence have largely concentrated on urban residents and much of our understanding of the phenomenon is largely based on urban circumstances. The findings of this study have been put into three themes; the conceptualisation of IPV, victims' lived experiences, and the contribution of social support systems towards victims' resilience. The analysis of each theme has been supported with respondents' quotations in a way that adequately answers the research questions. Overall, this study extends the definition of IPV to eight categories. It further reveals the lived experiences of rural women, and discusses their sentiments and sympathies towards their perpetrators. The results indicate that the family remains the largest social support system in rural Ghana, and expose the limited roles of queen mothers and institutional failures when it comes to IPV matters in rural communities. The findings also show how rural victims of IPV are becoming increasingly self-conscious of their situation, and are exhibiting resilience, and increased knowledge about new coping skills to improve their own lives, that of their children, and communities. The discussion draws out points of convergences and contradictions between the results, theories and the literature review. This study provides an essential expansion to the literature on the dynamics of IPV, and offers a significant contribution to knowledge that helps to direct policy initiatives and influence social work practice in Ghana.



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my family.



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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>IFM</b>	Integrative Feminist Model
<b>ACHPR</b>	African Charter on Human and People’s Rights
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BDPA</b>	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>DOVVSU</b>	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>OAU</b>	Organisation of African Unity
<b>SDGEA</b>	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
<b>SSS</b>	Social Support System
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UNDEVAW</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

#### 1.1 Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is “a complex social phenomenon” (Teaster, Roberto & Dugar, 2006: 636). It is conceptualised as multidimensional, with factors representing multiple intersecting contexts (Lindhorst & Tajima, 2008), and it is increasingly being recognised as a problem in many countries. Neustifter (2009: 1) corroborates this assertion saying “intimate partner violence (IPV) is a complex phenomenon that impacts all levels of our society. It takes a myriad of forms, from physical battering to emotional abuse.”

Victimisation of women in heterosexual intimate relationships transcends national boundaries, geographic locations, socio-economic status, culture, religion and ethnicity (Amoakohene, 2004; Prospero, Dwumah and Ofori-Dua, 2009; Mann & Takyi, 2009; Kishor and Kiersten, 2004; Jaoko, 2010). Studies are increasingly highlighting the worldwide scope of intimate partner violence affecting women physically, emotionally, and socially (Campbell, 2005; Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999). There have also been reports on particular aspects of gender-based violence (GBV) but the available literature is largely focused on urban dynamics at the disadvantage of rural areas. Shuman, McCauley, Waltermaurer, Roche, Hollis, Gibbons, et al. (2008: 390) state categorically that “intimate partner violence research to date has been limited to women residing in urban areas, with the small body of research focusing on rural populations.”

Additionally, even though the nature, causes, prevalence, and the impact of IPV on the psychological, physical and social well-being of victims have well been documented, research in

this area is yet to sufficiently explore rural women's conceptualization of the phenomenon from their own perspectives. Furthermore, experts such as Campbell (2005); Ofei-Aboagye (1994); Watts & Zimmerman (2002); Mason, Hyman, Berman, Guruge, Kanagaratnam & Manuel (2008); Latta & Goodman (2005); and Raj & Silverman (2002) have been involved in the development of its typologies, prevalence and socio-cultural contexts yet seemingly missing from the intimate partner violence discourse is an exploration of the lived experiences of rural victims and how social support systems contribute to their resilience or their ability to thrive. Meanwhile, the extant literature from developing countries indicate that the percentages of women reporting that they have been physically attacked by an intimate partner at some point in their lives are at least as high if not higher than those found in industrialized societies where much more research exists (Boy and Kulczycki, 2008; Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Unquestionably, violence against men and violence in same-sex relationships also occur, but the overwhelming majority of partner violence is by men against women (Heise et al., 1999; Krug, James, Dahlberg, & Zwi (2002) which is the focus of this study. Studies have also shown that there is not much difference in the amount of violence against women in a married relationship versus the amount of violence in a dating relationship (Hines and Saudino, 2002). Therefore, the focus of this work is on violence against women both in marriage and in dating relationships. There is a fairly high global consensus that rural women are disadvantaged by several circumstances (Adams, 2006).

A review of the theoretical literature shows a strong causal relationship between the victimisation of women and their access to social support systems, and it also identifies some barriers to safety which are potentially unique to women residing in rural communities. A study

of Southern rural women in the United States of America (USA), for example, shows that large coverage areas in rural communities hamper police and ambulance response time and there is also lack of close neighbours to offer shelter to victims (Shuman, McCauley, Waltermaurer, Roche, Hollis, Gibbons et al., 2008).

Another research conducted in Fuzhou, China, indicates that in traditional Chinese families, the family structure is hierarchical and the husband has final authority on a variety of family issues, such as financial decisions, although husbands may give the illusion of power to their spouses (see Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell, 2005). The researchers note that, Chinese women's social and family status can be clearly depicted in the traditional Chinese aphorisms that "beating is love, and scolding is intimacy" (Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell, 2005:78). The authors lay emphasis on the point that, even though China has little notion of individual privacy, violence against a woman by her husband is generally concealed and protected within the sphere of private life and, as such, is largely overlooked and ignored.

According to Hou, Ko, & Shu (2013), Taiwan maintains several traditional Chinese values, and is constructed through a patriarchal hierarchical family system. In the father-son domain of the Han Chinese value system, the husband has power over his wife, and the wife needs to obey her husband's orders. Hsieh, Feng, & Shu (2009) also argue that in patriarchal Taiwanese society, intimate partner violence is largely regarded as an expression of love and as a family matter. During the socialization process, women internalize their roles in caring for the family; they build self-esteem by catering for the needs of others and neglect their own personal needs. The wife is therefore expected to stay in the marriage relationship to keep the family intact even when the husband beats her and victimises her in other ways (Tsai, 1996).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics Report of the United States of America for the year 2000, indicate that sixty percent of sexual assault victims knew their assailants either as partners, relatives, friends, or acquaintances (US National Institute of Justice, 2008). Again, a study in a rural community of the Narshingdi District in the Dhaka division in Bangladesh demonstrates that majority of murdered adult women are killed by a husband, partner, or ex-husband or ex-partner (Sayem & Khan, 2012) and about one-fifth of rural Bangladeshi women who experienced physical violence reported of being hit with a fist, dragged, kicked, or threatened with a weapon (Naved & Persson, 2005).

Research uncovers that many people, including both men and women have beliefs that justify using violence against women and hold women partially responsible for the abuse they suffer in their intimate relationships (Boy and Kulczycki, 2008). In Ghana, punishment of wives occurs frequently in many parts of the country as some men consider it their marital obligation to “discipline” and control their wives (Adinkrah, 2008b, 2010; Amoakohene, 2004). As a result, women victims suffer a range of injuries due to victimization at the hands of their intimate partners.

In Ghana, Ofei-Aboagye (1994) in one of the early studies conducted with 50 women who were clients of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Accra, took a preliminary look at the incidence of domestic violence in their lives. Also, with a sample of 50 educated women from Accra and Kumasi, the two largest cities in Ghana, Amoakohene (2004) studied women’s perception of violence against them and reviewed policy and social responses on the issue. These women were recruited from four gender-related advocacy groups namely, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the then Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) now Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the

Ghana Police Service, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Ark Foundation. More so, Prospero, Dwumah & Ofori-Dua (2009) studied violent attitudes and mental health symptoms among mutually violent Ghanaian couples using a sample of university students from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. Furthermore, Mann & Takyi (2009) examined the impact of resources and socio-cultural processes on attitudes towards intimate partner violence in Ghana using a data set from the 2003 Ghana Demographic Health Survey.

It can be concluded from these studies that research participants were largely recruited from urban centres and these were women who could report their stories to formal social support systems. Most of the literature on IPV in Ghana thus elucidates the circumstances of urban victims, especially, those who are bold to come out to tell their stories or seek formal social support as against women in rural areas who, as a result of their circumstances, are unable to report or have access to social support systems or government institutions. Meanwhile, if we are to accept that structural factors play an important role in influencing a woman's risk for IPV, then it should be assumed that differing geographic regions should correspondingly show different dynamics of intimate partner violence (Rennison & Welchans, 2000).

So what are these dynamics and how can we appreciate the lived experiences and the perspectives of these women residing in rural communities in Ghana, whose voices may have otherwise not been heard? Can we say the views from experts have any cross-cultural link when applied to the perspectives of respondents from rural Ghana? I thus examine how rural Ghanaian women define the concept of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives and explore their struggles. The study further examines the forms of social support systems in rural communities that help to meet the needs of victims and the significant roles they play in their

efforts towards resilience. The study has strong implications for the integrative feminist model and the strengths perspective. This phenomenological study consequently highlights the gaps in scholarship by using the descriptive phenomenological paradigm to help draw out points of convergence and contradictions between the results, theoretical framework and literature review on the phenomenon of intimate partner violence.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem and Justification of the Study**

The problem this study identifies is that there are gaps in the literature. Research has not discussed the issues of intimate partner violence from rural women's own perspectives in Ghana. The central problem that this study investigates is how the concept of intimate partner violence is understood by rural women, what victims lived experiences are and the significant roles social support systems play in their resilience. The problem has to do with the understanding of what rural women have lived through, how they conceptualize the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives, and what they identify to be the contribution of social support systems to their ability to thrive, as well as the constraints that IPV victims from rural areas face when seeking support.

Another problem is that, the voices of rural women who are affected by these victimisations seldom get heard. As a result, a unique attribute of this study is the representation of the stories of victims recruited as primary participants, and the inclusion of the views of queen mothers and women from the selected communities as secondary participants. This provides diverse views which help to enrich the data and also amplify the voices of rural residents. More so, because of the relatively small size and close relationships among people in rural

communities, IPV occurrence seems to be known to others members. Hence, the need to involve them in the process of knowledge creation.

In addition, the inclusion of queen mothers as key informants is missing but this study takes care of that particularly because in Ghana, the traditional authority of which queen mothers are a significant part is the embodiment of the cultural traditions of the society. They play very important roles in the society. In rural communities, queen mothers are considered as major forms of social support especially, for women. It would thus be intriguing to find out their role at addressing IPV issues and discuss how that helps victims to cope and bounce back.

Furthermore, in matrilineal societies (as in the case of the Akan in Ghana), Queen Mothers are powerful members of the traditional governing councils (Stoeltje, 2006) and they (queen mothers) have powers in the decision to ‘enstool’ (enthroned) or ‘destool’ (unmake) a king or a chief. It is therefore worth knowing how they use this ‘power’ to protect women in their various communities and also featuring them is a way of projecting the voices of rural residents. The inclusion of the general community women in the forum is also important for asset mapping used in community development to get community members to identify existing social support systems and to explain the community’s role in addressing IPV matters.

This study does not focus on the perpetrators but on the victims to give them the needed attention and provide a deeper understanding of their circumstances. Research in this area usually highlights the urban dynamics at the disadvantage of the rural area. So, I concentrate on the rural area to give them a voice. Also, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, Ghana’s rural population is approximately 49.1 percent of the country’s total population. It is therefore imperative to contextualise and address such a major issue affecting almost half of the country’s population.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The focus of this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. How do rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives?
2. What are the lived experiences of rural women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships?
3. How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims' resilience?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Generally, this study explores the dynamics of intimate partner violence against women in the Upper West Akim District of the Eastern Region of Ghana.

#### ***Specific Objectives***

The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate how rural women understand the concept of intimate partner violence.
2. To examine the lived experiences of victims of intimate partner violence.
3. To explore the forms of social support systems that are available in rural communities and how significant they are at helping victims to thrive and exhibit resilience.

### **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of exploring this sensitive topic was to document how rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives in

order to have an essential expansion to the literature, and integrate these perspectives into policy initiatives and social work practice. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences and the resilience of IPV victims in order to amplify their voices which are often unheard in the discourse on gender-based violence.

Finally, the purpose of this work was to identify significant social support systems in rural areas that respond not only to the needs of IPV victims but are also able to protect rural women against victimisation, and contribute towards their ability to be resilient. For the purpose of this study, I have defined intimate partner violence as any behaviour in the form of physical assault, sexually aggressive conduct, psychological oppression, neglect, emotional manipulation or economic coercion that causes harm to a partner with whom one has or has had an intimate relationship.

### **1.6 Expected outcome of the Study**

I expect that as a result of this work a significant contribution would be made to the existing body of knowledge on the rural and cultural contexts of intimate partner violence. Again my findings seek to help shape social work practice, and influence policy initiatives on intimate partner violence and related issues on gender-based violence in rural Ghana. Even more, this work challenges oppression and calls on policy makers and social work practitioners to see through the knowledge, lived experiences and resilience of these rural women so that they can respond positively to the crisis of intimate partner violence in rural areas in the country.

Gil (2004) contends that social problems are not normal features of any society but are consequences of societies that are characterised by hierarchy, inequality, and

oppression which need to be confronted and dealt with. It is indeed “an unfortunate paradox when the helping professions in general, and social work in particular, which deal with victims of social problems on a daily basis, tend to accept social ills as an inherently normal features of society (Mullaly, 2010: 6) – this is the essence of a term referred to as cultural imperialism which has been discussed further in Chapter Two. Finally, this study helps fill these important gaps in the literature on intimate partner violence in rural Ghana.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Concepts**

***Intimate partner:*** A person with whom an individual has or had a romantic relationship.

***Intimate partner violence:*** IPV as I have used it in this context refers to any behaviour in the form of physical assault, sexually aggressive conduct, psychological oppression, neglect, emotional manipulation or economic coercion that causes harm to a partner with whom one has an intimate relationship (Neustifter, 2009: 5; National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, 2003: 3).

***Social support:*** The term social support in this study corroborates Ahsan’s (2007) views, describing it as the help one receives through formal or informal contacts with individuals or groups. Such support may come in the form of emotional strength and encouragement, overnight lodging, childcare, home or farming chores, mediation, professional counselling, spiritual or other forms of counselling, inspiring or encouraging words, prayers of support, respite from cooking, and financial loans. Other forms of support may include companionship, recreation, personal sharing experiences aimed at encouraging a victim, rescue efforts when there is violence, fight disruptions, community intervention, physical care and first aid among others.

***Social support systems:*** These are the social links or the network of resources (Murthy, 2011: 24) between individuals and or groups such as the family, friends, neighbours, chiefs, queen mothers, opinion leaders, religious figures, ‘Asafo companies’ (associations), and other community leaders and or professional organisations among others.

***Violence against women:*** Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

***Resilience:*** “an active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge” (Walsh, 2006: 4).

## **1.8 Organization of Thesis Chapters**

This study has eight chapters in all and below I provide the chapter outline of how my study has proceeded.

### ***Chapter One: Introduction to the problem***

This chapter consists of the introduction and background to the study. This introductory chapter provides a context for the study and discusses the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, and the expected outcome of the study. The chapter further defines key concepts that have been used throughout the study and explains how the thesis has been organised into the various chapters.

### ***Chapter Two: Literature Review***

This chapter specifically analyses previous IPV-related research in Ghana and elsewhere and presents three theories which form the framework of the study. First, literature has been reviewed on the definitions of intimate partner violence, the types of IPV, local and international instruments that protect the rights of women and the effectiveness of various approaches that have been adopted in furthering the IPV discourse. I also argue about social support systems and the rural-urban dichotomy, and then discuss the dynamics of intimate partner violence and the culture of imperialism.

### ***Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework and Research Paradigm***

This chapter of the work has been divided into two broad sub-topics - theoretical framework and the research paradigm. The theoretical framework of the study sits squarely in the remit of the integrative feminist model, and the strengths perspective, whereas the researcher's philosophy is influenced by the descriptive or eidetic phenomenological paradigm.

### ***Chapter Four: Research Methodology***

This chapter outlines the qualitative research method used for the study. Here, I discuss the research design, sampling procedures, research instruments used, sources of data, data collection processes, and the ethical considerations. The chapter also provides a report on field activities and a reflection on conducting field work in Ghana as a Ghanaian woman.

### ***Chapter Five: Socio-Demographics and Rural Women's Conceptualisation of IPV***

This chapter provides the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and answers the first research question - How do rural women conceptualise intimate partner violence from

their own perspectives? Here, I present the results on the emergent themes and the interpretation of the data, supported by quotations obtained from a cross section of rural women recruited as IPV victims, queen mothers, and general community women. As much as practicable, this chapter is largely shaped by how rural women themselves understand and define the concept of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives.

### ***Chapter Six: The Lived Experiences of Rural Victims of Intimate Partner Violence***

This chapter answers the second research question - What are the lived experiences of rural victims of intimate partner violence? The results and the interpretation of the data in this chapter are exclusively the responses obtained from the victims of IPV via the in-depth interviews. These women share their lived experiences of how they have been victimized in their heterosexual intimate relationships.

### ***Chapter Seven: The Significance of Social Support Systems to Victims Resilience***

This chapter answers the final research question - How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims' resilience? The results and interpretation of the data here are shaped by the views obtained from all three categories of research participants as they talk about the kinds of social support systems available in their communities that enable IPV victims to thrive and pull through.

### ***Chapter Eight: Discussion and Policy Implications***

This is the final chapter of my thesis and it focuses on an extensive discussion of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence along the lines of the research questions and the objectives of the study. I then link the results to the theories and the literature review to draw out

points of convergences and contradictions. The discussion also outlines the implications for practice, contributes to shaping future research, influencing policy initiatives, and directing social work practice in rural areas.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

In this first chapter of the thesis, I have provided an introduction to the study on intimate partner violence for the purpose of laying the foundation of this work. I have also identified the research questions and objectives of the study as well as the purpose and expected outcome of the study. Specific concepts have also been operationally defined in order to bring out the very meanings they represent in order not to create any ambiguity. Finally, I have outlined how the thesis has been organized into eight chapters and I have provided details of the content of each chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses existing work on intimate partner violence and the rural dynamics, exposes the gaps in the existing literature and puts the study into perspective. The nature of my work endears it to a number of previous qualitative studies and theoretical approaches. In the beginning phase of chapter two, I pay particular attention to how various scholars have defined the term intimate partner violence and discussed the issues of gender-based violence. In addition, I contextualize the subject of social support systems and the rural-urban dynamics in order to appreciate the issues. I also analyze the concept of violence and cultural imperialism and provide what I hope is a clearer understanding of the multiple dimensions of oppressions that rural women suffer. Juxtaposition of these structural factors is important in the sense that, rural women's experiences cannot be adequately discussed without a close examination of intricately inter-related issues that interact to produce particular and general oppressions and marginalization of women.

#### **2.2 Defining Intimate Partner Violence**

Intimate partner violence is an aspect of family violence but it appears that many social scientists disagree on a uniform definition of IPV. Researchers seem unaware of the striking differences between intimate partner violence, family violence and domestic violence. Sometimes, these terms are used interchangeably and some researchers, practitioners and public policy makers seem not to understand that, labelling all familial acts of aggression as one problem can reduce attention and make ineffective the provision of resources and services

committed to dealing with the problem. The ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition of all acts of violence as domestic violence or family violence seems to create confusion for researchers, policy makers and practitioners. “How does one accurately study or research a phenomenon if a definition cannot be agreed on because the definition of any act both sets limits and focuses research within certain boundaries? The lack of agreement in defining *family violence* has led to confusion and disarray in attempts to determine factors that cause or contribute to family violence” (Wallace, 2008: 3). In as much as it may be difficult to reach a common definition, it behoves all stakeholders to understand how different groups define the concept from their own perspectives so that they would be guided in the process of designing and implementing policies that affect the lives of those who live through them.

The first formal definition found in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) states that violence against women refers to any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. According to Heise (1999) gender based violence refers to many types of harmful behaviours directed at women and girls including physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse.

According to the Department of Justice Canada (2011), the term family violence encompasses child abuse and neglect, spousal violence, and elder abuse. In this document the term family violence is intended to be inclusive of all forms of abuse in the family unit and the term spousal violence can be used interchangeably with intimate partner violence to signify abuse within the context of an intimate adult relationship.

According to the U.S. National Center for Injury Control and Prevention (2003: 3), intimate partner violence is “violence committed by a spouse, ex-spouse, or current or former boyfriend or girlfriend”. Such behaviours are designed to control or instil fear, such as verbal abuse and denial of fundamental resources. In addition to physical and sexual violence, intimate partner violence can also include: “coercion and threats; intimidation; emotional abuse; isolation; minimizing, denying and blaming; using children; male privilege; and economic abuse” (Neustifter, 2009: 5).

Satzman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelley (1999) on the other hand define IPV as physical violence aimed at a current or former spouse, dating partner or boyfriend or girlfriend. Meanwhile, available literature proves that the scope of intimate partner violence goes beyond physical violence to include, sexual, psychological and emotional violence.

In a study on the ‘Prevalence of, and risk factors for, intimate partner violence in China’, Xu, Zhu, O’Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell (2005:78), define violence against a woman by an intimate partner as “any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship”. This according to them includes all language, manner, and actions that violate one’s physical body, sense of self, and sense of trust and that happens regardless of age, race or ethnicity. Xu et al. (2005) are of the opinion that violence against women consists of such behaviours as physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse, other forms of sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviours.

At this stage of the study, intimate partner violence will be referred to as any behaviour in the form of physical assault, sexually aggressive conduct, psychological oppression, neglect, emotional manipulation or economic coercion that causes harm to a current or former partner.

However, with data gathered from research participants, it can be seen that various definitions of IPV have been obtained from respondents' own perspectives which help to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon. The essence here is that, what is considered by scholars as intimate partner violence has not only been confirmed by these rural women but they have also expanded on the definition of IPV, which is an important contribution to scholarship.

### **2.3 Social Support Systems and the Rural-Urban Dichotomy**

What this section draws to our attention is the rural structural dynamics and the presence or absence of ongoing support unit or significant supportive networks during the period of crisis brought about by intimate partner violence. According to Murthy (2011: 24),

the term 'ongoing support unit' is introduced to get us thinking about a wider set of significant people than is traditionally associated with the concept of a family. This wider designation can but does not necessarily involve genetic relatedness or providing food, shelter, and clothing. Instead, it draws our attention to the influences of various people in whose eyes we come, over time, to see ourselves, and who are continuous enough in our lives that, in large part, we decide or become who we are in response or in relation to them, for example, a long-time friend who may seem more of a sister than does a biological sister, to whom we provide unqualified support and with whom we identify with so strongly if she experiences a life altering event.

Murthy (2011: 24) indicates it is important to take note that people who are 'there for us' can not only be traditionally or non-traditionally related to us, but they can support us in either positive or negative ways. Collins (2000) in her *Black feminist thought*, for example, distinguishes between 'blood mothers' and 'other mothers,' and discusses the important role played by this latter category in the lives of many people. What counts in such a creatively expanded term is apparently very open-minded, with people being adopted unofficially who can continue to be so identified, not just for many years, but sometimes through subsequent generations (Murthy, 2011: 26).

In a study of *Survivors of intimate partner violence in non-violent romantic relationships*, Neustifter (2009: 182) found that a large number of female domestic violence victims terminate the violent relationship whereas some single IPV survivors look forward to establishing future relationships and believe that they have gained skills and information that will help them to make better relationship choices in the future. This supports the conclusion by Walsh (2006: 4) that these survivors were not ‘damaged’ or ‘ruined,’ but rather entered the relationship with both struggles and increased knowledge that promoted thriving in individual and relational contexts. Saleebey (2002) asserts that those who have experienced IPV, and other types of trauma, cannot be presumed to lack the ability and desire to continue to contribute to their communities and relationships. This supports resilience-based research, which shows that traumatic experiences can lead to increased strength and resourcefulness (Walsh, 2006: 4).

Social support systems or social support networks in this study have been described similar to Ahsan (2007) and Hadeed & El Bassel (2006) perspectives as the entirety of social relationships or collective links between individuals and or groups. Social support, therefore, in this context, includes assistance, care, information, services and/or any other forms of resources, be it formal or informal. Further, social support systems may include family members, friends, neighbours, colleague workers, and community leaders such as chiefs, queen mothers, opinion leaders, religious leaders, or professionals in times of adversity or privilege. The support may come in the form of overnight lodging, childcare, home or farming chores, mediation, professional counselling, spiritual or other forms of counselling, inspiring or encouraging words, prayers of support, respite from cooking, and financial loans. Other forms of support may include companionship, recreation, personal sharing experiences, fight disruption, community intervention, physical care and first aid among others.

The social support literature indicates that practitioners and researchers often seem to regard social support systems as supportive ties that are naturally given. But it is important to note that even though social support systems may appear available to battered women, not all may be necessarily supportive. More so, the stuffs that come as support to these women may vary greatly even if they reside in the same rural community and the results presented in chapter five of this study to a large extent support this assertion. Murthy (2011:24-25) argues that sometimes, a supportive person can be well-meaning but miss the mark entirely, or end up providing support that has effects they never intended. As for example with overprotective parents who pass on lessons of familial dependency or intrusiveness to their daughters, or religiously motivated friends who cite doctrine that does not inspire, but elicit shame in a woman, perhaps deeply lowering her self-esteem. That is why this study examines not just the forms of social support systems that exist in rural communities but more importantly, the significance of the roles they play in the lives of victims.

According to Fowler & Hill (2004) and Thompson et al. (2000), several social scientists have identified the importance of social support for battered women. Unquestionably, social support is a rich and universal helping resource which have many positive effects on the recipient and the advantages may include among others, a sense of belonging and purpose, increased self-esteem, self-confidence and hope. It may also directly or indirectly protect individuals from the adverse reactions to loss or crisis, from physical and mental harm, and from feelings of helplessness. In a study about 'Social support among Afro-Trinidadian women experiencing intimate partner violence', Hadeed and El-Bassel (2006) found that, social support helps buffer the negative effects of intimate partner violence and it can be instrumental in helping women recover from the effects of IPV.

Ahsan (2007), in the *Social Networks Make a Difference*, identified seven ways in which social networking or social support systems impact vulnerable families and the summary is as follows: 1) *Strengthening a sense of identity and value* - Our social relationships are one of the key ways by which we define ourselves. Social networks help to give us a sense of belonging and the sense that we are cared for and valued. This provides positive feedback which increases confidence. 2) *Establishing norms* - Most of us are profoundly influenced by the beliefs and judgments of those around us; particularly those belonging to the people who are important to us. Sometimes, the desire to conform to acceptable norms and values can have a positive impact as a motivator for change. It can also help the individual take positive risks, or curb destructive behaviours by setting positive expectations and new standards which can be very important for changing unproductive behaviour patterns that have developed over time. As individuals develop a new sense of self and new patterns of behaviour, social support systems can play a role in reinforcing goals and supporting positive efforts toward achieving them. 3) *Providing social outlets* - Social networks also provide a place for us to let our hair down, relieve stress, and have fun with others. They are the space for us to be ourselves, laugh, share stories, and make friends. The actual social interaction within social support systems can provide an important opportunity for individuals to relax and reduce stress.

The others are: 4) *Facilitating resource flow* - Social networks provide a host of informal resources, including emergency child care, gifts of time (such as helping with moving), or gifts of resources (food, clothing, or even cash). These resources can be crucial in maintaining stability and preventing crises or responding to crisis. 5) *Building trusting relationships* - Social networks also are a key avenue for sharing trust. The ‘vouching’ that members can do for one another can be crucial because these individuals and families might have had fewer opportunities

to build trust or to develop their own positive experiences hence, social support systems can serve as mediators to provide a context to mitigate distrust.

6) *Aiding collective action* - Social networks are also tools for mobilizing individuals and groups with shared experiences to come together to address both individual and social problems. The adage that unity is strength cannot be overemphasized. Social support systems thus provide an avenue for vulnerable individuals and groups to turn to a place where they can share their experience with others and get help in identifying and responding to the issues. 7) *Facilitating information flow* - Social support systems are channels for information flow - it could be news about what is happening within the community or in the life of a member, or information about a job opportunity, a referral to a doctor, or other specifics. The social isolation of vulnerable individuals and families means that they often do not have the same access to information about opportunities and resources as others (especially in the case of people residing in the rural areas). These families can also face language barriers that keep them from getting access to information.

Studies have shown that victims of intimate partner violence require a variety of social support services in one way or another whether they decide to escape from the violent relationship or stay in it (Caralis & Musialowski, 1997). However, there are quite a number of obstacles that stand in the way of women residing in rural areas. In her PhD research conducted in Southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky in the USA, Adams (2006: ii) states that much of our understanding of IPV is based on urban models, whilst little is known about the phenomena in rural areas. For instance, there is a fairly high consensus that rural battered women are disadvantaged by several circumstances and they have significantly more problems than urban battered women in disclosing their abuse and in seeking help (Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2011).

Amoakohene (2004) in her research in Ghana proposed that, urgently needed are direct formal support systems for abused women and their dependent children, in the form of shelters. Certain kinds of social support may be most available to advantaged populations such as males, the educated, upper and working-class individuals. As a result, dispositional variables associated with socioeconomic status may partially explain why available social support is not always mobilized by disadvantaged individuals such as women who have experienced violence in their intimate relationships.

In a large-sample study of urban and rural battered women in Illinois in the United States of America over a 5-year period, 1990 to 1995, Grossman, Hinkley, Kawalski, & Margrave (2005: 71-81) compared the traits and service needs of those who received assistance in an urban county with those who were served by domestic violence programmes in rural areas. The authors found that several kinds of rural-urban differences exist in the study of intimate partner violence with the most obvious being extra burden in terms of lack of access to social support services. To a great extent, close-knit families, kinship, and friendship networks which are characteristics of rural communities, reduce the ability and willingness of rural abused victims to seek help.

They found out that the differences in the type, characteristics and circumstances of abuse among clients in rural and urban settings were not very large. However, victims in rural environments, regardless of race, need more services than those in Cook County. It is possible, as the literature suggests, that services are less available in rural settings which explains the greater need. Another reason the authors gave is that the literature suggests rural women who are victims of violence may not know about services that exist or how to access them. Therefore, the ability of staff in domestic violence agencies to provide linkages to needed resources in these rural settings is critical (Grossman et al., 2005: 75-80). A key finding was as follows;

Perhaps most importantly, our findings related to service needs suggest that it is critical for researchers and practitioners to consider the interaction of factors in order to better understand the needs of women who are victims of family violence. While race appears to matter more for some services and region for others, race and region together also appear to be important; looking at service needs by region or race alone does not allow us to see these nuances (Grossman et al., 2005; 80).

Schwartz, & DeKeseredy (2008) explain that there is an entire spectrum of barriers blocking rural women's efforts to find help. Among them are lack of confidentiality, lack of phones and transportation, isolation, less social support, lack of medical care and inadequate legal representation. They further argue that like battered women everywhere, rural battered women also often have less income, are less educated, are less employed and have experienced more childhood abuse compared to non-abused women (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008). There are, however, no hard and fast rules about this assertion because the situation may be different for other rural women who find themselves in similar situations.

Evidence suggests that the use of supportive resources serve as a cushion that protects individuals from the pathogenic effects endured from violence (Coker, Davis, Arias, Desai, Sanderson, Brandt, et al. (2002). The study analyzed data from the United States of America (USA) National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) of women and men aged 18 to 65. This was a cross-sectional survey which was conducted using a sample of 1152 women, where Coker et al. (2002) examined the association between IPV, mental health outcomes and social support. They note in their findings that abused women who reported more social support were less likely to complain about experiencing post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), anxiety, depression or suicide. Specifically, IPV victims who claimed to have friends who were 'always' supportive were less likely to report overall poor mental health, depression, anxiety and PTSD symptoms, regardless of the incidence of IPV. The inherent social and cultural difficulties in

relation to accessing social support services make the experience of rural victims different from those in urban areas.

Among rural victims of IPV, the lack of social support, poor responses from law enforcement agencies, religious beliefs and gender roles play important function in seeking help (Few, 2004). In an assessment of Black and White rural battered women in the United States of America, Few (2004) discovered that both groups felt discriminated against by the police but Websdale's (1995) investigation of police responses to IPV issues in a rural area in Kentucky in the USA, proved that patriarchal attitudes of the police officers hampered effective responses to reported incidences of IPV. For instance, sheriffs were sometimes reluctant to arrest abusers who offer them political support. Again, the level of personal relationship between sheriffs and abusers created fear in the women and caused them not to report abusive behaviours of their husbands. A number of women alluded to the poor support and what they perceived as a 'compromised' response on the part of rural police (Websdale, 1995: 332).

In a comparative study of rural and urban areas in Kentucky, USA, Logan, Shannon and Walker (2005) found that rural women experienced more barriers to obtaining a protective order compared to their urban counterparts. In the sense that, not only did community women and public service key informants in the rural area discussed non-service rates as an important barrier but also, the costs associated with the orders were also mentioned as a barrier. Beyond the statutory problems, there were several other barriers common to both the rural and urban dwellers, including fear of the perpetrator, the lack of resources to leave an abusive relationship, and the general lack of knowledge about protective orders as well as misunderstandings about protective orders.

Thorngren (2003) also suggests that community support is one form of social support system that can be a disadvantage to rural victims. While rural inhabitants may benefit from an informal support network among their extended families and community members, this may also weaken their view of the need for formal services. Hence, rural residents may for instance over rely on friends (who might have limited support) instead of obtaining professional help. Another obstacle faced by rural women is the lack of programmes available in their area. Many rural areas are without safe houses, shelters and assistance programmes (Grama, 2000).

Other concerns of rural women are issues related to cultural norms and confidentiality concerns (Adams, 2006: 16). According to her, proximity or geographic isolation experienced by rural inhabitants also hinders victims from getting services. She bears witness to the fact that although the prevalence of rural IPV may be similar to that of urban areas, the inherent social and cultural treatment barriers make the experience to be highly different for women in rural areas (Adams, 2006: 17-18). For example, in the event a woman decides to seek help, her access to services is limited by geographic seclusion and travel distances such that the family may not own a car, or if they do, the victim may be restricted from using it.

In addition, religious teachings also serve as the basis for stereotypical gender roles in rural areas (Adams, 2006). While some religious teachings hold women accountable for the abuse they endure, others highlight the responsibility of the woman to keep the marital bond intact. Therefore, exposing the incidence of IPV and seeking help are considered unholy to the matrimony. This belief is not only held by the women who experience the abuse, but invariably by the community at large (Wendt & Cheers, 2002), especially, where rural communities may be characterised by gossip and people may often tend to be so familiar with the activities of their

neighbours and friends because of the close-knit living arrangements. These negative conditions altogether make rural battered women extremely vulnerable.

#### **2.4 Local and International Instruments that Seek to Protect the Rights of Women**

Intimate partner violence cuts across cultures and the extant literature establishes that, gender-based violence against women is widely recognised as a matter of global concern and also as a human rights issue which needs attention (Amoakohene, 2004; Sayem & Khan, 2012; Teaster, Roberto & Dugar, 2006; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Richters, 1994). According to the United Nations Population Fund, violence against women has been called the most pervasive yet, least recognised human rights abuse in the world (WHO, 2000). In an ideal situation, women should be treated equally to men and they should be free from harm in their intimate personal relationships and all other relationships. Sadly this situation does not seem to be the case both in developed and developing countries throughout the world irrespective of the efforts towards ending violence against women.

In Ghana between the years 1999 and 2001, more than 30 women were violently murdered under circumstances that suggested a case of serial murder and autopsies showed that, all the victims had been sexually assaulted prior to, or after the killing (Adinkrah, 2010). In response to these serial murders, numerous gigantic protests and rallies were organised by women's groups and nongovernmental organisations in the country, to express disapproval of the murders and to protest the slow pace at which law enforcement agencies and authorities were moving to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice (Sakyi-Addo, 2000).

In terms of recent national-level statistics on the number of deaths due to intimate partner violence, Adinkrah (2008a) reports that during the first quarter of 2002, between February 12

and April 27, a spate of horrendous wife murders rocked Ghana where the country's mass media reported a total of 13 women who were killed by their husbands (uxoricides) with 6 attempted wife murders (Adinkrah, 2007). In as much as there are statutes in Ghana that punish intimate partner violence, many cases go unreported to law enforcement authorities (Adinkrah, 2010). This is a situation that may call for a study to be conducted to be able to understand why such cases are not reported for legal actions to be taken. The public outcry over the killings during the aforementioned period contributed to efforts at bringing the problem of gender violence into the national spotlight. An outcome of these efforts was the formulation of a comprehensive Domestic Violence Bill targeting the eradication of all forms of violence against women in Ghana and the subsequent passage of the bill into an Act in February 2007 (Adu-Gyamereh, 2007 cited in Adinkrah, 2010).

Ghana as a country is a signatory to a number of international conventions, and has ratified some regional and sub-regional instruments, and passed national laws in her efforts to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women. Among such international conventions are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG3, 2000) all adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995) Declaration and Platform for Action. These Conventions provide the basis for promoting gender equality and safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedom of women. For instance, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) states that violence against women, violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. More often than not, this leaves deep physical, sexual, emotional and psychological scars on victims and in some instances, results in death.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on the other hand is often described as an international bill of rights for women. This convention defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field (CEDAW, 1979).

Among the regional and sub-regional declarations are the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2004 and the African Women's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), adopted by the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1981 and subsequently by the African Union in 2003. Furthermore, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana also guarantees the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all citizens without any form of discrimination. Finally, in 1988, Ghana established the then Women And Juvenile Unit (WAJU), currently referred to as the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service and the Parliament of Ghana also passed the Domestic Violence Bill into an Act in 2007. These are but a few of such provisions.

Together with the sixty seven voices of respondents in this study and the millions of other voices heard throughout Ghana and beyond, such as civil society organizations, the women's manifesto, development agencies and many others, I strongly assert that despite these national and international provisions, the protection of the rights of women have not be fully achieved, and the policy initiatives regarding the provision of social support systems to address intimate partner violence and related matters have largely excluded the rural population.

I am of the opinion that the implementation of these provisions to end violence against women and protect them from the many forms of discrimination, as well as promote their fundamental human rights require a more robust approach which calls for a multi-level theoretical and paradigmatic processes as discussed in the subsequent chapters.

## **2.5 Cultural Imperialism and the Dynamics of Intimate Partner Violence**

The form of oppression where the dominant group universalizes its experience and culture and uses them as the norm has been identified by feminists, post-colonial and cultural theorists, among others as *Cultural Imperialism* (Mullaly, 2010:59). He further argues that exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness all refer to relations of oppression that occur in society and the dominant group, most often without realizing it, projects its experience and culture as representative of all humanity (59), as in the case of the dominant patriarchal system we have in Ghana which tend to see women as a subordinate group to be disciplined and controlled by men (Adinkrah, 2010; Amoakohene, 2004) instead of celebrating our differences.

African women have been victims of patriarchal cultural discriminatory practices as well as of nationalist development policies (Win, 2007). Ostensibly, studies along these lines have focused on exposing oppressive local patriarchal cultures as far as human rights abuses are concerned (Tamale, 2008) but to what extent? Yes, previously, society normalized and marginalized violence against women until the grassroots women's movement demanded legal reform and cultural change (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 832) but how much has this changed? To this extent, it is important to stress that my study is interested in how rural women understand intimate partner violence from their own perspective, discuss their lived

experiences and talk about the significance of social support systems available to them in times of crisis.

McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 832) argue that gender is a slippery construct, that is, if it is not front and center within an analysis, it tends to become invisible; and just because some practitioners and theorists ignore or minimize gender as a variable does not reduce its impact (832). According to Kimmel and Messner (2004: ix) “Gender remains one of the organizing principles of social life. We come to know ourselves and our world through the prism of gender. Only we act as if we didn’t know it”.

Mullaly (2010:59) maintains that cultural imperialism is experienced in varying degrees by all oppressed groups and the dominant group reinforces its position by measuring other groups according to the dominant norms, thereby making the unique differences that exist between the dominant group and the ‘other’ groups’ to rather become largely constructed as deviance or inferiority. In Collins’ (2000) theory of interlocking oppressions, for example, black women’s multiple identities by gender, class and sexuality intersect to constitute various sources of oppression to women at any point in time and this must be understood.

According to Mullaly (2010:59), these subordinate groups experience a double and paradoxical oppression and stereotypes are used to mark them at the same time that their own experiences and perspectives are rendered invisible. He stressed that the stereotypes applied to the culturally imperialized, which brand them as deviant and inferior are so pervasive in society that they are seldom questioned. Collins (2000), however, postulates that the experiences of oppressed groups, generally, provide them with access to a unique understanding of their situations and lives. While often treated as objects of theoretical and empirical analyses, such groups are practically fully conscious of the victimization they experience, their social locations

and the disadvantages they suffer which, to this end, illuminates the resilience discussed in this study.

Young (1990:60) describes the injustice of cultural imperialism:

This, then, is the injustice of cultural imperialism: that the oppressed group's own experience and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches the dominant culture, while the same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life.

To overcome cultural imperialism, it would seem that a necessary step would be for culturally oppressed groups like battered women to take over the definition of themselves and assert a positive sense of group difference (Mullaly, 2010:60). That is what this study attempts to do - giving rural women themselves the opportunity for their voices to be heard; telling the stories from their own perspectives; sharing their lived experiences and demonstrating resilience.

Young (1990: 41) is of the opinion that people suffer disadvantage and injustice 'not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society'. Oppression in its current form, does not mean the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group (at least not in democratic societies) and it does not usually occur through some coercive rule of law (although sometimes it does, as in cases of anti-union legislation) or because of the evil intentions of a dominant group, but it mostly occurs through the systemic constraints on subordinate groups, which take the form of unquestioned norms, behaviours, and symbols, and in the underlying assumptions of institutional rules (Mullaly, 2010: 53).

Foucault (1977) suggests that for us to understand the meaning and practice of oppression, we should go beyond viewing oppression as the conscious and intentional acts of one group against another because many people contribute to maintaining and reproducing

oppression unconsciously in their day-to-day activities (even though some members of oppressed groups are intentionally harmed).

There are three levels at which oppression occurs (such as in the form of violence) – the personal level, cultural level and structural level (Dominelli, 1997; Thompson, 2001; and Sisneros et al., 2008). The personal or individual level includes the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours that depict a negative prejudgement of a particular subordinate group. The cultural level comprises of the values, norms, and shared patterns of thoughts which endorses the belief in a superior culture. The institutional or structural level refers to the ways that social institutions, laws, policies, social processes and practices, and the economic and political systems work together in favour of the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups. This multi-dimensional perspective is what Thompson (2002:44) has termed as the PCS model of analysis where P is for personal, C is for cultural, and S is for structural. He states that:

The basis of PCS analysis is that any approaches to the question of discrimination and oppression which do not take into account all three of these levels, and their inter-relationships, is in danger of oversimplifying a very complex set of issues (Thompson, 2002: 44).

Mullaly (2007) corroborates with this assertion by reiterating earlier feminist mantra ‘the personal is political’. This line of thought popularized by feminists, social activists, and progressive social workers challenges the traditional notion that domestic violence is a private matter. Feminists believe that many of the problems faced by women, including violence, are caused by social, cultural, and political forces requiring action at the policy level (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 818).

According to Thompson’s (2002) analysis, the PCS model is an elaboration of ‘the personal is political’ theorizing which retains the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ recognizing that

social problems are structural by nature and that they cause personal difficulties for many people. But more importantly, what the PCS model does is to build on this perspective and add the cultural level which serves as an intermediary level between the personal and political, indicating that culture is not just something to be studied but it is a lived phenomenon.

In the section on theoretical framework that follows in this chapter, I discuss the Integrative Feminist Model (IFM) which shares similar characteristics with the PCS model in the sense that although it also retains the fundamental strengths of the mainstream feminist theory (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice 2007: 817-841). It most significantly explores progressive alternatives with which we can respond to intimate partner violence. The Integrative Feminist Model is suitable to my study due to its empowering components of choice, self-determination and resilience (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice 2007: 817-841). The model also helps us to understand how community-based alternatives can be explored to respond to intimate partner violence issues since rural communities may not necessarily rely on the criminal justice system or may not have the privilege of receiving formal social support in times of crisis as compared to their urban counterparts.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This part of the chapter has reviewed literature on the concept of intimate partner violence along several dimensions. I have provided varied expert definitions of intimate partner violence and contextualized social support systems vis-à-vis the rural-urban dynamics. A review has also been done affirming intimate partner violence as a human rights concern with an examination of both local and international instruments that protect the rights of women in

Ghana. I have in addition analyzed the concept of intimate partner violence and cultural imperialism.

The gaps that have been identified in the literature and have therefore been filled by this study are that, first, the existing literature fails to tell us how rural women understand intimate partner violence from their own perspectives. Second, much of our understanding of IPV seem to project more of the circumstances of urban dwellers and as compared to the lived experiences of rural victims. Third, even though the extant literature attempts discussing general social support systems that exist for IPV victims, there is very little documentation on the specific forms of social support systems that are available in rural Ghana and how they contribute towards victims' resilience. Perhaps, society has not yet realised the complexity of the social implications of intimate partner violence - a topic which can be considered for future research. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study, and the research paradigm.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PARADIGM

#### 3.1 Introduction

Theories abound but they don't exist merely for intellectual freedom rather, they help us to understand the world. For the purpose of this work, I find the integrative feminist model by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 817-841) and the strengths perspective by Saleebey (1996: 296-305) as very suitable for this study. In the write-up that follows, I contextualise how these two theories serve as the framework within which I situate my research. Mullaly (2010: 20) argues that "a theory by definition has descriptive, explanatory, and predictive capacities" and these two theories exhibit these characteristics as discussed below. Ideally, there should be a dialogue between ideology and practice with each informing the other (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 838).

For this research, both perspectives are relevant because they have major implications for social work practice, they are progressive, and they both underscore the inherent strength of all individuals. More so, both perspectives support a combined relationship with clients whose expertise on life struggles is recognised and supported to mobilise both inherent and community resources to make positive changes in their lives. Again, both the integrative feminist model which was born out of a discussion by frontline domestic violence workers (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 817-841) and the strengths perspective by Saleebey (1996: 296-305) offer choice, self-determination, and empowerment to women especially, in this circumstance where I explored rural women's knowledge on issues of intimate partner violence, their lived experiences, resilience, choices of social support systems, and their aspirations.

Neustifter (2009) defines resilience as a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity whereby victims demonstrate an “active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge” (Walsh, 2006: 4). The use of the concept of resilience allows us to challenge the assumption that IPV is so damaging that survivors are permanently broken and impaired. Finally, these theories emphasize the structural and socio-cultural underlying forces which are important in the analyses of women as an oppressed group and help explain the extent to which these women exercise agency despite certain restrictions and boundaries.

### **3.2 The Integrative Feminist Model**

The Integrative Feminist Model (IFM) by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 817-841) is a model that is still developing. It builds on and expands the traditional feminist response to domestic violence. The model seeks to address common criticisms that academics, frontline domestic violence workers, and others have about the feminist model. According to McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 825), the structure of the Integrative Feminist Model “is that of a puzzle, where interlocking theoretical pieces fit together”. It integrates other perspectives that enrich the feminist model and at the same time holds tightly to the strengths of the feminist model. The Integrative Feminist Model emerged from a discussion by frontline domestic violence workers who worked directly with clients involved in abusive situations in response to a critique of the feminist paradigm.

There have been a number of critics of the feminist model and one of them is Mills (2003) whose critique, as outlined in her book, *Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Responses to Intimate Abuse* was selected for use in the research project by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and

Rice (2007: 817-841) which gave birth to the integrative feminist model. Despite the controversy within academic circles about Mills (2003) critique, and although academics have reacted to her assessment with a critical evaluation of her arguments Mills' work has nevertheless generated lively discussions and opened the door to examining criticisms of the feminist model. Mills' critique was chosen for the purpose of that project due to its timeliness, comprehensive scope and the mainstream media attention its publication generated. The project also built on the many discussions by adding frontline domestic violence workers' responses to the critique of the feminist paradigm. Many of these frontline workers who participated in the project were people trained in the feminist model.

The research project by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 817-841) began by asking the participants who were frontline domestic violence workers the following questions. What do frontline workers in agencies that work in the domestic violence arena, think about the critiques of the feminist model as well as accusations of an overreliance on the criminal justice system? Do their experiences and practice resonate with the feminist model or critiques of that model? Can critiques influence frontline practice? Which elements of the critique, if any, might be incorporated into practice and theory? From this focus group discussion, a new model called the Integrative Feminist Model (IFM), emerged from the project findings. The entire process was characterised by four stages; Stage 1: Defending the Model and Challenging the Critique; Stage 2: Opening Up to the Critique; Stage 3: Considering and Assessing the Critique; Stage 4: Incorporating the Critique into a New Model - the Integrative Feminist Model. Moving from the analysis of the process to content led to the development of the Integrative Feminist Model (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 817-841). The model has five core beliefs or assumptions.

First, the IFM is committed to locating the roots of violence within gender (retaining a feminist analysis), and other forms of oppression like the intersections between gender and other systems of oppression such as race, class, national origin, sexual orientation, age and disability. This belief relies on part of the beliefs of the feminist model which is encapsulated in the feminist mantra “the personal is political” (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 818). This comes from the feminist belief that many of the problems faced by women, including violence, are caused by social, cultural, and political forces which require action at the policy level. In a similar way, political and structural problems affect people at the personal level and therefore, this orientation condemns earlier attempts to make collective problems of violence against women a private matter. Thus the integrative feminist model corroborates the feminist model which challenges the traditional notion that domestic violence is a private family matter thereby, demanding public solutions to personal problems including the establishment of programmes and services for battered women.

Second, the integrative feminist model acknowledges multiple causes of violence and views violence as both innate and learnt where every person has a propensity for violence, unlike the feminist perspective which focuses on patriarchal privilege and male oppression as the primary cause of violence against women (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 827-828). The IFM therefore presents a worldview in which violence is inevitable. This is not to say it is inevitable hence forget it, but it’s inevitable, therefore we cannot turn away from it. The IFM as a result, focuses on the interpersonal and psychodynamic theories in addressing the innate aspect of violence. This helps to complement the social and political framework which the traditional feminist model relies on to address the culturally learnt and structurally supported male violence.

Third, the integrative feminist model recognises the female role in violence in that women can also be perpetrators as well as victims of violence (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 828). The theory states that it is not in all circumstances that men abuse as presented by the feminist model but women also abuse whether in self-defense (i.e. violence begets violence) or not. Women also verbally, emotionally, sexually, physically etcetera abuse males, other female partners, and sometimes their children. Rather than a single causation model, the IFM uses both/and approach that includes multiple models of violence causation (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 834). Such a stance has implications for batterer intervention programmes, enabling practitioners to expand their repertoire of interventions in working with men and women who are violent. This is explained further below;

Therefore, rather than making assumptions (man = perpetrator, woman = victim) and assigning the standard feminist intervention (men in batterer treatment programs and women in support groups), more thorough and individualized assessments will need to be conducted to determine the couples' dynamics, motivations, and treatment options. For some couples, couple counseling may be indicated, and for others with deeper interpersonal issues, individual counseling may be most helpful (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 835).

Fourth, the integrative feminist model admits institutional failures and works at strengthening them to limit the unintended negative consequences like being more punitive in nature, having limited choices and being less fair as expected (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 831). Criticisms of the criminal justice system by frontline workers resonates with the criticisms presented in the academic literature. These include the realisation and acknowledgement that some of the systems that assist women in violent relationships have been unpredictable and sometimes unreliable. The IFM does not call for the decriminalization of intimate partner violence. However, it calls for a continued examination of current practices and consideration of alternative methods that might provide better solutions for women, men, and

their children, without losing sight of the many ways women continue to be disadvantaged in a society that has traditionally favoured men (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 837).

Finally, the Integrative Feminist Model is of the view that the self-determination of the client is paramount, and the choice that the victim makes guides the intervention as priority. In this way, all remedies are thus pursued and the criminal justice system may or may not be used in the helping process. Meanwhile, the first priority of the traditional feminist model seeks to make it political and criminalise by pursuing punishment through the criminal justice system despite the victim's wishes. The Integrative Feminist Model thus recognises that the feminist model reduces these core values of the clients' choice, and their self-determination, often in an attempt to hold the perpetrator accountable within the criminal justice system.

It must be acknowledged that the victims of violence would want the violence to stop but may not necessarily want the relationship to end. They may say 'I want to be back with my partner'; 'I want to see our family together for the sake of the children, whereas those who may want to exit the relationship may also explore social support systems that can help them thrive. In all these, it is the duty of practitioners to respect clients' choices, promote their self-determination and build their self-esteem. This implies also that a change in the approach in responding to intimate partner violence issues may require that victim and survivor service providers work more closely with batterers' intervention programs, and probably merge some agencies to better work with families who wish to stay together (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 835). Mills (2003) was more broadly critical of the entire feminist paradigm stating;

The assumptions underpinning mainstream feminist advocacy efforts is that all intimate abuse... warrants a state response, and that women want to leave rather than stay in their abusive relationships (Mills, 2003: 6-7).

In fact, even feminists themselves seem to question the scope of the criminal justice system's involvement in all domestic violence cases, as demonstrated by Ms. Foundation of Women's Report (MFW) (2003), *Safety and Justice for All*, which explored community based alternatives to current criminal justice policies. Paradoxically, the domestic violence movement has, in some ways, become a victim of its own legitimization as the latest round of criticisms has focused on a perceived overreliance on the criminal justice system.

What makes the integrative feminist model unique for my study is that it builds on its response to domestic violence by exploring community-based alternatives to intimate partner violence, and questions the scope of the criminal justice system's involvement in all domestic violence cases (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 819). For instance, Mills (2003) proposed 'Intimacy Abuse Circles' (IACs) (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 824), which are groups made up of family, friends, and appropriate community members working within a restorative justice model to hold the perpetrator accountable as an alternative dispensation outside the criminal justice system; an approach which my study found similar to that used by traditional authorities in the rural communities. The integrative feminist model does not only acknowledge but seeks to bring to reality the strength, resilience, and agency of women and strive toward the goals of female empowerment, choice, and self-determination.

In the diagram below, I have provided a summary of the Integrative Feminist Model vis-à-vis the Feminist Model to help explain the main tenets of the two models.

### 3.1 THE INTEGRATIVE FEMINIST MODEL VERSUS THE FEMINIST MODEL

	<b>THE INTEGRATIVE FEMINIST MODEL</b>	<b>THE FEMINIST MODEL</b>
1	Locates the roots of violence within gender and also acknowledges the importance of embracing the intersections between gender and other systems of oppression such as race, class, national origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, and poverty.	Primarily grounded on gender as a category for analysis or male oppression of women within a patriarchal system.
2	Acknowledges multiple causes of violence by adopting a both/and position, in that violence is both innate and learnt where every person has a propensity for violence. The IFM therefore, advocates for the interpersonal and psychodynamic theories to address the innate aspect of violence in order to complement the socio-political framework (of the traditional feminist model) in addressing the culturally learnt and structurally supported male violence.	Focuses on patriarchal privilege and male oppression as the primary cause of violence against women. Therefore, calls for the social and political context within which to address the culturally learnt and structurally supported male violence.
3	Recognises female aggression and the female role in violence in that, women can also be perpetrators as well as victims of violence; that women can and do verbally, emotionally, sexually, and physically abuse male and female partners as well as their children.	Explains violence solely in terms of men's role in abusive relationships, and male entitlement and privilege enforced by the use of power and control.
4	Admits institutional failures and works at strengthening them to limit the unintended negative consequences like being more punitive in nature and having limited choices.	Overreliance on its partnership with the Criminal Justice System which has often had negative and unintended consequences.
5	The clients' choice, empowerment, and self-determination are paramount therefore all remedies are pursued in the intervention process.	Reduces the clients' choice, and undermines their power and self-determination by seeking to criminalise and make it political through the criminal justice system despite the victim's wishes.

### 3.3 The Strengths Perspective

The strengths perspective of social work is also a developing body of knowledge and it is espoused by Saleebey (1996: 296-305). This perspective challenges the assertion that all people who face trauma and pain in their lives inevitably are wounded or incapacitated or become less than they might. The strengths-based perspective is of the assumption that all must be seen in the light of their capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and hopes, however dashed and distorted they may have become through circumstance, oppression, and trauma (Saleebey, 1996: 297). The strengths-based approach has evolved as an alternative to practice models that stress sickness and pathology, and it has been demonstrated to be effective with myriad client populations, systems, and social problems (Black, 2003: 334). According to Saleebey (1997: 49), there are three assumptions about human behaviour and experience which are:

1. Given the difficulties people have and the resources about which they *know*, people do remarkably well in managing their lives.
2. Despite life's difficulties, people have survived and have learned from their life journeys. As helpers, we must try to understand those journeys and help people identify those qualities that have contributed to their survival.
3. Change can only emerge when the helper collaborates with the individual's aspirations, perceptions, and strengths, and when the helper firmly believes in them.

In addition, common principles have also evolved from this body of work (see Cohen, 1999; Saleebey, 1997; Miller & Berg, 1995) and among those common principles are the following: 1) Every individual, family, group, and community has strengths; 2) The client is the

expert on her life. The client teaches the helper, and by learning from the client, the helper is in a better position to work collaboratively with the client to attain the client's goals and aspirations and 3) Every environment has resources. Often in their zeal to help and advocate for battered women, practitioners and researchers have depicted battered women as individuals who are weak and without options (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000) but the strengths perspective offers an alternative view of battered women (Black, 2003: 335) by highlighting their strengths which include their survival skills, resilience, aspirations, and expertise on their lives. She makes this statement about social support systems;

Humans can only come into being through a creative and emergent relationship with others. Without such transactions, there can be no discovery and testing of one's powers, no knowledge, no heightening of one's awareness and internal strengths. In dialogue, we confirm the importance of others and begin to heal the rift between self, other, and institution (Saleebey, 1997: 10).

According to Saleebey (1997: 51-52) potential strengths include what people have learnt about their life journeys and the world around them; personal qualities and traits that people possess (i.e., sense of humour, insight, religion, the ability to write, paint or create other art, compassion, empathy, etc.); and the community in which one lives that can provide helpful people and organizations. According to Miley, O'Melia and Dubois (2007), the strengths-based model endeavours to discover the resources available in the environment of the service user.

Related to the discourse on strengths is resilience and this has been clearly demonstrated by victims in this study. This confirms that individuals do not lose their ability to function in stressful situations due to traumatic experiences. Walsh defines resilience as "an active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge" (2006: 4). Resilience may also be referred to as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Neustifter, 2009: 184). Resilience studies explore the ability of

individuals to adapt and thrive after (and during) traumatic experiences (Walsh, 2006: 4), and the use of the concept of resilience allows this study to challenge the assumption that IPV is so damaging that survivors are permanently broken and impaired. This wisdom matches the tenets of the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2006) whereby individuals are viewed as being capable of healing and growth in response to trauma, and are experts of their own life experiences.

### **3.4 The Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm refers to a set of fundamental assumptions that define researchers' worldview and thus determine their ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108). In fact, every kind of research is grounded in a paradigm (Myers, 2009: 23) and my research project draws on the Eidetic or Descriptive Phenomenological Research Paradigm. There are three main paradigmatic approaches and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. These are: 1) Positivism which is interested in causes and predicting likelihood of incidences, seeks to explain and create social 'facts'; 2) Phenomenology which is interested in social meanings, seeks to interpret, uses direct involvement, and creates data on social interactions; and 3) Critical thinking which is interested in understanding social phenomena in their social context, seeks to offer change in the status quo and in structural relationships.

According to Effah (2011), the ontology of a phenomenon under study can be viewed as external, independent of human construction of it, or internal humanly constructed and epistemology can be viewed as objective if facts and knowledge are taken to be value-free or subjective if they are assumed to be socially constructed (Walsham, 1995b). Based on the

ontology and epistemology used, then the methodology can be seen as the strategies and procedures used for the inquiry (Effah, 2011).

Studies show that ontology is about the reality of what exists that can be studied, epistemology is about the nature of knowledge that can be acquired about a reality under study whilst methodology focuses on how to seek knowledge about the reality (Walsham, 1995b; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Effah, 2011; Myers, 2009). Table 3.2, summarise the three paradigmatic questions adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994: 108) to help answer the ontological, epistemological, and methodological concerns of my research.

**Table 3.2: Guba and Lincoln's Three Paradigmatic Questions**

Ontological question	What is the form and nature of reality and what is there that can be known about it? For example, if a ‘real’ world is assumed, then what can be known about it is ‘how things really are’ and ‘how things really work.’ Then only those questions that relate to matters of ‘real’ existence and ‘real’ action are admissible.
Epistemological question	What is the nature of the relationship between the enquirer (knower or would be knower) and what can be known? The answer is constrained by the answer already given to the ontological question; that is, not just any relationship can now be postulated. So, for example, if a reality is assumed, then the posture of the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom in order to be able to discover the subjective reality of participants on ‘how things are’ and ‘how things really work.’
Methodological question	How can the enquirer (knower or would-be-knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? Again, the answer is constrained by the answers already given to the first two questions; that is, not just any methodology is appropriate. For example, a ‘real’ reality pursued by an ‘objective’ inquirer mandates control of possible confounding factors, whether the methods are qualitative or quantitative.

Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994: 108)

### **3.5 The Choice of the Descriptive or Eidetic Phenomenological Paradigm**

The Encyclopedia of Phenomenology (Embree, 1997) identifies seven unique perspectives in phenomenological research. They are: (a) descriptive phenomenology that is concerned with how objects are constituted in pure (transcendental) consciousness, setting aside questions of any relationship of the phenomenon to the world in which one (the enquirer) lives; (b) hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology that is concerned with interpretation of the structures of experience and with how things are understood by people who live through these experiences and by those who study them; (c) existential phenomenology that is concerned with concrete human existence, including issues of free choice or actions in life situations.

(d) generative historicist phenomenology that is concerned with how meaning, as found in human experience, is generated in historical context of collective human experience over a period of time; (e) genetic phenomenology that is concerned with the genesis of meaning of things within individual experience; (f) naturalistic constitutive phenomenology that is concerned with how consciousness constitutes things in the world of nature, assuming that consciousness is part of nature; (g) realistic phenomenology that is concerned with the structures of consciousness and intentionality, assuming they occur in a world that is to a large degree external to consciousness rather than being brought into consciousness.

With these distinct schools of phenomenological thought, I was continually questioning myself, seeking to understand and clarify which of the paradigms fit my study. Consequently, the traditions, views and methods of Husserl (descriptive) and Heidegger (interpretive) appealed to my study. However, upon a comprehensive analysis of other qualitative research, I found Husserl's descriptive paradigm most suitable for my study. I came to this conclusion when I found out that descriptive phenomenologist attempt to understand and describe a phenomenon as

experienced by individuals who have lived through them (Swanson & Wojnar, 2004), and also the lived experience itself, as described by participants, is used to provide universal description of the phenomenon under investigation (Tymieniecka, 2003).

Again I found that most of the qualitative studies such as doctoral theses work by Nicole Johnson, Carol Dore, and Robyn Trainor *The Lived Experience of Doing Phenomenology: Perspectives from Beginning Health Science Postgraduate Researchers* used Heidegger's interpretive paradigm. They explained that the interpretative paradigm was suitable for their work because they as researchers shared similar personal experiences with their research participants, and these experiences played a beneficial part in influencing their research processes (see Pascal, Johnson, Dore, and Trainor, 2010).

In my case, I have not had any similar experiences as my respondents who have lived through the experience of intimate partner violence and therefore even though I have lived in their rural setting for many years, I could not exactly share their historical context as a hermeneutic or interpretive researcher may have done. So my role in this research as an eidetic or descriptive researcher is to demonstrate my understanding of and describe the phenomena as experienced by these rural women who have lived through them.

It is important to note here that no research paradigm is paramount; each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, any of the paradigms could have been used for this study but the research process and outcome would have varied under each. It is therefore important for researchers to choose an appropriate paradigm to address their research aims and questions. The choice may depend on a number of factors including the research field, nature of the study and its purpose, research questions, and the philosophical stance of the researcher (Effah, 2011; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). These and many other factors as indicated were put into

consideration before I finally made a decision to choose the descriptive phenomenological paradigm both as my philosophical approach and as my research method.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher and mathematician, is considered the founder of phenomenology as a philosophy and the descriptive or eidetic phenomenological paradigm as an approach to inquiry (Benoist, 2003; LeVassueur, 2003). The eidetic or descriptive phenomenology is a philosophical tradition and a method of inquiry which calls for exploration of phenomena through direct interaction between the researcher and the objects of study. Here, the lived experience itself, as described by participants, is used to provide universal description of a phenomenon (Tymieniecka, 2003).

Husserl defines *phenomenology* as “the science of essence of consciousness” (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007; 173) and explains the meaning of lived experience from the first-person point of view, stating that the meaning of lived experiences may be unravelled only through one-to-one transactions between the researcher and the objects of research. According to the Husserlian approach, these transactions must involve attentive listening, interaction, and observation to create representation of reality more refined than previous understandings (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Mish, 2002) also defines *phenomenology* as;

- (a) the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to philosophy or a part of philosophy;
- (b) a philosophical movement that describes the formal structure of objects of awareness and of awareness itself in abstraction from any claims concerning existence;
- (c) the typological classification of a class of phenomena;
- (d) an analysis produced by phenomenological investigation. From Greek *phainomenon*, appearance (p. 869).

At the core of phenomenology lies the attempt to understand and describe a phenomenon as experienced by individuals who have lived through them (Swanson & Wojnar, 2004) and this

study is an effort to understand how rural women conceptualise intimate partner violence and describe the lived experiences of participants who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships. In this study, phenomenology has been used both as a philosophy and a research method. Particularly, I have chosen the Eidetic or Descriptive phenomenology as suitable for this inquiry because I aim at discovering aspects of intimate partner violence that are incompletely conceptualized or never conceptualized in prior research such as understanding the concept of IPV from rural women's own perspective, exploring their lived experiences, and examining the significance of the roles social support systems play for them.

In addition, I am inclined to this descriptive mind-set to seek commonalities in respondents' experiences, to look for patterns, and ultimately to find solutions to the problem of IPV against women in rural Ghana (LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Husserl's central insight was that consciousness or awareness is the condition of all human experiences and he sought to explain how to overcome personal biases which stand in the way of achieving the state of pure consciousness. According to Husserl, there should be a condition of consciousness wherein the researcher is able to successfully abandon his or her own lived reality and describe the phenomenon in its pure, universal sense. This is what he termed as transcendental subjectivity (that is neutrality and openness to the reality of others), which can be accomplished by employing the process of bracketing, whereby the researcher consciously and actively seeks to strip away prior experiential knowledge and personal bias so as not to influence the description of the phenomenon at hand (Tymieniecka, 2003).

The process of bracketing has been described by LeVasseur (2003) as (a) separating the phenomenon from the world and inspecting it; (b) dissecting the phenomenon to unravel the structure, define it, and analyse it; and (c) suspending all preconceptions regarding the

phenomenon, and confronting the subject matter on its own terms, to ensure that the researcher withholds any preconceived ideas while he or she is listening to, interacting with, and analysing the stories of the participants. Husserl believed that through bracketing it is possible to gain insight into the common features of any lived experience. He referred to these features as universal essences or eidetic structures and considered them to be a representation of the true nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Luft, 2003). Therefore, Husserl argued, if the description of lived experiences were to be considered scientific and generalizable, then strict adherence to the principles of descriptive phenomenology has to be employed, and commonalities are to be identified among research participants.

Finally, a central tenet of Husserl's phenomenology is that human beings are free agents responsible for influencing their environment hence, the lived experience itself, as described by participants, is used to provide universal description of the phenomenon (Tymieniecka, 2003). That is what this research has tried to do by using the lived experiences described by rural women as universal truths to provide a description of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives. As is expected of the phenomenologist, I have used several frames of reference to be able to define and explore the phenomenon under investigation through neutrality and openness to the subjective reality of my three categories of research participants namely, victims, queen mothers and the community forum of women.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

My study uses the integrative feminist model and the strengths perspective as the theoretical framework. These two theoretical approaches have explanatory and descriptive capacities of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and acknowledges victims' expertise,

lived experiences, inner strength, aspirations, and community resources. Finally, the eidetic or descriptive paradigm serves as the philosophical assumptions that helps to describe the ontology, epistemology, and methodology of this phenomenological study. I must point out that both the theoretical framework and the research paradigm have been combined into one chapter simply for the purpose of presentation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the work discusses the qualitative research design I used for the study, the methods of data collection, sampling procedures, research instruments used, sources of data, the ethical considerations and the data analysis among others. The chapter also provides a report on groundwork, the research setting, community entry techniques and field activities, and a reflection on conducting research in Ghana as a Ghanaian woman.

I must emphasize here that this is a phenomenological study which combines two qualitative research methods namely, in-depth interviews and community forum. I conducted all interviews and facilitated the community forum so there was no need for the training or involvement of research assistants. The study embraces the significance of researching women's lived experiences, and personal knowledge on intimate partner violence in rural Ghana. It also explores community resources in the selected villages.

Phenomenological methodology engages, interprets and reflects participants' experiences through personal, social and cultural influences that have shaped their lives and experiences (Alcott and Potter, 1993). It incorporates feminist principles in representing the tension between concrete and universal experiences, and also acknowledges the exploration and interpretation of respondents' individual experiences (Pascal, Johnson, Dore, and Trainor, 2010: 178).

In exploring rural women's individual and collective stories, this study aims at challenging oppression and influencing social transformation by projecting women's voices,

valuing their expertise, experiences and aspirations, and incorporating them into policy initiatives and social work practice.

This is a sensitive topic which relies on the voices of rural women to provide a rich source of knowledge that can be used to promote a ground-breaking understanding of intimate partner violence in rural Ghana. These rural women give detailed description of their knowledge and experiences, including their thoughts, feelings, images, perceptions, social interactions and memories of consciousness along with a description of their cultural adaptations and forms of social support systems that have been valuable in their journeys towards resilience.

#### **4.2 A reflection of conducting research in Ghana as a Ghanaian woman**

According to Wojnar and Swanson (2007:175), descriptive phenomenology is grounded in the “assumption that self-reflection, and conscious ‘stripping’ of previous knowledge, help to present an investigator-free description of the phenomenon”. It therefore behoves such investigators to set aside preconceptions through the procedures involved in bracketing, and rather explore the phenomena through direct interaction between them and the objects of study (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007:174). By so doing, the lived experience itself, as described by participants, is used to provide universal description of the phenomenon (Tymieniecka, 2003).

It is therefore important that descriptive researchers disclose their background and provide self-reflection, and conscious ‘stripping’ of previous knowledge, for readers to appreciate their background and the qualities they possess. It also helps to understand how such researchers have presented an investigator-free description of the phenomenon, and embraced the concept of ‘bracketing’ as endorsed by Collaizzi (1978: 48-71) to ensure that interpretation is free of bias.

Having lived about 20 years of my life in a rural community in the Upper West Akyem District of the Eastern Region, and being able to identify with the cultural precepts and social mores of the people, I was influenced to document some of the overlooked social problems that affect the lives of rural women. I am very familiar with Ghana as a researcher, student, and citizen. Generally, I have spent over 25 years of my life in Ghana and I know it well geographically, politically and socio-culturally. I have not only attended school in Ghana but I have also worked in many capacities and participated actively in advocating social justice for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Prior to enrolling in the doctorate programme, I had my Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work with Sociology from the University of Ghana with a first class honours. I also studied for my Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Ghana and also at the University of Manitoba, Canada where I was a graduate exchange student via an award received from the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) with the support of my supervisors. While in Winnipeg, I had a six-month practicum with the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies where I developed great interest in working with persons with disabilities and collaborating with diverse disability organizations both in Canada and in Ghana.

Upon my return to Ghana, I worked with Sharecare Ghana, a disability organization working for persons with neurological and autoimmune conditions. My Master's thesis focused on needs assessment of students with disabilities in Ghana which earned an award – the Small Grants Programme for Thesis Writing from the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). At the bachelor's level, I carried out a research on the quality of health care service delivery for patients at the University of Ghana Hospital. Upon the completion of my undergraduate programme and prior to my national service, I had the

opportunity to work on a research project *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* with the Ghana Statistical Service as a Research Assistant. My team worked in both rural and urban areas in three Regions of the country namely, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, and Western Regions where we interviewed many respondents on their families and their socio-economic wellbeing.

After my Master's programme, I worked on another research project with the Centre for Social Policy Studies on orphans and vulnerable children in Ghana, and co-authored a book on counselling persons with HIV/AIDS, published by Paramount Publishing Ltd. In addition to the book, I have co-published some articles and made contributions to book chapters. Key amongst them are: a book chapter on the needs assessment of facilities for students with disabilities, published in *Social Work in a Changing World: Issues and Prospects* by Woeli Publishing Services; again, a paper on the implications of the oil find on local and regional development in the Western Region of Ghana, published by Sub-Saharan Publishers in *Managing Ghana's Oil Boom for Structural Transformation*; also an article on gender considerations and poverty reduction in West-Africa, published in the *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*; and a book chapter on the challenges of women's higher education in Ghana, published by the Cambridge Scholars Publishing Ltd in *Africa Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Exploring the Multi-dimensional Discourses on Development*.

I am also a recipient of the Carnegie Corporation Funded Ph.D. Scholarship for the Next Generation of Academics in Africa which has enabled me pursue my Ph.D. which is a split programme between the University of Ghana, Legon and the University of Manitoba, Canada. Prior to leaving Ghana for my doctoral course work, I was employed to work in the capacity as an Associate Researcher at the Constitution Review Commission. In previous years, I worked as a Tutorial Assistant at the University of Ghana for a one-year National Service to my country.

Also, during my Master's studies, I was worked in the same university as a Graduate Assistant, and as a Teaching Assistant. During the course of my Ph.D. programme, I was employed as a Research Assistant at the University of Manitoba and as a Teaching Assistant at the University of Ghana upon my return. Currently, I work as a lecturer at MountCrest University College and also as the Aftercare Casework Manager for the International Justice Mission in Ghana.

I am confident that the knowledge and skills I have acquired throughout my journey in life such as the lessons from several individuals, insight from gender-based violence experts, the direction from my supervisors, feedback from my research, and my own life experiences are rich enough to enable me continue to give back to society and help influence social work practice in Ghana and beyond.

#### **4.3 The Research Setting**

The research was carried out in Ghana, West Africa. The country is made up of ten administrative regions and the study was carried out in the Eastern Region which is the sixth largest region in the country. The study area was the Upper West Akim District of the Eastern Region where I selected Asikasu, Asuokaw and Bremang. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census Report, the total population of Ghana is 24,658,823. There are 12,024,845 males and 12,633,978 females suggesting that males make up 48.7 percent of the population while females constitute 51.3 percent. The national population has increased by 28.1 percent since the last census in 2000, and females outnumber males in all regions of the country. The country is located north of the Equator on the west coast of Africa and shares borders with Ivory Coast to the west, Togo to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. English is the official language.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population & Housing Census Demographic, Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics Report, 49.1 percent of Ghana's population live in rural areas with 49.6 percent of them being males and 50.4 being females, whereas 50.9 percent live in urban centres out of which 47.9 percent are males and 52.1 percent are females. The population is heterogeneous and according to the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census National Analytical Report, Akan is the largest ethnic group in the country constituting 47.5 percent, followed by Mole Dagbani (16.6%), Ewe (13.9%), Ga-Dangme (7.4%), and Guan (3.7%). The 2010 data shows very little difference in the ethnic composition of Ghana from that of the 2000 Population and Housing Census records. In 2000, the Akan group was 49.1 percent of the total population, Mole-Dagbani (16.5%), Ewe (12.7%) and Ga-Dangme (8%) (Ghana Statistical Service 2010 PHC).

According to the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Regional Analytical Report of the Eastern Region, a total population of 2,633,154 representing 10.7 percent of the total national population were enumerated at the 2010 Population and Housing Census. This figure is made up of 1,290,539 (49%) males and 1,342,615 (51%) females. The proportion of urban population by region shows 43.4 percent of the population in the Eastern Region live in urban areas. This suggests that 56.6 percent live in rural areas in the region.

The Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Regional Analytical Report reveals that the population of the Eastern Region (10.7 percent of the total national population) is the third highest in the country after Ashanti (19.4%) and Greater Accra (16.3%) regions. In terms of infrastructural development, the region comes third after the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions respectively. The capital of the Eastern Region is Koforidua which is located in the New Juaben Municipality. There are fifteen (15) Districts and six (6)

Municipalities in the Eastern Region currently. The region lies between latitudes 6 and 7 degrees North and longitude 1.30 West 0.30 degrees East, with a land area of 19,323 kilometres square, which is 8.1% of the land area of Ghana. The Eastern Region shares boundaries with five other regions: Greater Accra, Volta, and Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Central regions.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Regional Analytical Report of the Eastern Region, the economy of the region is predominantly agrarian, with both subsistent and commercial production of food crops like cassava (largely processed into ‘gari’, cassava dough, and fufu), and cash crops such as cocoa as well as animal rearing. Predominantly, rural populations report higher economic activity rates because greater employment opportunities exist in the agricultural sector. Mining of bauxite (a traditional mineral) and gold (a more recent activity) are also some important economic activities in the Eastern Region.

The Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Regional Analytical Report further states that the Akan is the dominant ethnic group in the Eastern Region constituting a total of 51.1 percent of the region’s population, followed by Ewe (18.9%), Ga-Dangbe (17%) and Guan (5.3%). The dominant religious group in the Eastern Region is Christianity with more than four-fifth (84.5%) of the people professing adherence to the Christian faith. Muslims form 6.7 percent of the population, adherents to traditional religion form 1.4 percent, and those who have no religion constitute 6.5 percent.

The Regional Analytical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census says on the average, 20 percent of all persons aged 15 years and older have never attended school in the Eastern Region. The majority who form 59.8 percent have primary or JSS/JHS/Middle school education with less than 10 percent having senior secondary/high

education and the remaining have vocational technical, post-secondary and higher education. There are wide gaps between the educational status of males and females with a higher proportions of the males having higher education in the region.

The total population of the Upper West Akyem District stands at 87,051 with males accounting for 44,212 (49%) and females constituting 42,839 (51%). A total of 21,114 of the population live in urban areas whereas 65,937 live in the rural areas (Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census). According to the Ghana Statistical Service District Analytical Report of the Upper West Akyem District (2014: 23), arriving at the population figures for the district is as a result of scientific extrapolation from the 2010 national population and housing census of the Municipality from which the district was created. The report states that the Upper West Akyem District is one of the 46 districts that were newly created in the country, and it is now one of the 26 administrative districts in Eastern Region.

According to the District Analytical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service, the Upper West Akyem District was carved out from the West Akyem Municipality in 2011 by a Legislative Instrument LI 2049 and was inaugurated on 30th June 2012. The District capital town is Adeiso, and it is located on the main Nsawam-Kade highway. The district has one constituency known as the Upper West Akyem constituency and two area councils namely Adeiso and Mepom area councils. The Upper West Akyem District is located in the south western part of the Region. It shares boundaries with Ayensuano District to the eastern side, West Akyem Municipality to the north, Nsawam Aduagyeri Municipality to the south eastern part, Ga South Municipality to the southern part and Awutu Afutu Senya District to the west. It has a total land size of about 342.3 km<sup>2</sup> and it is the only District in Eastern Region that shares boundaries with Central and Greater Accra Regions.

As stated in the District Analytical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service, the Upper West Akyem District is traditionally under the Paramouncy of Akyem Abuakwa State and, therefore, has one of the Divisional chiefs of the Abuakwa state. The District celebrates one festival known as Ohum in June every year. It has high forests that are rich in timber and other forest products, and it is also endowed with rich soils which makes it suitable for farming activities. The main economic activity in the district is agriculture and it is estimated that the agriculture sector employs about sixty-five percent of the total population in the District.

Crop farming is the most common type of agricultural activity in the district constituting 96.3 percent; 40 percent of this agricultural population are engaged in livestock rearing making it the second common type of agricultural activity in the district after crop farming; with tree planting and fish farming falling below one percent. The major food crop produced in the district is cassava. Other occupations include craft and related trade work; and service and sales work.

A higher percentage of rural households consisting of 82.5 percent are engaged in agricultural activities as against 52.5 percent of the urban households. 31.2 percent of households in the district use bore-hole/pump/tube well water as their main source of drinking water, whereas (24.2%) are dependent on river/stream, and 11 percent of households use pipe water outside their dwelling, and those who use protected well as their main source of drinking water is 11 percent. There are 31,202 persons (16,701 males and 14,501 females) 3 years and older in the district who are currently in school or have ever attended school in the past. The data shows that there are 51,605 persons 15 years and older out of which 37,977 are economically active and 13,628 are economically inactive. For the economically active persons, 96.7 per cent are employed and 3.3 per cent are unemployed (Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census).

According to the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Regional Analytical Report, the classification of localities into ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ is based on population size. Localities with 5,000 or more persons are classified as urban while localities with less than 5,000 persons are classified as rural, and these three selected communities met the rural classification. At the time of conducting this study, the Locality Analytical Report from the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census was not available.

I therefore relied on the locality report from the 2000 Population and Housing Census in choosing the rural communities for the study. Per the classification of the 2000 Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service, the total population of each of the three sampled villages fell below 5,000 which puts them into the category as rural communities. The Ghana Statistical Service 2000 Population and Housing Census reports that the total population of Asikasu was 2,516 (1,278 males and 1,238 females); Bremang 1,195 (560 males and 635 females); and Asuokaw 4,581 (2,229 males and 2,352 females).

Like the general trend in the country, although women in these communities are increasingly working outside the home for economic reasons, fulfillment of their domestic role is regarded as their primary obligation. Physical chastisement of wives seems to occur frequently, as most men consider it their marital obligation to ‘discipline’ and control their wives or spouses (Adinkrah, 2007; Amoakohene, 2004) for reasons that can be determined through research.

#### **4.4 Sample Unit**

The sample unit for my study was a rural woman with the experience of intimate partner violence, a queen mother, and a woman from the sampled community (with or without an IPV experience) willing to participate in my research.

#### **4.5 Target Population**

The population targeted for this research are rural women in Ghana.

#### **4.6 Study Population**

The study population are rural women with an experience of intimate partner violence in the Upper West Akyem District in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

#### **4.7 Sample Size**

The total sample size used in this study is sixty-seven (67) respondents. Out of this total number, twenty-four (24) of them were victims of intimate partner violence that is, eight (8) from each of the three rural communities. There were also three (3) queen mothers that is, one from each village. Then a total of forty (40) women participated in the community forum. The community forum was made up of eighteen (18) women who participated in the forum at Asikasu; ten (10) women from Bremang; and twelve (12) women from Asuokaw.

#### **4.8 Community Entry Techniques and Field Activities**

I conducted the research in three rural communities in the Upper West Akyem District. Field activities and the entire data collection process have been explained in details below. Although I have lived among the people of the Upper West District for about 20 years, I still went through the community entry procedures and I observed the required traditional norms of entering the land prior to my field work. In the subsequent pages, I provide a more descriptive approach of the community entry techniques I used. These include the process of sampling the communities, the entry procedures used in each community, where I went, who I interacted with, and the strategies used to carry out my research. I also discuss here the relevance of visiting the

queen mothers and involving them in this research project. Further, I describe who my research participants were, the study design used and the methods of data collection.

#### **4.9 Choosing the Communities**

The choice of the Upper West Akyem District is because my aim was to investigate and document the phenomenon of intimate partner violence among women residing in these rural communities of the district. I identify with the cultural precepts and social mores of my study population, and I fluently speak and write the Akan language which is the dominant language spoken by the people. The commonly spoken Akan dialects are Akyem, Fante and Asante.

The Upper West Akim District has a huge concentration of rural communities. All the communities have an ‘Odikuro’ (chief) but only about 13 villages can each boast of an ‘Obaahemaa’ (queen mother). Based on this preliminary information, all the 13 communities were purposively sampled as potential areas for the study out of which 3 villages were simple randomly selected for the study. The queen mothers were important to serve as key informants for my study because of the symbolic traditional roles they play in the traditional Ghanaian society as leaders of the women.

#### **4.10 Entering the Communities**

My initial entry into each community was very informal and the purpose of my study was not publicised due to the sensitive nature of my research. Asikasu was the first village I visited. The people are predominantly farmers and traditionally, they do not go to the farm on Thursdays. With such knowledge, I knew that Thursday was one of the possible days in the week to plan community activities with residents without hugely interrupting their routine work. Again, Thursdays are particularly meant for communal labour, other community development projects,

and educational campaigns or for relaxation. It was therefore a good day for me to pay a courtesy call on the ‘Obaahemaa’ (queen mother) of the land. In doing that, I did not go alone but I sought the permission of an elderly woman who knew the customs of the land and she led me to a man who happened to be the community gate-keeper.

I briefly introduced myself to him and told him about my mission which was in the form of a cover story on *how women can take care of their health* (this cover story was different from my main research project which I had to conceal from the gate-keepers and my initial contact persons due to the sensitive nature of my topic and in order to protect myself and others from potential harm) and he led me to the Obaahemaa. We approached her in the morning with a bottle of schnapps to pay homage and to demonstrate a sign of respect. This elderly man spoke on my behalf directly to the queen mother and informed her about my mission based on my cover story. I then requested to meet with the queen mother on a later date where I had the opportunity to interact with her alone, and I had the privilege to specifically explain to her about my research project which she understood. She granted me the permission to interview her one Sunday morning as a key informant and she made arrangement later for me to meet with the women for the community forum at the premises of the Roman Catholic Church.

The second village I visited was Asuokaw where my initial contact was with a male teacher on a Friday morning. After a brief introduction with my cover story, he took me to the queen mother’s residence and he left. Happily, here I had to do the introduction myself and inform the queen mother about my research. In fact, this queen mother granted me interview immediately after knowing about my mission and expressing excitement about my work. At a later date which was a Thursday, she also organized the women for the community forum for me at her residence immediately after their weekly ‘susu’ (meaning savings) meeting.

Bremang was my last community of entry and the first person I met was a woman who led me to the community gate-keeper who was also a man. I introduced myself to him and presented my ‘cover story’, and asked to see the queen mother. He graciously led me to the residence of the mother to the queen mother and after this gate-keeper had left us, I got the chance to open up and interact with the old woman. I gathered on that Wednesday morning that the queen mother had travelled so the mother placed a call to her daughter –the queen mother whom I had the privilege to speak with on phone to discuss my research project. She therefore directed her mother to organize the women the next day for the community forum at her mother’s residence which she gladly did. A week later I received a call from the queen mother who announced her return and asked that she would be ready on a Saturday to grant me an interview which came off successfully.

In each community, in stating my mission, I used a broad topic of *how women can take care of their health*. This was important because I had to be careful not to disclose the topic of intimate partner violence to the gate-keepers or the general community due to its sensitive nature and also because I had a duty to protect the women and myself from harm. Customarily, all the three gate-keepers I was directed to were men and since I was only interested in recruiting women for my study, it made sense that I concealed my actual purpose from these gate-keepers to help safeguard every piece of information I received. Once these precautions were taken and the cultural customs were duly followed, then I was in a good position on my personal interaction with the queen mothers to explain the precise details of my research to them. In fact, the queen mothers understood the situation and they were very cooperative. It was quite easy to initiate subsequent informal meetings with the queen mothers whose support was invaluable. I therefore worked closely with them without subsequent help from the gatekeepers.

#### **4.11 Visiting Queen Mothers and Why that was Important**

Historically, in many traditional African communities, the status of a queen mother is very prestigious because of the respect and elevated status that accompanies it, and many familial organizations revolve around her. Queen mothers are important because of their status and the significant roles they play in conflict resolution in the traditional Ghanaian society.

The Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census Report Monograph on Men and Women in Ghana (2013: 5) explains that invariably in Ghana, a chief would not even have ascended to the throne without the approval of the queen-mother and this makes her very powerful. In the inner sanctum of the palace or behind the scenes, very few important decisions are taken without consultations with the queen-mother. Indeed, she is described as the ‘monarch behind the monarch’ and the only person who can reprimand the chief. Female stools complement the hierarchy of male stools with the usual set of elders, advisers, attendants and spokespersons all presiding over disputes in the traditional Ghanaian societies.

In matrilineal societies in Ghana (as in the case of the Akan), queen mothers are powerful members of traditional governing councils (Stoeltje, 2006). She advises, and represents the women in the community and also mobilises them for community projects. She resolves conflicts among women and settles misunderstandings between couples. She even has the power to authorise for the performance or non-performance of puberty rites such as the ‘bragoro’ (in the Akan society) for a teenage girl who experiences her menarche once the mother of the child informs her. She again has the authority to decide who qualifies from the royal family to become the chief and appoints such accordingly in consultation with the community elders and ‘abusuapanin’ (head of the family). Just as the queen mother has the power to ‘enstool’ (make) a chief, so does she has the power to ‘destool’ (unmake) him.

In traditional Ghanaian societies, sometimes the processes of resolving problems between individuals go beyond family heads. Sometimes cases usually end up at the doorsteps of traditional rulers such as chiefs and queen mothers. In this study, I worked with the queen mothers since my study population was women. The queen mothers were therefore in a better position to help organise the women for the community forum and even help recruit some IPV victims they had worked with in the past for the study. I relied on these queen mothers essentially because of the special position they occupy and also due to the traditional roles they play as intermediaries of domestic conflicts especially between spouses and families.

#### **4.12 Research Participants**

At the beginning of the interviews and forum, participants were asked to provide their socio-demographic data and create a pseudonym. As indicated earlier, there were three categories of respondents recruited for this study: queen mothers; the victims of intimate partner violence; and the general women's group recruited from each of the three communities to participate in the community forum. The queen mothers were purposively sampled as key informants by virtue of their positions as the queen mothers of the area. I then organised three sessions of community forum in the sampled villages. Through an open invitation, I had not less than ten women from each community participating in the unstructured community forum to share their views which generated insightful dialogue.

When deliberations at the forum were completed, I used a convenient sampling technique to recruit women who volunteered for the in-depth interview to share additional information which they could not share at the forum. Out of this convenient sample, I further used criterion sampling technique to sample women who met the following criteria for the in-depth interviews.

To qualify for the in-depth interview as a victim, a participant must: (a) be a female; (b) be 18 years or older; (c) be in or must have had an intimate relationship; (d) have experienced a form of violence from an intimate male partner; (e) reside in the community at the time of data collection (because living in environments outside the sampled community may affect a woman's response to questions that are community specific); and (f) volunteer to participate in the study and share one's experiences with the researcher.

Locations deemed safe and comfortable by respondents themselves were used for the in-depth interviews, and an agreeable time was negotiated with them for the interviews to be held. Each interview session took about an hour while the community forum lasted about two hours. Each interview session and community forum was audio recorded with permission from participants and there were no objections. Each participant was compensated in cash for making the time to participate in the study and each respondent was eligible for payment immediately after the interview session. Each participant in the in-depth interviews was provided 30 Ghana Cedis, about 12 US Dollars each [at the time of data collection] and participants in the Community Forum were each provided 10 Ghana Cedis, about 4 US Dollars each [at the time of data collection] to help cover transportation cost or loss of income due to the time period spent in participating in the research other than work.

#### **4.13 Sampling Scheme and Procedures**

To begin with, I purposively sampled the Upper West Akyem District of the Eastern Region based on familiarity, convenience and the concentration of rural communities in the area and I simple randomly sampled the Asikasu, Bremang and Asuokaw communities for my study. A formal entry into the Upper West Akim District was preceded by an initial visit as indicated

earlier. This was a fact-finding mission and the opportunity to familiarize myself with the area, and to meet with the queen mothers to seek their support to conduct my study. My fore knowledge about traditional rules dictate that anyone who aims at carrying out any activity in the community should seek permission from the community leadership such as the chief, queen mother or the community gatekeeper.

Three categories of participants were conveniently sampled namely, victims of intimate partner violence, queen mothers and a gathering of women from the general community. Throughout my fieldwork and data collection processes, I was mindful of the potential low levels of literacy among folks in rural communities, so I translated the details in the consent form and all interview questions into the Akan language for the women to understand except in one instance where the participant spoke English fluently and requested the interview to be in English. I also conducted all the interviews myself and facilitated the community forum myself. Again, the questions I asked research subjects were simple and straightforward and I got to know they had a clear understanding of my questions based on the answers I received from them and the smooth flow of our interaction. Below are the procedures I used to identify, approach and sample specific research subjects;

First, the queen mothers of Asikasu, Bremang and Asuokaw were important as my key informants by virtue of the exclusive position they occupied. They were therefore purposively sampled for the in-depth interviews (details of the in-depth interviews have been provided under the section on ‘Methods of Data Collection’). These three queen mothers were very helpful to me. They supported me to get access to the community women and victims who had experienced intimate partner violence. I solicited their views on how they addressed the phenomenon of IPV. That means, the selection of a community by design made the queen mother of that community

eligible for a key informant interview once she is available and willing to participate in the study. As a sign of respect and as a traditional requirement, I paid courtesy calls on all the three queen mothers. I sent a bottle of schnapps to each queen mother as the custom of the land demanded and I sought their permission to interview them for my research which was duly granted by each of them.

Second, women from each community were conveniently sampled through an open invitation to participate in a community forum. With the support of the queen mothers, I organised three sessions of community forum for women, one in each village (details of each session has been explained in detail under ‘Methods of Data Collection’). A cover story on *how women can take care of their health* was employed in order to protect both participants and the researcher from harm. The implications of this approach has been explained further under the section on ‘Community Entry Techniques and Field Activities’ above. The community forum was important in order to help find out the rural women’s understanding of the concept of intimate partner violence, and to identify community resources available to women who encounter the ordeal of partner violence. The women’s contribution to the discussion and their opinions on the phenomenon were revealing and thought provoking.

Finally, I used convenient sampling strategy during the community forum to first recruit women who volunteered to share their information with me and further used criterion sampling technique to derive my research subjects based on the criteria I listed under the ‘Research Participants’ above. My sample was thus practically obtained out of convenience first and later through the outlined criteria. Apart from recruiting volunteering participants from the community forum, I also received recommendations from the queen mother about women victims she had worked with in the past who could be interviewed. Once prospective respondents agreed to

volunteer in the research, interviews were then conducted at suitable places deemed safe by the victims themselves.

#### **4.14 Research Design**

This phenomenological study combines two qualitative research designs namely, in-depth interviews for IPV victims, and queen mothers (key informants), and community forum for the general women in the villages. The use of a qualitative method is supported by Liamputtong (2007) and Lee (1993). They argue that many researchers of sensitive topics that truly examine the experiences of people tend to choose a qualitative design using the in-depth interview as their preferred method of data collection. Further, Lee (1993:1) in his book *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, states that qualitative research is more suited to the study of sensitive topics because it does not assume prior knowledge of people's experiences instead, it allows people (respondents) to develop and express their own reality.

First, I conducted in-depth interviews with queen mothers who were my key informants. Second, in-depth interviews were used to collect data from rural women who have experienced violence from their heterosexual intimate partners. This design focused on getting the women to discuss their experiences of intimate partner violence and construct a meaning of the concept of IPV from their own perspectives. Finally, there were three sessions of Community Forum organised in each of the three villages – Asikasu, Bremang and Asuokaw to get the views of the general women population on intimate partner violence. I also found out about the kinds of social support systems available to women in rural communities who go through the experience of intimate partner violence. The choice of the 'community forum' over say 'focus group discussions' was a matter of familiarity of the concept to participants. According to the queen

mothers, community members easily identify with the term ‘forum’ because it is a common term used to bring community members together to discuss issues that affect them and to plan for ‘amandwuma’ (communal labour) so the women easily understood the concept. The forum also allowed me to have a good number of respondents at a time to deliberate on the issues.

#### **4.15 Methods of Data Collection**

Data was gathered from two sources, namely; secondary and primary sources. The ways and means through which data was collected differed from one group to the other. Secondary data was largely used in the literature review and theoretical framework sections and in terms of primary data, the research used multiple sources of data specifically, from queen mothers, victims of intimate partner violence, and from a broad-spectrum of community women to enrich the data.

##### ***Secondary Data***

In terms of the sources of secondary data for this study, I reviewed the subject of intimate partner violence and its related topics from both local and international published books and other available records. I also examined peer reviewed articles and other periodic reports from major journals. Scholarly publications were largely retrieved from the library database of the University of Manitoba, the University of Manchester, and the University of Ghana. In order to help enrich the quality of literature for the study, the search was refined to focus on key themes such as intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, violence against women, partner abuse, women in rural communities, social support systems, the role of traditional leaders in Ghana, resilience etcetera.

### ***Primary Data***

The method for collecting primary data was a mixed qualitative method via in-depth interviews for both IPV victims and key informants using a semi-structured interview guide, and an unstructured community forum. The voices and views of respondents were important in understanding local perspectives. Below are details of the specific methods I drew on;

#### **4.16 In-depth Interviews with Victims of IPV**

Data was obtained through a semi-structured in-depth interview and the set of questions on the interview guide were open-ended. All the in-depth interviews were conducted in safe places recommended by the women themselves. This technique of using in-depth interviews enabled me to get detailed data about the lived experiences of the respondents who were my participants in knowledge creation. Before the start of each interview session, I read out the verbal consent to get respondent's approval and make sure that they understood the research process and agreed to be interviewed. Some of the questions the women were asked included the following: 1) How do you understand intimate partner violence? 2) Discuss any behaviour a partner may display that you will consider as a form of violence. 3) Talk about any violence you have experienced from your partner. 4) Which kinds of social support did you receive when the violence occurred?

All appointments, identity of respondents and data collected were kept confidential. One of the most important aspects of the data collection process for a sensitive topic of this nature was the ability of the researcher to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents, address their safety concerns, develop a good rapport with them and gain their trust. Many researchers of sensitive topics such as Liamputtong (2007) and Lee (1993) have recommended

the use of in-depth interviews because it allows people to develop and express their own reality. Therefore, the choice of an in-depth interview for this study is in line with the recommended method.

During each interview process, I took into consideration participant's expression of emotions in addition to capturing their voices. These emotions took the form of verbal communication and non-verbal emotional displays such as pauses, silence, tears, feelings of anger, embarrassment, among others. More so, due to the sensitive nature of the interview process, I made available to respondents a list of community resources [both formal and informal support networks] some of which were provided by the queen mothers as to where victims could go for help, whom to talk to whenever they needed any form of social support or how to report cases of violence. Lee (1993:1) states that "sensitive research often has potential effects on the personal life, and sometimes on the personal security, of the researcher" hence, "researchers need to find ways of dealing with the problems and issues raised by research on sensitive topics. The threats which the research poses to research participants, to the researcher and to others need to be minimized, managed or mitigated" (Lee, 1993:16). These resources were to support and help take care of respondents who might have suffered emotional pain while being interviewed.

After every in-depth interview session, each woman was given a token in the form of money to compensate them for the time they spent and to show appreciation to them for participating in the study. I used a consistent approach for all the women I interviewed to ensure truthfulness and trustworthiness of the data collected. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of respondents, data was transcribed verbatim from Akan to English and each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and to protect their privacy.

#### **4.17 In-depth Interviews with Queen Mothers**

The study purposively chose to interview the queen mothers because of their position as the leaders of the women and the female custodians of community norms, values and tradition. Again, the focus on queen mothers is as a result of the influential roles they play as female leaders and king makers in the traditional Ghanaian society. A semi-structured interview guide and a set of open-ended questions were used to obtain data from the queen mothers as my key informants. Before the start of each session, I read out the verbal informed consent to seek their approval and make sure that they understood the research process and agreed to be interviewed. The intention was to get them to discuss the ways in which they addressed the issues of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their communities and to identify other forms of community support.

The questions I asked the queen mothers as my key informants revolved around the following; 1) kindly discuss the specific cases of intimate partner violence that have come to your attention? 2) What roles do you play at helping to meet the needs of IPV victims? 3) Which social support systems are available for victims in this community? 5) What roles must the community play as a whole to handle IPV in this village? I used a consistent approach for all the three queen mothers to ensure that the data I collected was also truthful and trustworthy. Each queen mother was presented with schnapps as tradition required during courtesy calls before an interview date was set, and after the interview process each queen mother was presented with a trinket to show my appreciation for their support and participation in the research.

#### **4.18 Community Forum of Women**

Due to the relatively small size of rural populations and the strong ties that usually exist between people in rural communities, it was important to sample the views of not only IPV

victims but also of the women in general through a forum discussion. Each community forum was based on an open invitation. I conducted separate community forum with the women in each of the three communities - Asikasu, Asuokaw and Bremang to allow them to share their knowledge and perceptions on the issues related to intimate partner violence and demonstrate what the community response should be. The choice of 'Community forum' as a strategy for inquiry was suitable for this study because the participants were already familiar with the term since it was a commonly used terminology in the village to assemble community members together for meetings. Again, the choice of community forum over, for instance, focus group was appropriate because it took care of my strategy of having an open invitation which allowed the opportunity to have a sizeable number of women to participate in the dialogue without being limited as would have been the case of a focus group discussion.

Nonetheless, the style of the community forum was similar to that of an informal focus group discussion. The characteristics and advantages that are unique to focus group discussions were derived in the community forum. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), the advantages of focus group discussions in qualitative research are that, they tend to be spontaneous and emergent, inclusive and quite democratic as far as knowledge production is concerned. The process of conducting the community forum helped make it participant driven, and its inherent spontaneous nature enabled me to facilitate the sessions and sustain the discussions in a way that generated insightful dialogue. An added advantage of the community forum was that it allowed me to have an effective use of time.

I covered simple points at the forum in an unstructured or informal format. At the start of each session, I read out the verbal consent to seek their approval to participate in the study. As a triangulation method, the data from the community forum have been used to amplify the data

gathered from the in-depth interviews with victims and the queen mothers. The informal and unstructured way in which each community forum was organised helped remove hurdles to participation, especially, in such a culturally dominant society. It also made it possible for the voices of rural women to be recognized.

Although the women in the community forum were from diverse backgrounds by virtue of their socio-demographic characteristics, their common geographical locations helped to create a comfortable and conducive environment for them to engage in this discourse. The questions they were asked at the forum included the following; 1) What are your views about intimate partner violence? 2) What has been your observation of intimate partner violence in this community? 3) What roles does the queen mother play when there is an IPV problem 4) Which community resources can be tapped to support women who experience any form of intimate partner violence? Below is a description of the specific procedures I used in each community for data gathering.

#### **4.19 Community Forum with the Women of Asikasu**

Asikasu was the first community of entry and the community forum brought together eighteen (18) women from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The forum generated very insightful dialogue and the session lasted about three (3) hours. As a typical traditional means used to bring community members together, the queen mother ordered for the gong-gong to be beaten to assemble all women. A cover story on *'how women can take care of their health'* was used for the public announcement until at the time of the forum where the exact purpose of this research was explained to participants.

When the forum ended, the floor was opened for those who had some additional

information to share with me to do so later. Out of the number who volunteered and were conveniently sampled for the one-on-one session, five (5) of them fit the criteria as victims of intimate partner violence after I further used the criterion sampling to select participants. So through the criterion sampling, I recruited these women for the in-depth interviews whilst the queen mother helped to recommend and recruit the additional three (3) respondents based on the same criteria and that enabled me to get the sample size of eight (8) respondents needed from Asikasu. The session was audio taped and later transcribed.

#### **4.20 Community Forum with the Women of Bremang**

Bremang was the second community where I conducted the research. The forum was organised with the kind support of the mother to the queen mother, per the queen mother's instructions since she (the queen mother) had other appointments. The strategy used in Bremang was similar to that of Asikasu and the forum was participatory and insightful too. The queen mother had prior instructed for a gong-gong to be beaten to invite the women to a community forum on the stipulated date with the same cover story on *'how women can take care of their health'*.

All the women gathered at the premises of the queen mother's mother for the session. In all, ten (10) women volunteered and participated in the two (2) hour forum which was also audio taped and later transcribed. As it was done in Asikasu after the forum, the floor was opened for women who had some additional information to share with me to do so later. Out of the number who volunteered and were conveniently sampled for the one-on-one session, four (4) of them fit the criteria as victims of intimate partner violence. That is to say I used criterion sampling to recruit them for the in-depth interviews whereas the queen mother here also recommended and

helped recruit the additional four (4) women based on the same criteria. The number therefore added up to the required sample size of eight (8) respondents needed from Bremang.

#### **4.21 Community Forum with the Women of Asuokaw**

The final community forum was held at Asuokaw and the strategy used by the queen mother to bring the women together was quite different from Asikasu and Bremang. Here, during my initial contact with the queen mother, she suggested that Thursday was a good day for me to conduct the forum because that was when the women usually meet to discuss their 'susu' (savings/financial) matters at her (queen mother) premises. She, therefore, prior informed the women about the forum using the same cover story of *'how women can take care of their health'*. For this group of women from Asuokaw, I admit that a different cover story on 'how women can improve their savings/finances' could have also been appropriate due to the circumstances under which I met with them but I wanted to ensure consistency in the approach used in all the three rural communities.

I therefore met with the women for about two (2) hours after their financial deliberations. Twelve (12) of them volunteered and participated in the forum. The session was also audio taped and later transcribed. As it was done in Asikasu and Bremang, the floor was opened for those who had some additional information and were willing to share with me to do so at a different date. Out of the number who signed up and volunteered for the one-on-one session, three (3) of them fit the criteria as victims of intimate partner violence. That is to say I used criterion sampling to recruit them for the in-depth interviews whilst again, the queen mother helped to recruit and recommend the additional five (5) participants to add up to make the necessary sample size of eight (8) respondents needed from Asuokaw. The forum was very insightful.

#### **4.22 Research Instruments or Methodological Tools**

As part of my field work process, my data collection instruments for all the three categories of respondents were comprehensive. A semi-structured in-depth interview guide was designed for IPV victims with a set of open-ended questions consistent with the literacy levels of the rural women. Similarly, a separate semi-structured interview guide with a set of open-ended questions were also administered to the queen mothers in the in-depth interview sessions. Then, a community forum was organised in each community in an unstructured format to solicit for participants' submissions in order to amplify and enrich the data.

#### **4.23 Ethical Considerations**

According to Lee and Renzetti (1993:10), in order to ensure that social scientists do not shy away from undertaking research on sensitive topics, they “must confront seriously and thoroughly the problems and issues that these topics pose”. Dickson-Swift, James, and Liamputtong (2008) warns that although they are important, focusing too narrowly on the ethical issues such as informed consent and the issue of harm can pose some dangers. In the sense that, by narrowing the focus, other issues inherent in sensitive research may not be given the consideration that they deserve. Cowles (1988:163) express concern about the dangers of focusing on ethics alone by saying:

When the qualitative researcher delves into the private worlds and experiences of subjects, sometimes evoking strong emotional responses and sometimes pursuing thoughts that might otherwise never be revealed, consideration of the common ethical issues may not be enough (Cowles, 1988:163).

Therefore, as much as I did not overlook my call to duty as a researcher, I was also guided by these concerns and followed due ethical process

First and foremost, I obtained ethics approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the University of Ghana. My research instruments, volunteer agreement and consent form were all approved by the Ethics Committee. In order for me to ensure the dependability, truthfulness, consistency, and trustworthiness of this qualitative study, I did the following a) I translated the content of the informed consent form, the volunteer agreement and my methodological instruments verbally into the Akan language for research subjects to understand during the in-interview sessions and community forum. I also informed research participants about the purpose of the research, and for the sake of trustworthiness, I ensured that each respondent signed or thumb printed the consent form and gave me their permission to volunteer in the study and share their information with me (refer to appendix 1 and 2). b) Also, I used the same interview guide with the same set of questions to solicit responses from all respondents in the same category and I asked all participants in the same category the same questions to ensure precision and consistency in the data collection process (refer to appendix 3). This also ensured that my research truly measured that which I actually intended to measure with regard to making sure that I answer my research questions and thus achieve my study objectives; c) In addition, all interviews were recorded and I had the audio tapes and transcripts of the interviews sampled, checked, and authenticated at the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana to ensure that my translation and transcription had been done correctly; d) Finally, I returned to participants for member checking to ascertain the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the research findings and incorporated their feedback.

I was very mindful of the sensitive nature of the study so I assured respondents of their safety, and actually ensured their safety and confidentiality by conducting the sessions at safe places so that none was exposed to harm. Again, all interviews were scheduled at times that

suited respondents to conceal their participation in the study from others, especially, from their partners since majority were still in a relationship with the perpetrators. More so, the identities of subjects have been safeguarded by assigning pseudonyms and codes to protect their anonymity, and the data collected have solely been used for academic purpose. I ensured that there were back-up copies of all data collected and a master copy was put in a secured place for safekeeping. This is because I consider every data gathered as one of a kind that may never be recaptured in exactly the same way and as such I needed to protect all.

Specifically, the following measures were taken to make sure that all potential harm and any negative repercussions on subjects were avoided: 1) arrangements were made to host all interviews at a safe place; 2) I adhered to all appointments at the times recommended by participants themselves being mindful of the fact that some victims were still living with the abused partner; and 3) I kept all appointments and data collected confidential.

Respondents were made to understand it was okay to express their emotions during the sessions but were advised not to harm themselves or the interviewer or a third party. In a few cases, some women broke down in tears at some point when they remembered and talked about the abuse. Such emotional releases took the form of verbal and non-verbal reactions such as shedding tears, pauses, silence, feelings of anger etc. As much as practicable, questions intended to provoke emotionally charged responses were avoided and each woman was accorded respect. I provided respondents with a list of community resources recommended by the queen mother, including information on where victims could get various forms of social support in the event they needed counseling or any help. It is important to emphasize here however that, there was no instance where any participant became overly distressed during an interview process to have required terminating the session to initiate crisis therapy or to arrange a brief follow-up

counselling for a victim. Finally, respondents were informed they were free to withdraw from the research or terminate the interview if they did not want to continue but no such situation was encountered.

#### **4.24 Data Handling and Analysis**

Consistent with descriptive phenomenological paradigm, data was analysed using Collaizzi's (1978: 48-71) method of analysis by following these steps; (a) bracketing, (b) analysing, (c) intuiting, and (d) describing which have been explained further below. Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously but the two have been separated here for the purpose of presentation. In reality, the emergent findings from the initial analyses shaped subsequent data gathering processes which in turn shaped successive analyses. The in-depth interview sessions and community forum were audio recorded, and field notes were hand written in a reflective diary. The essence of using both tape recorders and written notes was to ensure that no detail was overlooked. This also allowed for comparison between the tape records and the field notes to ensure gaps were filled and also to make sure there was consistency.

The handwritten field notes were organised and typed out to complement the tape records. I listened to the tapes and reviewed my translation to make sure it is consistent and accurate with the women's responses. Data was then transcribed verbatim by myself and the analysis of the data was done manually. I did what Creswell calls 'member-checking' to review some of the tapes and transcripts with a few of my study respondents to make sure I had captured their perspectives accurately to help me analyse my data and produce findings that were truthful (valid) and trustworthy (reliable). The thematic descriptions were reviewed by three participants each from the selected communities during a follow-up visit in order to determine if participants'

experiences were adequately captured and also truthfully presented. Changes offered by the participants were then incorporated into the final discussion of results. These were in line with Collaizzi's (1978) sixth and seventh steps of data analysis discussed. I also applied the process of triangulation to verify the results and attest to the credibility of the research findings by using two qualitative methods [in-depth interviews and community forum] and obtaining data from various categories of participants.

Prior to the transcription work, I played over and listened to the tape recording to immerse myself in the data and gain a broader but deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. I did all the transcription myself from the Akan language to English and from experience, an hour of an audio tape took about five hours to transcribe. I proofread and cleaned the data to correct mechanical, grammatical and typographical errors using spot checking and rechecking. I however maintained the verbatim transcription of the interviews. Even more, the transcripts were read and reread several times to appreciate participants' descriptions of the phenomenon, to acquire a feeling for their experience and to make sense of their account. This strategy was consistent with Collaizzi's (1978) first step of data analysis which has been explained further below.

During this process, I also extracted significant statements and patterns that pertained to the study objectives and the research questions. I then gave each interview transcript a unique pseudonym and code and then printed out the transcripts and run my eyes down the various themes for accuracy, consistency and professionalism for the purpose of quality-control check. Meanings were formulated from these significant statements and phrases, and then organised into clusters. Thematic statements that represented the experiences and views of the women were identified. I used different colours and codes to identify the different patterns and thematic areas

on a computer. Using the phrases and sentence clusters, the data was reduced until essential themes emerged namely, 1) Conceptualisation; 2) Lived Experiences; and 3) Resilience.

Once all the above important steps were taken, I looked out for types, sequences and patterns that went together to constitute common themes for the purpose of coding and filing. The aim of this process was to assemble and restructure the data in an organised, meaningful and comprehensible fashion. I further assigned codes to the data under each subtheme and established a systematic filing system by way of sorting data into coded classifications, annotating the coded subthemes and placing them into files which contained the major thematic areas. I later created a systemic index sheet which contained annotations with codes identifying the transcript in which it had been located, the page number of the specific transcript, and a brief but verbatim excerpt of the transcripts. This provided me with a comprehensive means of accessing information and analysing the various specific emerging themes.

This research, as discussed earlier uses phenomenology both as a paradigm and as a method. It will therefore be important to emphasize the key merits of using the descriptive phenomenology for this study. It's strengths include (a) the emphasis on describing universal essences; (b) viewing a person as one representative of the world in which he or she lives; (c) a belief that the consciousness is what humans share; (d) an assumption that self-reflection, and conscious "stripping" of previous knowledge, help to present an investigator-free description of the phenomenon (e) the assumption that adherence to established scientific rigor ensures accurate description of universal essences or eidetic structures and finally (f) the assumption that 'bracketing' ensures that interpretation is free of bias (Koch, 1995).

Consistent with the eidetic or descriptive phenomenological enquiry, Collaizzi's (1978: 48-71) method of analysis has been used in this research to guide the analysis of the data using

the following steps which have been discussed further below; (a) bracketing, (b) analysing, (c) intuiting, and (d) describing. Although these steps are considered distinct components of descriptive phenomenology, each moment of the investigation entails a blend of bracketing, analysing, intuiting, and describing to produce a true understanding of the phenomenon under study (Swanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988).

### ***Bracketing***

Colaizzi (1978) argue that the first step in descriptive phenomenology is ‘bracketing’, and according to Wall, Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole (2004) bracketing is an investigator’s attempt to achieve the state of transcendental subjectivity (neutrality) by putting aside prior understanding or preconceptions about the phenomenon under investigation. Bracketing may be accomplished by using the field notes as a ‘reflective diary’ to write down the investigator’s observations, assumptions, and confusion; by seeking critique for the investigator’s insights from methodological experts or others who might have personal or professional experience with the topic under investigation and by maintaining an ongoing sense of caution about the role personal bias plays when making sense of the data.

### ***Analysing***

Rigorous analysis of data constitutes the second component of the descriptive phenomenological investigation. Beyond Colaizzi’s (1978: 48-71) four broad method of analysis, he provides a step-by-step process of analysing the data which consists of the following seven steps: (1) reading and rereading the participants’ descriptions of the phenomenon to acquire a feeling for their experience and make sense of their account. (2) Extracting significant statements

that pertain directly to the phenomenon. (3) Formulating meanings for these significant statements. Colaizzi (1978: 48-71) cautions that, the formulations must discover and illuminate meanings hidden in the various contexts of the investigated phenomenon. (4) Categorizing the formulated meanings into clusters of themes that are common to all participants; referring these clusters to the original transcriptions for validation and confirming consistency between the investigator's emerging conclusions and the participants' original stories; not giving into the temptation to ignore data which do not fit or prematurely generating a theory which conceptually eliminates the discordance in findings thus far.

(5) Integrating the findings into exhaustive description of the phenomenon being studied. Employing a self-imposed discipline and structure to bridge the gaps between data collection, intuition and description of concepts. Describing includes coding segments of text for topics, comparing topics for consistent themes, and bridging themes for their conceptual meanings. Based on this description, a prototype of a theoretical model about the phenomenon under investigation is formulated. (6) Validating the findings by returning to some participants to ask how it compares with their experiences. (7) Incorporating any changes offered by participants into the final description of the essence of the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978: 48-71).

Below is a summary of Colaizzi's method of analysis and the purpose for each step.

**Table 4.1: Colaizzi's Method of Analysis**

	<b>Step in Analysis</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	Reading and rereading descriptions	To acquire general feeling for experience
2	Extracting significant statements	To generate information pertaining directly to phenomenon studied
3	Formulating meanings	To illuminate meanings hidden in various contexts of the phenomenon
4	Categorizing into clusters of themes and validating	To identify experiences common to all informants with original text
5	Describing	To generate a prototype of a theoretical model
6	Returning to participants	To validate the findings
7	Incorporating any changes based on the informants' feedback	To present theoretical model that comprehensively reflects the universal features of phenomenon

Source: Colaizzi (1978: 48-71)

Colaizzi (1978) adds that data analysis may also involve referring to the researcher's reflective journal and field notes, debriefing and discussing findings with colleagues who are experts in the phenomenological approach and/or personally or professionally familiar with the topic. In addition to bracketing, and analysing are intuiting, and describing as discussed below.

### ***Intuiting***

Consistent with Husserl's assumptions about the importance of transcendental consciousness (remaining open to the reality of another's experience), intuiting ultimately leads to empathy - an innate sense of what it might be like to 'live in the participants' skin.' As accounts are generated, the investigator's intuition is 'fed' by more and more data through attentive listening, deep critical reflection about commonalities across participants, and a

concerted effort to understand ‘what it must be like.’ The intuitive process leads to the investigator owning a sense as if he or she had personally lived the participants’ experience. Intuiting balanced with bracketing involves a conscious attempt to honour insights about emerging evidence (Colaizzi, 1978: 48-71).

### ***Describing***

The end point of descriptive phenomenological investigation is to present a theoretical model representing the essential structures of the phenomenon under study (Colaizzi, 1978). Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988: 104) referred to such model as a “universal skeleton that can be filled in with the rich story of each informant”. Consistent with the Husserlian tradition, if the true structure of the phenomenon is identified, then anyone who has experienced the phenomenon should be able to identify their own experience in the proposed description.

### **4.25 Conclusion**

This chapter on research methodology has provided a detailed account of the qualitative research method used for the study and the step-by-step procedures I followed to conduct my research. More so, it has outlined a description of the research area, the research design, sampling procedures, research instruments, sources of data and the data collection processes that were used for the study. The chapter has further discussed the ethical considerations, data handling procedures and the techniques used for the data analysis. In addition, the section gives a report on field activities and my reflection on conducting research in Ghana as a Ghanaian woman. The chapter finally provides information about the steps involved in using Colaizzi’s (1978) method of analysis and the advantages it presents for doing interpretive phenomenology.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF IPV

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter five begins the presentation of results phase and provides the socio-demographics of respondents, as well as the results on the conceptualisation of intimate partner violence from the rural women's own perspectives. This chapter also offers a broad introduction of how the emergent themes were built in chapters five, six and seven. This chapter most importantly answers the first research question - How do rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives? Besides the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the results presented here have been shaped in large part by the definitions of intimate partner violence in the way and manner in which rural women understand the concept.

In response to the research question, an initial theme called 'definitions' emerged and out of this, four sub-themes subsequently emerged from the data analysis namely i) Factors that create happiness in an intimate relationship; ii) Definition of IPV; iii) Specific behaviours that account for IPV; and iv) Circumstances under which violent behaviour may be justifiable. These have been presented along the lines of my research questions and the objectives of the study in such a way that provides an adequate description of participants' responses supported by direct quotes from the women. In this chapter, therefore, are powerful voices from a total of sixty-seven women; namely twenty-four (24) women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships; three (3) queen mothers, and forty (40) women from the various communities who participated in the study.

## **5.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants**

I initiate the write-up of this section with the socio-demographic characteristics of the three categories of research participants, namely, IPV victims, queen mothers and the general community women. Names of all participants have been replaced with pseudonyms of their choice and all possible identifying details have been disguised in order to preserve their anonymity and protect their confidentiality.

### **5.2.1 Socio-Demographics of IPV Victims**

Table 5.1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the twenty-four women who were interviewed in the category as victims of intimate partner violence. In each community, eight victims volunteered to share their stories with me through the in-depth interviews. Becoming a victim of intimate partner violence didn't matter, irrespective of the personality or social status of respondents. Even though participants had some similar characteristics by virtue of their geographic location, the findings indicate that intimate partner violence cuts across age (in this case, 18 years and above), marital status, educational qualification, geographic locations, culture, religion, ethnicity and other socio-economic factors (Kishor and Kiersten, 2004; Jaoko, 2010; Amoakohene, 2004; Prospero, Dwumah and Ofori-Dua, 2009; Mann & Takyi, 2009). Their ages were from twenty-three years old through to seventy-eight years of age. The results indicate that more than thirty-seven percent (9) of the women were between 20-29 years old, about twenty-nine percent (7) were between 30-39 years old, approximately seventeen percent (4) of them were between 40-49 years of age, about eight percent (2) were between 50-59 years old and another eight percent (2) were above the age of 60 (precisely 65 and 78 years).

On the subject of ethnic origin, majority of the respondents representing almost fifty-nine percent (14) self-identified as Akan; out of this number more than sixty-four percent (9) said they speak Fanti, close to fifteen percent (2) Ashanti, and seven percent (1) each said they speak Akwapim, Brong and Akyem. Also, about seventeen percent (4) of participants were Ewe, and four percent (1) each was Ga, Ga-Adamgbe, Mosi, Dagomba, Gonja and Kusaasi. With regards to their marital status, forty-six percent (11) were married and ten out of the eleven were still married to the perpetrators at the time of data collection. Four percent (1) woman was separated from her partner; seventeen percent (4) were divorced; another seventeen percent (4) were in cohabitation with the perpetrator; about eight percent (2) were widowed; and another eight percent (2) were single but in a dating relationship with one still in a relationship with the perpetrator.

Overall, all of the participants had at least one child each with the perpetrator of the violence. Four percent (1) woman had the highest number of eight children; followed by close to thirteen percent (3) of the women who had six children each; another thirteen percent (3) had five children each and another thirteen percent (3) had the least of a child each. More than thirty-three percent (8) had two children each, four percent (1) had three children, and about twenty-one percent (5) had four children each. In terms of educational qualification, with the exception of about thirteen percent (3) who had no formal education, the remaining eighty-seven percent (21) had obtained some level of formal education. That is twenty-nine percent (6) of this number had some form of primary education with the highest being about fifty-three percent (11) of them having attended Junior High School or Elementary school; whereas fourteen percent (3) completed Senior High School; and five percent (1) enrolled in vocational catering course.

In terms of occupation, while it is possible that victimization and employment trajectories are causally linked as suggested in some research (e.g. Lloyd, 1997), it is also possible that other factors account for the observed differences, which will be a great research area to explore in the future. The findings show that the highest number of victims specifically fifty percent (12) were traders; more than twelve percent (3) were farmers; a little above eight percent (2) were farm labourers; another eight percent (2) were unemployed, whereas four percent (1) each self-identified as caterer, cook, waitress, seamstress and housewife. Here, some women mentioned that they were employed in two or more jobs but for the purpose of categorisation, I asked them to mention the major work they do.

In addition, participants were made to recount the nature of intimate partner violence they have experienced and in their responses, I recorded eight different kinds of IPV. All the women reported they have suffered two or more forms of violence in the hands of their intimate partners with about thirteen percent (3) of them saying they were subjected to six forms of violence from the same perpetrator. Overall, eighty-eight percent of victims (21) reported of deprivation and neglect; sixty-three percent (15) reported of physical violence; fifty-eight percent (14) reported of infidelity; fifty-four percent (13) reported of economic and financial violence; fifty percent (12) reported of psychological and emotional violence; 42 percent (10) reported of verbal assault and humiliation; seventeen percent (4) mentioned sexual violence; and eight percent (2) reported of coercion and intimidation.

Finally, the results indicate that out of the total number of twenty-four victims, approximately sixty-two percent (15) of them were still in a relationship with the perpetrator at the time of data collection and thirty-eight percent (9) were not. Out of the thirty-eight percent of women who had no current relationship with the perpetrator, forty-four percent (4) of them were

divorced; whilst eleven percent (1) each of the remaining four were either separated, widowed, re-married or single but dating. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the victims' socio-demographic characteristics.

**Table 5.1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of IPV Victims from the In-depth Interviews**

Asikasu Participants (n = 8)	Ethnic Origin	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Education	Occupation	Type of Violence Endured	Currently in a relationship with Perpetrator
Margaret	Ga	48 years	Married	6 children	No education	Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Sexual Violence</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional</li> </ul>	Yes
Angelina	Ewe	47 years	Married	8 children	Elementary school	Cook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Sexual Assault</li> </ul>	Yes
Tiwaa	Akan-Akwapi m	31 years	Married	5 children	JSS 1	Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Coercion and Intimidation</li> </ul>	Yes
Amina	Ga-Adamgbe	42 years	Married	4 children	Elementary school	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional</li> </ul>	Yes
Hajia	Mosi	48 years	Married	2 children	No education	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> </ul>	Yes
Kesewaa	Akan-Ashanti	27 years	Separated	2 children	SSS	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> </ul>	No
Kuukua	Akan-Fanti	23 years	Cohabitation	2 children	JSS	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> </ul>	Yes
Akpene	Ewe	65 years	Divorced	6 Children	primary school	Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Sexual Assault</li> </ul>	No

**Table 5.1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of IPV Victims from the In-depth Interviews (Continuation)**

<b>Bremang Participants (n = 8)</b>	<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Type of Violence Endured</b>	<b>Currently in a relationship with Perpetrator</b>
Augustina	Ewe	25 years	Cohabitation	4 children	JSS	Housewife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Sexual Assault</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> </ul>	Yes
Dorcas	Akan-Akyem	23 years	Cohabitation	2 children	JSS	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> </ul>	Yes
Portia	Akan-Fanti	28 years	Divorced	2 children	JSS	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Verbal assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> </ul>	No
Grace	Akan-Brong	36 years	Married	4 children	JSS	Seamstress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> </ul>	Yes
Comfort	Akan-Fanti	35 years	Married	4 children	primary 5	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> </ul>	Yes
Azumi	Kusaasi	27 years	Single but dating	2 children	primary 3	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> </ul>	Yes
Fuseina	Gonja	24 years	Cohabitation	3 children	primary school	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal assault</li> <li>• Deprivation and neglect</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Coercion and intimidation</li> </ul>	Yes
Asantewaa	Akan-Fanti	34 years	Married	2 children	primary 6	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Economic and Financial</li> </ul>	Yes

**Table 5.1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of IPV Victims from the In-depth Interviews (Continuation)**

Asuokaw Participants (n = 8)	Ethnic Origin	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Education	Occupation	Type of Violence Endured	Currently in a relationship with Perpetrator
Elorm	Ewe	29 years	Married	1 child	Diploma in Catering	Caterer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> </ul>	Yes
Nyansa	Akan-Ashanti	33 years	Divorced	2 children	JSS2	Unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Infidelity</li> </ul>	No
Asarebea	Akan-Fanti	78 years	Widowed	4 children	Elementary school	Unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> </ul>	No
Christiana	Akan-Fanti/Asant	36 years	Married	6 children	SHS	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> </ul>	No
Georgina	Akan-Fanti	36 years	Divorced	5 children	JHS 1	Farm labourer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and neglect</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> </ul>	No
Sukena	Dagomba	23 years	Single but dating	1 child	SSS	Waitress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and Neglect</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Verbal Assault and Humiliation</li> </ul>	No
Nyarkowa	Akan-Fanti	56 years	Widowed	1 child	primary 5,	Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infidelity</li> <li>• Psychological and Emotional Violence</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Economic or Financial Violence</li> </ul>	No
Ama	Akan-Fanti	50 years	Married	5 children	No education	Farm labourer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic and Financial Violence</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> </ul>	Yes

### 5.2.2 Socio-Demographics of Queen Mothers

Here, I present the socio-demographic characteristics of the queen mothers who were interviewed in the capacity as key informants and this can be seen in Table 5.2 Three queen mothers aged 53, 70 and 72 years old participated in the study. Two were widowed and the other divorced. All of them had obtained some level of formal education and were in some form of employment; one completed Elementary school (a ‘chop’ bar operator), another completed Primary school (a herbalist), and the other attended up to primary three (a trader).

Table 5.2 outlines the socio-demographic characteristics of the queen mothers;

**Table 5.2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Queen Mothers**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Queen mother No. 1	70	Widow	Primary Three	Trader
Queen Mother No. 2	72	Widow	Completed Primary school	Herbalist
Queen Mother No. 3	53	Divorced	Completed Elementary school	‘Chop’ bar operator

### 5.2.3 Socio-Demographics of Asikasu Women in the Community Forum

This section presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the women from the three communities who participated in the community forum. These have been presented in Tables 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5. At Asikasu, eighteen women volunteered to participate in the forum. Seventeen percent (3) were between the ages of 20-29; fifty percent (9) were between 30-39 years; twenty-two percent (4) fell between 50-59 years; and eleven percent (2) were between 60-69 years old. More than half of the participants representing sixty-one percent were married (11); seventeen

percent (3) were in cohabitation; eleven percent (2) were single but dating; six percent (1) each was either divorced or separated.

Seventeen percent (3) of these women had a child each; six percent (1) had two children; another seventeen percent (3) had three children each; twenty-two percent (4) had four children each; eleven percent (2) had six children; and another eleven percent (2) had seven children each; six percent (1) had no child and the other six percent (1) had twelve children. The highest of sixty-seven percent (12) of respondents were Akan (six Akyem's, one each being Fanti, Larteh, Brong, Ashanti and Akwapim); seventeen percent (3) were Ewe; eleven percent (2) were Ga; and six percent (1) was a Dagomba.

In terms of formal educational qualification, twenty-eight percent (5) had primary education; fifty percent (9) had Junior High school or elementary education; six percent (1) had tertiary education; and seventeen percent (3) had no formal education. With the exception of one respondent who was a house wife and another who was an apprentice in dress making, all the women were in paid employment formal or informal. In all, thirty-nine percent (7) of them were traders; twenty-two percent (4) were farmers; eleven percent (2) were hairdressers and approximately six percent (1) each was a trained teacher, farm labourer, and store keeper. Table 5.3 below represents these demographic information of respondents from Asikasu who participated in the community forum. Table 5.3 is as follows showing the socio-demographic characteristics of Asikasu women in the community forum.

**Table 5.3: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Asikasu Women in Community Forum**

<b>Participants (n=18)</b>	<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Alice	Akwapim	31	Cohabitation	5 children	JSS 1	Farm labourer
Mary	Akyem	33	Single but dating	1 child	Primary 6	Hairdresser
Janet	Brong	30	Married	4 children	Primary 6	Trader
Sarfoa	Ashanti	27	Cohabitation	2 children	JSS 2	Storekeeper
Sadia	Dagomba	34	Married	3 children	Primary 3	Trader
Boatemaa	Brong	53	Married	6 children	Tertiary	Trained Teacher
Felicia	Fanti	34	Married	7 children	JSS	Trader
Adwoa	Akyem	25	Cohabitation	No child	JSS	Apprentice
Mary	Akyem	33	Single but dating	1 child	Primary	Hairdresser
Comfort	Ewe	63	Divorced	7 children	Elem. school	Farmer
Dora	Akyem	65	Married	4 children	Primary 5	petty trader
Esther	Ga	29	Married	4 children	JSS	Farmer
Serwaa	Akyem	31	Married	1 child	JSS	house wife
Veronica	Ewe	56	Widow	12 children	No education	Trader
Selina	Larteh	51	Married	6 children	Elem. school	petty trader
Gladys	Akyem	39	Married	4 children	No education	petty trader
Georgina	Ga	32	Married	3 children	No education	Farmer
Angela	Ewe	50	Married	3 Children	Elem. School	Farmer

#### **5.2.4 Socio-Demographics of Bremang Women in the Community Forum**

This section gives the socio-demographic information about participants in the community forum organised at Bremang. A total of ten women volunteered to participate in this forum and out of this, fifty percent (5) were between 20-29 years; thirty percent were between 30-39 years; ten percent (1) 40-49; and another ten percent (1) between 60-69 years. The percentage which was married was fifty (5); thirty percent (3) were in cohabitation; ten percent

(1) each were either single but dating or divorced. Twenty percent (2) of these women had two children each; thirty percent (3) had three children each; twenty percent (2) had two children each; ten percent (1) each had five children; ten children and no child respectively. Seventy percent (7) were Akan (four Fanti's and three Akyem's); ten percent (1) Ga; another ten percent (1) Ewe; and the remaining ten percent (1) was Baasare.

In terms of their educational qualification, majority of the women representing forty percent (4) attended Junior High or Middle school; thirty percent (3) had some form of primary school education; and the other thirty percent (3) had no formal education. Meanwhile, apart from one woman who was a housewife each of them were engaged in some form of paid job. Fifty percent (5) were traders; and one percent (1) each was a farmer, cook, hairdresser, fish monger respectively.

Table 5.4 provides the illustration.

**Table 5.4: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Bremang Women in Community Forum**

Participants ( <i>n</i> =10)	Ethnic Origin	Age	Marital Status	No. of Children	Education	Occupation
Seesi	Fanti	35	Married	4 children	Primary 4	Fish monger
Margaret	Fanti	68	Married	10 children	No education	Farmer
Dorcas	Akyem	23	Cohabitation	2 children	JSS	Trader
Paulina	Akyem	24	Single but dating	no child	Primary 6	Hairdresser
Adoma	Akyem	35	Married	5 children	No education	Cook
Diana	Fanti	30	Married	3 children	Primary 5	Trader
Portia	Fanti	28	Divorced	2 children	JSS	Trader
Martha	Ga	40	Married	3 children	No education	Trader
Augustina	Ewe	25	Cohabitation	4 children	JSS	Housewife
Lukaya	Baasare	26	Cohabitation	3 children	JSS	Trader

### 5.2.5 Socio-Demographics of Asuokaw Women in Community Forum

Here, I present the socio-demographic information about the women who participated in the forum at Asuokaw. Thirty-three percent (4) each of the respondents fell between the age bracket of 20-29 and 30-39 respectively; twenty-five percent (3) were between 50-59 years and nine percent (1) was between 40-49 years old. Regarding their marital status, thirty-three percent (4) were married; seventeen percent (2) each were either single but dating, divorced, cohabiting or widowed. Twenty-five percent (3) each of the women had two, three and four children each; seventeen percent (2) had a child each and nine percent (1) had a child. In terms of educational qualification, forty-one percent (5) had obtained primary education; thirty-three (4) had formal education up to Junior High or Elementary school and twenty-five (3) percent had no formal education.

Approximately fifty-eight percent (7) were Akan (four Fanti's, and one each being Denkyira, Akyem and Asante); seventeen percent (2) were Ewe; and nine percent (10 each was Ga, Ga-Adambge and Mamprusi. All of the women were in paid employment. Twenty-five percent (3) were farmers; seventeen percent (2) were traders; thirty-three percent (4) were farm labourers; nine percent (1) each were hairdressers, fish monger, and a commercial driver.

This is illustrated in Table 5.5 below.

**Table 5.5: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Asuokaw Women in community forum**

<b>Participant (n=12)</b>	<b>Ethnic origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of children</b>	<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Attaa	Denkyira	52	Widowed	4 children	Elementary school	Farmer
Georgina	Fanti	36	Divorced	3 children	JSS	Farm labourer
Mariama	Mamprusi	45	Married	4 children	No education	farmer
Charity	Asante	29	Cohabitation	2 children	JSS	hairdresser
Obaayaa	Akyem	31	Divorced	1 child	No education	Trader
Owusua	Ga - Adamgbe	37	Married	4 children	Primary 6	fish monger
Osaebeta	Fanti	32	Single but dating	2 children	JSS	Farm labourer
Ahiave	Ewe	26	Single but dating	3 children	Primary 6	farmer
Nyarkowaa	Fanti	56	Widowed	1 child	Primary 5	Trader
Sedinam	Ewe	20	Married	2 children	Primary 6	Farm labourer
Ama	Fanti	50 years	Married	5 children	No education	Farm labourer
Sarah	Ga	22 years	cohabitation	3 children	Primary 6	commercial driver

### 5.3 Building the Emergent Themes

This section explains how I built the emergent themes – conceptualisation, lived experiences and resilience. I have used a thematic approach to structure the results sections in chapters five, six and seven along the lines of the research questions and the interview guide [provided in the appendix]. This was important in laying the foundation for the presentation of the results of the study. Overall, the purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of rural women on what they conceptualize as intimate partner violence (IPV), examine the lived experiences of IPV victims and investigate the significance of the roles social support systems

play to contribute to victims' resilience. In order to achieve these purposes of the study, I sought to answer three research questions namely:

1. How do rural women conceptualize the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives?
2. What are the lived experiences of rural women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships?
3. How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims' resilience?

In order to accomplish this, data was gathered through in-depth interviews and community forum. Data was then transcribed, coded and analyzed using Collaizzi's method of analysis. I used a combination of predetermined and emerging codes to generate significant themes to answer the research questions. According to Creswell (2009: 187), one issue about coding that researchers have to deal with is to determine whether to a) develop codes only on the basis of the emerging information collected from participants; b) use predetermined codes and then fit the data to them; or c) use some combination of predetermined and emerging codes.

This third option was the approach I used in the process of analysing the data– i. e. a combination of predetermined and emerging codes simply. This was because I needed to adequately answer my research questions and also make room for information or new questions that I had not earlier foreseen. These predetermined and emerging themes display multiple perspectives from my respondents; interconnect these themes and shape them into general descriptions as is expected of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2009: 189).

During the data analysis process, I developed a qualitative codebook that contained a list of predetermined codes. This codebook had the names of the codes in one column, the

description of each code in another column, and the page numbers with annotations where the codes could be found in the transcripts. I used Microsoft word processing for both the transcription and for the development of codes, and I used comments and different colours in the transcripts during the coding process. I then generated a number of themes which appear as major findings in this study. These have subsequently been used to create the headings in this results chapter of the study.

Here, I discuss three significant themes which emerged in the data analysis (other themes were predetermined as earlier stated). The analysis of the data provides a wealth of rich illustrations for each aspect of the research question. In order to demonstrate the emergent themes, it is necessary to return to the original data and codes so the following sections of this chapter illuminate the three categories by exploring the sub-categories in the participants' own words. In considering the components of the emergent themes, the analysis has been applied to the three research questions guiding this study with each theme generating four significant sub-themes as outlined below.

Chapters five, six and seven comprise of the following themes;

*Chapter five: Conceptualization of IPV*

- i) Factors that create happiness in the relationship
- ii) Definition of IPV
- iii) Specific behaviours that account for IPV
- iv) Circumstances under which violent behaviours is justified

*Chapter six: Lived Experiences of IPV Victims*

- i) Forms of IPV experienced
- ii) Victims reactions to the violence
- iii) Victims sentiments and sympathy in the midst of violence
- iv) Impacts of violence

*Chapter seven: Social Support Systems Contribution to Victims' Resilience*

- i) Available social support systems and their usefulness
- ii) Queen mothers' involvement in resolving issues of intimate partner violence
- iii) Constraints associated with the use of social support systems
- iv) Current state of affairs and looking ahead

#### **5.4 Applying the Analysis of Data to the Research Questions**

In the write-up that follows, it is evident that this study yielded a wealth of information. All three research questions were addressed by the data gathered, and all of the categories of the emergent themes contributed to answering at least one research question. In order to ensure that the research questions were addressed, the interview questions were designed to yield information that addresses at least one question each. Probing questions were used during the interviews to further encourage participants to include data that would address the research questions. Since the interview guide employed the use of open-ended questions, it was correctly predicted that some of the interview questions would yield information regarding two or more research questions.

The three categories of respondents interviewed were victims, queen mothers and the general community women. However, for the purpose of presentation, I have designed Table 5.6

to illustrate my research questions with the corresponding interview guide questions for IPV victims, and the themes that emerged from the analysis in order for readers to understand the processes I went through to make sure my research questions were all adequately answered.

**Table 5. 6: Research Questions, Corresponding Interview Guide Questions for IPV Victims, and Emergent Themes**

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Guide Questions	Emergent Themes and Sub-themes
<p>1. How do rural women conceptualize the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives?</p>	<p><b>A. Conceptualisation of intimate partner violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some of the things that create happiness in an intimate relationship?</li> <li>2. How will you define intimate partner violence?</li> <li>3. Explain why you would consider the above mentioned behaviours as forms of violence.</li> <li>4. Under which circumstance would these violent behaviours be approved?</li> </ol>	<p><b>A. Conceptualization</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v) Factors that create happiness in the relationship</li> <li>vi) Definition of IPV</li> <li>vii) Specific behaviours that account for IPV</li> <li>viii) Circumstances under which violent behaviour is justifiable</li> </ol>
<p>2. What are the lived experiences of rural women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships?</p>	<p><b>B. Experiences of intimate partner violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Kindly discuss specific behaviours your partner exhibits that you consider violent? Tell me what you remember about any form of violence you have experienced from your partner.</li> <li>6. How did you react to his violent actions? What did you do immediately when the incident happened?</li> <li>7. How did his actions affect you or anyone else?</li> </ol>	<p><b>B. Lived Experiences</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v) Forms of IPV experienced</li> <li>vi) Victims reactions to the violence</li> <li>vii) Victims sentiments and sympathy in the midst of violence</li> <li>viii) Impacts of violence</li> </ol>
<p>3. How significant are the roles of social support systems in contributing to victims' resilience?</p>	<p><b>C. Factors that contributed to Victims' Resilience</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. What kinds of help did you seek? Mention specific forms of social support systems that were available to you when you needed help. How useful were they at enabling you to thrive?</li> <li>9. Did you inform the queen mother about it? How has the queen mother been involved in resolving this issue of intimate partner violence or which particular roles has she played in this regard to support you?</li> <li>10. What constraints have you encountered with the use of the social support systems available to you?</li> <li>11. What has happened between you and your partner after that incident? Is the perpetrator the same person you are currently in a relationship with? What are your reasons for staying in the relationship or leaving? What are your plans about the future?</li> </ol> <p><b>D. Suggestions/comments/recommendations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. At this point you have the opportunity to give your final suggestions, comments or recommendations to the discussion.</li> </ol>	<p><b>C. Resilience</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Available social support systems and their significance</li> <li>ii) Queen mothers' involvement in resolving issues of intimate partner violence</li> <li>iii) Constraints associated with the use of social support systems</li> <li>iv) Current state of affairs and looking ahead</li> </ol>

## **5.5 Conceptualisation of Intimate Partner Violence**

Under this first theme ‘Conceptualisation of Intimate Partner Violence’, I discuss the following sub-themes; i) Factors that create happiness in the relationship; ii) Definition of IPV; iii) Specific behaviours that account for IPV; and iv) Circumstances under which violent behaviour is justifiable.

Lopez and Willis (2004), and Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988) suggested that descriptive phenomenology is more useful for inquiry that aims to discover universal aspects of a phenomenon that were never conceptualised or that were incompletely conceptualised in prior research. Therefore, as a researcher who is more inclined towards describing universal essences of a phenomena with an ultimate goal to develop interventions that promote the wellbeing of rural abused women, I find the descriptive/eidetic phenomenology more useful for my study.

According to Wojnar and Swanson (2007), those who tend to see similarities in human experiences and look for patterns and universal features of phenomenon, and who aim at moving their programme of research toward designing helpful interventions, may be more suited to a descriptive mind-set. Here, I aim at discovering the patterns of how rural women themselves understand intimate partner violence which haven’t been completely conceptualised in previous research or have never been conceptualised in existing literature.

## **5.6 Factors that Create Happiness in an Intimate Relationship**

At the opening stage of the interviews and prior to initiating discussions on the phenomenon of intimate partner violence, I first used an approach to get respondents both in the in-depth interviews and the community forum to reflect on some of the pleasant aspects of their relationships. This was to stir up their interest in the discussion before probing into the issues of

violence. Participants commonly expressed their views on a wide range of issues and their responses from across the three communities had similar but unique patterns. In all, participants reported that happiness in an intimate relationship can be linked to ten factors. These can be classified as happiness in relation to: 1) providing capital to support the woman's business; 2) providing for the upkeep of the home; 3) the woman performing her duties at home; 4) respecting each other as co-equals without quarrels; 5) the couple demonstrating love, understanding, and forgiveness; 6) the man performing the marriage rites; 7) being blessed with children; 8) the absence of infidelity; 9) satisfying the man sexually; and 10) practicing the same religion.

All of the participants spent a great deal of time engaged in comparing the happy and unhappy moments in their relationships and this period was largely marked with a mixture of laughter, sighing and giggling. Victims in the in-depth interviews especially opened up and talked warmly about their personal experiences whilst participants in the forum were encouraged to generalize their responses in order to protect their privacy; a strategy which generated effective participation. Whereas some victims romanticized their experiences about the differences between the current partner and the ex-partner, and between the past and present relationships, others fantasised about what they would have preferred their relationships to be like. Not only did these women offer differentiation and comparison during the interviews, they also cited many instances during their past and current relationships which led to stressful conflicts. I will first present the submissions from victims in the in-depth interviews and follow with that of participants in the community forum.

### 5.6.1 Victims' Perspectives on the Factors that Create Happiness in an Intimate Relationship

In the in-depth interviews, I found out that majority of the victims related their happiness in the relationship to the ability of the man to provide capital to support their trade. Others related their happiness to the ability of the man to provide for the upkeep of the family. For example at Asikasu, Margaret, a 48 year old mother of six who had endured six forms of violence in the hands of her husband explained in a series of statements that the things that bring happiness is when the man is able to provide capital for her trade. She had the following to say;

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: A husband must be able to give the woman capital to start a business. If he doesn't get a job for you to do, you will be unhappy and people will sit back and say you are not consistent with what you do. I was a petty trader but I'm now doing farm work just because my husband doesn't want to give me money for my trade. When the situation is not good for you that is when frustration sets in. Sometimes you may decide to leave the marriage and go to another man but you may later realise it is even worse at that place. That is what brings about divorce and other things. These are the reasons why most women follow other men.*

To most of these women, happiness in the relationship was synonymous with the man providing for the upkeep of the family. Hajia, a 48 year old married woman illustrated her point vividly with a song in between her statements;

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: As for marriage, every woman goes into marriage hoping the marriage will work for her; hoping to meet something sweet... (singing) 'odo kakra, sika kakra' (a little love, a little money). Do you understand that? (singing) 'Odo kakra, sika kakra'. But if it happens that you the man you stay slumber and it's only the woman who suffers, that wouldn't help to bring happiness in the marriage. Do you understand?*

Some of the women across the three communities did not only base their happiness on the expectations of the man but indicated that, happiness in the relationship is equally linked to

the woman's ability to play her part by performing her duties at home as a wife. Nyansa from Asuokaw and Hajia from Asikasu had the following to say;

*Nyansa, 33, trader, divorced, 2 children: Happiness includes taking care of the children and performing your chores at home. Um... it shouldn't involve only the man but if the woman is working, she must support the man. These little things bring happiness in the marriage and helps the relationship to develop. Sometimes, both couple may have money but will not carry out their responsibilities and that doesn't help the union.*

*Hajia, 48 years, trader, married with 2 children: There are also many things that the woman would have to do to bring happiness in the relationship. It involves a lot. As for marriage, hmmm... the wife must wash the husband's cloth. Even though we hate infidelity, sometimes, before the man might get involved in that you may have also done something he doesn't like. Do you understand what I'm saying? Eeerrrr... as I sit here, if he also does not do what he is supposed to do for me, I cannot get the love for him and give him what he expects of me. So once I don't give him what he's looking for from me, all he will say is that he will go out to get it. That is what brings about the fight.*

The following women considered the performance of house chores as the woman's contribution to maintaining happiness in the relationship and they had these to say; "The woman should also make sure she cooks for the family" (Angelina: 47 years, married). "The woman should also desist from staying too long with friends to chat about unnecessary things because the man may need her to cook for him. That would help make the man happy" Tiwaa: 31 years, married; "She should wash his clothes and support him to take care of the kids so that there will be progress in their lives" Georgina: 36 years, divorced. As Hajia and these other women have demonstrated, their comparisons emphasize the differences between the expectations they have from both partners that is necessary to ensure happiness in the relationship. They emphasize their appreciation for certain qualities by contrasting elements that create a happy relationship with an unhappy one.

For most of these women, they contextualized love and communication as important elements that create a happy relationship even in times of difficulty. In their submissions, the

following women stated that there is happiness when there is understanding, communication, love and forgiveness in the relationship. Georgina, for example, agrees that the man should provide for the family if he has money but cautions that in the event that he doesn't have money, he should be able to communicate it to the woman. These were what the women stated;

*Georgina: 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: It will all depend on understanding. If the man has money he should be able to provide for the family but on days that he doesn't have, he should also be able to communicate it to the woman. She would believe him because she knows that when he has he gives so now that he says he doesn't have, it is true.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: It is all about how the man communicates with the woman. Sometimes, hmmm it beats my imagination that I'm home with him and he frowns. A man may not have money but may have a nice way of talking to his wife which brings happiness in the home. As we speak now, my husband is having a disagreement with me on some issues in our marriage but he does not know how to sit down with me and discuss the important issues. As soon as I initiate any conversations with him, heyyy... then he says he doesn't have time and then he goes out. I honestly do not know what he uses his time for that makes him not to have time to have a conversation with me. This is something that I find very difficult to understand. My father... he is a busy farmer and my mother also works on the farm but they make time to chat. So I sometimes compare their marriage and mine and ask myself why my marriage is different from that of my parents.*

*Akpen, 65, farmer, divorced, 6 children: For there to be happiness in any relationship, there has to be a number of factors. Do you understand? The first two things should be understanding and love. If understanding doesn't work the marriage will be like something that is hanging. You will be seated but not well positioned. If the woman's mind is different from that of the man, there wouldn't be understanding and the marriage will be hanging.*

*Elorm, 29 years, caterer, married with a child: It always makes me happy when he comes from work and I say welcome and he responds and shows me love. ...Then after he takes his bath and I have given him food to eat, we sit together, chat, play games and do other things ... (giggling). Hugging me before he goes to work is important or giving me a peg or something yeah hahahaha.*

*Georgina, 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: Happiness also comes from love, understanding and forgiveness. Do you understand me? Sometimes you will open your*

*heart to serve the man but he might think you are stupid. When I got married, I expected my husband and I to be of the same mind. I didn't want to have children with different men. I expected that together with my husband, we can raise our children to take care of us in old age. I worked so hard with my husband and we suffered together to get few things. Hmmm... sometimes, we didn't even have money to buy soap so we bathed with some kinds of leaves and I never complained because he didn't have the money to buy soap. As soon as we made a little money, he decided not to take care of the needs of the children and that hurt me badly. I lived in sadness and I almost went mad.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: It's all about love, understanding and oneness. If there is understanding between the two of you, there is no difficulty.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married, 5 children: Ooh sister as for my marriage, there is no happiness because there is no love. If your husband does not behave anyhow, you can be happy. But when he goes out to drink and comes home with trouble, how can you be happy?*

Most of the women especially those in cohabitation emphasized that happiness was in relation to the man performing their marriage rites. Dorcas for instance started living together with her partner when she was only 16 years old. They've been living together for seven years in her parents' residence and she describes how happy she would be if her partner should perform her marriage rites.

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in Cohabitation, 2 children: If my partner should go and perform my marriage rite, I will be happy. We started this relationship when I was only 16 years and he has been sleeping with me all this while without thinking about going to see my family to say something about his plans for me. He hasn't formally married me but we are living together in my parents' house.*

Others made the following statements;

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: Another thing that brings happiness in the marriage is when the man performs the marriage ceremony and you both wear rings.*

*Tiwaa: 31, farmer, married, 5 children: ... again, being happy depends on the man going to perform our marriage rites.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: There would also be happiness when the man performs the marriage rite of the woman.*

Other participants emphasized that their happiness comes from being able to bring forth children. Below are excerpts from their views

*Tiwaa, 31, farmer, married with 5 children: Being blessed with one or two children brings happiness too.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 2 children: The things that bring happiness for example when you are married is being able to have children.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child. When I married, my expectation was for us to have children and give them a brighter future so that when we become old woman and old man they can take care of us.*

Some of the women as illustrated in the statements below indicated that their happiness was in relation to faithfulness of their partners. For example;

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: ...if the man does not follow other women, then that means there is no problem. If you live with a man and he doesn't take any sinful course, then you the woman does not have any problem. If tomorrow he goes to do this or that, it brings about division in the marriage and the woman will have no happiness. Once you are living with a man, all he has to do is to be concerned about your worries.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: For us women, we hate infidelity. Infidelity is something we don't like. If you get yourself involved in that and later you the man says you have even changed, things will never be like first.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: He is only interested in following other women and when I confront him about it then he gets angry and beats me up. He has decided 'se mpena twiee naa na obetwi na ongyai agyese atete ansa' [that he would keep having extra marital affairs and would not stop until it is completely out of hand]. I will be very happy if he goes forward to perform my customary rite as his wife. If he should support me in all these things, I would like it.*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: I have always wanted my marriage to be happy and beautiful but when I realise my husband was already a married man, it took away my happiness. He hid that from me so the love and happiness that was in our marriage couldn't stand.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: When the man doesn't go after other women or does not spend his money on other women but stays committed to the relationship, it brings happiness. It doesn't help when the man keeps picking women after*

*women and wouldn't listen when you complain until a time when he himself realises what you are saying is sensible.*

Portia from Bremang mentioned that happiness in the relationship is when there is no public humiliation by the man. According to her,

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: When I see the marriage of young people, it looks so beautiful to me. Sometimes, you see 20 year olds and even 15 year girls and they are happily married. When they get pregnant, they are treated nicely by their husbands without receiving any insults from their husbands in public. But in my case, it wasn't like that. As soon as I discussed something privately with my husband in the room then he goes out there in public to insult and embarrass me from the top there to down here. He will insult me and add my parents to it. I would have been happy if he didn't disgrace me in public.*

According to Azumi and Georgina, happiness is in relation to the ability of the woman to satisfy the man sexually. They said; "There are certain men who want sex every day. If you refuse them sex for even a day, then they get angry so you have to allow him". Azumi, 27 years, Bremang, single but dating. "The woman should make sure she doesn't starve her man from sex". Georgina: 36 years, Asuokaw, divorced.

Meanwhile, Fusena's happiness was in relation to practicing the same religion and she said "there will also be happiness when the couple practices one religion. My husband, for example, was a Christian but he became Muslim when he wanted me to marry him and as soon as he got me, he stopped being a Muslim". Fuseina, 24 years, Bremang, Cohabitation.

According to Christiana, happiness relates to respecting each other as co-equals. She noted;

*Christiana: 36, trader, married with 6 children: When a man marries, he should know that the woman is his co-equal. Every decision that he takes should involve the woman and when he closes from work and the woman is doing something, he can help her or be playing with the children. That makes the woman happy and that is when she can say she is blessed to have him. The woman also has to respect the man. When he says don't go there or sit here or do this for me, she has to obey and the man will like her.*

### 5.6.2 The General Community Women's Perspectives on the Factors that Create Happiness in an Intimate Relationship

Even though the perspectives of the women who participated in the community forum were not too different from the views gathered from victims in the in-depth interviews, it is important to underscore the point that each context was very unique. Selina in the quotation below relates happiness to the provision of capital in her business to enable her support the man and also improve upon her dressing.

*Selina, 51, trader, married with 6 children: There will be happiness in my marriage if my husband gives me capital to trade with in order to support him so that I don't put all the burden of my needs on him. In that way, I can always provide food for the family and also improve my dressing so that he will be happy with me.*

Serwaa, on the other hand, noted that if her partner keeps spending his money on other women and always gives her the excuse of not having money, it brings enmity instead of happiness in the relationship. She felt that if a partner should provide for the home and commit his life to God, it would bring happiness.

*Serwaa, 31, housewife, married with a child: If you are a husband and you don't have money, you should be able to explain to your wife that you don't have but if you are there with a man and he keeps telling you that he does not have money yet, splashes money on concubines that creates enmity. If my husband does not chase after other women but commits his life to God, I will be happy.*

Meanwhile, happiness for Gladys means a combination of different factors and top on her list was not being a tenant anymore but being able to build and live in their own house.

*Gladys, 39, trader, married with 4 children: As for me, when my husband and I are able to build a house to live in without having to pay rent, that will certainly bring happiness in the marriage. If my husband doesn't do 'hey, hey' to always scare me but treats me nicely, I will be happy and will always be looking forward to seeing him.*

Upon a decision to remain committed to her husband whether in sickness or in good health, Dora admonished her fellow women saying it takes love to commit to one's partner

especially in times when one becomes disabled by sickness. This story of remaining resolute despite the circumstances of life gives insight into the mutual role expected from both couple to ensure there is happiness in the relationship. She shared the following:

*Dora, 65, trader, married with 4 children: For me I want to say to all of us that, marriage as we see it is a union of partners who see themselves as 'siblings' because nobody marries his or her enemy. So both partners have a role to play to bring happiness in the marriage. Eerrr... currently, I've been in my marriage for all this while even though my husband has become crippled as a result of illness. He cannot walk anymore but I am still staying with him. If there is no love in our marriage, aaahhh, I would have been gone long time. I cannot leave him else he will be miserable. So I'm putting it to all of us that if you are there with a man and at some point he becomes disabled in the things he used to do, you have to be humble and strong enough to hold him carefully like an egg. Love him like yourself. If he is able to get healed, that is good but if he is not able to get up but always says 'God bless you, God bless you' that is a lot of blessings.*

In the case of Comfort and Margaret, happiness exists when there is oneness which gives the children a peaceful environment to develop. Diana relates happiness to continuous pampering even after child birth whereas Adoma finds a peaceful home and the ability to produce children as factors that bring happiness in the relationship.

*Comfort, 63, farmer, divorced, 7 children: ...there is happiness when both partners are of the same mind. Example, you can say ohh 'mewura' why don't we do this? Or please, now that the children have completed school, what can we do next? Then he may say, 'ohh I don't have money now but let's do this or that to raise enough money to support the kids so that when they get to a better place in future, they can also take care of us in old age'. So if little by little, the couples put their heads together to agree on issues that bring the best to the children, it brings happiness all the time and you will enjoy the marriage. In this way, the children also learn from the parents and copy their behaviours.*

*Margaret, 68, farmer, married with 10 children: In marriage once you meet your partner and you marry and decide to live together, peace of mind, happiness and loyalty by both parties should exist. If you are blessed with children, and you are able to give them that peace of mind too then the marriage will be filled with happiness. But if everyday there is 'kookaa, kookaa', it doesn't help but if there is oneness and truthfulness, then 'mmofraa no betu mpong' (the children will be able to develop). If there is peace between husband*

*and wife and the child goes to school, he or she is able to get that peace of mind to study. Days that you have money, you have but days that you don't have, you don't have.*

*Diana, 30 trader, married with 3 children: Mostly you will realise that there is happiness at the beginning of the relationship because the man shows a lot of 'akorokoro' (pampering) but as soon as you give birth for him then he begins to treat you like thrash. Sometimes because you the woman may not be working and therefore do not contribute monetarily towards the upkeep of the home, he doesn't value your labour and sees you as annoying... The men would have to understand that some women go into their marriages and are unable to give birth so once we are able to bring forth children, they have to continue pampering us.*

*Adoma, 35, cook, married with 5 children: The things that my husband will do that will make me happy is that, from the beginning we will live together peacefully without any fights and there will be childbirth and the children will get some motivation to get to a level whereby when we grow old, they can take care of us for us to also be comfortable. These are the things that if my husband does for me I will be happy.*

Most of the participants stressed on the role that the woman would also have to play in tandem with the man in order to ensure both partners are happy in the relationship instead of having all expectations from the one side. Attaa mentioned the context of interconnected variables such as love, caring for each other and having the gift of children, as being factors that provide an important element in creating happiness in the relationship. She cited an example of a common practice in the village where marriage is becoming unattractive to the women which has led to giving birth out of wedlock. For Charity, forgiveness and the ability to satisfy the man sexually create happiness in the relationship. Sadly, allowing the man sex any time he wants serves as a guarantee for him to provide for the upkeep of the family.

*Attaa, 52, farmer, widow, 4 children: The thing that brings happiness in a marriage is when your husband loves you and cares for you. In that way, you as a woman will be happy. Also if you are able to give birth it brings happiness. There is also happiness when the man shows interest in bringing up the children. ...The woman is also supposed to take care of the man by cooking for him and washing his clothes. When you do that you will realise that the man will be happy with you all the time. Everything that is in the interest of the woman should be his responsibility and that will motivate the woman to*

*continue being in the marriage. Okay...on the other hand, if he can't really take care of you, then you cannot also agree to continue staying in the marriage. These things we are talking about happen a lot here in this village. The women do not enjoy marriage because the men take them for granted so you will see 'aborn one', 'aborn two' and even 'aborn three's' hahaaaa agyeiiii. That is why you will see so many single or divorced mothers. The man would say he will marry you and live with you but hoooo, he will not treat you any better apuuuuu!*

*Charity, 29, hairdresser, in cohabitation, 2 children: As a married couple, what is important is for you to understand each other. When the man offends you, you don't have to tell the whole world. When the man wants sex, you have to give it to him hahaaaaaaa. There are certain men, when the night comes and they ask that you should go and do the hard work hahaaaaaa and you refuse them, he gets pissed off and when you ask him for money for the children, he wouldn't mind you. So whenever they ask for it, we have to give it to them. The men should also know that if they have extramarital affairs, our hearts cannot take it and we get hurt so they have to be faithful to us.*

Mariama bemoans the essence of remaining in a marriage where she has to take care of her own needs when the man spends his money on women and alcohol. Obaayaa argues that the root of all the violence in marriage is extra marital affairs without which there will be happiness in the relationship.

*Mariama, 42, farmer, married with 4 children: Giving the woman chop money also helps to bring happiness in the home but men these days do not provide for their families at all. When they get money, they prefer to go to the beer bar to drink alcohol and chase after women. They leave us to suffer instead of providing for their families so now we suffer a lot as women. That is why nowadays, you will see that after a few years of marriage there is divorce. If I am in a marriage where I take care of myself then what is the need to be in the marriage? Won't it be better for me to leave and rather work to look after my children? That is why this time, we seek divorce by heart.*

*Obaayaa, 31, trader, divorced, 1 child: These things happen a lot but you can't go to somebody's house to find out the details. Or am I lying? The root of all the violence in marriages is when the men engage in extra marital affairs. That brings quarreling in the home. Sometimes, what the family will even eat is a problem so when the man chases after other women it becomes a problem for the married woman.*

## **5.7 Rural Women's Definitions of Intimate Partner Violence**

This section answers the first research question - How do rural women conceptualise intimate partner violence from their own perspectives? I therefore present the results obtained from a cross section of the rural women across the three villages and provide interpretation for the data. As much as practicable, this section is largely shaped by a discussion on how the rural women themselves understand and define the concept of intimate partner violence from their own perspective. These definitions are, to a very large extent, how the rural women have come to understand the concept of intimate partner violence based on their personal experiences or from their observation of other people's circumstances. An important outcome was that most of the respondents described their perceptions and experiences of intimate partner relationships generally as a negative one marred with undesirable consequences, and not as an acceptable behaviour or normal way of life as some other literature indicate (Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell, 2005:78; Hsieh, Feng, & Shu, 2009). This reality came to light very quickly in the interviews as rural women demonstrated their understanding of intimate partner violence by attempting diverse definitions of the concept.

### **5.7.1 Victims Definitions of Intimate Partner Violence**

Most of the victims engaged in a great deal of differentiation and comparison between the actions and inactions of their partners in both their previous and current relationships. I found out that for almost all the respondents, intimate partner violence is a set of interconnected variables of undesirable behaviours of a partner that produced elements of pain or trauma. Most of them revealed that, when your partner's behaviour makes you feel hurt, sad, humiliated, takes away your happiness, or causes you pain, then it is intimate partner violence.

For instance, when Elorm was asked to describe what she understood by intimate partner violence, she first attempted to define what an intimate relationship is and then went further to provide a definition of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence.

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: An intimate relationship is the type of relationship between two people that is very close, heheheee ... You will always see them together and extremely close to each other... Intimate partner violence therefore is when disagreement or misunderstanding lead one partner to act in a way that hurts the other or causes severe anger or downheartedness. It is violence because it makes the other person feel bad, gets hurt, or may even die or get paralyzed as a result.*

Margaret pondered for quite a while and with a few words, poured out her heart.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: It is any behaviour your partner puts up that frustrates you or causes you pain. Because anytime you remember it [sighs] ...hmm and you enter your room or when you are alone, umm... you feel sad and cheated.*

Tiwaa indicates she might not call the experiences she goes through in the hands of her husband as violence if she didn't feel hurt or endured pain. She says violence is when your partner's actions or inactions hurts or causes you pains.

*Tiwaa: 31, farmer, married with 5 children: Violence in an intimate relationship is when with a little misunderstanding your partner beats you, throws your things out and tells you to go. Ooh! ...some of them also know how to drink alcohol so when they get drunk and come home, they beat you such that sometimes, you feel like leaving the marriage. You feel pains when he beats you and your heart hurts when he fails to provide for you and the children. Um... to me, it may not be violent if I feel no pain or hurt.*

Failure of her partner to be appreciative of the things she is able to do for him is what Hajia calls intimate partner violence. In this sense, she juxtaposes her efforts with death and insinuates that for such a man, he will still not appreciate her even if she decides to lay down her life for him.

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: That is when your partner accuses you of something you have not done. Even if you kill yourself for him, he will not see it and will not show appreciation.*

For most of the victims, like Augustina, Dorcas and Comfort, causing pain and humiliation to one's partner is a big deal. Augustina whose partner humiliated her twice in public for bed wetting, [a medical complication she experiences only after child birth] defines intimate partner violence based exactly on her personal experiences as she uses the words of her partner at the time he humiliated her openly in the community.

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: That includes insults when you have not even offended your partner to the extent that he beats you up very well, humiliates you in public and calls you 'dwnsokrobo', dirty woman. Sometimes, he may even go to the extent of using foul words against your parents too...eerrr that is also violence. It is a form of violence because it causes pain and makes the woman feel shame.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: Anything your man does against you that brings worry to you is violence so if my partner beats me or does things that cause me pain, ... I will call that intimate partner violence. Sometimes, even how he talks to me matters and if he humiliates me in public, it is also violence. These actions ... hmmm they hurt and make the woman unhappy.*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: I understand it to mean causing pain and shame to your spouse. It includes something like my case whereby he gets drunk and starts beating me. When he gets drunk, you will not have your peace of mind ooh. Madam, I'm not happy ooh, I'm not happy at all in my marriage... if I say I'm happy hmmm, then I'm telling lies. I have been married for 11 years now but I'm not okay at all with the way things are ... 'oteetee me'*

Grace said IPV is when the life of one's partner is characterised by dishonesty. Not only did she define IPV as a partner always telling lies but she used the opportunity to outline a number of other variables such as beating, womanizing and lack of communication as also being intimate partner violence. Asantewaa on the other hand provides a different perspective on IPV. She defines intimate partner violence as the situation whereby a partner fails to instil discipline

in the children and refuses to teach them to put up good behaviours and not merely when a partner beats or insults the other.

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: I understand that to mean when a partner keeps telling lies in the relationship. ...for some men, they refuse to converse with you when you are home together and if you say something to him that is not even offensive then he beats, you. It is also when your partner goes after other women.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children Madam, violence is not only when your husband beats you or insults you but when he fails to teach your children to put up good behaviour, it is equally a form of violence. Some of his violent behaviours is when he intentionally pretends not to see the wrong things the children do and therefore fails to correct them. When these children grow up, their character will not be different from how we train them today but my husband does not see the sense in what I explain to him.*

In the words of Christiana, when your partner controls you and prevents you from going places or even visiting your own family members, it is violence. According to Portia and Nyakowaa, IPV is when your partner uses foul words against you. Nyakowaa goes further to state that when a married man chases after another woman, his infidelity is also violence. On the other hand, Nyansa demonstrate with an example of failure on the part of the man to meet the needs of the woman is in itself violence like refusing to provide capital for her to establish a trade.

*Christiana, 36, trader, married with 6 children: It is the situation where your partner controls you in everything ...um 'ohyewoso na okawobohh3'. He can even go to the extent of stopping you from going to places where married people go. ...Aaahhh sometimes he will even instruct you not to visit your own mother or to give her food to eat. That to me is intimate partner violence.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: It is when my husband insults me and calls me "a foolish woman, prostitute" or when he beats me up and disgraces me in public.*

*Nyakowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: When your spouse's behaviour causes you pain, it is violence. Sometimes he doesn't beat you but he can say something to you that makes you weep or he might go after another woman. Then that woman might also do things*

*that make you unhappy. They are all forms of violence because they hurt the other partner and make you sad.*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: Take for example that I am married and my husband hasn't secured any trade for me, it will be his responsibility to give me money. If he refuses, that is also a form of violence in the marriage because he is denying me of my needs eheee.*

These women demonstrate to a very large extent how the issue of male privileges, power and control constitute violence. The quotes above provide evidence of all the eight forms of violence that feature in the rural women's definitions of intimate partner violence. These are: 1) Physical violence; 2) Sexual assault; 3) Psychological/emotional violence; 4) Verbal assault/humiliation; 5) Economic/financial violence; 6) Non-maintenance/Deprivation/Neglect; 7) Infidelity; and 8) Coercion and Intimidation.

### **5.7.2 Queen Mothers Definitions of IPV**

The definitions of IPV provided by each of the three queen mothers corroborate that given by majority of the victims with regard to the emphasis they all play on actions (such as beating) or inactions (such as non-maintenance of the family) of partner that produces such elements as hurt or pain to the other partner. Understanding their roles as key informants for the study, each of them spoke at length and cited practical examples of some of the cases that have been brought to them to resolve either ongoing at the time of data collection or in the past. These queen mothers conceptualized the issues in-depth by giving different instances of violent related events between couples that they've presided over in an attempt to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence.

Queen mother 1 added that, if one should invoke the spirit of the gods against a partner that is also IPV just as any other form of maltreatment. I observed that in their attempt to coin a

definition, all the queen mothers tried to highlight predisposing factors to the violence, the nature of the violence and the consequences. They also underscored the point that it isn't only the women who are victims of IPV but were quick to add in their examples that some of the women who act violently towards their partners sometimes do so in retaliation. They had the following to say;

*Queen mother 2: It is any action by a husband or wife that causes injury or pain to the other. It brings nothing good but suffering and poverty. Violence in marriages happen very often here in (name of village withheld) because we are in hard times. Sometimes the girls do not wait and they become teenage mothers and we all suffer. Some men like going after other women just to cause their wives pain. ... Some refuse to provide money for the family and when the woman complains hmmm... then it becomes a matter of blows. Um ...I however think that can be minimized if the women are working and are able to support themselves without having to ask the man for everything. This morning for instance, a lot of the women have come to me. Some said they were going to work as labourers or porters on people's orange farms to be able to raise money to feed their children. This mainly happens when the men ignore their responsibilities at home. Errr...even my own grandchild has given birth to twins but her husband does not take care of her. Eeeiiii hmmm his children became severely ill and were taken to the hospital but this man never bothered to step his foot there. ... I always console my daughter to take heart and look up to God. Sometimes, the fault may come from her mother-in-law or the sisters-in-law. They may falsely accuse the woman of things she has not done and the man will not even listen to his wife or stand by her and there is always violence in the marriage. Another also has three sons who just started walking but the man refuses to provide for them so the burden is on the woman. I have called for the husband several times but he doesn't come. So I always advise my daughter to be patient about it. This morning for instance, I gave her money to go to Badwiasse to buy pineapples for sale so that she can be able to buy food to feed the kids. Excuse me to say, there are some men who are reasonable and will understand you when you discuss the issue but there are others who do not care. Eeerrrr... how do we even call them?... they are 'I don't care' so they don't care about the wellbeing of the woman and that of their own children so the entire burden rests on the woman. If you are in this world as a woman and the man always pushes the burden and responsibilities on you, you don't become successful.*

Queen mother 2 did not end her definition here, she continued defining the concept of intimate partner violence using many interconnected components as in the quote below:

*Queen mother 2: Sometimes, the men beat their wives and even when you call to speak with them, they might just walk over you. These things happen a lot. Sometimes, the woman might not be lucky and the man she meets may be a very difficult person. Whenever he gets money, he spends it on other women or on alcohol instead of using it to support the children's education ... ooh my daughter, despite the enlightenment 'mpo oo'. In this area, there are some villages around where the roads are bad and lorries do not ply those routes so it becomes difficult to walk there ...hmmm but these pregnant women would have to walk about 3 miles just to go there to work on peoples' farms for money. If the man should take care of the needs of the woman and children, the burden would have been less. These women and girls who have given birth in this village are really suffering 'papapaapa' and most of them are those who have not been customarily married. Aaah well, even those whose bride price have been paid and have been properly married also get abused so the value is the same. In the case of my daughter, the man even performed the white wedding nicely at church 'mpo oo' but ...*

Queen mother 3 stated that ingratitude, lack of respect for each other, and beating among spouses are major problems confronting the community.

*Queen Mother 3: When we talk about violence in a marriage, it is a matter of taking advantage of your partner and doing 'nneamagyengyan' (worthless things). It is also a situation where the wife does not respect the husband or the husband does not respect the wife. Ingratitude is also a form of violence and also the situation where the woman wants to suppress the authority of the man can also be a form of violence. These things do not bring happiness in the marriage. It is a major problem here in this village. Some men beat their wives and leave them with serious injuries. Some of the cases of IPV end up at the palace or at the police station. The biggest of them all is non-maintenance of the children. This includes not taking care of the children in school and their general wellbeing especially in terms of food... hehhh, these are the things I call violence. If the woman does not have a good job and the man does not support her by giving her money for food and to provide for the children, what should they eat? ...it brings suffering in the marriage. Also, when the woman fails to understand the man, it can bring about violence in the marriage. Probably, the man may tell the woman that "as for today I am not well to do" but when the woman sees the man in the company of his friends, she may say something offensive to him which would make him unhappy and may meet her with a fight at home.*

### 5.7.3 The General Community Women's Definitions of IPV

The women who volunteered to participate in the community forum had quite interesting renditions of the definition of intimate partner violence. Some of the definitions however had similar patterns as those given by the victims and queen mothers in the in-depth interview sessions. At each session, the women were encouraged to speak out but not disclose identifiable information of themselves or others. This made the discussion participatory. I observed however that some of them wove in their personal experiences at some point and were very articulate but they attached less emotions to their submissions.

*Attaa, 52, farmer, widow, 4 children: Yoooo ...see, when your husband insults and humiliates you in front of the children or in public that is violence.*

*Sarfoa, 27, storekeeper, in cohabitation, 2 children: Violence in a marriage in my view is when my spouse smokes marijuana, drinks alcohol and beats me up mercilessly such that ...hmmm if I don't run he can even kill me.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: That would be my case which happened less than 3 months ago. Hmmm that is why I divorced him ...my husband even says he will kill me. He even said that when thunder strikes, it should kill me. He actually swore on that. He said he will kill me oohhh and secretly put my body inside my parents' house. You have extra marital affairs and I also have extra marital affairs so what is your problem? ... eeeiii will you kill me*

*Obaayaa, 31, trader, divorced, 1 child: Intimate partner violence is when a man beats his wife and throws her out of the house. Where would she go? How about the children hehhh?*

*Mariama, 45, farmer, married with 4 children: Another form of violence in a relationship is when my husband refuses to help the children to continue their education ... I'm also a sick person who cannot carry heavy load but I had to forcefully work in people's farms to send my son to school. I don't even see my husband often... he doesn't care about us. He hardly comes home. So madam, this is what intimate partner violence means to me.*

*Sarah, 22, commercial driver, in cohabitation, 3 children: When your partner breaks your heart and causes you to think so deep that your head aches or your heart feels pain is intimate partner violence.*

*Margaret, 68, farmer, married with 10 children: As for violence in a relationship, I see it as when your partner does something against you that affects 'wobre mu' (your physical strength) or 'w'adwendwen mu' (affects you psychologically). With such issues you may decide to discuss it with someone you trust ...doing that alone can heal the pain in your heart.*

## **5.8 Queen Mothers' Perspectives on the Forms of IPV**

In addition to the definitions of IPV above, the queen mothers were asked to discuss the forms of intimate partner violence that come to them for intervention. From their submissions, one can identify about four forms of IPV. Queen mothers No. 1 and 2 talked generally about non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect of the wives and kids in their communities which have dire consequences, especially, on the children. Queen mother No. 1 also discusses other forms of IPV such as physical violence against wives and infidelity both on the part of the men and also the women. Queen mother No. 3 talked specifically about a case of infidelity by the man that the wife brought to her attention in the recent past but for her intervention, the marriage would have ended in divorce.

*Queen mother No. 1: um...when a man goes after other women and refuses to provide for his own wife and children, it is a form of intimate partner violence. Sometimes, the man may have married two wives without the knowledge of the women involved and that can be heart breaking. ...and she is also denied her 'chop money'. Beating your wife and refusing responsibility towards her upkeep is also one... Some men also push the burden of taking care of the children solely on the woman and does not care about what they will eat or drink, or what they will wear or their health or education...hmmm 'eyeasemooo'. ...at other times, you see the children at the lorry station begging for food or selling pure water and when the woman talks about it, she gets beaten or scorned in public. If you don't love her, would you have gone in for her? ...My granddaughter, there are however behaviours the women also display that create violence in the home. For example, some women sleep with their drivers and house boys and I think that is evil. Other women behave like humble dogs at the beginning of the relationship but as soon as the man weds her, then she becomes dangerous and hostile to the man's parents and other relatives... accusing her in-laws of witchcraft. All these things are violence in the relationship.*

*Queen Mother No. 2: As a queen mother, some of the women sometimes come to me not for money but, they just want to talk to me about the violence they endure in their*

*marriages. Others get injured from being beaten by their husbands so they come here for herbal treatment and counselling. Sometimes, other women come so that I link them to people with whom they can work for money to support themselves and their children because their husband refuse to cater for their needs.*

*Queen Mother No. 3: The recent case that came to me was about a certain woman whose husband had gone in for another woman and he was causing her a lot of frustration. So I taught her how she should welcome her husband home nicely in order to make the man happy. She followed my instructions and they are still married. In another incident that was reported to me, the man was engaged in extra marital affairs and the woman didn't like it. So she went to the other woman to beat her up. That made her husband furious and he in turn beat up his wife badly. The wife then went to hide in the bushes where the other woman passes to work and fought with her. It became a serious police case and the man threatened to divorce his wife and asked her to pack her belongings from the room. This troubled the woman greatly and she came to discuss it with me so I called the man but he refused to come. I therefore advised the woman to be patient with her husband, humble and shouldn't pursue everything since that could push him away. I advised her to calm down, to continue cooking for him and discuss the matter privately in their room when they go to bed at dawn. I asked her to wake him around that time and say maybe 'ohh my husband, please I made those filthy comments against you because I was offended by your actions so please forgive me'. I told her when she does that the man may understand her frustration and can stay away from the other woman. Lo and behold, now the marriage is on and there isn't any divorce.*

## **5.9 The General Community Women's Perspectives on the Forms of IPV**

Next, I turn to an analysis of the forms that intimate partner violence take or behaviours that constitute IPV. There are elements of such forms of IPV in the definitions respondents have given above except, this section goes further to explore the specific behaviours or conducts that respondents see as constituting IPV. This section helps to expand on the definitions and to fill in the gaps that were left open in the definitions given by the rural women during the community forum. During this exercise, it was somewhat more common for respondents to list out as many forms of IPV as possible especially, those who did not speak to the issues on the definition and those who spoke less about it. Therefore, in addition to the definitions, participants in the community forum shared their views on the forms or nature of IPV or the specific behaviours or

actions and inactions that they consider to be intimate partner violence. As the findings below show, they identified multiple forms of intimate partner violence which range from physical through emotional to economic violence. Some of them demonstrated with real life experiences of people whose identities were replaced with pseudonyms.

Looking at the generally low levels of education for most respondents in this study, they did not categorically use the verbatim terms that largely characterize how literature describes the forms of IPV. However, their clear descriptive views of particular behaviours make it possible to establish a connection and identify with those documented in the extant literature. It is worth acknowledging the fact that these specific forms of IPV discussed by participants in the community forum are very similar to what victims in the in-depth interviews described as their lived experiences. Those have also been presented under the sub-heading ‘Victims Lived Experiences’.

*Dora, 65, trader, married with 4 children: Infidelity is one form of IPV I want to talk about ...um sometimes you will realise that the man has gone in for another woman and it's not like he even does so in secret. He will emotionally abuse you and tease you with his 'new catch'. This happened to my sister and had it not been by the grace of God, she would have been dead by now. Whenever, my sister passes by the other woman's house, she will hear 'mttcchhheewww, 'mttcchhheewww' and wherever the other woman sees her, she will hear 'mttcchhheewww'. One day, this other woman came to look for my sister's husband and my sister asked her to wait while she calls him. Then my sister returned with a new blade hiding in her hands and said to the woman "he is not there ooh and I don't know where he has gone to, hmmm you are very fair in complexion ooh and that is why my husband likes following you". As though it was a joke, my sister used the blade to mark this other woman's face all over and blood oozed out. When her husband later heard the news, he sacked my sister and told her because of the other woman's disfigured face, no other man would want to marry her so he will marry her. He then asked the wife to pack and leave his house immediately. This caused my sister a lot of abnormality in her memory and she took to drinking until we sort both medical and spiritual care for her.*

*Angelina, 50, farmer, married with 3 children: Marital issues are a lot. For example concerning the provision of 'chop money', sometimes one week, two weeks or even three weeks will go by without the man giving out 'chop money' for the family and sometimes*

*the woman is unable to provide for the family because she doesn't work. So sometimes, you will be reluctant to also give him what he wants ...heheheee like um ...you will not allow him to sleep with you. All these disturb your heart and your mind... and can easily kill you or it can cause disorder to the memory. It can also lead to divorce. When these things happen and the woman packs her things from the man's house, people in the community would just conclude that the woman is of bad behaviour but ... 'choow!', they may not know the truth.*

Boatema is a trained teacher whose argument appeared to have hit on the nail of most of the women at the forum reflecting their circumstances because her comment attracted an applause and a loud aahhhaaaa (an agreement in unison) from the gathering. She used different scenarios to explain various forms of intimate partner violence that many rural women endure. She came up with about six forms of violence which can be categorised under economic/financial violence, non-maintenance/deprivation/neglect, psychological/emotional violence, verbal assault/humiliation, physical violence, and sexual assault.

*Boatema, 53, trained teacher, married with 6 children: All that my colleagues have said are very true in the sense that maybe, the man does not provide for the family. However, the woman would work so hard to secure some capital to trade with and the family's meal may be coming from this same income. The children's school fees may also be coming from this same money which was not even given to you by your husband. ... We all know that feeding takes a lot of money and if we should put together all the money women contribute for food, it can even pay school fees and there would be excess but the men do not put monetary value on it. With time, all the capital for the business will vanish and all that the man will say is "you don't know how to trade". Upon all these, the man will not even appreciate your effort or say something that will put your heart at peace. He will insult you such that when you enter your 'kukuamo aaa' (closet), all you do is cry. When it happens like this, it means the man does not appreciate all the work that you do. You see? So you go through emotional pain within you. Eheee! Such things cause the woman to grow lean. Even if the man does not get to provide as he should but is able to at least praise the woman and say "ohh! With all that you are doing, I see it oohh and I appreciate it but it's because I genuinely do not have money". This can at least comfort the woman. But for such a man, he does not provide for the family, neither does he appreciate his wife's efforts. When he comes, he only insults and still takes money from the woman's savings. Annoyingly, he only waits for you to pound 'fufu' for him to eat and when in the evening you refuse him sex, he forcefully sleeps with you and beats you up. He can even accuse you that you might have gone to sleep with other men and that is why you are refusing to allow him to touch you but no no no that might not be the case. Maybe, because he does not take care of you, that is why you are angry and*

*wouldn't want to allow him to touch you. These things are serious forms of intimate partner violence that many women face and sometimes they go through so much emotional pain and die. Do you see?*

*Adwoa, 25, apprentice, in cohabitation, no child: Hmmm madam, I know of a case like this that happened at 'Aponkye Akuraa' last week. A certain sister was married to a man and they had two children but the man was not carrying out his responsibility of taking care of the wife and kids. So the woman decided to go and stay with the mother but her mother did not approve of the separation. So she looked for GHC 100 for the daughter to go back to the husband and trade with the money to support the home. We heard that, on Saturday when they went to bed and the man wanted to have his usual game in bed, the woman refused him. Then he waited for the woman to fall asleep and he picked up a hammer and hit the woman's head with it. So sadly when Sunday morning came, the woman was dead. When this happened, the man run away and on his way he encountered the wife's ghost in Bodwease 'fiilifili' (one-on-one) asking the man "where are you going after you have killed me? Get back". So the man returned to the village to confess and he was arrested within the week and is now in the Nsawam prison. So this woman's corpse will be taken from the mortuary on Friday for wake keeping and will be buried on Saturday.*

Margaret was the oldest compared to all the women who participated in the sessions of the community forum. She emphasises the killing of wives by their spouses and says that the concerns being raised by participants are not scenes they have watched on television but are the true state of affairs in their communities. Ama also gives another twist to the nature in which physical violence can take.

*Margaret, 68, farmer, married with 10 children: Violence among spouses is very common in this village and they come in various forms like all that we have told you. We are telling you what we experience and what we observe right here in our community. Not what we watch on TV or hear on the radio. Sometimes, some men go to the extent of planning to remove their partners from this world.*

*Ama, 50, porter, married with 5 children: Sometimes, the man will slap the woman or pack her things outside in the rain and ask the children to also sleep in the rain. That happens a lot and these are the problems that are destroying us.*

Non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect were key forms of IPV which came out many times in the discussion. Adwoa talks about when the man neglecting his duty of performing the marriage rites as a form of violence whereas Comfort, Seesi, Augustina, Portia and Sarfoa

emphasize failure to provide for the family's needs such as food, clothing, school fees for the children among others.

*Adwoa, 25, apprentice, in cohabitation, no child: The men these days are reluctant to perform your marriage rites. Any day you bring that up then it creates war at home.*

*Seesi, 35, fish monger, married with 4 children: As a husband, if the children are going to school you must be able to provide for them and pay their school fees. He must also be able to pay the light bill but if he leaves all these responsibilities on me to suffer, I consider that violence. If the husband goes after other women, it also brings emotional trauma to the woman.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: My issue has to do with men who do not provide money for food. When he gets money he uses it to stake lotto and refuses to pay for the children's school fees and cater for other needs. How can the child go to school to become a responsible person in society? It worries me a lot when my husband hides his money from me.*

*Sarfoa, 27, storekeeper, in cohabitation, 2 children: ... maybe this man does not even give me 'chop money' and if the children would have to go to school it's all by my effort, then what will I be doing in such an embarrassing marriage? Maybe, if the food I cook does not taste nice in a small way, then he gets angry and scorns me. He will say today that there is too much salt and tomorrow he will say the pepper is too much. If the pepper is not enough the next day too there will be trouble. Aaabaaa! For all you know, he had gone to eat elsewhere and is just disturbing your peace.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: The kind of behaviour that my partner puts up is too much paaa. He insults me and insults my father and mother in addition. My parents tell me to divorce him and I tell them not to worry because I have my own way that I will use to leave him. So now I have divorced him and he doesn't understand. He told people that he will kill me and some of them came to inform me. I don't want him to pierce my stomach with a knife or kill me so I decided to inform the police about it. He doesn't cater for his children. He is stupid and does not reason that if he takes care of the children and they get a good job in future, they will intend take care of him in his old age when he cannot work. He drinks 'akpeteshie' (locally made hard liquor) and so he gets drunk and fools about in this community. As for beating me, hmmm plenty. My problems are many. If we want to talk about all of them, we will not finish today. When his parents talk about his behaviour, then he takes his anger on them too. One other thing that disturbs me a lot is the way he insults my parents without any respect. You don't look after your children, yet you insult my parents without feeling shameful about it.*

Comfort and Owusua's worry are not only about non-maintenance or physical violence but also about infidelity on the part of the man. They demonstrate the forms of violence and further talk about the precipitating factors as well as the impact it has on the relationship.

*Comfort, 63, farmer, divorced, 7 children: The things that a married man will do that will create violence in a relationship is when he chases other women and when the wife complains about it then it triggers fighting. Maybe, she has suffered all these years with the man, cooks for him but he doesn't even come home to eat the food because he is with his girlfriend at a beer bar. All he does is to collect more beer for the lady to drink. You may not confront him at the bar but when he comes home and you bring it up, then he slaps you just because of another woman and tells you to pack and go.*

*Owusua, 37, fish monger, married with 4 children: When your man goes out anytime he wants without spending time with you, it leaves you heartbroken all the time. Sometimes, you will find out that he is doing that because he has found another woman out there. When it happens like that, he spends his money on the other women and does not provide for the children. That causes you so much pain and that to me is intimate partner violence because it is coming from your husband or the man you love.*

Finally, Ahiave, 26 years old, single with three children from three different relationships and who happens to be the second youngest respondent in one of the community forum, boldly shared aspects of her own personal experiences as she puts forward her views on the forms of IPV. She uses the opportunity to advise her fellow young ladies to take advantage of the little support they receive from their parents to work hard in school or learnt a trade. She expressed lots of regrets about rushing into a relationship with the promise of marriage which never saw the light of day.

*Ahiave, 26, farmer, single, 3 children: Madam, I will use myself as an example. At the beginning of the relationship, the man treated me nicely when I agreed to his proposal to marry me... hmmm then when I became pregnant... um.. it got to the point where I needed God to intervene. These days, there isn't any better man anywhere so what I want to tell my fellow girls is that when you get the chance for your parents to send you to school, you have to be focused to finish your studies. Even if your mother does not have enough money, you must work hard in school and sometimes agree to go without food because your mother may be working hard just for you. Um...if you give yourself out to men, they will use you. Maybe, he will be nice at the beginning of the relationship but will not do same later on. He may impregnate you but will deny it even when you are sure he*

*is the one responsible. When the pregnancy grows, you may not be strong enough to work for money and that is when you will become frustrated in life. You will become miserable because you will be hungry but cannot get food to eat. Sometimes the man can buy himself enough food to eat but will not give you. All these are violence against women. I will be a liar if I don't confess that the guy who was responsible for my first pregnancy did not frustrate me. It got to a point when my condition was hopeless. I had to work as a labourer on people's farms to get money for food even when I was heavily pregnant. Things got even worse with my second pregnancy. So the advice I will give to my fellow ladies is that, they should exercise a lot of patience so that even if their parents are unable to put them through school, they can learn a trade, they should work hard so that in future no man can 'bluff' them.*

### **5.10 Circumstances under which Violent Behaviour is Justifiable**

Here, I sought to find out if respondents in the community forum had a way of excusing the violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partners or whether there were times when violent behaviours would be justified or approved. I needed to establish whether violence is violence no matter the circumstance or there were few times when some women made compromises and therefore saw nothing wrong with it. Responses were largely skewed towards the mantra 'violence is violence on any given day' while few gave room to the 'enye whee' (it's no problem or it's nothing) syndrome thereby, approving of such conduct.

*Sarfoa, 27, storekeeper, in cohabitation, 2 children: There will be no such occasion when I will consider any of these madness as justifiable. It is violence paaa on any given day.*

*Boatemaa, 53, trained teacher, married with 6 children: Under no circumstance will the man be right with his violent behaviour. It is love that brings two people together for marriage so if your wife has offended you, you have no justification to be violent towards her. You can call her to the room quietly and speak with her or wake her up at dawn to discuss the problem. But some men will not do that, rather as soon as you do something wrong then he slaps you 'kpaaa' so no man has the right to violent on his partner no matter what wrong the woman does. He has to talk to you about whatever it is you might have done but for him to stretch out his hand to slap you is unacceptable.*

Dora with an illustration says it is for the sake of the wellbeing of the children that most women would stay in a violent relationship and suffer even to the point of death. She however adds that although this may be the posture of the women, it does not take away the fact that the man's behaviour is a violent one. On the other hand, Felicia and Comfort are of the view that their partners' violent behaviours may be justifiable once the fault is theirs. Felicia, believes her moment of pain may present an opportunity for the man to console her or even provide money to support her business.

*Dora, 65, trader, married with 4 children: Maybe you have four children with this man and you cannot carry them to another man's house. So even though the man is killing you, you will say 'enye wheee' (it's nothing). If you leave the children behind, they can become wayward and I know of a situation like that. A certain woman left her children behind and went into another relationship. So when the eldest girl wakes up, he tells the father that he is going to the mother and ends up at the boyfriend's room. When he tells the mother too that she is going to visit dad, then she goes straight to sleep with her boyfriends and this continued for some time until the teenage girl became pregnant and couldn't tell which of the men was responsible. These and other problems are the reasons why some women would say it's better to stay in the marriage even though the man is violent but it does not mean you consider your partner's behaviour as non-violent.*

*Comfort, 63, farmer, divorced, 7 children: We are also part of the reason why the men beat us and they may be justified. Most of the time, the woman refuses to do what the man wants. The man might say, "my clothes are dirty so wash them for me" but the woman might insult the husband. In such a situation, the man might get angry and stretch his hand on the woman so it is our fault sometimes.*

*Felicia, 34, trader, married with 7 children: One of the reasons why I will consider my partner's violent behaviour as nothing violent is when it is my fault. Maybe, I did not keep the house clean or I did not do my house chores or I did not cook his food. Sometimes he might console me or praise me when I do the right thing. ...hmmm the comforting words that come out of the mouth of your husband alone can make you say "it is okay, after all when I'm going through pain he comforts me". Again, he may have mercy on me and give me money to invest in my business and when I run out of money, he may provide. That is why I would not complain about his violent behaviour.*

Felicia gives another twist to her argument. She goes deeper to talk about the control that family can have on the relationship which subsequently influences the couple's stance.

According to Selina, there would be no such time when she will justify the man's violence against her but she may perhaps be in the abusive relationship because she wouldn't want to leave for another woman to enjoy what she and her partner might have worked hard together for.

*Felicia, 34, trader, married with 7 children: Sometimes, for the woman to say the man's violent behaviour is ... um is something to worry about then it may depend on what his family members will do. Maybe, his sisters or mother-in-law will be sitting somewhere not knowing the pain you are going through but will be thinking you are enjoying their brother's wealth. I experienced that some time ago, when my husband's family member confessed to me later that she visited us to see for herself how much I am allegedly enjoying because of what she had heard from my husband's family members until she saw for herself that it was not easy for us. When you remember such nonsense from the man's family, that is when you will feel the pain of the man's violent behaviour and decide to even seek divorce because after all, someone somewhere is just calculating wrongly. I have 7 children and when I look at the number of children I have and I think about going to live with another man, it scares me. For all you know, he might even be worse off so in such a situation you just take it like that.*

*Selina, 51, trader, married with 6 children: Violence is violence and I would never say it is good. It's just that eerrr...it could happen that, when you came to marry the man he had nothing but now you have worked hard together to build houses and acquired properties, so you wouldn't want another woman to come and take over. You may then say 'enye wheee' (it's nothing)' and decide to stay in the violent relationship.*

At Bremang, Seesi shared similar views as the Asikasu women where she alluded to the fact that the children are a major factor why one might excuse the man's violent behaviour even though it is obvious he is intentionally doing so. Interestingly, upon a second thought and as a wake-up call, she acknowledged that perhaps, these justifications women make could account for the reasons why they are being consistently abused.

*Seesi, 35, fish monger, married with 4 children: Sometimes, you might think as for today he is being violent because of some influence so you might say "oh let me overlook it". Then he might do it a second and third time. This should tell you he does so intentionally.*

*...but the problem is “how can I leave my marriage with three or four children and go into another relationship when I don’t even know how the new man will treat my children? That is why I will stay in this marriage with all the man’s troubles. ...Eeiiii but seriously, perhaps... hmmm ‘the no problem, no problem’ is the reason why these men keep abusing us ooohh.*

## **5.11 Conclusion**

This chapter of the findings has presented the socio-demographic characteristics of research respondents from the three sampled villages, and has sought to answer the first research question on the conceptualisation of intimate partner violence by rural women in the Upper West Akyem District. In the section, I have analysed the data in relation to my three research questions, and I have also explained how I built the emergent themes around the factors that create happiness in an intimate relationship, the definitions of IPV, the various forms that IPV can take or the behaviours that constitute intimate partner violence, and the circumstances under which violent behaviour is justifiable. The results show various perspectives in quotes obtained via in-depth interviews with IPV victims, queen mothers, and through community forum with the general women from the villages as they establish their understanding on the issues of IPV.

The actual major findings of this research which I identified in this chapter are highlighted below. First, by expanding what is known about IPV in rural areas, this research has expanded on the dimension of IPV. Again, respondents acknowledged that intimate partner violence is a set of interconnected variables of undesirable behaviours which do not form part of the elements that create happiness in an intimate relationship. They did not sum all familial acts of violence together as IPV but were very specific about what constitutes intimate partner violence. The findings also demonstrate how the study help shape our understanding of how

rural women define or conceptualise intimate partner violence, stating that it is an unacceptable phenomenon marred with undesirable consequences.

Second, in the chapter most respondents who were in an abusive relationship explained that even if they stayed, it was for the wellbeing of their children; and that there will be no circumstance under which the violence they experience would be justified. They therefore called for interventions that can support them financially and enable them take care of the needs of their children.

Third, this chapter emphasises on the point that intimate partner violence goes beyond marital status, educational qualification, geographical location, culture, religion, ethnicity or other socio-economic factors. The findings show that women who suffer violence in their intimate relationships do not have particular characteristics that predispose them to violence. Therefore, the social or economic characteristics of a rural woman was not a determining factor of becoming a victim of intimate partner violence. Even though it may be possible that victimization and the above mentioned trajectories are causally linked, it is also possible that other factors account for the observed differences [another area for future research].

Fourth, another major finding identified in this chapter is that, the rural women have created a more informed perspective on the factors that produce happiness in an intimate relationship. Some participants talked about the extent to which families can influence and control the relationship if the partners involved fail to be united and resourceful. In their submissions, they called for active social options from social support systems, and encouraged couples to think about and create different sources of happiness within their families.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RESULTS: VICTIMS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter six is the second chapter of the results section and it answers the second research question - What are the lived experiences of rural victims of intimate partner violence? The results in this chapter are exclusively responses obtained via the in-depth interviews from the victims of IPV who shared their lived experiences based on how they have been victimized in their heterosexual intimate relationships. The results have been presented based on the following emerging themes which have essentially been captured as the major sub-headings: 1) the forms of intimate partner violence experienced; 2) victims' reactions to the violence; 3) victims' sentiments and Sympathy in the midst of the violence; and 4) the impact of the violence.

#### 6.2 The Forms of IPV experienced

The forms of intimate partner violence women alluded to during the community forum were illuminated within the in-depth interview sessions with the victims themselves. The findings indicate that rural victims experience multiple forms of violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partners. In this section of the results and in connection with descriptive/eidetic phenomenology, I have provided a vivid and detailed description of how these rural women were victimized by their partners. Based on the experiences victims shared during the in-depth interviews, I have categorised the forms of IPV that came to light into the following for the purpose of this study: 1) Physical violence; 2) Sexual assault; 3) Psychological/emotional violence; 4) Verbal assault/humiliation; 5) Economic/financial violence; 6) Non-

maintenance/Deprivation/Neglect; 7) Infidelity; and 8) Coercion and Intimidation. Table 5.0, Socio-demographic Characteristics of IPV Victims from the In-depth Interviews, provides an overview of all the different forms of intimate partner violence that each of the twenty-four (24) victims had suffered. Some of the women had endured a maximum of six forms of IPV and others two. This part of the interview was quite emotional for some of the women, many of who described the interview session as therapeutic.

### 6.2.1 Physical Violence

Physical violence in this research work includes battery and all its related actions such as beating, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, throwing, scratching and dragging, among other things whether or not they cause any physical harm to the victim. I found out that, many of the women described multiple forms of violent experiences perpetrated against them by their partners. These women were very firm about labeling such behaviours as violence regardless the precipitating factors. Again, respondents explained that the circumstances under which such actions occur (like receiving slaps for going to the beach or for not cooking) do not take away the fact that these behaviours are forms of violence. For example, For some of the respondents irrespective of their ages or marital status, one of the biggest setbacks has to do with physical violence. They share their experiences with battery in the quotations below,

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: He has turned me into a fellow boxer and refuses to play his role as a husband... He beats me and fights with me all the time ... There is one particular incidence I remember so well. That day, I went to his farm without telling him because he was at the other woman's place. Was I supposed to go there to call him? But heeiii, my husband didn't understand why I did not inform him first before harvesting food from the farm; a farm I worked so hard to maintain. He started arguing with me and when I wasn't looking, he slapped me. He then beat me up mercilessly until the cloth I had tied around my waist came off and I was naked in the midst of other tenants.*

*Georgina, 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: I remember some time ago I went to the beach to swim and my husband used a cane to whip me like a child. I thought when I pick up my baby in my arms, he would be deterred from beating me but he still beat me up until the child fell. I expected him to warn me first instead of beating me up. Even with what he did, I did not plan to divorce him because I thought it was just a marital issue which didn't need to be reported. He rather divorced me when there was an issue between his mother and I.*

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: One evening after we finished sales at the store, I asked him to drive me home ... well we were both to go home. I did not know he was drunk but he drove. When we got to the police barrier, the police officer stopped us, inspected the car and warned my husband strongly against drunk driving and also asked him not to wear slippers to drive. That is when I noticed he was drunk and I rebuked him in front of the policeman. So when we got home he became furious and started hitting me... Um I run out of the house that night when it was getting serious and I came to hide in my mother's house here in this village but he followed me that night all the way here to beat me up mercilessly ...hmmm, in my own mother's house ooh. That was the second time he had beaten me in my mother's house and I don't know if it is because he does not respect my parents anymore. I thought he was shy of my parents but he acts violently under the influence of alcohol. On that day, our youngest child was tied with cloth behind me but my husband kept beating me until my daughter fell from my back. This man did not care ooh. As at that time, my parents were at the shop on the roadside and the rest of the other tenants were in their rooms. By the time my parents heard me crying and came to my rescue, he had finished beating me... my daughter and I were both wailing uncontrollably.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: There is always beatings. Even when something is not that serious, he will beat me... Madam, he beat me up that day, stumped his foot into my stomach mercilessly and I started bleeding. I later lost the pregnancy. This man can just slap me in the face for me to fall down and he will stump me 'rough rough'.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: The last time I hang my clothes on the drying line, he came for them and burnt them into ashes...At first he wasn't like that. He started his violent behaviour when I was pregnant with our first born. I once got him arrested when I was pregnant with our second child for hitting me and stumping his foot in my abdomen... so he killed the baby in my womb. That second born would have been our third child hmmm. Sometime ago, he saw me in public and called me but I did not mind him so he took a cane and whipped me. I was by then on my way to give food to my grandfather at the top. I then went straight to inform his mother who brought me home through another route. Do you know something? Whenever he misbehaves, he doesn't stay in this village ooh, he goes to hide in another village. ...Because he is a commercial driver, he pretends to be working in the various communities but I know it is his strategy to hide from the police since he knows I will report him by all means. I told his friends last week to tell him not to step his foot in this village because I will get him arrested and I believe he has heard it.*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: Hmmmm madam, as for what we call marriage ... aaaahh I don't enjoy it ... I don't feel married. He beats me all the time; even yesterday and that is why I couldn't go to the farm today. I have done nothing against him. Three days ago I brought in footwear from Accra and someone asked me to add some of the sandals for her to sell for me. So after she went out to sell the footwear and came back, she advised me that if I had reduced the prices to 3 Ghana Cedis, all my items would have been sold. What is insulting about this? But when my husband heard us talking, he came out to accuse us of insulting him. Then he went inside to pick the bag of footwear and poured all away. Next, I saw him coming towards me and I started running but he ran faster than I could so he caught me even though I was rescued by some men. At that point madam you should have been there to see. He tackled me, beat me up and took off my clothes in public [tears began flowing]. Had it not been because of the pair of shorts I was wearing, he would have exposed my complete nakedness to everyone. This was right in the presence of many people.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, Single but dating, 2 children: In fact, we fight but because he is a male, he overpowers me. When I see that he is beating me too much then I run to my friends' place until he comes over to beg me to come back. When he comes around, he says I should forgive him because he acted out of anger. When I run to my parents', he comes there with a new piece of cloth to plead. The last time, he battered me so badly that I had bruises all over my body and my face and I had clots of blood on my eyes so I reported him to the police. However, his family members came to my parents to beg for us to settle the matter at home so my father charged him with GHC 400 for damages and he paid. I was given GHC 300 and my parents took GHC 100. My father warned him that this was his last time and asked him never to stretch his hands on me again since that will send him to jail. Since that time, he hasn't beaten me ... at least not yet but he still chases other women and even young girls.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: I don't offend him but if I should say something, he beats me. When it happens like that, I get bruises and I feel severe pains in my body. Once, when I confronted him about his infidelity, he fought with me and beat me up in the girlfriend's presence. He didn't care. It was even that annoying girl [partner's girlfriend] who begged him to stop beating me because I was pregnant. I started bleeding but I thank God my child did not die.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: ...with the least issue he will hit you. Something you think should be solved quietly, he wouldn't. When he gets angry and he has something in his hands, he can just use it to hit me.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: He was very aggressive ... hmmm this man used to fight with me and his other wives... beatings, beatings kaaaiii. Whenever, I confronted him about something, he beat me up so I stopped complaining. Mostly, my cheeks were swollen and I went through so much pain.*

*Christiana: 36, trader, married with 6 children: as soon as you comment about his drinking behaviour, then he will hit me very well and fight with me. The least thing that you talk about will turn into a fight and such a marriage is not able to stand... Whenever I talk about it, then*

*he tries to fight with me...At the time I made the comment, I was carrying my daughter at my back but my husband hit me and the child fell. Anytime I remember that incident, it hurts me so badly.*

*Sukena, 23, waitress, single but dating, 1 child: Again, when this man goes out he gets drunk and he smokes with his friends so the least thing provokes him and brings about beatings... Well, for me I made a mistake. I cheated on my boyfriend with another guy. He found out about it and broke up from the relationship. The next thing I heard was that he was getting married... he went ahead to marry another woman and I felt jealous. I then rushed into another relationship and started dating a new guy with whom I had my son. That guy was very abusive. He always slaps me and whenever I go to demand money from him to take care of the child it always ends in a fight. I broke up with him too oooh sister and I'm currently going out with a married man who doesn't even provide for me...*

### **6.2.2 Sexual Assault**

Physical assault notwithstanding, rural women also face setbacks with regards to sexual assault by their own partners. Even though some women in the community forum earlier argued that a woman should be ready to satisfy the man sexually since sex is something men cannot do without and the woman's refusal may send him out to cheating, these women [below] in the in-depth interviews intimated that there are days when the men sexually assault them and do not exercise wisdom when it comes to sexual intercourse. Three of the victims boldly spoke out and shared their experiences with sexual assault. As illustrated below they indicated that sometimes the men just use the women as 'sex machines' or as 'baby producing factories' such that even on sick days for example they [the men] forcefully would have sex with them [the women]. For example, in the case of Angelina who had undergone surgery, she had to still battle with forced sex which resulted in a pregnancy that almost killed her. Meanwhile, Augustina, a 25 years old mother of four, attempted several concoctions to abort a pregnancy that was conceived as a result of forced sexual intercourse by her partner whom she is in cohabitation with.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: All he does is to use me as 'mahin' [machine] ...sleeping with me whenever he wants ...whenever he enters the room then.... So anytime I'm alone and I think about it then I feel sad and cheated.*

*Angelina: 47, cook, married with 8 children: He knows I have been disabled by sickness and cannot do hard work any longer but this man sleeps with me always because he says he wanted another boy. He doesn't even take care of these children yet he slept with me forcefully and got me pregnant again even when he knew I had gone through an 'operation' [surgery]. ... Um when I went to deliver that last child, I had to go through another operation that nearly took my life. When the time came for me to give birth, I packed my things and went to the hospital alone and throughout my stay at the hospital, my husband never came to visit me. The women I met in my ward safely gave birth and aawww...it was left with me alone [in tears]. The doctor and the nurses kept asking me when my people were coming but I kept lying to them that "my husband would be here soon." I'm telling you I did not eat for 3 days and it was difficult for me to push hard so they took me to the theatre at 12 o'clock midnight for surgery. When they were taking me away, everyone at the ward was saying "go with the Lord ooh" and at that time I knew I wasn't coming back. I kept doing hmmm, hmmm and you should have seen how miserable I was at that time... I was very miserable and I think I died but because of the God I serve, I came back to life. The doctor even told me that my God has saved me.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: Sister, I decided not to allow him to touch me in bed for some time after he humiliated me in public that I am 'dwnsokrobo' (bed wetter). This is a condition I suffer from after every child birth. Um...um I didn't want to get pregnant again so I stood by that decision until after two months when he reported me to his uncle. His uncle advised both of us to live in peace and warned my husband to start preparing to perform my marriage rites which he agreed to do. But when we came back home, the only items my husband gave me money to buy in preparation towards the marriage ceremony were ladies panties worth 2 Ghana Cedis only. ...and one night, he forced to sleep with me and unfortunately, I became pregnant again with this baby on my lap so I decided to abort it and run away. However, I tried several concoctions but I couldn't destroy the pregnancy and I gave birth to this child [on her lap]. I think this baby is a miracle from God to be able to live despite the concoctions and will become a great person one day.*

### **6.2.3 Non-maintenance, Deprivation and Neglect**

Another important form of violence that rural women endured is non-maintenance/deprivation and neglect on the part of their partners. Approximately eighty-eight percent (21 out of 24) of all the rural victims interviewed mentioned non-

maintenance/deprivation and neglect as a major form of violence they suffered in the hands of their intimate partners.

*Margaret, farmer, 48, married with 6 children: When my husband gets money, he gives it to the other woman and tells me he has no money. He won't even spend 10 Ghana Pesewas on me. It's already been 4 days and I haven't seen him even though I have hint that he is right here in the village. He always claims he has no money...He is only bothered about the needs of other women and their children and wouldn't take any serious care of my own.*

*Angelina, cook, 47, married with 8 children: What I find painful right now is the 'chop money' he doesn't give me. Does he mean he makes no money from his farm? He should understand that the work I do now doesn't bring much money. He forgets that, the children are not only two but eight ... buying food items to cook every day for a family of 10 is not easy ooh my sister. I borrow from people all the time but he doesn't ask himself whether there is any profit in borrowing. As I sit here right now, I owe. I am not able to even pay my dues at church too. If I say I don't worry about these things, then I am lying ... hmmm. ...Also I had to look for money somewhere to take care of two of our boys in SSS (Senior High School) and now by God's grace, they have finished SSS. Would you believe my husband has never asked me how I managed to pay their school fees for three years? I am a middle school Form 4 leaver but because I didn't get a helper, I couldn't continue. I can't allow my brilliant children to end up like me. Whiles they are waiting for WAEC (West African Examinations Council) to release their results, these boys would want to be working to save some money but they are now staying with us here in the village helping their father on the farm for free. These boys want to buy admission forms and go to the university or to a teacher training college but it is left with the 'k' [money]. Our second son has been quite helpful. He just graduated from electrical apprenticeship and he told me yesterday that when he finds a job for his brothers, he will come and take them away to Accra. Now that they are becoming men, if they should stay aimlessly in this village my fear is that they might impregnate someone's daughter ooh bueeiii... that would bring us so much dishonour.*

*Tiwaa, farmer, 31, married with 5 children: There are some men as soon as they wake up then they take their cutlasses and go to the farm without providing 'chop money' ...they don't care about what the children will eat. ...I'm sure even women who have very good jobs in the cities get their men to still provide for them. How much more those of us here in the village who have nothing better doing? My marriage is filled with so much violence. He had a wife who left him so I came to meet their three children who were very young with the youngest being about a year old. I also had two children from a previous marriage but I didn't bring them along and they have never been here. I took care of his children until they reached their teenage years when the youngest girl realised I wasn't their mother, she did certain things that made me leave my marriage. Aaaahhh that little girl accused me of asking his father to send her mother away and she refused to eat my food because she said I was a witch. My husband started giving his daughter the chop money to cook for the family instead of me and*

*I felt badly hurt. As a result, I went away to live with my parents for two years. I had two girls with him at the time so I came back to pick them away. After those two years, my husband came to my parent's place to apologise and he said that stubborn child is no more staying in the house so I should come back. ... but I became pregnant again and gave birth to this child I'm carrying. Madam, his behaviour didn't change when I came back apart from the absence of his disrespectful daughter. He doesn't care about me and the children and does not provide money for our upkeep. He also failed to help me pay off the loan. I expected that, since I had thought him a lesson by walking away for two years, he would change for the better but everything is still the same. ... Oooh madam, even throughout my pregnancy up until the time I gave birth, he refused to provide for us. The cost I incurred at the hospital became my own debt which I had to pay all by myself. That dawn when I was in pain, he was in the room with me but it was my co-tenant who took me to the hospital. Madam, when we got to the hospital we were told the doctors were on strike and they did not accept the national insurance card I had so I had to pay. Hmmm, I didn't have money and had to beg my co-tenant who paid my entire hospital bill. When I was discharged, I informed my husband about the debt and expected him to settle that cost but he told me the baby belongs to both of us so I can also pay. Do you see?*

*Amina, trader, 42, married with 4 children: When you are in need and the man always tells you he doesn't have, it frustrates you. But when you need something and he provides and he also needs something and you provide then it becomes like the left hand bathing the right and the right bathing the left. If it doesn't happen like that, then you the woman becomes frustrated... I consider it violent when I ask him for something and he refuses to give it to me especially when I can see that he's got it. Such things pain me aaaa. If he says he doesn't have when I know he has, hurts me. Sometimes too when the children ask him for something and he tells them to go to their mother, it hurts me and it puts the entire burden on me.*

*Hajia, trader, 48, married with 2 children: Now what he frustrates me with is money matters. Madam, as for me I have really met stupidity in this marriage oohhh; I have seen a lot of foolishness in my marriage. If I had not gone into this foolish marriage I wouldn't have been like this because even though I am uneducated and ignorant about certain things, I would have been better off.... Aaaaahhhhh true paaa oohh, if it hadn't been for this marriage I would have been better off.... When I get seriously sick, I can be lying down helpless for days but this man will not even ask me if I have taken medication or eaten. He won't ask. Hmmm meanwhile, when it's getting to supper time then he will come and ask me "won't you cook?" When I go to the hospital and the national health insurance scheme does not cover my treatment and I have to pay, he will never pay for me. The Issue about money is what he uses to upset me. Currently, I can even say that I have become the man and he is now the woman because I provide the chop money. When something comes up and we have to contribute, mine is always more than his. If you look at this, isn't it a form of violence? It is violence. When our son is ready for school in the mornings and asks him for money, he says "I don't have". In that case I have to provide and sometimes about two weeks will go by without him giving our son even 10 Ghana pesewas. I can't tell what he uses his money for. Everyday all*

he says is “I don’t have, I don’t have” ...At first, he used to buy me something when he travels but he stopped doing that a long time ago. Sometimes I ask him ‘eeii papa, enti wo tuu kwan yi common brodo kuraa w’antumi anto bi ambre yen? W’antumi anto bi ammbre nkolaa yi mpo?’ (eeii man, so when you travelled, you couldn’t even buy us common bread? (So you couldn’t even buy some for these children?) He wouldn’t even mind me. That tells you that he has purposed in his heart not to do it.

*Kesewaa, trader, 27, Separated, 2 children: He did not even buy any Christmas dresses for the children and he also refused to contribute anything to the family’s upkeep during the Christmas and New Year period. Members of his family and mine met to resolve this issue but in less than three weeks after this problem was resolved, he started drinking again and continued with his violent behavior.*

*Augustina, housewife, 25, in cohabitation, 4 children: When we started dating, my partner was a commercial driver and he used to give me money. As soon as I became pregnant, he stopped providing for me and life became difficult so I aborted the pregnancy. At that time, I was living with my parents ... that was before my mother died. Soon I became pregnant for him again and my father decided that I should come and stay with this man. So that is how come I moved here and now I have all these children with him. He did not perform my marriage rites. He was only made to pay a compensation for getting me pregnant. Sometimes, he does not even give me 1 Ghana cedis for food. So I stay hungry the whole day until evening when he gives me 2 Ghana Cedis as ‘chop money’ ... madam, how much is 2 Ghana Cedis? That is not enough for a family of six. Sometimes, when someone gives me money then I use that to buy food for my children. He does not carry out his responsibility as my husband and doesn’t provide for the children. He is now a cocoa farmer and I help him on his farm but as soon as we harvest the cocoa and he makes money then, he decides not to talk to me. The highest amount of ‘chop money’ he has given me is 5 Ghana Cedis and sometimes he will even ask me for a change. Since I came to live with him, he has never bought a cloth for me so I also don’t see his use as a husband. ...I mostly stay very hungry and that makes me cry. When I’m hungry, I would be left with no option apart from going into prostitution but I don’t know how to do that. So sometimes, I stay in the room the whole day without eating. Before my mother died, I remember I went to her to have my second child and my husband called to accuse my mother that she has allowed me to overstay because she wants to give me out to another man for marriage. He ordered my parents to send me back to his house before he kills my mother. So my mother decided to call the elders from both families to discuss the issue but she got seriously ill and died so that meeting never took place [crying]. ...Today for instance, my husband is in the house. He did not go out because he has no money. That is what usually happens; he stays home when he has no money and expects me to conjure food for him to eat. I’ve also become wise. When I have money and he is home, I do not use it to cook. We all stay hungry together until he goes to his farm to bring foodstuffs for me to cook. When I don’t wash his clothes, he complains but he forgets he does not play his role as a husband. Could you believe he has asked our two children to stop schooling and stay home?*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: I expect my marriage to be successful but my partner does not take care of me and the two children. He does not even buy anything for us. When he gives me money for food, he asks me to top it up. It is not because he doesn't have money ooh.... he has money on him but he will not give me enough to cook. If I should even borrow from somewhere, he will not pay. He will ask the person to take the money from me because I borrowed it. In this community, they sell cassava at the price of 2 Ghana Cedis but that is the exact chop money my husband will give to me and he expects me to top it up and prepare fufu with soup for the family to eat. If I buy 2 Ghana Cedis worth of cassava, won't the money get finished? It is nonsense... perhaps, he expects to eat his fufu with water instead of soup.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: Madam, how can a husband refuse to take care of his wife and children? He doesn't give the children money for food and when their school uniform gets torn, he doesn't bother to buy them new ones. He is a drunk and only cares about using his money on alcohol... When my ex-husband realised I was serious about divorcing him, he suddenly started buying clothes for the children. He never bothered about their wellbeing so why will he do it now? He thinks I am stupid and doesn't respect me as his wife. All these things are intimate partner violence. This new man is a tailor, he is very humble, he provides for me and he has told me about his intentions to marry me. I have informed my mother and sister about it but I haven't yet told my father but we will inform him very soon because the man wants to come for the list of items to perform my traditional marriage ceremony. He has agreed to take care of my children even though he has no child of his own.*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: If you marry a woman and at some point you do not have money to take care of her needs, you have to be able to explain it to her in a nice way so that if she has got some money, she can also help. As for my husband, whether he has money or not, he wants me to tackle him with anger before he gives me money. If he has got money on him then you may be lucky to receive something but if he doesn't have, then he will be walking about aimlessly instead of explaining things to you. He is a cocoa farmer. He makes a lot of money from his farm but he is stingy. Um...um...sometimes, we borrow money or food items before we eat just because he will not provide for us. He will be walking about aimlessly without saying a word. My husband is the quiet type who wouldn't talk. Whenever I bring up money matters, all he will say is ...errrr "when I get I will give you" but when he gets he wouldn't even let me see. As for him, he doesn't drink alcohol but I don't see what he does with his money. Sometimes, he says he is saving it at the bank which I don't believe. All these are part of intimate partner violence especially, when he refuses to give me money even when he has it. It pains me a lot when he does that. For instance, when I give birth and he has to perform the naming ceremony, he will not do it. He will just be delaying for a long time and at the end of the day, he will close his mind to it. That pains me so much. Um ...he has never beaten me but refusing to provide for my needs is violence against me as his wife.*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: ...I don't know what he wants from me. When he sees that someone's wife is looking beautiful, he will say it but he will not make his own wife look beautiful. He harvests a lot of cocoa but if the year comes, he will not say "take this amount" unless I toil all by myself to make money to buy something. With this, would you find joy in the marriage? He is very mean. The children did not even go to school today. They didn't go because he refused to give them money. Madam, I am the one who takes care of the children ooh... he doesn't care about them.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, Single but dating, 2 children: ... Truly, if you love each other and he hurts you, you can forgive easily. But then sometimes, some men refuse to give you chop money. When he wakes up he just leaves the house pooaaa without providing for the family and you go through suffering. There isn't much work to do in this village to bring income; that is why some women go behind their husbands to sleep with other men. It is for the money but that brings a lot of problems in the marriage. So when some women talk about violence, violence, violence these are some of the forms of violence.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: In terms of providing for the family, he is not good at that. My chop money does not come very regularly. When I borrow money from people for the sake of the children it becomes a huge cost for me to settle... Well, in the beginning, my husband was very caring and he did not joke with my needs at all but as soon as I produced two children for him, he began treating me badly. When we started living together at first, he didn't know how to drink alcohol but now because he associates himself with friends, he has learnt how to drink and does despicable things. This man does not provide money for food. When he is in good mood, he gives me money but he only gives what he likes and whenever I talk about it he beats me and insults me anyhow he wants.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: ... My husband is a villager and he has lived in this village all his life so he doesn't see what goes on in the world. If your husband decides not to give you money to take care of the needs of the children and behaves like someone who doesn't care, it is violence because he puts you through suffering. I did not get the opportunity for my parents to help me finish school and they also did not put me through any form of apprenticeship so I know how it feels like and wouldn't want my children to go through the same thing. We have only two children and I believe we should be able to work very hard to take care of them and provide everything they need especially in their education. I don't want to give birth with another man or marry a different man and expect him to take care of my children. That is why I want my husband to see the relevance of what I am saying so that we will both put aside our personal interest to take care of just these two kids. If you do not give your children a good future, you suffer. I do not worry too much if he is not able to provide for my personal needs because he plans towards the future of the children but this man doesn't even care whether the children go to school or not. Last Monday for example, the kids did not write exams because their father did not pay for their printing fees. Hmmm I cried. Our first born came to ask me why their father did not allow them to go to school and I angrily told him it is because their father dropped out of JSS and he does not want them to be*

*better than him. Madam, I could not get good education but I want my children to go to the highest level and become important people in society who will take care of us but this man does not think about it that way. I know of people who even sell their pieces of cloth in order to pay for their children's school fees. I left him some months ago and decided not to marry him again but I realised I had missed my menstruation period... I was pregnant and that forced me to come back to him. If I safely give birth to this third born, I wouldn't want to have a fourth child. Others give birth to eight and ten but they strive to take care of them and they flourish in their marriages but mine is different. Hmmm anything that will be successful starts from the very beginning and I can see that even with the two children we have, he is unable to cater for their needs. Even though my parents were very happy I gave birth to two because there aren't many children in my extended family, I don't want to bring children into the world that I cannot take care of. ...*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: In my case, I stayed married to my abusive husband until he died. He married up to 8 wives but they all left him at some point. He was an Ashanti. When he married me and later started 'picking' different women, he wasn't taking care of me and the children because he said I am a Fanti. He said traditionally, if he takes care of my children in school, they will end up taking care of me alone and would neglect him so he only cared about those children he had with the other women... This forced me to sweat painfully and work extra hard to take care of my children. Although my husband was an Agric officer who had money, I had to cook kenkey to sell and work as a labourer in farms before I could raise enough money to take care of our children. He was using his money to take care of only the children of the other women. Um... but I remained faithful to him and stayed with him until he died at the hospital. Before he died, he asked the nurses to ask me to forgive him for all that he had done against me so I forgave him. I didn't even know he was about to die but the nurses saw it and asked me to excuse them. When I later went inside I saw that he was dead. That is when I understood why he asked for my forgiveness. ... Later on, the children he spent his money on did not look after him when he became old. When he died, none of those children were present and they did not contribute anything to support his funeral. It was my children who bought his coffin and buried him. Why won't he ask me to forgive him? It only takes a woman who is very tolerant to endure such a marriage. Can you imagine that when I close from church and I'm coming home, every woman I meet from the other churches will be telling me "eeiii auntie B, today the pastor used your story to preach to us". Then I will ask them what was it about and they will say that, "the pastor said whoever doesn't know how to marry should go to auntie B to learn how to marry". Yes, as for me I am very tolerant oooh even towards my rivals. There was nothing I enjoyed from my husband in my marriage apart from the gift of children. Despite all that he was doing against me, when I cooked I fed him. That is the more reason why he asked me to forgive him hmmm.*

*Georgina, 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: So many issues brought about the divorce. My ex-husband supports his family members whenever there are problems like funerals but aaaooohh madam, he fails to provide for me and the children and he doesn't*

*stand by me. Our divorce came about through the fault of my mother-in-law and my sisters-in-law. My mother in-law said my goat had chewed her garden eggs so she asked me to warn the goat. Madam, how can I talk to an animal? Surprisingly, I found the goat dead in the pen the next morning so it became a big fight even though I was pregnant. My husband wasn't home that day so when he returned I informed him about what his mother had come to do but he just said he will not marry me again because I had beaten her mother.*

*Sukena, 23, waitress, single but dating, 1 child: ...neglect is also a form of violence because it means the man is irresponsible at meeting the needs of the woman. Hmmm some men may appear gentle and calm but very wicked while others may appear wretched but not violent so it is very difficult to easily use their appearance to predict their character... we broke up and about three months after the break up, I found out that I was three months pregnant. He however denied being the father and refused to take responsibility for the pregnancy when the baby was born.*

#### **6.2.4 Economic and Financial Violence**

Economic or financial violence as victims describe here consists of circumstances where a partner exploits the family's source(s) of income; or refuses to assist the other to find employment when one is capable and willing to work; or fails to support the other with capital to set up a trade or business; or violates the responsibility of supporting the other's career to succeed; failure to allow a partner to benefit from a property (moveable or immovable) that the couple worked together for; or simply misappropriating or misusing available resources or the sources of funds from their occupation etc. Below are illustrations of various circumstances whereby the economic or financial resources of the couple were abused by an intimate partner.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: The little money I need to set up a business has been given to his other wife for a naming ceremony because I have no kids with him... He has prepared a farm for that other woman but he gave me nothing. By the time I was aware, he had harvested and sold all the cassava on the farm ... a farm I worked with him on. I suffered so much with him and now he doesn't even allow me on his farm. I cannot even harvest cocoyam or cassava on the farm to prepare fufu to eat and he has banned me from going to the farm.*

*Angelina: 47, cook, married with 8 children: I think as for misunderstanding it will always happen in every relationship because even the tongue and the teeth fight. I don't*

*believe there is any marriage in which the couple do not fight. But my husband makes life difficult for me when he fails to support me with money in my work... it hurts me when he is unsupportive because I am not lazy. Sometimes I have to stop working because I become sick. When that happens, he has to help me...it is important that he helps me. At first, I could uproot cassava from the farm and use it to prepare gari to sell at the major market but now my strength is gone so he can at least give me one rope of the cassava farm to sell out and use the money to buy the things I need for my business. By doing that, it would have helped our marriage and nobody would have heard about us.*

*Tiwa: 31, farmer, married with 5 children: Can you believe that he forced me to work on his cassava farm when I was heavily pregnant but he later went behind me to sell all the cassava without giving me a pesewa? I had not been to the farm for some time because I gave birth and it's been about three months now since I delivered my child so I decided to go to the farm a few days ago. I was shocked to find that he had harvested almost all the cassava.*

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: We established a provision store and we worked hard to buy a taxi from the profit we made. We initially gave the taxi to a certain man to operate but he could not maintain it well so my husband decided to operate the taxi himself. It was from that time that his attitude began to change because he started associating with bad company of friends who drink and smoke cigarette. Sometimes he just roams about with the taxi in the company of his friends and comes home drunk without bringing home any proceeds. Sometimes too, when he gets drunk people steal his phone and money. This is the second time he has lost his cell phone due to fighting in public and in both instances, um... he took monies meant for the business to buy a new phone. That needless spending makes me unhappy and his disgraceful attitude of public fighting brings shame. He happens to be in the NDC party and I belong to the NPP party. During the 2012 national elections, he took 400 Ghana Cedis I had saved from the provision store to sponsor his party's campaign in the area. I therefore got very angry and confronted him about this, but it resulted in a big fight.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: He uses his money to stake lotto. He doesn't give me money because he thinks I don't do any work to support him even though I work on his farm and also take care of the children. His cocoa yields a lot of fruits and he deceives me that when I work hard enough on the farm, he will give me capital to start a trade. Meanwhile, as soon as we harvest the cocoa then he finds a way to have a fight with me and refuses to talk to me. By so doing, he gets an excuse not to honour his promise.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: The alcohol I sell is for him but if I dare take even 1 Ghana Cedis, he will be so annoyed and there will be a fight. I thought he will change but I can see he doesn't want to change ...he will say that I have stolen from him. Not long ago, about a month ago, he did something to me that I didn't like. That wasn't the first but it was the most recent. I asked him for money and he beat me up and*

*almost killed me. My husband is a cocoa and orange farmer so he sees money all the time but hmmm madam, he will not give me money to even help boost my business. What happens is that, whenever he gets money, he intentionally doesn't talk to me but when the money gets finished then he wants to speak to me. That day, I asked him for money to buy a few items for my trade and he didn't give me but when I was asleep in the night, he woke me up and took money from under the pillow where I was sleeping. I didn't know he had hidden his money there. At that time, there was a knock on the door and I heard a lady's voice. He gave the money to that particular person and asked her to go. I questioned him about why he gave money to that lady and he told me that was not my business.*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: I make very little from sewing people's clothes so I once asked him to give me capital to begin selling earrings and other fashion items but he hasn't given me any positive answer. He keeps saying he is saving at the bank but I don't see what he uses that money for. Meanwhile, anytime there is a funeral in his family or something happens in his family, then he quickly goes to withdraw from the bank for that purpose. Meanwhile, he doesn't carry out his responsibility as a husband and father.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: My husband has the intention of travelling and he has tried paying huge sums of money to people about five times but they deceive him all the time. Sometimes, he even borrows money up to about 4,000 or 3,000 Ghana Cedis to pay for his travelling documents to be processed but he doesn't succeed and it drains our resources. I always tell him that if he can invest those huge sums of money into a business here in Ghana and also invest in the children's education, he can be successful. I am not entirely against him travelling because after all, if he succeeds abroad, it would be for our good but he doesn't have to throw monies about and neglect his duties.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: Truly my husband did not leave behind any property for me and my children. Had it not been the land my uncle gave to me, I would have had nothing. I had nothing from my husband when he died so the family asked me to stay in one of the rooms he built but I didn't stay there. I thanked them and left. When I arrived here, there were so many people gathered waiting for my arrival and I cried that day. If going to heaven will be dependent on how tolerant we are, then I'm very sure I will easily make it to heaven because I am very tolerant.*

*Georgina: 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: We were very young when we married and I can remember when I sold my piece of cloth and gave the money to my husband to go to Akwatia to work at the diamond mine as a 'galamsey' operator in order for us to put up a building. That was how come we were able to build a house. So "if a misunderstanding comes between me and your family and the elders have sat down to settle the problem, why don't you at least try to take care of the children for the sake of their future because I didn't offend you personally". He just said he has divorced me*

*because I fought with his mother when I had done him no wrong. Besides, I wasn't the one who went to fight his mother in her house, she came to my house. Even after all these, the elders of both families met with us to discuss the problem. They gave him two weeks to go and think about it hoping he will change his mind but he didn't. So I could tell that, he didn't even love me after all because this wasn't an issue that needed to end in divorce.*

*Nyakowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: I remember once when he took my money which my friend brought to him to give to me for something she bought from me. When I questioned him about it, he slapped me. If you take my money and all you do is to beat me when I ask you about it, then what else can I say?*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: As for my marriage, it has a whole lot of issues. When I first lived with my husband, truly this wasn't how he was ooh. He worked as an Agricultural officer and he had money. So he provided for me always until he took to drinking. When he went on pension, he couldn't even say "take this money and use it to support your business." He spent his money on women and he became bankrupt. It even got to a point where he couldn't even get money to buy food to eat. So my eldest son and I had to work as labourers on people's farms in order to get money to feed the family. Whenever I cooked, I couldn't leave him out because he was still my husband and I didn't have any plans of harming him. We gave birth to 7 children but 2 died... this man didn't care about the children. This house where we live does not belong to us ooh madam, we pay rent... The last time he picked a knife and cut my clothes and bags into pieces. I didn't know what I had done to him but I guess it's due to the alcohol he drinks. I therefore took all my things out and put them in my eldest son's room. He never sees why he should support us.*

This section of the results supported by quotes has discussed in great detail, the forms of victims' IPV lived experiences and how these women tell their stories about how they were victimised by their intimate partners regarding their physical violence; sexual assault; non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect; as well as economic and financial violence experiences.

### **6.2.5 Verbal Assault and Humiliation**

In this context, victims described all kinds of insults, harsh words, foul language, insinuations and swearing behaviours that were spoken against them by their partners and all sorts of treatments that made them feel putdown, embarrassed or ridiculed. About a half of the

twenty-four victims talked about being insulted and humiliated by their partners. Some of them described their experiences of the verbal assault and humiliation as behaviours not coming directly from their partner but from third parties (like rivals or community members) who had the guts to do so because the man directly or indirectly predisposed the victim to it. Below are some quotes;

*Tiwaa, 31, farmer, married with 5 children: My husband has never beaten me but sometimes he uses very harsh words on me. My father once asked me whether my husband has beaten me before and I said no because in fact, he has never beaten me before but the insulting behavior he puts up troubles me a lot. I remember the last time during an argument, he said to me “I know your roots” and that was very unfortunate. I then asked him to tell me whether I have mad people in my family or he has found sick people in my family.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: ...it isn't only 'aboa' (animal) and 'kwasia' (stupid) that are insults. If you use a word like 'apotoro obaa' (female frog) to describe me, it is an insult. So if ...errrr she (rival) uses a statement such as apotoro obaa ene apotoro obaarima da nsumu, nase apotoro obarima no huri koto apotoro obaa noso aa den na wo apotoro obaa no wo beka? (if a female and male frog are laying in water, and then the male frog jumps on the female frog, what have you the female frog got to say?) She knew the person she was saying that knew me very well and would definitely come to tell me what she had said but she intentionally gave that message to the fellow. The person came to ask me what that meant but was reluctant to tell me who made the statement. I asked the person for a long time before she mentioned the person who sent me those words. So I used to ask myself if I was a female frog. For her to say that I am a frog lying in the mud paaa hmmm... but it is the man I always confronted because he made it possible for her to insult me. Had he not sold me out to her, she wouldn't have been able to send me such foul statements.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: Hmmm madam, there is one particular incident that happened and anytime I remember it I cry. You see? Everybody has something little about themselves that they go into their marriages with. In my case I don't know if I was born with it or I was cursed. Since this is between you and I, I can tell you. Sometimes when I sleep, I urinate in bed and my husband humiliated me once about it in public in a manner that I will never forget. You see? That used not to be the case but it started after I gave birth to our first child. I had another child elsewhere with a different man, that was my first child but I did not urinate in bed. When it first happened, he asked me “what have you done?” I told him I didn't know why it happened and he did not raise it again. Later on, I urinated in bed again after I gave birth to our second and*

*third children and he got furious about that and disgraced me in public about it. Surprisingly, I don't experience it when I'm pregnant but it comes after child birth. ...What actually happened was that my husband once bought food for the children and refused to give me. Madam, I was very hungry so I ate some of the food and he became furious about it. That was when he started humiliating me about bedwetting and called me 'dmonsokrobo' [bed wetter]. Madam, there were so many people around ooh. I cried the whole day and decided to pack my things and leave but I couldn't go because of the children. As for that day hmmm God says we should speak the truth, I felt disgraced and so embarrassed. So now ..., I'm careful how I go about my things with people in this village because with the little thing I do, they will ridicule about it [in tears]. We live in this house with other tenants ooh... just two weeks ago I was very sick yet he was forcing me to cook for him. I refused and he started his insults until I got up to cook his food. He was saying "what kind of woman do you think you are, foolish woman, dirty woman, I regret bringing you to my house. Why should I even worry myself about performing your marriage rites? I will not do that for your father to even benefit from my money. Do you think I am stupid?" Um... If the man insults me in the presence of people instead of talking to me quietly in the room, I consider that a violent behaviour. For example, if the man comes back from the farm and the woman was unable to cook, he has to be patient to find out why instead of ruining insults at her. He should try to find out why she wasn't able to do so. Possibly, he even forgot to leave money behind for food but this man will begin insulting me by saying "foolish woman, dirty woman, I regret marrying you, I will never use my money to perform the rest of your marriage rites". This makes me sad and I sometimes think about leaving the children behind and going away but when I run to my family, they tell me to go back to my husband because of the children.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, two children: ...so the last thing that brought about the divorce was his swearing behaviours... he swore that thunder and lightning should strike me dead, all because I started dating a certain guy of my age. He went ahead to beat up the guy, he punched him so hard he was bleeding... it wasn't easy ooh. Also, I once went out to sell my soap without coming back home to sleep. In fact, I slept in the new man's room and when I came back it was all insults and humiliation. I also heard the many things he had said against me. He had even sworn to kill the other man and put his body in his parent's house. So I told him I will get the police to arrest and charge him for planning that evil thought but the new guy asked me to stop.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: ...My partner for instance can get drunk and begin insulting my parents. One thing I dislike about him is that he drinks too much alcohol and whenever he gets drunk, he becomes lawless.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: He does not beat me but he shouts at me and insults me anyhow. I know it is because the love we had for each other at first is no more. That is why I may divorce him after I give birth to our third child. ...talking*

*harshly to me, getting angry about things he shouldn't even get angry about, complaining and a whole lot.*

*Christiana: 36, trader, married with 6 children: He usually says he even regrets marrying me and I also repeat that to him but ... but... as for him he hates to hear that.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: ...Insults, humiliation in public and other forms of violence are his daily bread. Sometimes he insults me to the extent that my parents even get some. Madam, in the beginning, he was good. He was very good to me in the beginning of our relationship. He showed me kindness up to about four years and then his attitude began changing and now he has changed completely. When he gets drunk and I complain, he tells me to go and advise my uncle because he is also a drunk. Once he is drunk, he doesn't mind what comes out of his mouth. He insults me and my parents anyhow oooh. Sometimes he can accuse me about something in public just to embarrass me. For instance, he can accuse me of sleeping with my own uncles just to disgrace me.*

To conclude, sometimes in plain language, some of the words used by perpetrators may not appear insulting but the victims explained that the context within which they are used make them distasteful. Examples are the cases of Hajia whose rival referred to her as a 'female frog laying in the mud' and Augustina who suffers public ridicule after her partner humiliated her that she was a 'dwonsokrobo' [bedwetter].

### **6.2.6 Infidelity**

Infidelity is another major form of intimate partner violence that victims describe as characterising their lived experiences. Fourteen out of the twenty-four victims interviewed reveal that their partners cheat on them with other women and that is a big problem in their relationships. The findings further indicate that the number of victims who reported infidelity as being a form of intimate partner violence were as many as victims who reported of physical violence. The following are quotations from the victims;

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: In my first marriage, I didn't offend my husband but because he liked women, our marriage was hanging so I divorced him.*

*Personally, this is my third marriage and I'm still where I am because there is no improvement in any of my marriages. At some point in my first marriage, I decided not to marry again but here I am in a third marriage. I divorced my first husband because he was a drunk and a womaniser. I later heard that he died of a curse because... um he slept with someone's wife. In my second marriage too my husband died and his family took away the house and a plot he left for me and the children. Then I came into this marriage ... with this one too a small girl has come to take it and is sharing my husband with me... My husband now has two children with that little girl in this village. Can you believe this man had a first wife before he married me? He had two kids with that woman but she left him. He then impregnated two other women at [name withheld]. One of them was a married woman. What kind of man is this? He shamelessly goes to sleep over at the girl's place right here in this village and sometimes comes home after about three weeks... hmhm ... that marriage he went into without informing me. Initially, when I was suspicious and questioned him about it, he lied to me. After a while, I saw that the lady was pregnant and someone told me the pregnancy was for my husband. I was once in the house when I saw him sneak out with bottles of schnapps and I later heard he had gone to perform her marriage rites. She gave birth soon after that and now has two children with my husband.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: The way my husband went in for another woman and had a child with her is what troubles me. I almost filed for divorce but well...I'm already in it. After we gave birth to our last child, I didn't even know he had gone in for another woman. All I heard was that he had impregnated someone at [name withheld]. For that reason, I said since he wasn't satisfied with the four children I had produced for him, I will not give birth for him again. That is the reason why up to now I haven't produced any child. If you are not satisfied with mine and you can go in for another, then there is no need for me to have children for you anymore. He hasn't married her and he claims he has ended his relationship with her but madam, when he is going there he won't tell me he is going there. For example, when he informs me that he is travelling to Accra, he may probably go to her. In that case, he will not alight here where I fry my yam ooh for me to see the direction where he is coming from. He will alight at the Roman school just to deceive me that he is from Accra. Whenever I raise that issue, all he says is "I have broken up with her, I have broken up with her" but I don't believe he has ended that relationship. In anyway, he hasn't also told me he is going to perform her marriage ceremony.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: Infidelity tops them all... Apparently, it wasn't only my husband who was sleeping with her. That one woman was in-between two men and that is why she contracted an infection and died. So as for diseases, the man can easily infect me unawares. ... Sometimes, I can be in the house and wouldn't know where my husband has gone to and at other times, I see him after several days. Ooh, he relocates to live with my fellow woman. Aah, just like he has done today, he can just relocate. Sometimes, around this time [10:28 PM], you will find me seated here [at the provision store], waiting to see if he will come. I can wait for so long but he won't show*

*up then I will go home and sleep. ...Sometimes as late as this time [10:31 PM], I will then see him on his bicycle coming from the other village but he will not stop here ooh. He will cross the road from the other side and will not even go home straight but will go to his friend to ask if I have come around to ask of him. These are the kinds of violence my husband puts me through.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: He finds pleasure following other women... He is only interested in following other women and when I confront him about it then he gets angry and beats me up. ... 'waye n'adwen se mpena twee naa na obetwe na ongyai agyese atete ansa' (his mind is made up on his womanising exploits, he won't stop until he has finished tearing them into pieces) .*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: He goes after other women and whenever those other women see me, they tease me. I sometimes cry all day and when I ask my man to stop following other women, he doesn't listen. Aaaaba madam, the young girls these days like following men and they prefer the married men because of money... I dated him for about 8 years before I got pregnant and my parents objected to our marriage. ... I loved him and didn't listen to anybody but he is a womanizer. The pain of seeing him flirt with other women is violence against my soul so whenever I see him with any girl and I suspect something, I beat up that lady. Now all the girls in the village are afraid of me. We used to live in a certain house as tenants and one day I caught my partner on top of the landlord's daughter. I fought with the girl and I almost killed her. Later I thought about it and asked myself why I should kill someone's child because of this man's behaviour? That would mean going to jail and leaving behind my children. So I left his life for him and went to live with my parents. At a point I realised my father was not having enough to take care of me so I travelled to Accra and spent four months over there. After those four months, my man came to apologise to me to forgive him and that is why I agreed to come back. Would you believe he has impregnated a certain lady in Accra where he goes to sell his coconuts? I have talked about it for a long time but he doesn't listen so now I have left his life for him. We are living together but he is still dating that lady and now they have given birth to a baby girl. It is his womanising behaviour that disturbs me because there are some women who may have some infections and would never tell the man. In that case, your husband may have sex with you and would bring you the infection. It could be um um AIDS or eerrr Syphilis or some other diseases. You may be there one day and you will start scratching your private part without knowing it's your man who brought it to you.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: I realised he was flirting with another woman. I first saw the messages on his phone but I didn't ask him anything about it until later. When I finally questioned him about it, he lied to me so I took the girl's number and called her. The lady insulted me and I also insulted her. I asked him about it again and he said it was because I did something he didn't like. ...Then he said he was even happy the*

*lady insulted me and I was hurt that he was supporting that girl. I complained to his mum who called him and he explained that he dating that lady some time ago but they broke up about three years before he met me ...but the lady wants to come back. There was a problem between us and I went to my parents so that was the week he went in for the lady. He said the lady was pressurising him with love messages but he wasn't replying but because I went away that was why he did that. For my husband, when he sends the messages he deletes so for the ones that I saw on 1<sup>st</sup> January it said, "I love you, I will marry you, I miss you" and a whole lot. For the lady, the messages were a lot, "you promised to marry me and you left me for another lady blab la bla". I can't remember all the messages "I love you, I miss you, you promised to marry me". Some of the messages koraaa (even) if you read, your heart will 'burst'. His mum said now that the problem has been resolved he should cut every contact with that other lady. Sometimes when he sleeps in the night, I sneak to take his phone and I don't see any of those messages again. By God's grace he is also now a pastor so I think he has stopped but when I remember those things hmmm I get hurt... because it happened around Christmas time and it took away that joy.*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: At the beginning of my marriage, everything was good. My husband didn't beat me and I also didn't offend him. It was all about the fact that he was already married and never told me about it... I was so hurt when I found out and my church frowns upon adultery. I worship at church of Christ and it is against the bible to be a second wife so I decided to pull out of the marriage. I told him to go and marry his wife and if God is merciful to me I will also find my husband. He didn't fight with me but he betrayed the love and trust I had for him. Okay, during the time we were courting, I travelled to the village to visit my family and without calling him, I went to his house and he was having an affair with my own female friend. He didn't know I will return that night so he was doing it secretly and didn't perceive that I will see it. My mother gave me items to give to him so when I knocked on his door, he couldn't open. I clearly overheard a lady telling him that somebody was knocking at the door so he came to open it and I gave the items to him but he did not allow me to enter the room so I walked away. I went away to sleep at my sister's place without saying anything to him. That evening, I didn't even know it was my friend who was in his room. I was heartbroken but I felt the pain even more when I found out the next day that it was my own friend. She was my classmate in school. Hmmm! When I got to my sister's house, she asked why I will leave my fiancé's place this late and I informed her I met another woman in his house. So it was the next day that my friends told me the lady who was in my man's house was not a stranger but rather my school mate so so and so. Madam, I forgave him and he later came to perform my marriage rites. All this while, this man was married ...hmmm he had a wife in Accra but I didn't know. He had actually left his wife and children in Accra and had only moved here because of his work. She was his first wife but he never mentioned it to me and nobody ever hinted me about it so I left.*

*Christiana: 36, trader, married with 6 children: Most men these days take women to be fools. They will impregnate you but wouldn't do anything for you after that. Even when he has married you, um ...he can go out and bring another woman to come in and cause you troubles. After giving birth for him he brings in the woman to hate you for no reason. There are some of them who will live with you peacefully but will later go in for another woman. There are certain men who know very well that this person is your friend but they will go after her and will be dating her secretly... At first, my husband and I were living together nicely but he likes women. In the course of our marriage, he went in for another woman. That woman sells alcohol so that influenced my husband to learn how to drink alcohol and now his life has changed. When he went in for that woman, it could take about four or five days before I see my husband although we all live in this village. At first, I used to go to the woman's house to quarrel with her but I later realised that it wasn't beneficial so I left his life for him. Some time ago, my husband went in for a girlfriend and I talked about it. That woman was my friend and I quarrelled with her about it but I later on decided not to mind her again. At first, when I'm going to the farm I call her for us to go together to harvest our crops after which I pay her. Can you believe my husband slept with her? Initially, she told me it wasn't true but my husband confessed to me that it was true. I then went to confront the woman and she told me that now that I have been told the truth, she will go on with my husband so I left their will to them because my husband is someone who doesn't listen.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: My late husband was a womanizer. He made adultery the cloth he wore and that was destroying our marriage. Many a time you will find out that the man is a womanizer and whenever you complain about the shame he brings to the family then he denies it. It is not good to put your wife through that. Is that love? No, no, no, that is wickedness. This brings so many problems because the man will not stop and agree for both of you to be one. As a woman, you cannot go in for another man behind your husband so everything centres on your husband...*

It can be concluded here that, even though IPV cut across all marital statuses it can be observed that the number of married women in this study whose husbands were engaged in extramarital affairs were twice as many as the women in cohabitation whose partners were involved in multiple intimate relationships.

### **6.2.7 Coercion and Intimidation**

Coercion and intimidation is the situation other than sexual assault where a partner uses force, threats and other controlling behaviours against another. Tiwaa's husband forced her to

work on their cassava farm when she was heavily pregnant whereas in Fuseina's case, her cohabiting partner was using his religious beliefs and practices as form of oppression. This can happen by way of imposing ones faith on the other or by forcing the other partner to commit to or omit a particular religious conviction. Fuseina happened to be the only victim who reported religious coercion but there could be many others in her situation.

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: He said, I should stop practicing my Muslim religion by force and become a Christian but my faith is different and my family does not even agree to that. If I consider where we are now in this relationship, I don't think we will continue into marriage because of religious differences.*

*Tiwaa: 31, farmer, married with 5 children: Can you believe that he forced me to work on the cassava farm when I was heavily pregnant?*

### **6.2.8 Psychological and Emotional Violence**

Victims' experiences that bothered directly or indirectly on their state of mind and feelings, including behaviours that disturb a partner's mental condition or breaks the heart and sometimes even lead to mental illness. It is evident that psychological and emotional violence, inadvertently, are consequences of most of the other forms of violence. In other words, most if not all of the forms discussed above give rise to psychological and emotional violence. However, these experiences as the rural women describe them fit their own category for the purpose of emphasis and understanding.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: ...whenever I see that then, I start nagging and worrying because that woman will not agree if I were to have been the one doing that to her. My husband doesn't regard me as any important person probably because I have become old for him or he sees me as an animal... and that girl too doesn't respect me. I will be a liar if I say that I don't get offended by that. It brings me so much pain anytime I think about it. Sister, this man was so 'broke' after his first wife left him and I was the one who used to borrow items to cook for him. Now he says I'm useless... that I have done nothing for him but I give all that to God. One day, we'll know the truth.*

*Sometime ago, I packed my things and left my marital home because I couldn't take it anymore but I later came back and that is what happens to most women. That is why you will see them talking to themselves like mad women but nobody understands.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: When we talk about violence in marriage, hooo I meet them every day. Madam, whenever, I keep track of his violent behaviour, my heart aches. We can pull the issues from top to down and sometimes my husband and I will not talk to each other for a whole month but he doesn't care. He can decide not to talk to me for 5 weeks and that hurts my feelings as a wife. I can choose to talk a bucket full, even 'hmmm' itself he will not do; he simply will not mind you. When I report him to his brother, he doesn't care. I once reported him to his brother and he said to his brother "chale yi w'ani" (chale shun your eyes) and he will come back and ask me "so what did you gain from that? Is this what you haven't seen before?" ... I was in agony during those times. I had never seen that before. What he was doing to me hmmm! Hmmm, ...meanwhile, he doesn't even inform me when he is going out and wouldn't call to let me know where he is. He maltreats me so much until my neighbours come to rescue me. Had it not been teacher Gyan (pseudonym) and his wife, I'm sure I wouldn't be alive by now or maybe I would have divorced him and be gone indeed. So any time I talk to him I tell him that if he has any appreciation, he should give it to teacher Gyan and his family. 'oneme ti otwe nwoma so paa' (he really sits on the same antelope skin with me indeed). Do you see? He was always defending her seriously. That woman is now deceased. Hmmm eeee she is dead. He had a child with her and he had even gone for the list of items to perform her marriage rites when she was alive. Even though she was dead, the woman's family forced my husband to perform the necessary marriage rites for the corpse before she was buried. He wedded the dead body indeed before burying her... such shame.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: His behaviour keeps me thinking deeply until my heart feels so much pain. My father did not approve of our union in the first place but I loved my husband and I was in a hurry to come and live with him. Now look at me. At the beginning of our relationship when we were courting, he was nice to me and treated me with respect. At that time, he was living at (name withheld) and I used to visit him and sleep over in his house. Within the first month of our relationship, I became pregnant with our first child and he went to see my family to perform the marriage rites. In the beginning, he used to pamper me and he talked to me with respect but later on he became irresponsible and started drinking heavily with his friends. At the time, I had left my mum's house to permanently live with him after the marriage rite was performed and I've had no happiness since then.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: I became so lean and pale. I wasn't even able to finish eating 30 Pesewas worth of banku because I had too much thoughts going on in my mind. Madam, look at me and how young I am. Why should this man make me endure*

*such pain? I mostly stayed indoors and I cried all day until my heart ached and whenever I decided to walk away then I considered the wellbeing of the children and I stayed. I always think about the children and now that I have divorced their father I get scared that maybe, one day they will accuse me of not being there for them. The thing is that, the man will say something about you in public that is not true. He falsely accused me of being a prostitute aaaaahhh. See, I was in JSS 2 when he proposed to me and at that time, I had not seen any man before. He was the only man I slept with but he always accused me of sleeping with other men and that was shameful. He once said to me that our first born is not his son so anytime the child asked him for something he didn't give him. I remember some time ago he was drinking common sachet water and the child asked him to give him some of the water because he was thirsty but this man poured the water away in front of the child... hmmm common water ooh madam. So you can just tell that it was his character and he had decided to torment me until I die.*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: My husband does not know how to sit down with me and discuss important issues. As soon as I initiate any conversations with him, then he says he doesn't have time and then he goes out. Um ... I honestly do not know what he uses his time for that makes him too busy to have a conversation with me, his wife ooh. I sometimes ask myself, "why is my marriage different from that of my parents?" I live in sadness and some time ago I almost went mad.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: I think about it a lot and that hurts me badly ...the pecks and the hugs have stopped coming ooh and I always get emotionally disturbed. He said he has a whole lot on his mind and when I ask for it he says I'm not serious. Sometimes too he gives me the hug or the peck but when he comments about it before doing it, I don't feel happy.*

*Georgina, 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: He was causing me so much pain in my heart. Sometimes he doesn't beat me but some of the things he does to me makes me weep. We were very poor when we married but even during those times we didn't have such problems eheee. Those problems started coming because when my ex-husband and I discussed something, he went to ask his mother before he allowed us to carry out our plans. My husband and I married when we were very young but we didn't have any problems at the beginning of our marriage until a week after I delivered our first child. ...Due to the painful way my husband divorced me, I was afraid to commit to another relationship so I decided not to marry again. But two years after, I met another man who came to perform my marriage rites but we got divorced due to a lot of problems. We gave birth to three children but they all died. Since then, I haven't married again and I will not marry ever again.*

### 6.3 Victims' Reactions to Violence

In this section on lived experiences, victims discuss how they reacted to particular incidences of violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partners. Some of the women described how they fought back in self defense or recoiled into their shells in response to the violence they suffered. Others sought help by reporting the violence to family members or other forms of social support systems, some displaced their anxiety on third parties, whereas few confessed they had conceived the idea of poisoning their partners but they had not had the courage to do so. Some of the interviewees noted that the particular form of violence they suffered determined the specific reactions which mostly sparked a decision to develop ways to transition out of violence. Other times the violence slowly led to the termination of the relationship. Either way, participants demonstrated that these key changes were important to their resilience.

In the quotes below, victims demonstrate how they reacted to physical violence. I observed that very few (approximately thirteen percent) victims reported their partners to the police. I also found out that all these women had similar characteristics. They had all obtained at least primary school education; they were younger (below the age of thirty years); they were unmarried as at the time of the interview (they were either separated or divorced whilst one had never married but was in cohabitation with the perpetrator; and their partners' offense for which they were compelled to report was as a result of physical violence even though they had suffered other forms of violence from the same partner.

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: He didn't even care... he beat me up until the child fell from my back. ...What he did to me was very painful so I reported it to my father and we decided to report it at the police station but because it was a Saturday night, my father asked that we rather report it on Monday. The case went to WAJU [Women and*

*Juvenile Unit now the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU)] ...so my husband was invited over on Tuesday and we are still on the case.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: I got him arrested by the police for hitting me and stumping his foot in my abdomen. That happened when I was pregnant with our second child so I lost that baby.*

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: I got angry and took a big piece of firewood to hit his head so hard. Had it not been our neighbours who stopped the fight, hmmm he would have been dead the next morning because I would have hit him again very hard but they advised me to stop and they took the firewood from my hands [in tears at this point]. ...madam, I would have killed him...*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: I went to inform the elders of his family who live here in the village. They are his grandparents. I did not sleep in the house last night. I went to spend the night in the house of one of his uncles because from the way he was aggressive yesterday, I had no idea what he could have done to me if I had slept home. I went with the children to sleep over there at his uncle's place.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: I also fight with him but since he is a male, he overpowers me. When I see that he is beating me too much then I run to my friends' place until he comes over to beg me to come back.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: I reported the case to my parents and then to the police but I didn't follow up ...I didn't have money for transportation every day to the police station.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: Currently, I am rather the one who is able to beat him because he has become old and weak due to excessive drinking of alcohol. So when he insults me and starts a fight, then I beat him as much as I am able to heheheeeee.*

In addition, I found out about how victims reacted to non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect. Below are some of their reactions;

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: For me in particular, if he refuses to cater for my needs, I get angry, I just go out... and wouldn't talk to him...*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, married with 4 children: I run to my aunt for assistance whenever he refuses to provide us with food or when he starts his insulting behaviours.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: Most of the women in my generation took after our mothers such that, we can endure hardships in our marriages and would not easily divorce our husbands. We are not like the girls who have come these days. They cannot take*

*nonsense hence with the little misunderstanding in their marriages then they seek divorce. I didn't do that.*

The victims below remembered their thoughts about a sexual assault by their partners whom they are still in a relationship with. Angelina explains how she simply ignored her husband's actions which got her pregnant and almost took her life at the point of child birth. On the other hand, Augustina recollects how she riskily attempted unsuccessfully to abort the pregnancy.

*Angelina, 47, cook, married with 8 children: If there was a moment that stood out for me, ... I was raped one night by him... and I didn't want the children to hear about it or to see us fighting. I felt so powerless and... hopeless because, um I, I didn't have any information about where to go for help. I always feel embarrassed about quarreling with him in the presence of the children because of where they have reached now. Hmmm sometimes, as soon as I see that he wants to sleep with me when I'm sick or when I am tired I ...sometimes he wants to touch me after he had offended me, so um...um I go out and leave him. After a while, then I come home. For me to quarrel with him in the midst of the children, I haven't done that before... When the time came for me to give birth, I went to the hospital alone and when my condition became serious I gave my sister-in-law's cellphone number to the nurse to call and eerrr she came to take care of me. She is the one I discuss most of my marital problems with. ...I never confronted my husband about what he had done.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: Madam, I decided to abort it and run away ooooh... in fact, um, um I tried several concoctions for an abortion but I couldn't destroy the pregnancy and I gave birth to this child [child on mother's lap] who I think is a miracle... I initially did not allow him to touch me and I stood by that decision for two months until one night he forced to sleep with me and I unfortunately became pregnant with this baby...*

In addition, victims also talked about their reactions to infidelity and for some of them, although they were uncertain what to do, it marked a point in the relationship when they knew that things were not right. Several of them considered the consequences of leaving but few actually terminated the relationship whilst others set particular boundaries for their partners.

*Nyansa, unemployed, 33, divorced, 2 children: I didn't know how to handle it...being a second wife for many years without knowing hmmm ...now our children are 17 and 12 years old and he never mentioned he had a wife and children in Accra ... so when I got to know*

*about it, I walked away. My church even frowns upon it so I went away ... without saying anything to him.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: I fought with the girl and I almost killed her. Later I thought about it and asked myself why I should kill someone's child as a result of my husband's behaviour? So um ...I left his life for him and went to live with my parents.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: I went to inform my uncle at Kasoa about what my husband had done. When my uncle asked him about it, he said he is no more in a relationship with that woman but only taking care of the child. My uncle advised him that if it is really true that he has broken up with her then he doesn't want to hear another story that he has produced another child with her.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married with 2 children: If I hadn't been strict on my husband, I'm sure he would have married two wives and given birth to several children without taking care of them. What I do is that if I see any woman with my husband, I go straight to warn her in her house or beat her up very well. So they are afraid of me and now I have heard that when he proposes to the girls, they say "no" because they are afraid of what I will do to them. Girls in this community easily snatch people's husbands so I don't allow any of them to come close to my husband.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: I didn't always allow him to beat me up even though he was stronger. I also beat him or hit him with any object I get. ...I realised those things made us fight a lot. So later on, I released his rope for him to do whatever he liked because I knew that no matter how far he goes, when the time comes he will come back home. That attitude I developed helped me; it made me feel better and I worried less.*

When I explored victims' reactions during or immediately after a psychological or emotional violence, some of them indicated that they go into their closets to weep; few stated they immediately leave the scene; whilst others said they discuss it with family in order to heal. Meanwhile, Hajia had a different strategy that helped her. This is what she said;

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: ...so I try not to keep them in my heart even though they are in my memory. As soon as I feel the pain in my heart, then I take it out ...um by directing my attention to my trade or my children.*

With regards to how victims' react to verbal assault and humiliation, Augustina talked about how she currently is extra careful and exercises more restraint how she goes about things with

other members of the community since the time she was publicly humiliated by her partner because she is afraid.

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: ...so now in [name withheld] here, I'm careful how I go about my things with people in this village because with the little thing I do, they will use that to rain insults at me.*

In furtherance to the discourse on victims' reactions, Ama and Nyarkowaa pointed out how they responded to the violence in connection with economic, trade or financial issues. Ama used sex as a weapon whereas Nyarkowaa used silence by simply walking away.

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: In fact, as for our marriage it has been a very long time since I allowed him sex. From the way things have gone, I don't know what will happen if I should sleep on the same mat with him.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: As for this time when he took that money, I did not say or do anything. I quietly packed my things and went away to stay with my father. After about two weeks when he realised I wasn't coming back, he picked a vehicle and came all the way there. My people also handled him the way he deserved. My father told him, he didn't sell me off to him so he had no right to use me anyhow as if I'm a 'restaurant bowl' so he should customarily bring me back if he can't marry me. He then apologised and paid all the damages my father charged him with and then brought me back.*

#### **6.4 Victims' Sentiments and Sympathy in the Midst of Violence**

Notwithstanding the cycle of violence and the dire consequences that come along, victims in this study interestingly exhibited sentiments and sympathy for their partners. Below are some of the ways in which they expressed their feelings, thoughts and pity for their perpetrators. For example, in the case of Kesewaa whose husband defied the odds to beat her up in her own parents' house when she ran there for safety, she regretted reporting her husband to the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU). She explains that even though she liked the idea of teaching her husband a lesson by getting him arrested by the police, she didn't know he would be locked up. She describes how she rather expected DOVVSU to only warn her spouse

because she was afraid community members would condemn her actions and stigmatise against her.

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: In fact, I did not know he would be 'jailed' and even though I willingly reported this case, I regretted it when he was put behind bars. I saw my husband crying when they were taking him to cells and that made me feel so guilty and very sad. ...aahhh well but I don't think putting him in cells is helpful because maybe he will change his mind and take care of me and the children. There is too much hardship for us ooh sister. I was not happy about putting my husband in cells because he might say to people that the woman he married sent him to 'jail'. Arrest by the police was good for me to teach him a lesson but people will think evil of me... that is why I just wanted WAJU to advise and warn him instead of putting him in jail.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: When I cook for the children, I can never leave him out. ...Um, what if I am wicked to him and he later becomes wealthy? I have to remember what tomorrow can bring. Even if it doesn't get better tomorrow, maybe it is the Lord's doing.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: Interestingly, when I notice that he is safely back from wherever he went to, then my heart feels at peace. In any case, he is also somebody's child just as I am. ,,eerrrr If something should happen to him, his people will ask me so if he is not yet back, I cannot sleep. Meanwhile, he doesn't even inform me when he is going out ooh and he wouldn't even call to let me know where he is.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: In all of these, whenever I cook I still give him some of the food. Even just this afternoon, I cooked and dished some of the food for him.*

*Kuukua, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: Even though we hate infidelity, hmmm sometimes, before the man gets involved with another woman you may have also done something he doesn't like. ...well, my partner doesn't beat me, he is a good man but he like women. Sometimes I blame myself?*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: they shouldn't have let the matter be made too public because the man was a visitor in town. He had come to work in the hotel as a chef so I didn't want to disgrace him.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: Well, I am not the first woman whose husband has gone in for another woman. I love him and he also loves me ...and um he always tells me that he loves me. Again, his behaviour and attitude truly shows that he has changed.*

In summary, even though victims have shown agency in the previous sections, it is evident from the women's responses above that they express feelings of guilt, and of concern, and

sometimes even rationalise the violent behaviour which seem to an extent clip their wings of escaping from the violence or seeking help.

### **6.5 Victims' Views on the Implications of Intimate Partner Violence**

Another important part of rural victims lived experiences of intimate partner violence has to do with how the violence affect them and significant others. The findings suggest that even though rural women victimized by an intimate partner are likely to act in self-defence, they are also at great risk of being hurt. They are a unique group of victims, majority of who are willing to take steps to ensure their safety and the wellbeing of their children but are more likely to stay in the violent relationship. However, the findings indicate they are likely to report the violence to family but are least likely to seek help from a formal social support system; and the impact from the violence is generally long lived as victims tend to be sentimental and sympathetic towards their perpetrators especially, where children are involved. The descriptive findings of the impact of violence that rural women experience are documented below:

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: I will be a liar if I say that I wasn't affected by that. It brings me so much pain anytime I think about it. ... I sometimes sit down to think about all these for a long time until my head aches and it disturbs me that he has taken me for a fool but what can I do? My children also worry a lot about my situation but because they are also poor, they are unable to support me. All they say to me is that I will hear from them.*

*Angelina, 47, cook, married with 8 children: Truly this worries me a lot because as I sit here right now, I owe many people. I am not able to even pay the monies I owe at church too. It gives me a lot to think about and if I say I don't think about these things then I am lying. It worries me so much.*

*Tiwaa, 31, farmer, married with 5 children: I run into debt so there was no point coming back. My husband has turned me a debtor and I always had bills to settle. I think people do not respect me because they hear that I always owe somebody. His refusal to cater for us makes the children go hungry for a long time and sometimes they cry of hunger and headache. They do not go near their father and they are always afraid to ask him for something when they need it. Our first child who is now 7 years old once came to me to*

*ask if their father left them money for school. When I told her “no he didn’t”, she said to me “eiii as for dad he is so mean ooh”. This tells you these little ones see everything that goes on. School is vacating next week and exams are ongoing but he has failed to pay the children’s printing fees so they are home today and couldn’t take part in the exams. His behaviour gets me thinking ...worrying and I talk to myself all the time to the extent that I sometimes forget I am walking in public...*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: It worries me and I think about it a lot but then I take into consideration my children. In that case, I just endure every violence he puts me through just to look after my children. As soon as you leave these children behind, they will go wayward.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: Whenever, I keep track of his violent behaviour, my heart aches so I try not to keep them in my heart. His attitude worries the children. It has negatively affected the relationship between him and the children. Do you understand that? As a father you don’t do that and expect the children to give you respect. All he will say is that, the children do not respect him but he has to find a way of saying something sensible to them.*

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: I got bruises all over my face and other parts of my body. I also felt pains internally and that hurt badly. Due to the excessive crying, I am still coughing. The WAJU people asked that I seek medical attention, but I haven’t because I have no money. My husband doesn’t give me money and I cannot raise about GH 50 Cedis for my medical care. I wasn’t the only one affected ooh madam, hmmm... My mother was troubled and my mother-in-law too felt embarrassed by her son’s attitude. Our children are also very much affected. They cry every time he beats me up. He sometimes even extents his aggression to the 6-year-old son by beating him mercilessly and that makes the child fall sick. Also, since he refuses to provide the children’s basic needs like food, clothes, payment of school charges and um um ...he also fails to show them love so for instance, the 6-year-old child sometimes says to the father “you are not my father” and he goes on to tell other people the same thing when they ask of his father from him. I’m sure this child says that out of anger because he beats him and the child also sees it when he abuses me. The girl is 2 years but she has not yet started school because he has refused to provide money for her school needs. Government schools are free except for the payment of printing fee and money for the child’s feeding but my husband fails to pay even that. I am therefore compelled to take such expenses from monies that come from sales of the provisions. This does not help my business to grow. I have observed that, the children are happier when they come to their grandparent’s house than when they are in their own father’s house...*

*Augustina, 25, in cohabitation, married with 4 children: So I mostly stay hungry the whole day until evening... When I’m hungry, I would be left with no option apart from going into prostitution. Wouldn’t I madam? His behaviour is affecting me because I think deeply about it and my heart feels so much pain ...As for that day hmmm God says we should speak the truth, I felt disgraced and so embarrassed. So now ... I’m careful... if I*

*dare offend someone in this community, they will rain insults at me that I am 'dwnsokrobo' because of how my husband used that term to embarrass me in public.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: I always lived in fear because this is a man who will kill me whenever he gets the least chance...*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: It pains my heart so much when he does that. For instance, you know, naming ceremonies are very important in our tradition but when I give birth and he has to perform the outdooring, he will not do it. He will just be delaying for a long time and at the end of the day, he will close his mind to it and that brings me shame in the community.*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: I am naturally someone who doesn't like talking but my husband has now turned me into a talkative. Look at how my whole face has swollen up and annoyingly, I'm on my way to fetch water for him to bath. I couldn't even see properly when I woke up this morning and my entire body aches right now. He always insults anyone who dares comes to my rescue so now nobody wants to come close when he is causing any violence against me and that puts me through a lot of pain. Yesterday for example, if I had not run to those men who had gathered, maybe he would have killed me. They struggled to free me. I don't even know them but they rescued me... Yes, and the children, it affects them too. Sometimes when he does that then they cry. Yesterday for instance, when he removed my clothes in public, they cried so much. He usually beats the children whenever he gets drunk because he doesn't seem to know what he is doing and when they get sick, he wouldn't buy them medicine. They will just be lying there like that. Isn't it mere wickedness on his part?*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: I'm afraid I could be carrying AIDS or Syphilis... I'm not the only woman he sleeps with ooh madam... Then with the beatings, I had bruises all over my body and my face and I had clots of blood on my eyes*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: how can he ask me to stop practicing my Muslim religion and become a Christian when his Christianity is even questionable? ... that is harsh. So now our relationship is hanging and I don't think we will continue with it anymore aaahhh.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: Eii hmmm, it affected my thoughts and I even lost weight. Madam, I even lost weight and I couldn't sleep, I was thinking about what he said to me. I was asking myself if it was because of something I might have done that pushed him to go in for his ex-girlfriend. ...I started asking myself "what did I do, or have I changed or what?" In fact, I started blaming myself when he was the bad one. ...Yes, my mum and sisters were also deeply disturbed. My sisters advised me to leave him if he has gone in for another woman because he is not the only man but um ...my mum advised me that, I am not the only one whose husband has gone in for another woman so I should forgive him especially, because he had apologised and promised to stop. For my mum, she likes the guy so she didn't advise me to leave him. Since I had a*

*child with him, it was difficult to leave. Nowadays, it is not easy to get another man to marry you when you are 'born 1 or born 2' (the state where a woman already has a child or children).*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: We were all very shocked and deeply troubled when we found out that he was a married man. I had two children with him and that was difficult for me. He was an elderly man, very well respected and nobody thought he could do such a thing. He was a guest in the community so nobody really knew him well enough and moreover he didn't discuss his issues to that extent. The issue really affected me. I kept thinking and I became lean so people were asking me if I was sick. I always say yes I'm sick because it isn't everything you can tell everyone. This problem also affected my sister so much especially when she saw that I walked alone in the darkness that night from the man's house. My sister was afraid for my life that night. This also affected my rival because she later came to meet me and my children in the man's bedroom. I really respect his wife very well because she never fought with me when she found out. She only fought with his husband and I felt so guilty about the incident...so I finally left.*

*Christiana: 36, trader, married, 6 children: It affected me in the sense that it drained all my finances because he refused to take care of the children... I was always troubled and unhappy in my marriage. I had to suffer so much to raise these six kids with my current husband. It also affected the children's education because sometimes I was unable to even give them money for school and they would be home. That worried me and it also troubled the children... it made them unhappy kids all the time.*

*Georgina: 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: If we were still married, I'm sure our eldest child wouldn't have stopped school because at least if I am unable to discipline him at all, you as the man can discipline him. So eventually the children had to stop schooling.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: I was very hurt and my heart was troubled. Sometimes my cheeks got swollen and I went through so much pain. Also, my husband did not leave us with any property before he died and my daughter and I are still living in poverty. I remember once when I left my daughter behind and separated from my husband... she cried so much when she saw me going. I decided not to take her along so that my husband can experience how it felt like to take care of a child. I later regretted it because even though I intended to punish my husband, I ended up punishing my daughter. I think she was starved because she had grown lean and pale when I returned. Also, because my husband spent his money on women we couldn't take care of our only daughter in school and we couldn't also pay for her to learn hairdressing or catering. She is now a married woman but she is still bitter about it and that makes me feel guilty.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: It affects me in so many ways. For example, my soul is always gloomy and I even regret marrying someone like him. Now I'm not working and he is unable to give me money so I sometimes decide that I will not*

*give him food but I'm not able to see him starve. At other times I feel I should ...um, um poison him but I think about the fact that we have children together. If I should allow something to happen to him, my conscience will forever prove me guilty so hmmm I just throw away my evil thoughts.*

## **6.6 Conclusion**

To draw this chapter together, the findings underscore the point that victims in this study experienced a wide range of forms of intimate partner violence. Their experiences and perspectives have helped in expanding the forms of IPV to eight different categories.

More so, the chapter reveals that about sixty-two percent of victims were still in the violent relationship with the perpetrator. Others continued to be the subject of their partners' violent efforts only when there was a threat of the women existing or terminating the relationship, and the cycle repeats itself. Meanwhile, for thirty-eight percent of the victims, the violence ended when the relationship did. The range of experiences and contexts have made some of the women think of themselves more as survivors other than victims. They generally described their struggle as something that has made them resilient and experts of their circumstances; a strength they were using to help protect their children and encourage other women in their communities.

Additionally, this chapter discusses respondents' strong submissions about the implication that intimate partner violence has on them and their significant others. Some of the implications include injury, lack of self-esteem, psychological and emotional trauma, a cycle of abject poverty, and sometimes death. Victims admitted that the impacts of the violence they experience are usually long lived.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **RESULTS: THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO VICTIMS'**

#### **RESILIENCE**

##### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter seven is the last chapter on the results sections and it answers the final research question - How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims' resilience? In this section, the key word from the analysis is 'Resilience' and I concentrate on four sub-themes namely; 1) Identification of social support systems and their usefulness; 2) Involvement of the queen mother in resolving issues of intimate partner violence 3) Constraints associated with the use of social support systems; and 4) Current state of affairs and looking ahead. The results here are shaped by the views and experiences of all three categories of respondents who participated in the study either through the in-depth interviews (i.e. victims and queen mother) and community forum (general women's group from the communities).

##### **7.2 Victims' Perspectives on the Contribution of Social Support Systems to their Resilience**

This section discusses the broad spectrum of social support systems that contributed to victims' resilience and their ability to thrive. The interview questions included 'What kinds of help did you seek? Mention specific forms of social support systems that were available to you when you needed help. How useful were they at enabling you to thrive?' Again, I explored queen mothers' perspectives on the contribution of social support systems and what they believed were the implications that intimate partner violence brings. I also examined the constraints encountered with the use of social support systems. More so, I found out about the state of the

relationship between victims and their partners and the way forward. Below are some of their responses;

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: When all those things happened, I informed my father-in-law and he advised me not to go away because I have taken good care of his house and the surroundings... You know what? We live in my-father-in-law's house... yeah, the house belongs to my husband's father. ... Sometimes I also inform my aunties and my brothers but when they last call my husband to order, he told them to inform me to pack and go. He hasn't even bought me a pair of slippers in a long time but he has been able to produce 4 children with other women after I became his wife ooh. Apart from reporting him to my-father-in-law and my brothers and aunties, I don't seek help anywhere. What do I have? I don't have money to go to court and I have no one who will support me with money to take the case to the police or to seek medical care...*

*Angelina: 47, cook, married with 8 children: I informed his sister about my problems. As for this sister-in-law, I tell her everything. Everywhere I passed through before getting money to pay my children's school fees, she knows. I don't want to inform my husband. I keep them secret. I don't tell my husband because when the time came for the children to continue their schooling, we had lots of cassava in the farm but he refused to use the proceeds to pay for their school fees. They were the ones who even told my husband that these two boys have passed their BECE so he has to work hard to send them to SSS [Senior High School] but he didn't do it. I don't know what he used the cassava money for. These children helped him to plant and also uproot all the cassava but they didn't see what he used the money for. The children asked him to pay their school fees several times but he claimed he didn't have money unless someone gave him a loan before he could send them to school... The teachers were also very helpful. The teachers used to come to our house to plead with him to pay the admission fee for these boys because they are clever but he didn't care.*

*Tiwaa: 31, farmer, married with 5 children: My sister is at Nsawam and she has even advised me to come and live with her. My parents are both alive and they have been a form of social support for me... they are those I lived with during my months of separation from my husband. My co-tenants have also been very supportive because they sometimes feed my children when I am not around and I can go to them when I need money. All these people are my sources of help and they each supported me and they still do.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: Sometimes, I go to inform his elder brother who lives at the top. He is the one who comes to discipline the children and to talk to my husband.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: ...So I started reporting him to his younger brother but 'the value was the same'. There was a time when he did something and I went to inform his uncle at ... [name withheld] and he was called for questioning and was found guilty but nothing happened after that. One person I am able to confide in is sister Azumi [pseudonym] bro Mohammed's [pseudonym] wife. She is the wife to my brother-in-law. Her*

husband also puts her through a lot of violence just like me so we both sit to discuss our issues. When I tell her my problems, she can say that eiii me too same ooh; this and that is what my husband also does to me ooh! By talking about it to each other, we are able to advise ourselves and also comfort each other. ...sometimes, whenever it is beyond me then I inform my neighbours Mr. Gyan [pseudonym] and his wife; they are very well respected teachers in this village. When it is beyond me then I inform them but after a while, I realised that when they call to talk to my husband, he still doesn't change. What I control myself against is never to go to my parents with my marital problems because once it gets to them then it means the matter is out of hand. Imagine that my younger siblings are there and I always take my issues there and they hear about it. Shouldn't it be the younger ones who would have to bring their problems? If they do not come with their issues and I am the one who always take mine there, would that be a good example? That is why I don't take my issues to my parents. My husband's parents are deceased. His mother was even worse as compared to her children. If that woman were to have been alive, maybe we would have all died by now because she used to say that as for her husband, he married many wives so there is nothing wrong with it. She even said that to her other daughters-in-law so she found nothing wrong with that. One of her daughters-in-law was heavily pregnant at some point when she called to tell her that due to where her pregnancy had reached, she cannot satisfy her son sexually so she has decided that her son should marry another woman in addition. This lady came to me in tears and I told her to go back and respectfully inform our mother-in-law that, she cannot give her any reply in her condition but will do so after she gives birth. ... Not knowing that process of finding another wife for her son had taken place long ago because we found out that there was another woman in the picture who had given birth to twins for the man. These twins were even born before this lady delivered the baby she was pregnant with at the time. On top of that, they even gave birth to a triplet after the twins but they died. So this man had five children with that other woman out of which the twins survived ... Can't such a man bring you AIDS?

Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: What he did to me was very painful so I decided to report it to the police. ...um I was very tired and weak that night and could not even get the strength to stand on my feet. He refused to even spare his own daughter who was tied at my back and when I fell, I was helplessly lying on my child. I thank God the child did not die. ... It was a Saturday and although it was in the night, I decided to go with my father to report the incidence to the police. On our way, my father advised me to rather wait till Monday to take the matter to WAJU (Now DOVVSU) instead of the police station because he said the police do not handle marital issues. So I listened to my father and I was praying for Monday to come quickly. That Monday morning, my father escorted me to the WAJU office at [name withheld] to report and my husband's own mother even pressurised me to report the case since her son had decided not to take her advice or obey the family anymore. My mother-in-law was even the one who gave us the name of the WAJU official to see. ...The officer in charge met both of us to listen to my husband's side of the story too after which the madam told us that he would have to be detained until he gets someone to bail him. Apparently, he did not come along with anyone so he was told to get someone to bail him else he would be 'jailed'. By the time he got his brother to come to his rescue, it was past 6 o'clock in the

evening when the officers had closed. He was therefore made to remain at the police cells till the next day. My mother-in-law didn't know her son would be arrested. In fact, I also did not know he would be 'jailed' and even though I willingly reported this case, I got worried when he was put behind bars. ...I always report his behaviour to the family members who stood behind us during our marriage but sometimes, just about three days after the problem is resolved, then he puts up the same behaviour again. So when I realised, I could not take it anymore that is when I decided to take the last case to WAJU. I believe if I continue to live in this and don't report the problem, I may die as a result or I may fall sick. I thought this can stop him from being violent towards me. Even if he takes good care of me and the children but still takes in alcohol and beats me or insults me, I will still consider all these behaviours violent. Um...I knew of a certain lady whose husband also used to abuse her a lot but she just said hmm! Hmm! Hmm! without seeking help and one day when he beat her up, she died on the spot without saying even a word. I do not want that to happen to me. That is why I reported my husband's attitude to the family heads and now to WAJU so that he will stop his violent behaviour. Madam, reporting the case to WAJU has really helped a lot because they have warned my husband against any such violent acts and they have also sat both of us down to advise us. The only thing I was not happy about was putting my husband in jail because ...eerrr he will think evil of me.

Akpen, 65, farmer, divorced, 4 children: Yooo! Every mother will take in her daughter who is being abused by her husband so I believe that is also a place where victims can seek help. ...Let me say that, I could have reported his violent behaviour to social welfare but we don't have one here.

Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: I run to my auntie or a neighbour for support whenever he refuses to provide money. I sometimes report his behaviour to his uncle but the situation is the same. Sometimes, when it comes to the clothes that the children will wear, my sister buys for them. Also, there is a certain pastor living down there, I have reported some of the issues to him and he has called my husband several times to advise him but he wouldn't listen.

Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: My parents came to my rescue and we reported him to his 'abusuapanin' (family head) and two other sub-chiefs in the village. He was found guilty and was made to pacify me with a piece of cloth, a fowl and an amount of money. My uncles and aunties are also here so sometimes when he beats me up, I go there to inform them. When I'm lucky, they give me money or they provide food for my children. They called to advise him but he pretended he has changed. You wait and see. Just give him some time and he will repeat the same behaviour. He will not change. That is his character. As for his behaviour, that is how it has been. He hasn't changed and he doesn't want to change because it has become the food he eats.

Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: I haven't told anyone about my problems because I think he will change. Sometimes, I feel like talking to someone about it but I haven't been able to do that yet. He has a friend who is older than him so I would prefer to

*inform him about it one day if he continues with this behaviour. It's been a lot of years now but the reason why I have not yet reported his behaviour to anyone is because I believe him if he says he will give me money whenever he gets it but now I think he is taking advantage of me. \*\* [this woman did not seek any help] \*\**

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: Neighbours came to stop him from beating me more. When I informed my-mother-in-law she said his son troubles her a lot so she can't say anything anymore. When I informed my people, they said they won't allow me to come back to my marital home because they don't want me to go through such problems and they comforted me. I am too young to go through a problem like this. I remember once my husband came with his people to plead for forgiveness and my auntie even said she wouldn't permit me to come back into the marriage but I came back. But now from the way things are going, if I should go to my people there is no way I would return. I will go to... [name withheld] because that is where I come from. Two of the children live somewhere else so I will take the other two along with me.... With what happened yesterday, my only option was going to his uncle's place with the children. I decided to go to my parents but his family said they will sit to discuss the case today. Hmm I will not be in a marriage like this but they have asked me to be patient. My mother didn't want me to come back and my father also said because he cherishes me so much he wouldn't allow my husband to treat me like that. But since he brought his elders to come over to plead on his behalf the last time, I accepted him again. Now, what he has done is even worse than the first. I won't wait for him to kill me.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: Due to the way he is, if I should report him at all to any leader in the community, nobody will be able to talk about his character. If I should take him to any elderly person and ask them to advise him or say something sensible into his ears, hhhoooh he will insult those people. ...Okay, his mother is deceased and I have been unable to tell my parents about how he treats me because they warned me against living together with him but I did not listen. Um ...when I was pregnant for instance and he beat me up, I could not inform my family members because they would have said that I did not listen to them. I also did not seek support anywhere and I did nothing about his behaviour. I only went to the hospital for treatment after some neighbours came to stop him from beating me more. My parents however questioned me about it because hmmm surprisingly they heard about the incidence from someone. They thought I would learn from that and wouldn't live with him anymore but after I gave birth to our second child, I came back to him and the violence continued. This compelled my parents to wash their hands off my relationship and now I have no help but Allah.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: I informed my mother and my-mother-in-law...I even told my friend about it. I didn't tell anyone else. I don't want my issues to go out and that is why I only talk to my mum or his mum. That is all, nobody else. His mother reminded him of how violence occurred in her own marriage with his father [my-father-in-law] and doesn't want him to repeat that so he should stop. ...She advised him that once we are married, he should stick to me. There are problems in every marriage but when he does that, he will never mature. For the mother, she is good. Since then when something happens we*

*talk to ourselves because for him, he doesn't like complaining. He is the shy type so when sometimes it is beyond my control, I report to his mother or my mother. He is very close to my mother so sometimes she also talks to him but if it is a little problem, we sort it out ourselves.*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: It was my sister and his husband who gave me a place to stay that night and provided me with food and took care of my wellbeing for some days. The man later came to my sister's house in the morning to look for me and to beg me to forgive him. My friends stood by me...they even went to the other girl's parents' house to threaten her but I didn't like the idea. I asked them not to beat her and they shouldn't also let the matter be made too public because the man was a visitor in that town who had come to work in the hotel as chef so I didn't want to disgrace him. ...Okay, um at that time I didn't really seek any other support from anywhere else. My parents are living in Kumasi and we didn't want them to know what had happened. We didn't want people to hear about it and I couldn't tell the elders of my church or in my family but I was heartbroken and was brooding over what had happened.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: I informed my uncle about it because he gave me out for marriage forcefully when I was a teenager. I didn't disobey him so he gave me a piece of land as gift to develop a property on for myself and the children. My uncle said he was giving me that piece of land so that even if my ex-husband fails to give me any inheritance, I will not suffer.*

*Georgina: 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: Ooh, we went to put the case before the 'abusupananin' [family head] of my ex-husband's family and they called to advise him but he stood by what he had planned... so bent on divorcing me. I had also informed my parents and other members of my family and they were all present when the matter was called but my husband was adamant so I also stopped following up on the case. ...eeerrrr I came to live with my mother and that is where I am still staying.*

*Sukena, 23, waitress, single but dating, 1 child: I reported it to my mother and also the boy's mother but because the boy does not claim responsibility of the child, it always comes back to nothing. Nobody told me about WAJU [now DOVVSU] at that time until last month when a customer mentioned it to me and gave me directions to the place. He told me WAJU handled a certain woman's case which was similar to mine. He said um ...they determined a particular amount of money for the man in question to pay to cater for the child so they would get the boy who impregnated me to also take care of the child. ...I knew that I could have reported it to the chief's palace but I didn't because I was afraid something terrible would happen to the boy and that would have been my fault. I work hard to take care of my child but it is really difficult for me and that is why I welcomed the suggestion the man gave me to go to WAJU so I can be able to enrol my child in school. I believe they will handle my case to favour me and my child.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: As for the family heads, there are some who will speak well for you as a woman but there are others who know how far they will go with your case. As for my husband, if I dare report him to anyone like the way I'm talking to you hmmm, what he will do to you... He simply doesn't want me to discuss with anyone the violence he commits against me. He can even disgrace the person who dares call to advise him... that is why I also beat him myself.*

Conclusively, in terms of social support systems, it is evident from the findings that victims had knowledge regarding available social support systems that they could tap in times of distress. However, they recognised some of these social support systems as less supportive or even unsupportive. For most of them, the supportive people in their lives have been members of their own families or that of their spouses particularly, the people who stood behind them during the marriage ceremony or those who approve of their relationship.

### **7.3 Queen Mothers' Perspectives on the Contribution of Social Support Systems**

The queen mothers also provided in-depth information as key informants on available social support systems; some of which victims did not mention probably because they were unaware such opportunities existed for which they could benefit from. They also talked at length about some of the punitive measures put in place traditionally to check the actions of perpetrators. The question was 'What social support systems are available within this village for victims of IPV and how are the actions of perpetrators checked? Also, kindly talk about any additional support services this community receives from outside to enhance the lives of victims of intimate partner violence'.

*Queen mother No. 1: We currently don't have any governmental social support systems or any help for people who suffer these sad problems. If we have a shelter for them to stay in, that would have been okay but we don't have that. There are guest rooms in the palace to host visitors and we sometimes keep victims of such offenses there overnight for safety ...away from the husband until tempers have calmed down. We don't allow the woman to go home especially*

*in the situation where the husband has pulled a machete or cutlass in an attempt to kill the woman. This helps to prevent her from being harmed further by her husband. Recently, there was a situation where a man cursed the wife over some misunderstandings and the woman reported to us at the palace and the man was made to pacify the gods. The tradition here is that, when such a thing happens, the chief will ask the offender to overturn the curse and then pay 1,000, Ghana Cedis and provide 6 schnapps, 6 sheep as a form of 'Mpata' (apology) to the victim and the community. If the person refuses to abide by that and the case goes to the 'Omanhehe' the amount and items will double. This man pronounced that the community river should kill his wife or destroy her. In such a circumstance, if we do not resolve that, the gods of the river could kill not only the person in question but also the children and other family members. So that cost alone can help deter other potential offenders. Um ...the traditional authority of this land does not joke with such issues at all and we do not condone such behaviours. This tells you that there are laws that protect community members and therefore does not allow a man to violate his partner's rights. For example, if a man impregnates a woman, it is his responsibility to take care of both the woman and the child. Sometimes, the man is made to take care of the needs of the child or children or we ask him to pay a monthly fee to the woman for the upkeep of the children. If the man refuses to obey the terms and conditions we agree on, then we take him higher to the 'Omanhehe' where he pays even higher costs because it is the responsibility of any man to take care of the children he brings into this world.*

*Queen Mother No. 2: If for example a woman is beaten by her husband or there is any form of violence in the middle of the night, and the case comes to the palace, the man is charged if the case is severe. But if it is the woman who is guilty, then we [the traditional authority] will charge her and we will ask the perpetrator to pay damages we deem appropriate. The chief and I together with the elders sit to discuss it and then we send for that particular man to present himself for questioning. When the offense is not that serious, we ask the wrongdoer to kneel down and apologise to the victim after which we counsel both partners but when it is a grave offense, the offender is charged to bring schnapps, sheep, fowl and an amount of money as 'mpataade' [a form of apology] to the victim. The person in question is sometimes made to cook a meal for the victim using the animal that has been presented as a sign to request for forgiveness and also heheheee ...to demonstrate love. Sometimes, if the problem is not reported at the palace and the couple decide to settle it at the family level then the 'abusuapanin' [family head] plays those roles and that is acceptable. At other times... very few occasions when we judge that it is a criminal matter then we advise the victim to report it at the Asamankese Police Station and sometimes the perpetrator goes to jail if he is found guilty.*

*Queen Mother No. 3: For most of the men in this village, they won't show up when you call them because they are largely the perpetrators but for the women who respect, they will come anytime you call the case. There are those who will even insult me if I attempt to discuss their issue. You will not believe the foul words that some men can say to you. It is not easy ooh madam. When a very serious matter is reported at the palace, the chief will call me together with the elders to discuss the case and bring peace in the community. When we find the person guilty, we give our ruling and charge the offender to pacify the gods with sheep and schnapps and also compensate*

*his partner with money... we believe an offense against a fellow human being is an offense against the gods too. After that we give a ruling for the offender to follow and also advise both couple on the need to live in peace. We then ask the perpetrator to propose a suitable date on which to present the items and if it is reasonable, the leadership will take those required items from him or her. Those who do not report their case to the palace sometimes take it to the 'abusuapanin' or an elderly person in the community to help them resolve their problems. Others also report it to the police station or WAJU and that is also acceptable. I remember once a similar issue happened to my sister where the man took it to the human rights commission. He said he wouldn't marry the woman anymore and the family asked him to pay some damages and compensate her. He complained that the bill was huge but he later agreed to pay and gave a date on which he would make the payment. It didn't get to that date and the family received a letter from the human rights office saying the man has accused us of duping him. We were therefore asked to appear before the court so I was the lead person. They listened to both sides of the story and to his surprise they rather found him guilty so he was charged and the divorce occurred at the human rights. Can you imagine the amount we asked him to pay at the family level was hugely increased by the court and they gave him strict rules to follow? The court said from 6 o'clock in the morning, he can decide to see his children until 6 o'clock in the evening. I didn't like that idea of allowing him permission to see the children but because it is the law, I couldn't do anything about it. The man kept coming to the house and after a while, they even remarried but sadly the man later died.*

#### **7.4 Queen Mothers' Understanding of the Implications of IPV**

As major social support systems and also as a result of their prominence in traditional Ghanaian society, the queen mothers likewise shared their perspectives on the implications of intimate partner violence as a way of amplifying the voices of the rural victims in this study.

*Queen mother No. 1: When it happens like that it is only the new woman who enjoys the fruits of the other woman's labour whilst she [the victim] suffers continually. Due to the other woman in his life, he just doesn't want to see this woman's face. You see? It doesn't always help, it destroys the life of the children. ... Sometimes, the man comes back to his senses but it might be too late. ... Children from such broken homes may end up becoming prostitutes because when she tells the mother she is going to the father, she may end up sleeping in the rooms of other men and the boys sometimes become armed robbers troubling society.*

*Queen mother No. 2: All I can say is that it brings nothing good but suffering and poverty.*

*Queen Mother No. 3: The woman whose partner beats her all the time can develop serious bodily damages and mental problems. ... Um sometimes, it can lead to severe*

*medical complications and the woman can even die like the case that happened last week at 'aponkye akura'. Men usually have heavy hands and if he continues beating her, she can be injured or fall sick. There was a time when a certain man slapped his wife and she lost some of her teeth. For those women who cannot endure the violent behaviour from their partners, they seek divorce. As soon as the divorce happens the children are the first to be affected. They mostly end up with their mothers and in the situation where she is not working, then those children go wayward. Um as for 'throwing' the children on the man, it is usually not an option. Since the man cannot even take care of himself, how can he take care of the children? When it happens like that, everything gets out of hand and it doesn't help the wellbeing of the children. Eeerrrr again, when it happens that the woman is thrown out and is unable to be self-disciplined, then she goes into prostitution.*

By way of drawing this section together, it is important to emphasise that similar to the victims' perspectives about the implications of IPV, the queen mothers also mentioned injuries, deformities, mental problems, economic hardships to victims, and dire consequences on the upbringing of the children where such are involved.

## **7.5 The Community's Role in Intimate Partner Violence Issues**

This part provides information about the views from both the queen mothers and the general women who participated in the community forum about what they propose to be the best practices that the communities can adopt to address the problem of intimate partner violence.

### **7.5.1 Queen Mothers Views on the Community's Role in IPV Matters**

Some of the key informants (queen mothers) proposed the creation of shelters for IPV victims and a coordinated effort of family and community support instead of leaving the whole kit and caboodle in the hands of the justice system.

*Queen mother No. 1: In the Northern Region for example, they have Gambaga witch camp where they safely keep people who have been accused as witches so that society cannot harm them. The government can create something like that in the form of shelter to protect women who also are beaten or violated by their husbands. The whites have developed those facilities to protect victims but we don't have that here so we depend on our extended family system. We cannot copy everything that the whites do because our*

*system is different. Family members cannot sit back and watch their own being taken to WAJU or the police station just like that without offering help from within. In Ghana, we love and value family a lot and that is how we have been socialised so we come in to offer help and not divide families. Sometimes, family members come in to provide assistance by way of offering to host the woman and the children for some time until the problem is resolved. At other times, I look for neighbours or community members of good character who may not even be related by blood to the victim but can offer counselling and emotional support. ... Why won't you help your own when they get into trouble? If one becomes so rich and gains the whole world, he or she will not enjoy it alone. Definitely, the family will benefit and taking care of victims in trouble like what we are talking about is one of the ways one can help. I have heard that sometimes, a white person expects his or her own parents to give notice before they can visit and I find that unfortunate. That is not our culture so if someone is being abused by the husband I don't expect the family to wait to be given a notice before coming.*

*Queen Mother No. 2: It is the responsibility of the entire community to come together to support each other. If someone goes into trouble or faces a problem, we all have to help during such difficult times so that the person feels loved.*

*Queen Mother No. 3: Everybody is each other's keeper so members in the community would usually separate couples when they are in a fight rather than sit unconcerned. The elders can also call the couple to advise them as is usually done or neighbours can help take the woman to her family members. There are people that you call to talk to and they listen but others wouldn't even mind. There are some men who never listen to any advice but when they sit back to think about their behaviour, sometimes they feel remorse and they change for the better.*

With regard to the discourse on the role expectations of the communities in IPV matters, the queen mothers agreed that a lot of responsibility falls on community members to be each other's keeper, and they charged families to strengthen their commitment to supporting their members not only in this regard but in all aspects.

### **7.5.2 The General Women's Views at the Forum on Community's Role in IPV Matters**

These were perspectives of women who participated in the community forum. Whilst most of them shared similar views with the queen mothers on the need for continuous family support, others advocated formalised social welfare services to be brought to the door steps of

rural residents. On the other hand, some challenged why any woman should report her spouse to the police. Meanwhile, some of the women in all the three villages did not seem to acknowledge the role of their queen mothers in such matters but there were few encouraging words admonishing the women to feel free to approach the queen mothers and benefit from their counsel.

*Dora, 56, trader, married with 4 children: Please, if such a thing happens to a woman, she goes to an elderly person to cry on his or her shoulders and to seek counselling. The advice that an elderly person gives, if only the woman follows it then it ends her well. A young lady has come to me like that once with her marital problem and I advised her appropriately. When I finished with her, I went to the man to also talk to him about the issue and since then, they tell me there hasn't been quarrels of that sort again and they are always thanking me for helping them. I am not their relative but they listened to me and their marriage is working.*

*Felicia, 34, trader, married with 7 children: Now, we understand that our queen mother does not live here all the time. Therefore, since almost every ethnic group in this community has got their own sub chiefs and queen mothers for example 'Baasare chief and queen mother'; Fanti chief and queen mother'; 'Ewe chief and queen mother'; Ga chief and queen mother' etc, I suggest that we go to the queen mothers of our ethnic groups to discuss such problems with them. However, if we can have the queen mother of the community to live here and spend most of her time here, that would have been good for us to go to her with issues like these.*

*Seesi, 35, fish monger, married with 4 children: I will prefer that the chief with his queen mother and elders of this community should make a new law which should be communicated very well to everybody in this village to punish anyone who beats his wife or causes any form of violence to any woman. In that case, if someone refuses to cater for his children or behaves irresponsibly as a husband or causes harm to his wife, he should be punished or be charged and given a bill to pay. That money should then be used to develop the village so that everyone will be a witness instead of the perpetrators being asked to pay those monies to government who does not care about us.*

*Adoma, 35, cook, married with 5 children: If the community is able to get government to set up a police station in this village or a social welfare office here, I will be happy because they will be more powerful to deter the men from committing such offenses. The men will know that, because the office is right here and can easily arrest them when they misbehave, they will stop and the number of violence cases would decrease.*

*Margaret, 68, farmer, married with 10 children: I will encourage the women in this village to approach the queen mother and discuss their problems with her because she will handle the issue wisely. ...It is part of her role as a queen. She is also a mother and a young woman who will understand your needs and will work patiently to bring peace in your marriages. She will talk to the couple and teach them how to communicate and understand each other. ...don't be afraid of your husbands. All of you are my children and I want your marriages to be successful so let's all discuss what we can do to make us all happy or ladies, don't you agree with me? [loud cheer from the gathering in agreement]*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: If the couple is your next door neighbour and you hear them fighting at night, then you go and break their door to separate the fight because when you knock on the door, they will not open it. You can bring the woman to sleep in your room until the next morning. But sometimes when you are not careful, you will get a few slaps so you can go in with a male to stop the fight. Hmmm, sometimes it could be you that your husband is killing so you may hit him with anything you can find before neighbours come to rescue you.*

*Georgina, 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: Sometimes, if the violence is not severe the couple may only need counselling to make the marriage work but at other times some perpetrators need punishment. So when the case is reported at the palace or to the 'abusapanin' (family head), they should gather not only the other elders to resolve the issue secretly but they should gather the entire community. So that the perpetrator will be aware that every member of the village is watching them. It will help check their subsequent behaviours and also deter other men from doing same. ...but if it is a very serious offense such that resolving it becomes impossible, then the marriage can be dissolved. In the event that the couple have children, the man should be charged to take care of their needs.*

*Attaa, 52, farmer, widow, 4 children: Intimate partner violence is a family issue so the families should learn to resolve the issue within the extended family. Eerrr I have no problem if others decide to deal with the man as the law requires. In that case, if it becomes necessary for the woman to file for divorce she can do so for the man to be charged or for him to compensate the woman.*

*Charity, 29, hairdresser, in cohabitation, 2 children: But how can you report your husband to the police for them to come and arrest him? When he comes back from jail and you go back to sleep with him, wouldn't that be a curse on you? As for anger it comes all the time. If you send him to prison and he comes back a better person and then the family decides to settle your differences for you to come together again, your conscience will hunt you so all you have to do is to forgive him like that. Just forgive him.*

*Owusua, 37, fish monger, married with 4 children: The community members do not have much say as to what action the victim and the family decides to take. Personally, I will not try to stop any woman who decides to report the matter to the police because she is the one who is by the fireside and knows how much it is burning her.*

In summary, the women from the various communities also shared their perspectives on what they believe the role of the community should be to contribute to victims' resilience. Many called for the continuous support of the family just like the victims and queen mothers had already emphasised, and some advocated for the establishment of formal social support systems to augment the supportive role of the families.

### **7.6 Involvement of the Queen Mother in Resolving Issues of Intimate Partner Violence**

This aspect of the write-up focuses on respondents' assessments of the extent to which the queen mother of their respective villages have been involved in resolving the problems of intimate partner violence. I was interested in knowing the specific roles queen mothers might have played as female traditional authority figures in the traditional setting in contributing to victims' resilience.

Local leaders have traditionally played a very critical role in conflict resolution in all areas. They are also a key point of recourse especially in rural areas. Their roles have been and are still very well appreciated in resolution of matters relating to intimate partner violence. However most of the research respondents revealed problems that affect fairness and confidentiality with which the issues related to IPV are or may be handled by the traditional leadership. In some communities, many respondents, during the in-depth interviews, revealed lack of respect for the authority of some of the personalities within the traditional leadership, whereas others expressed little or no awareness of the roles chiefs and queen mothers play in intimate matters such as IPV. More so, few simply stated they didn't have the courage to go

before such authority figures to discuss their relationship issues. It was also pointed out that the palace are public domains that are not convenient enough to handle sensitive issues like intimate partner violence. For many of the respondents, these are the reasons why they don't even bother report to the queen mother once such intimate cases happen.

Fascinating enough, the responses received from the queen mothers about the roles they play in their respective communities at resolving IPV issues were quite inconsistent with those obtained from victims in the in-depth interviews and the general women's group who participated in the community forum. These contradictions may either be a case of their roles not being recognized by the community women or the participants possibly might not have used their [queen mothers] experiences before or the queen mothers were simply trying to save their faces. In the wake of these controversies, it is important to emphasize here that it is not quite likely that all respondents not only in one community but in all three communities would be wrong about the roles of their respective queen mothers.

These are the views of twenty-four victims who were individually interviewed and forty women from the general community who participated in the community forum. It could also happen that perhaps, the individual in-depth interviews and the community forum did not attract women who may have benefitted from the services of the queen mothers to have spoken in their favour for validation. The findings in this qualitative research to a very large extent, illuminate the dichotomy between intimate partner violence and social support in rural Ghana.

### **7.6.1 Victims Analysis of the Queen Mother's Role in IPV Matters**

The crucial question I asked victims was 'Did you inform the queen mother about it? How has the queen mother been involved in resolving this issue of intimate partner violence or which

particular roles has she played in this regard to support you?’ and below are some of their responses.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: No, no, no. the queen mother doesn't live in this community very often. Besides, most people in the community support my husband's new found love ...they think I am the bad one. So even if I should report to the queen, how sure am I that she will rule in my favour? The people who will sit on the matter at the palace will be the same people who will go to my rival to inform her of what I have said or not said. Therefore, I don't see the relevance of telling anyone. I know that it is the responsibility of the queen mother to settle cases such as these but I don't intend to take my matter to her because I'm not sure how it will end up.*

*Angelina, 47, cook, married with 8 children: Hooo since I came to this community, I have never seen the queen mother call anyone or organise any meeting with women. I don't know what she is up to. Just as the chief is, so is the queen mother and all the others at the palace. If you live in this village and you don't work hard for yourself, you are dead. There is no support from the traditional leadership and my family members are in Togo so if something happen, I only have my sister-in-law to support me.*

*Tiwaa, 31, farmer, married with 5 children: No, I find it difficult to go before such people in authority. I would have liked to go to the queen mother with my problems but I don't have that courage. Although my husband's behaviour can send him to jail, I find it hard to report him and because of that, I suffer so much violence.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: No. I don't take my issues to the queen mother or to the palace because in this village, once you take your issues there it will be broadcast. The manner in which you will present your issue will be different from how it will be circulated. When the case is called, it will not only be the queen mother; other people will be present so I will not take my matter there. I am not afraid to go before the queen mother with my problems but I will prefer to discuss it with my uncle. It should have been possible for women to send their concerns to the queen for her to say something to help us but excuse me to say, I think the gap between the queen and us is wide.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: No. I have never seen her play any role in people's marriages. I haven't seen some before. Since I have never seen her resolve conflicts in any marriage, I can't sell my story to her. She herself might be holding on to someone's husband seriously so if I should report my husband to her, all she will say is that I'm such a problematic rival or I'm such a litigant. ...hmmm if you have something that you cherish, you don't leave it to rot. What I always say is that, if a man is jealous about his woman then he loves her. It is in the same way that if a woman should be jealous about her man she loves him. If I don't love him and I see him going astray, I wouldn't talk; I would have waited to*

*see him fall into the ditch so that when that is achieved, I will leave him but I love him so I have to protect him.*

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: Well, it was even the queen mother who sent a message that we see her and she advised us to live peacefully as husband and wife. My mother-in-law and other members of my husband's family had gone to her to request that she pleads with me and my parents to take the case out of WAJU and settle it at home. She only became aware of the case when my husband got arrested and she advised both of us.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: Yes, once when my husband and I were fighting on the roadside the queen mother saw us and called to advice both of us. But as soon as we got home and I asked my husband for chop money, he angrily asked me to go to the queen mother for my chop money. Since then I haven't been able to go to the queen with any of my problems because I'm afraid of what my husband will say and I'm being careful so that he does not insult the queen mother to put me into trouble. One problem is that, the queen mother of this village is not very respected by the people. She is also the cause of that because she does not bring unity among people and she is unable to command respect as a queen mother. She operates a chop bar and people sometimes make fun of her that her soup does not taste good. Hmmm when you met us in the community forum, we were all afraid to say the truth about why we do not report our spouses to the queen mother because her mother [the queen mother's mother] was present. Do you know something? The queen mother herself hmmm excuse me to say oooh she herself is promiscuous... she is unable to stay with one man. She has four children but each child has a different father. Currently, she is dating a certain teacher at ... [name withheld] but I even hear the man has a wife and is planning to divorce her because of this queen mother. So you see, she has no respect and nobody wants to go to her for advice. That is exactly how the issue is.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: Not at all, there is no way I will ever report my case to this shameless queen mother because even my own husband 'koraa' she has slept with him before. Our queen mother does not respect herself as queen mother so nobody also respects her in this community. They just put her on the throne without doing any character checks so she can't hide her real character. Imagine if I should report my husband to her, then I have even helped her. The children in this community can insult her 'rough rough'(anyhow). She operates a 'chop bar' (eatery) and that paves the way for the 'girls girls' and 'boys boys' to talk to her anyhow. I don't think this queen mother was properly enthroned because if that was the case, she would have commanded a lot of respect. Maybe, the position came to meet her on the way and that is how come she herself does not value it. I don't see her role as the leader of the women. I think the chief himself should be the one to call our husbands to order and punish them when they abuse us because they are afraid of him [the chief].*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: I haven't informed the queen mother about it. I rather went to report my ex-husband to one of the sub-chiefs but he didn't show up. As for the queen mother, the people even want her to be 'de-stooled'. If I should report my husband to her, he might even insult her. My husband respects nobody and if the chief himself should even call him, he may not show up so it is not necessary I inform the queen mother. It is a personal decision. ...For instance even if my husband should go to the chief and ask him to plead on his behalf for me to remarry him, I will not do it. It is not by force. This is a man who will kill me when he gets the least chance so why should I? I am sure now he might want to go to the queen mother or the chief to plead for him or he might bring some elders to settle our differences but it is too late; I will not agree. He once sent a certain man to my father to plead for forgiveness for all that he had done against me. My father asked that he should come with his people but I'm sure none of his family members wanted to lead him here.*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: No. I was thinking my husband will change and give me what I need. Hmmm, I didn't even think the queen mother will have any role to play in my marriage because I thought her role is at the palace. I haven't heard anyone talking about taking her marriage problems to the queen. Maybe, if I take my problems to her, she might help me but... Probably, I haven't got help because I haven't taken that step. I think my husband is just being greedy.*

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: No. Since his uncles have said they will see to it that the matter is resolved, that is why I haven't taken it anywhere else. If they call the case and it is not properly resolved, I will leave because hmmm madam, he has done that before. There was a certain pregnant woman in our house whom my husband fought with some time ago until there was a clot of blood on her eyes. So she reported the case to the police and my husband was arrested. They made him sign a bond not to repeat that again but he hasn't changed. Somebody's wife ooh. He does all these to disgrace me.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: No. There are certain queen mothers who will broadcast your name in the community when you confide in them. She might tell people that as for this woman, her husband is always beating her and I don't want that to happen to me. As for the queen mother of this village, she is not good. For example, when she lies to the chief about someone in order to get favour from the chief, it only puts the person in trouble. She did that to someone and he was fined. That is why the girls and boys in this community do not like her. I wouldn't want to take my issues to her due to her behaviour. She cannot even help me. She has the power all right but I don't want her to be the one to settle my case for me. Maybe, my husband would even get angry for reporting him to the queen mother instead of his own mother. He may ask why I would prefer an outsider.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: I haven't taken him there because if it has to do with the queen mother alone, he will insult her. ...the two of them have quarrelled over an issue before but if I should take him to the chief, maybe that will be better. Due to the way the*

*queen mother is, that is why it happens like that. The fact is, she doesn't do things like a queen mother mmhhmm. Even if you should meet her somewhere, you will not believe she is queen because she doesn't behave like one. If she wants to play her role as a queen mother, she must respect herself first so that she would be able to bring all the women together and advise them concerning marriage. She should be able to tell the men also that, if they do not want to marry their wives again, then they should take them back to their families. She should advise unmarried couples that if it is money that they do not have to perform the marriage ceremony, they should both work and contribute to perform the customary rites. All these are the responsibilities of the queen mother to gather all the women for this purpose but as for ours 'tweeeaaakaiii'...*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: No. I don't want my issues to go out. The issue here is that, if you take your matter to the queen mother then it means the whole traditional leadership would have to sit and discuss it at the palace. When that happens, you will realise that even though you wanted the issue to be privately discussed; now the whole community will hear about it. I personally do not even believe I have to inform my father-in-law about certain problems in my marriage so taking it to the queen mother would have gone too far and my husband might even get angry. That is why I only discuss it with his mother and my mum. In this community too, it isn't every marital issue that you can take to the queen mother unless probably the man has taken you for a fool. For example, when the man refuses to accept responsibility of a pregnancy then you can take him to the palace for him to be penalised...*

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: No, I didn't go to her and I haven't gone to the queen mother in this village either because I don't want anyone to know my story. The queen mother's role is to bring all the women together and advise them that when they meet any man who proposes to settle down with them, they should take him home to meet the family and pay her bride price. This is important so that when later he hurts her, they can be confident enough to report him to the appropriate people who stood behind the marriage to reprimand him or punish him if punishment is required. The queen mother should advise the women that if they want to get married, they have to be patient. The girls these days say that our time has passed so if you advise them, they don't listen because they think it's their time. Those who refuse to listen will go and hit the wall like I did and when that happens, they will come back. They are not like you who have the time for us to have come all the way to listen to us. Hmm, if you advise them, they don't even listen because they think they know better than everybody else.*

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: I don't remember taking my marital problems to the queen mother at the time. ...Meanwhile, the role of the queen mother is to bring the women together to advise them in their marriages. She is supposed to teach the women what they should do and what they shouldn't do in their marriages so that the women do not tell their problems to people who cannot help them.*

*Georgina: 36, farm labourer, divorced, 5 children: No. The queen mother is now old so she is not very active and I have no knowledge about her resolving other marital problems.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: No, I didn't go to her. But in the olden days, the queen mother used to meet with all of us as young ladies to advise us on a lot of things. Now, she is old so she is not able to do those things again. Ooh I remember those days when she was also a young lady, she used to settle problems in people's marriages but she is now weak and unable to do so much any longer.*

*Ama, 50, farm labourer, married with 5 children: She used to be very active when she was enthroned but now, she is old. Those days, she used to bring all the youth together to discuss problems that worried us but she is now aging. She has stopped doing those things.*

This section has presented the analysis of the queen mothers' role from the perspectives of both victims, and the general community women. Interestingly, majority of these respondents confirmed the institutional failure that exist in the rural communities, and also revealed the unsupportive role of their various queen mothers when it comes to the problem of IPV as they have experienced. Others also expressed fears about confidentiality issues, whilst few acknowledged that their queen mothers used to play significant roles for women in the olden days but [the queen mothers] have grown old and weak, and are therefore unable to continue acting in those capacities; without quite acknowledging the fact that wisdom comes with age.

### **7.6.2 General Women's Analysis of the Queen Mother's Role in IPV Matters**

Here, I obtained the responses from the group of women who gathered for the community forum in order to triangulate the results received from victims and the queen mothers regarding the roles queen mothers play in addressing issues of intimate partner violence.

*Comfort, 63, farmer divorced, 7 children: Since the queen mother was en-stooled in this community three years ago, she has never met us for any interaction. So if you should ask us the roles she has been playing to address issues of intimate partner violence, we will*

*not be able to say anything. Unless there is someone here who has personally gone to her for such support.*

*Dora, 65, trader, married with 4 children: But the queen mother herself does not really live here. She spends most of her time at Asamankese. ...As a queen mother, her role is to advise women and girls. She can even correct us about our way of dressing; to dress decently. Some girls expose themselves too much in their dressing. Sometimes, they allow too much openings on their 'kaba and slit' [a traditional Ghanaian women's outfit] such that they cannot even bend to pick up something from the floor. It is the role of the queen mother to correct such indecent dressing and if the girls are respectful, they will listen and obey by the next morning. Also, the queen mother can bring unity among the women. This community is very small so she can visit us sometimes and try to find out how we are doing in our marriages and in our work. She can find out about the wellbeing of our children and our own wellbeing. This will encourage us to go to her and discuss some of the problems with her so that we seek her advice. Since she doesn't live here very often and doesn't draw us closer to herself, we also prefer to stay in our own closets.*

*Angela, 50, farmer, married with 3 children: Now that it is getting to 'Akwasidai' [festival] she should gather all the women together and have a discussion with us on such important issues just like you have made time to talk to us about. She has to invite us and ask us about our needs so that she finds a way to help us.*

*Sadia, 34, trader, married with 3 children: Please on the issue about the queen mother's role, I remember when I was living at Nsawam, I once had a quarrel with my husband and the queen mother happened to be passing by our house so she heard the confrontations and she called me aside to advise me. Later, she invited me to her house and continued counseling me which helped to bring peace in my marriage, so I expect the... [name withheld] queen mother to do likewise so that she can save many marriages.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: Eeeeeiii no no no! As for me, I did not go to the queen mother ooh because my husband doesn't respect her at all. He will even insult her if I dare report him to her so I will not even bother. ... Going to the queen mother with my issue is not something I have done before but I have roamed this whole village and approached some of the elderly people with my marital problems. The last incident that happened, my ex-husband sent the case to his uncle in another village called... [name withheld] but because of his [ex-husband] bad character, he did not get any elderly person from his family or from this village to stand behind him. If he is respectful, he would have had an elderly person to come along with him. I have reported him to the 'Ankobeahene', 'Dwantohene', [sub-chiefs] and the 'Abusuapanin' [family head] who have all called him separately on different occasions to settle our differences but none yielded any fruits so the best thing for me was a divorce. ...So as for me, I suggest that when the queen mother hears that a man is causing violence against the wife, she should*

*follow the legal process rather than for the man to be hugely charged by the traditional leaders. In the same way, if a woman is also the one at fault, the law must take its course. That is what I expect of the queen mother*

*Diana, 30, trader, married with 3 children: Nobody seems to have gone to the queen mother. This is because our husbands do not respect her and will only insult and embarrass her. They may insult her to the extent that, even her mother might get some of the insults. So simple and short, we do not report our husbands to the queen mother. We prefer to discuss our issues with the elders in our families or with other community leaders.*

*Martha, 40, trader, married with 3 children: Maybe, it was in the olden days that women reported their marital issues to the queen mother to intervene. But these days especially here in... [name withheld], the men do not respect at all. They sometimes even insult their own parents for the parents to know that yes, they have indeed given birth to fools and their male kids also copy that. Now with men these days, there are no better ones. Even those who call themselves pastors are those who misbehave most.*

*Margaret, 68, farmer, married with 10 children: Hmmm madam, I am the mother of the queen mother. Do you know something? In the olden days, our forefathers were able to marry two or three wives and there was still peace in the home. But now our young males and females do not have respect so they are unable to handle even one spouse. What these women are saying is the truth. The young men in this village do not respect my daughter – the queen mother. After all, she is young, smallish and cute like you so they think she is their co-equal. Even we the elderly people in this community, with all the wrinkles on our faces and our grey hair, when we call them to order they refuse to obey. Maybe, in other communities the youth there show respect but in... [name withheld] village where we live, the youth have no respect and they do not want you to advise them. ...even if they decide to show up at all, hmmm they will walk on you before your statement ends. I know in some villages when someone swears to the gods and curses anyone like what Portia's ex-husband did, he would have been summoned to the chief's palace to revoke the curse and charges would be put on him. But madam here, everybody is related to somebody so it is very difficult to report another person to the palace because the community members will stigmatise anyone who tries to do that. So even if someone offends another, he or she is unable to go and seek for appropriate justice.*

*Sarah, 22, commercial driver, in cohabitation, 3 children: I want the queen mother to help bring social welfare into this community. She may be of help by calling the boys in this community to talk to but maybe um ...as soon as they leave her presence, they will refuse to abide by whatever was discussed. When you get home, the man will be furious for reporting him and will not even give you the little money or support he used to give you. If you have no job, then where will you go?*

*Martha, 40, trader, married with 3 children: I want the queen mother to treat the issue very privately by not calling my husband to talk to directly. She should rather advise me on what to say to my husband when we are alone in our bedroom or she should advise me on what to do without my husband knowing I have reported him at all.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: As for me, I won't go to the queen mother to discuss it because my husband does not respect anyone and I don't want him to insult the queen mother. My husband is capable of doing that and he can even do more than that. I will prefer to report him to social welfare if they should establish one here because my husband will be afraid to insult them.*

*Paulina, 24, hairdresser, single but dating, no child: As for me, my boyfriend does not put up such violent behaviour but I see it happening to some of my sisters and friends and I get sad. The youth in this community don't respect anyone so even if the queen mother talks to them, they won't listen. ...I want you to tell the government to establish social welfare in this community to help bring order. Just as my friends are saying, most of the men do not see anything wrong with insulting women in this village and they can even insult the queen mother but they are afraid of the chief.*

*Attaa, 52, farmer, widow, 4 children: She has never met with us so we don't know. I have never seen her play any role for women in this community. We have a festival called 'Ohum' so I expect that during that festival, she calls all women together to entertain us and also talk to us about marital issues so that we can be well informed when we encounter certain problems. But because she doesn't bring us together for such discussions, we are suffering.*

*Charity, 29, hairdresser, in cohabitation, 2 children: The queen mother should be able to meet all women at least once every year to educate us on what we should do and what we shouldn't do in our relationships. For some of us, our parents did not teach us certain things so when we hear other women talk about the forms of violence they have experienced in their marriages and how they survived it, we can learn from them. Sometimes, we hear different opinions on the radio but they don't work for us here.*

*Sedinam, 20, farm labourer, married with 2 children: I don't think the queen mother should be the one with the responsibility to solve marital problems. The woman would have to report to the people who stood behind her during the marriage ceremony. She has to inform them that this is what and what my husband is doing to me so that they will call him to order. In that case if it is required that the man is to be punished, then he gets punished at the family level.*

*Osaebeta, 32, farm labourer, single but dating, 2 children: Most marital issues do not usually go to the palace. Some people take the matter to court when they feel their partners have made a fool out of them. Sometimes too, when the matter is reported to the 'abusuapanin', then he may send for the man to resolve the problem at home.*

In the above responses from the community forum, participants have discussed the ways in which the queen mothers are involved in addressing issues of IPV in the village, and in each of the three communities, the trend of the reactions from the forum, appears more skewed towards the responses from victims. Respondents here also acknowledged that there are serious challenges with having to report marital issues to the palace for the queen mother to address and key among them is the lack of respect for some of the queen mothers especially on the part of the perpetrators, lack of privacy in handling IPV issues, fear of stigmatisation, and others believe handling IPV matters simply should not be the role of the queen mothers but by family heads.

### **7.6.3 Queen Mothers' Analysis of their Own Roles in IPV Matters**

I also requested the queen mothers to 'kindly discuss the role you play at addressing issues of IPV in this village.' Their responses however showed that they were doing quite a lot for women in their various communities in this regard except in the case of Queen Mother No. 3 who acknowledged she had not had many cases of people coming to her with IPV concerns.

Queen mother No. 1 for instance revealed how she tried bringing the women in her community together about three times within the period of her reign to discuss issues concerning their general wellbeing, their work and their marriages but because they saw that no money was coming out of their meetings, many of them refused to show up at subsequent meetings. Queen mother No. 2 also talked about how she worked hard at encouraging micro financial institutions

to offer ‘soft loans’ (what she termed ‘Kufour loans’ because those opportunities came about as initiatives during the former president’s reign) to women in the community.

*Queen mother No. 1: When the women report such cases, I mostly call the men in question to also listen to their side of the story and I later call both of them together to advise them. In most cases, I ask the offender to apologise to the other partner to ensure there is agreement and peace. Um ... I usually do not allow such marital cases to go to the police station because marital problems are supposed to be handled at home. I handle it peacefully at home and ensure that the woman and the man reach consensus. The Bible does not approve of divorce so we don't destroy marriages but we sometimes allow just separation. Even, my own daughter has experienced intimate partner violence before and I settled it peacefully so they are still married today. What happened was that, the man travelled abroad and neglected his responsibilities as a husband towards my daughter - his wife. As if that was not enough, later on this man came to Ghana to marry another woman and took her along with him abroad and that was a big issue. So I called him, advised him and talked to both of them very well until they understood each other. After sometime, he decided to resolve the differences between him and my daughter and he sent the other woman away, so he is still married to my daughter and they are living together peacefully. Eeerrr men have the desire for pleasure and that is what we call 'apepe'. The situation whereby a person just goes after other people and do not even care if that is someone's wife or husband. There are some people even when you tie and put them in a bottle 'kuraaa' they will come out. So anytime, I have the opportunity to advise the youth of this community, I tell them there are lots of diseases now so if you get your own wife 'na wo ande wo lane mu aa owuo na wo bewu' [and you stay out of track]. Again, I tell the women to live with their husbands and stay peacefully in their marriages to raise their children. I also tell the girls to stop aborting their babies. They have to be patient and wait to be traditionally married but even if they happen to get pregnant, they have to still be patient to keep the baby and not have an abortion. I have met all the women of this village about three times since my three-year reign as queen mother. I spoke to them about their general wellbeing, their work and their marriage. I called them together and advised them that, as women they have to support their husbands without putting all the burden on the man. I tell them that marriage is like a mirror... you look at your image and your image also looks at you...um in the sense that whilst the man pays the school fees, the woman can also provide part of the food for the family from their farm work or trade. The women told me they need capital to trade with. After I met them three times and they realised there is no money coming out of our meetings, when I call them for community meetings, they don't come in their numbers again so I'm telling you so that you can help secure some form of micro finance loan for them. Some would like to use it in gari processing, others want to go into palm oil production whilst some prefer other forms of trade. I want to organise the women again soon and talk to them.*

*Queen Mother No. 2: I have supported many women in this community with the Kufuor loan because if you are a woman and you get access to a micro finance and you are able to pay back, your children are able to go to school and you don't suffer violence from your husband. ...I will also talk about the Kufuor loan which I helped to bring to the women in this village to use as capital in their businesses to support themselves and their families. When you came in, I believe you might have seen the number of school sandals over there [pointing to a collection of footwear] which um...I bought just to distribute to the kids to be able to encourage them to go to school. These are not my own children or grandchildren oooh but I am doing this for them so that they can be happy. Tomorrow is 'Our Day' [end of school term celebration] ... before they go on holidays and you will see the number of children from the community who will come here expecting food, drinks and biscuits from me. ... My story is always used as a good example at the ... church [name withheld] to advise married couples that my husband and I never fought or quarreled. What they don't know is that, we quarreled and fought in our room. It is just that we didn't do that outside for people to see and we showed a lot of respect to each other. Couples should learn to calm their hearts down even when the other partner is angry so that there will be peace even in situations where there is the tendency for chaos.*

*Queen Mother No. 3: As a queen mother, I haven't had a lot of people coming to me with their cases but sometimes when I hear the women in the community discussing about their husbands and some of the troubles they go through in their marriages, then I call to talk to them... Sometimes, I use my own story as an example to advise them and when they follow my instruction, it brings peace in their marriages. My role is to bring the women together to find out what troubles them and show them what to do in order to bring peace. Again, in the community there are certain things that the women must also do to help so I organise the women to carry out those tasks in the form of communal labour.*

Interestingly, the position of the queen mothers on this matter was not exactly the same as the other women had discussed in the in-depth interviews and in the community forum. The general women population didn't appear to see much of the roles the queen mothers were playing in their communities especially, related to resolving intimate partner violence problems.

### **7.7 Contextual Constraints Associated with Victims' use of Social Support Systems**

The third emerging sub-theme in this category was about finding out the difficulties IPV victims identify as being associated with their use of or their attempt to use social support

systems. Of course, interviewees have earlier on indicated that even though they were aware of the availability of various forms of social support systems, not all were supportive; describing some as less supportive and others unsupportive. In this regard, therefore, it was important to probe further to establish what sorts of constraints they faced in the wake of intimate partner violence and as they go through the process of resilience.

It was evident that many women encountered the problem of limited resources on the part of family members who genuinely stepped out or attempted to help them, whilst most of them simply lacked needed information and or the financial resources to seek redress or get medical treatment. In other circumstances, the particular kind of social support system that a victim needed to intervene in a particular situation was simply non-existent or was far away.

Meanwhile, the structure of some social support systems and the nature in which they are set up makes it difficult to ensure confidentiality and anonymity hence, victims who otherwise would have accessed such facilities or services were cut off. Others had simply lost confidence in the justice system such as the police force. Below are some of the constraints that were cited;

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: Even though my husband's uncle took us in to spend the night with them last night, my children and I had to return to our house this morning because the man also has his family to care about...he lives with his wife and children in one room. I have none of my family members here. Apart from his uncle and grandparents, he's also got his sisters here but their living conditions are not that good. Um...even though they like me and treat me nicely, they don't have enough.*

*Christiana, 36, trader, married with 6 children: I realised his father supported him against me. He supports his son because they both go to drink alcohol at the woman's place for free and moreover, my sisters-in-law support what their brother is doing. See...all of them go to the woman when they need money so they back her. My uncle was always the one who called to advise my husband. As for my mother, she experienced similar violence in her own marriage so she always advises me to be strong.*

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: My mother-in-law used to live in this village with my brothers-in-law and I used to confide in her when we first married. However, I stopped going to her far before her death because she once made a statement that I am*

*the reason why her son is not rich so I have to go. I was lucky the wife of my brother-in-law came to inform me and since then, I never told her anything about my marriage again. ...As a Muslim community, we have a leadership where I could have sought assistance from but I will not. If you take your matter to them, they will pretend to be saying something to support you just to make you feel good but as soon as you leave, what they will say to your husband will be different. That is why I don't want to take my issues to them oooh haaaa!*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: His brother Mohammed [pseudonym] lives close to our house so I... um anytime something happens I tell him about it. He then calls my husband to talk to him but he doesn't invite me to sit in. I don't understand why he calls only my husband. That doesn't help because the only feedback my brother-in-law gives me is that, my husband says he has heard me and that he won't do that again. Meanwhile, he doesn't stop; he repeats the same behaviour over and over... after a while, he does the same thing again. Even when I request to be called to sit in such discussions, I'm never called. Since my brother-in-law also does similar things against his wife, there is no way he can call me to sit in; only the two of them will talk and he will just report the outcome of the conversation to me.*

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: ...Hmmm! I'm sure some tenants might have heard me screaming but maybe they were afraid to come into the room to rescue me. They should have at least come close to say something to stop him but no one did. I don't know if that is their lifestyle ooh...just hide in their windows and look on unconcerned when such violence occurs. Can you imagine that they did not care whether he killed me or hurt me?*

*Kuukua, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: I will not report my husband if there is a social welfare or a police station here because I have heard that they will only ask him about the work he does and based on his salary, they will just give him a bill to pay to me every month which he will not even obey. So why would I bother?*

*Akpena, 65, farmer, divorced, 4 children: ...Let me also say that, I could have reported his violent behaviour to social welfare but we don't have one here. Look, sometime ago a certain woman was bold enough and took her husband to the social welfare at Asamankese but I later heard that she withdrew the case and decided to settle the matter at the family level. I believe that maybe she stopped because of the cost of transportation or maybe people chastised and insulted her for reporting her own husband. So you see? If there is a social welfare office here, she could have followed up for them to arrest the man.*

*Dorcas, 23, trader, in cohabitation, 2 children: Whenever, I inform his uncle about his behaviour he says he is fed up with him and would not want to talk about his behaviour any longer because he doesn't listen to advice.*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: I once reported his violent behaviour to his father but his father is also a drunkard so even if I report his son to him, he does not get any sensible thing to tell him. I am unable to tell my parents about how he treats me because they warned me but I did not listen.*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: As for my ex-husband, as soon as he finishes misbehaving then he runs away to hide somewhere. Because he is a commercial driver, he sometimes picks the car and goes to a different village for days or sometimes weeks. With such a person, if you even report him I believe he will run away and stay there for a long time until the case dies. I remember a very long time ago, I got him arrested by the ... [name withheld] police but that case didn't go anywhere because the police failed us. The issue was that, he got heavily drunk during a funeral celebration and at the time I used to cook rice to sell. So I had gone to fetch water and he approached me saying we should go home because he wants to have sex with me... Aaaba! I said no and he beat me up brutally and I was sent to the hospital. They gave me a police report and the police came to arrest him. Do you know what happened? People insulted me and my parents a lot for getting him arrested. Every day, we heard insults from his friends and family. Everybody had what they wanted to say to us and we were very much stigmatised against in this village. After about three days, we saw him walking about because maybe, someone went to bail him out and the police didn't follow up on the case.*

*Asantewaa, 34, trader, married, 2 children: If there is a police station and a social welfare office here in this village, I don't think that would have been the outcome of my case. As for me, if they bring social welfare here, I will report any such violence against me or my family and friends.*

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: Eeeiii! I would be very afraid to report my husband if social welfare is here because that office may not protect me. My husband will come back and beat me or disgrace me more in public. People would also question me about it and ask who will take care of my children.*

In drawing this section together, it is evident that for few of the victims, they had little or no backing from their partner's family [in-laws] or even from their own family members due to apathy or learned helplessness. Some also entertained fears of being stigmatised against or labelled as litigant if they should report their partners' violent behaviour to any form of social support system [be it formal or informal]; whereas others complained about being sidelined by some helpers in the dialogue process aimed at resolving the problem.

## 7.8 Current State of Affairs and Looking Ahead

As part of exploring victims' resilience or their ability to thrive, they were asked to discuss the current situation of their relationships and talk about their aspirations for the future. I asked, 'What has happened between you and your partner after that incident? Is the perpetrator the same person you are currently in a relationship with? What are (or were) your reasons for staying in the relationship or leaving? What are your plans about the future?' The findings show that it didn't matter whether or not these women were still in a relationship with their perpetrators, what was revealing was that they knew they deserved better from their partners and expressed hope about the future (even though few appeared to have sadly given up).

I observed that something that was common to all victims in this study was that they all had children, and for those who were still staying in the relationship with the perpetrator, they attributed their reason to their concern about the wellbeing of their children. Even with the two widows whose quotes appear at the end of the responses below, they indicated that they stayed in their marriages until the death of their husbands for the sake of the wellbeing of their children. In order to end strong, it can be observed that victims were implored to give their final suggestions, comments or recommendations to the discussion which can be seen as concluding statements in some of the submissions in the subsequent quotations.

*Margaret, 48, farmer, married with 6 children: I am still in the marriage because I have nowhere to go. ...and where will I go with all these children? If I should get financial support, maybe I will leave him and start trading... I will add that to my farm work... Um I want to make a request to anyone who can provide me with start-up capital to start a business like selling plastic containers. I need to take care of myself and the children. I am very hopeful that things will get better when the children start working.*

*Angelina: 47, cook, married with 8 children: I prayed to God not to let me have children with different men. I said that to myself before I came into this marriage and I still pray to God about it. Maybe, the new man you will go in for would be a wee smoker and an irresponsible person. As for that I don't want. I will stay where I am even if I suffer. I*

*pray for good health so that I can be able to work and pay back the loan instead of giving myself out to men. ...I am still guided by my principle that even if he abuses me, I will not go anywhere no matter what. I am still in the marriage also because of the children. If I cook for the children, I can never leave him out. What if I am wicked to him and later he becomes wealthy? I have to remember what tomorrow can bring. Even if it doesn't get better tomorrow, it is the Lord's doing. Again, I don't intend to leave the children behind for them to go wayward. If I do that, in future they will accuse me of not being there for them. I'm happy whenever I see my children and I don't want to see them unhappy. If I go away, a certain fool will come and trouble my children and frustrate them all the time. Most of the women in my generation took after our mothers such that, we can endure hardships in our marriages and would not easily divorce our husbands. We are not like the girls who have come these days. They cannot take nonsense hence with the little misunderstanding in their marriages then they seek divorce. I will not do that. ...*

*Tiwaa: 31, farmer, married with 5 children: I think about the welfare of the children because when I leave, I can't tell what will happen in my absence. That is what will make me overlook the violence and stay in my marriage. If I had no child with him, I could have easily gone. Hmmm but sometimes too... Well, I am waiting for this child to grow a bit older [last child is 3 months old as at the time of the interview] and then I will go and stay with my sister at Nsawam for a while to sell bread.*

In the responses above, Margaret, Angelina and Tiwaa indicate that they don't intend to leave their marriages; they will stay for the sake of their children no matter the difficulties. However, whereas Angelina's decision is strongly influenced by her principle of not wanting to have children with different men, it was a state of confusion for Tiwaa and Margaret. In the case of Margaret, she initially pointed out that she had nowhere to go with the children but quickly added that if she receives financial assistance, she will perhaps leave her husband and include trading to her farming job. Similarly, Tiwaa began by saying she wouldn't want to leave her marriage for the sake of the children but at the end of her statement, she expressed the idea of waiting for her last born child [who was three months old at the time of the interview] to grow a bit older so that she can go and stay with her sister in a different town to engage in trading. In the event that they leave their marriages, it's not clear what their plans are for their children for whose sake they didn't want to leave.

*Amina, 42, trader, married with 4 children: Aaahhh sister, we are still married but now I have taken my mind off him. I'm only concerned about my children. Well, the relationship between us is okay aaahhh; we talk to each other and converse but it's not the same like before. The thing is that, when your man threads on an evil path, it gives you a change of mind. The reason why I am still staying in this marriage is because of the children. What will I do? I already have children with him and I cannot say I'm leaving the children behind. So what else do I have to do than to stay and take care of my children? When I leave the children behind, they will be miserable. I cannot say that I am taking all the children along and that will demand leaving them for the man. He will not know whether to do things this way or that way. It is only when you are there that you can tell him to do this or that for the children. When you are gone, the woman who will come might have her own children whom she will be taking care of and may maltreat your own. Do you see? She will not cater for yours. That is what I can tell. Had it been that I had no children with him, I would have been long gone. Hmmm, I would have left him long ago because ...I came alone and so I would have gone alone. My final words are that, I have put my hope in the children. I want to see them get a good stand in the future. In a marriage where there are children, if the man should trouble the woman, she should consider the wellbeing of the children and stay in the marriage. This is because if you don't stay to take care of the children, there is no way the man can look after the children the way you want. I have heard situations where the man kills the woman or the wife goes through suffering and dies but mine will not get to that level.*

*Hajia, 48, trader, married with 2 children: Ooh, the marriage is hanging. We are both hanging. Our marriage is not the same as before. For example, when he asks me to do something for him, I do it when I want to and if I don't want to, I just don't do it. This is because I have realised that for these long years that I have been with him, no support comes from him. Even the Bible says that, woe unto the one who puts his or her trust in a human being. Isn't that so? So now I have put my trust in my God. Do you understand me in that way? Eheee, I have put my hope in God whether it concerns my children or myself. For me to look up to my husband, that is out. All I pray to God for is that, when I wake up in the morning, He should give me strength and long life to be able to work to take care of my children. ... Hmmm, marriage is both sweet and sour; some parts are sweet while other parts are sour. I always say that if I have the chance to advise any woman who wants to marry, I will tell her to be careful before she goes into the marriage. She should take care so that she doesn't end up like me.*

Amina and Hajia in the quotes above also say they are in the marriage because of the children and they wouldn't want their children to be miserable after they are gone. For them, even though they are still in the marriage, the relationship is hanging in the sense that Amina says she has taken her mind off her husband even though they converse sometimes and concerns herself only with the affairs of the children whilst Hajia states that she only agrees to do

something for her husband when she wants to and that over many years, no support has come from him.

In the excerpts below, Portia and Kesewaa talk about their exit from the marriage and their aspirations. Portia's divorce happened three months prior to the interview and Kesewaa's separation was less than a week. Both women reveal how they had considered walking away but had not been bold to do so because they always thought about the consequences that could have on the children. In Kesewaa's case, she said she was looking forward to the husband coming over to apologise for his behaviour and take them back to his house just as he always does whereas Portia talked about her fears about her children accusing her one day for not being there for them. Portia had earlier on revealed that she found someone and was looking forward to her new partner performing the traditional marriage rite soon.

*Kesewaa, 27, trader, separated, 2 children: The relationship between us is very bad. He does not even look me in the eyes and I also don't talk to him because as the man who has offended me, he should apologise and rather pamper me. My husband asked me to pack my provisions out of the store... a store he himself set up for me else, he said he was going to destroy everything. I left his house with the children and we now live in my parent's house. His mother and sisters went with me to pack all the items so that he does not harm me again. I ...packed the items and sent them to my mother's store. Paying for the taxi fare to bring the items was very difficult for me so my parents paid for me. Because he asked me to pack out, I cannot decide to go back unless he comes to say sorry and agrees to come for me and the children back to his house. He has not said anything like that to me since he was released so I am waiting to see what he would do next. I remained in the marriage because both families always stepped in to settle our problems and I believed he would eventually stop. I come over with the children to live with my parents whenever he abuses me but we always go back after a few days. I have really been troubled in this marriage and I have no joy. I have decided to live with my parents for a while to see if he will come with love to take me home. There have been times when he comes to apologise, comfort me and then takes me back home. Due to the way he has maltreated me this time, I would be here up to about 4 or 5 months to see what will happen. I would prefer to punish him by refusing to go with him immediately when he comes to apologise. I would want to stay with my parents up to about 4 to 5 months to be sure that the pain and hurt have reduced before I move in again with him. I want him to take care of me and the children very well in terms of our food, clothing without abusing any of us. I have thought about divorcing him but I have not been able to do so.... In fact,*

*I don't want divorce... Ok, If he comes to take me back and stops beating me...eeerrr the provision store is made of wood and glass which makes it possible for robbery; it has happened about five times at midnight, so I would ask that he puts up a metallic container and stock it with provisions for me to operate. I don't want him to give me money but he should use the money to put up a container store at... [name withheld] for me since I do a lot of sales there as compared to my mother's place here at... [name withheld].*

*Portia, 28, trader, divorced, 2 children: I decided to end the relationship. Um we are now divorced and I am currently seeing another man because I don't want to go through that pain again and die. I don't talk to my ex-husband anymore and I have asked him never to call me. ...Whenever I decided to walk away then I considered the wellbeing of the children and I stay. I always thought about the children and got scared that maybe, one day they will accuse me of not being there for them and that always made me stay in that violent marriage until I gathered the courage to divorce him. Now I'm afraid the children will one day ask me what their father did that made me leave... I will leave the children with my mother... eeerrr my mother sells kenkey so I will support her financially in that business to take care of my children. ...um if I continue with the marriage saying what he does to me is no problem, maybe one day he will just kill me. I will prefer to pull myself out of the relationship than to endure this pain and die... Madam, I am young and I want to do something with my life. ...Any woman who goes through any form of violence in the hands of her husband but decides to stay in the violent relationship is not wise. The man might not have a change of heart and will take you for a fool.*

It wasn't only Tiwaa (above) who was waiting for the last child to grow up before leaving the violent relationship, Augustina and Grace (below) expressed similar opinions even though they were both not very certain about that possibility. Even though she is constantly victimised and has been told by her partner several times that he will not spend his money to perform her marriage rites, Augustina is still cohabiting as a housewife and is afraid to leave because of her four children. She happens to be the only child of her late mother and saw the victimisation her late mother suffered in the hands of her father till she died and therefore expresses fear of going back to her father despite the assertion that he is quite rich. She shares with me her family's story and towards the end, she seemed to have gained some level of consciousness of how her own story could end hence, she devises a plan of escape although conditional.

*Augustina, 25, housewife, in cohabitation, 4 children: I'm still living with this man ooh hmmm because of the children. Um... I could have left him but who will take care of the children? People will also ask me why I would leave the children behind and go away. I have seen some of this frustration before. ... Let me tell you my family's story; my father was very violent to my mother. He abused and frustrated my mother until she died. My father is quite rich but he does not care about me because he says I did not take his advice and I went ahead to give myself to this man. Hmmm ...my father would not take me and my children into his house. I am the only child of my late mother but my father is a womanizer so he has other children. He likes following women a lot and he disrespects them. When I was growing up he once brought a certain woman into our house and told my mother that she was a family member. My mother believed him, cooked for the woman and even slept on the same bed with her. Not knowing she was one of my father's numerous concubines. My father had no shame and was having sex with the woman throughout the days she spent as a visitor in our house. It was a neighbour who stepped on my mother's toes and told her the truth about who that woman actually was. When my mother confronted my father, he became angry and battered my mother so badly. ... We later took her to the hospital and they couldn't detect what kind of sickness she was suffering from... she later died. My mother lived with that pain of violence from my father ... until she died. ...hmmm I don't want that to happen to me so when my baby grows a bit older, I will leave if my husband does not support me with capital to start a business. I have thought about this and I have planned to run away when this child grows a bit [last child is four months old as at the time of the interview].*

*Grace, 36, seamstress, married with 4 children: We are still married and living together. ... Right now, I would prefer that he rescinds his decision to travel and rather agree for us to build our future together. Some time ago, I decided that if he continues to be this stingy and refuses to support me and the children, I will pack my things and leave him. I am just waiting for this last born [last child is 1-year-old as at the time of the interview] to grow up to about three or four years then I will go away and work as a farm labourer to support myself and the children. ...hmmm I want you to also talk to the men ...advise them to take responsibility towards the upkeep of their children.*

In Comfort's case, apart from the children being the reason for her stay another reason was because of a loan facility she had taken from a financial institution which she needs to pay back. She however indicated she would exit the marriage once payment of the loan is done but she admitted it was something she needed courage to do. Azumi, Fuseina, and Asantewaa [below] also acknowledged there are problems in the relationship but they didn't demonstrate the zeal to walk out of the union for the sake of the children. Fuseina for instance admits her cohabiting partner's violence is not merely as a result of their religious differences but his

character yet, she couldn't emphatically state she would end the relationship though she had moved in to stay with her parents at the time of the interview.

*Comfort, 35, trader, married with 4 children: I have taken a loan from the government so as soon as I finish paying I will go. It's because of the children. Left to me alone I would have wanted to seek divorce because one day I can lose my life and the children will be left behind. I want to get the courage to leave and rather stay with my brother at ... [name withheld].*

*Fuseina, 24, trader, in cohabitation, 3 children: I do not think it is solely because of the issue about religion. It is his character. Madam, where things have gotten to right now, I wouldn't mind him if he should do something to me. I have now moved in to stay with my parents whilst he also lives in his house. I just have to be careful about myself... My father does not even consider himself as the grandfather of my children because he says it is only the children of his sons who are his grandchildren. So if my husband should come right now to claim his children, my father will gladly give them to him. When I started life, I told myself I wouldn't want to have my children with different men all over and that is why I am still in this violent relationship.*

*Azumi, 27, trader, single but dating, 2 children: Ahhh sister, I wouldn't want to have my children with different men. I don't like it when people produce children here and there and the children have different fathers. I will prefer to endure the violence and stay in my marriage or simply leave him alone without marrying elsewhere. I am enduring all these violent behaviours from him just for the sake of the children. Maybe, if I leave and another woman comes she would maltreat the children and abuse them. I have seen some before. The wife left and when a different woman came, she put stone in fire and burnt the child's hands for stealing meat from the soup. I always say that if I divorce him, I will never leave the children for my rival. That is the more reason why I came back. I wouldn't have come back but for the sake of the children.*

*Asantewaa, 34, married with 2 children: We are still married and living together as a couple. We sleep under the same roof and wake up together in the same house. I wouldn't want to take our marital issues out and wouldn't want the children to be miserable.*

Nyansa had actually been married to her ex-husband more than seventeen years without knowing the man already had a wife with children living in Accra. She ended the marriage as soon as she got to know she was a second wife because she says her Christian religion frowns on that. Elorm on the other hand underscored the point that she isn't the first woman whose husband has committed adultery. Besides they love each other, they have a son and what has happened

belongs to the past hence the need for them to embrace the future and give their son a better future. Christiana's principle is for her family to live together without her children having different fathers and that is her motivation for staying even though she says she isn't happy.

*Nyansa, 33, unemployed, divorced, 2 children: No no no. now we have ended our relationship completely but the boy lives with him and the girl lives with me. ...He sends money for her school fees. He does not take care of my needs anymore but at least when he sends money for the child's upkeep, I also benefit. ... Ahhh! It's because he already has a wife and also because the doctrine of my church does not permit me to be a second wife. If I have to continue my relationship with him, then I have to stop going to church but that will keep me away from my God... Maybe, mine will come later. ... I will say that, some of us didn't get the opportunity to go to school the way we wanted but you have gone higher and higher and you have a lot of knowledge so I will encourage you to educate the women who come your way. Use my story and that of others to advise them because you will come across people who may have knowledge from school alright but may lack the wisdom in marriage. Others may also have the wisdom from marriage but might lack the knowledge from school. If I had the chance again, I would be more careful.*

*Elorm, 29, caterer, married with a child: Well, I am not the first woman whose husband has gone in for another woman. I love him and he also loves me and he always says that to me. Again, his behaviour and attitude truly shows. I have a kid with him and we have a better future ahead so I don't think because he has done that I should still talk about it...it is past. I think we should forget about it and focus on what is best and know how we will cope with the future. Since we have a son, we should learn how to handle him so that he can have a better future.*

*Christiana, 36, trader, married with 6 children: Yes, we are still married even though I am not a happy person. I want all my children to have one father. I don't want to bring forth children whose fathers will be scattered all over. I dislike that behaviour. I want my family to live together.*

The last two older women below with pseudonyms Asarebea and Nyarkowaa, discuss how they stayed in their marriages up to the time their husbands died irrespective of the violence they endured. They share their experiences, talk about their processes of resilience and add their final comments.

*Asarebea, 78, unemployed, widow, 4 children: I stayed in my marriage throughout because I didn't want my children to have different fathers. Um...I stayed married to my husband until his death and I didn't remarry even after his death up till now that I have*

*become an old woman. ... If a woman gets married and the man decides not to take care of her needs, she should concentrate on a trade like I did. Even if she has to borrow money to trade with, she should do it. In that case she will be able to save so that when the children need something in school she can provide for them. The women should learn not to be completely independent on the men because there are certain things that the men will not do for them. When you give the children a brighter future, they will look after you when you are old. When my husband was alive and the children come home to give us money, he always complains about why they give me more money than they give him but he forgets he didn't take care of them.*

*Nyarkowaa, 56, trader, widow, 1 child: Even though there were lots of problems in the marriage, we didn't divorce. We were married for over 25 years until he died. Ooh, prior to his death I was still taking care of him ... even cooked for him to eat. ... Oh I will say that the only valuable thing now is education. So women should go to school to be educated because if you are educated and you have a good job, no man can bluff on you. Maybe if I had been educated, I wouldn't have gone into that marriage. Once you have the knowledge, nobody can take that out of your head. Women should be interested in securing a career; a kind of work they can be better at so that even if tomorrow they get married and their husbands are unable to provide for them, they and their children will not suffer. My advice to the men too is that, once you have gone forward to propose to the woman, it shows you love her and once she also accepts your proposal means that she loves you. Therefore, both of you should live in peace so that it will extend to the children.*

## **7.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has primarily focused on presenting the results of the study which reflect multiple perspectives of respondents on the contribution of social support systems to victims' resilience. These perspectives have been shaped into general descriptions as required of phenomenological research.

The highlights of this chapter are that whereas some victims made little or no efforts to seek help, others found their families to be very supportive, and very significant for their resilience. Also, respondents admitted however that many of the available resources were not necessarily supportive even though they appeared available. These other sources such as the traditional authorities and formal social support systems like the police, DOVVSU, health

facilities amongst others were mainly unsupportive due to confidentiality concerns, the lack of knowledge about their services, lack of funds to access their services, or they were simply out of reach.

The key concluding remarks grounded in the findings are that for many of the participants, their responses revealed their quest for survival; their resilience; a better sense of commitment to their values especially, to their children; an increased knowledge about intimate partner violence; their awareness of social support systems at their disposal, and their demonstration of agency. Agency here refers to the instrumental ways these women act, their consciousness and ability to change their situations either by taking action against IPV, leaving the violent relationship, or learning new skills to improve their lives, that of their children and others.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DISCUSSION AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

#### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of intimate partner violence from rural women's own perspective, and to examine the lived experiences and resilience of IPV victims. This study offers an essential expansion to the literature on intimate partner violence, provides a significant contribution to influencing policy initiatives, and helps in shaping future research in the area of domestic violence. In this chapter, I have placed the overarching themes that emerged from the analysis of the data within the context of the research questions, and I have drawn out points of convergences and contradictions between the results, the theories and the literature review.

The research questions were answered through collecting and analysing data obtained from respondents in three rural communities in the Upper West Akyem District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Data gathering was done via in-depth interviews with twenty-four victims of intimate partner violence, in-depth interviews with three queen mothers as key informants, and three sessions of community forum with forty women from the general communities. I guided this research by employing two significant theories namely, the integrative feminist model and the strengths perspective as the framework to understand intimate partner violence.

More so, the method that this study uses is phenomenology because I wanted to understand the meanings, perceptions and lived experiences of people on the subject of intimate partner violence. My philosophical stance as a researcher is the descriptive phenomenological paradigm, the reason being that my aim was to understand and describe the phenomenon in its

pure universal essence, identify patterns and discover subjective meanings. Swanson & Wojnar (2004) argue that descriptive phenomenologist attempt to understand and describe a phenomenon as experienced by individuals who have lived through them. Also the lived experience itself as described by participants, is used to provide universal description of the phenomenon under investigation (Tymieniecka, 2003). Again, researchers who are inclined towards a descriptive mind-set seek commonalities in respondents' experiences (even though I also seek discrepancies). They also look for patterns, and ultimately find solutions to the identified problems (LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004) which is what this study has done.

Three major themes namely, conceptualisation of IPV, lived experiences, and resilience were generated during the analysis of the data. Each major theme produced sub-emergent themes which composed of four categories each. The results show that many factors differed between participants whereas others were comparable. Some of these factors were the things that create happiness in an intimate relationship, definitions of IPV, the circumstances of victims lived experiences of intimate partner violence, available social support systems and the constraints associated with them. Respondents in this study provided thought provoking insights into the phenomenon of intimate partner violence, and they highlighted key themes which were consistent with the reviewed literature and the theories that serve as the framework of this work.

In order to make this exploration possible, I raised three research questions and it is evident that the data I have gathered is consistent with what I set out to do. The following were the three specific research questions I asked;

1. How do rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives?

2. What are the lived experiences of rural women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships?
3. How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims' resilience?

## **8.2 Points of Convergence and Contradictions Regarding the Conceptualisation of IPV**

My first research question was: *How do rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives?* The results of this study indicates that the rural women interviewed for this study did not only confirm what the literature defines as IPV (Neustifter, 2009; Satzman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelley, 1999; U.S. National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, 2003; Department of Justice Canada, 2011; Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell, 2005; Heise, 1999; United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993) but they also provided an important contribution to the literature by extending the definition of intimate partner violence. This encompasses physical violence, sexual assault, psychological and emotional violence, verbal assault and humiliation, economic and financial violence, non-maintenance or deprivation and neglect, infidelity, and coercion and intimidation committed by an intimate partner against the other.

In this section, I place the analysis of the data within the context of the existing literature. It is important for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and implementers to acknowledge that issues of definition are key in policy design and implementation. It is even crucial that stakeholders understand how different population groups like rural residents define the concept of IPV from their own perspectives, so that in the process of designing and implementing policies, the voices of all categories of people whose lives are affected will be incorporated to

help direct policy response and shape social work practice. The implication here is that if in the violence discourse, concepts are used interchangeably and all familial acts of aggression are labelled as one problem, it is likely to exclude certain groups and reduce the attention committed to dealing with the problem. It is again likely to make unsuccessful, the efforts by social support systems geared towards the allocation of resources and the provision of services.

So in order to amplify the voices of rural women who seem to have been unnoticed in the IPV discourse, I set out as my first objective to find an answer to the question of how rural women conceptualise the phenomenon of intimate partner violence from their own perspectives. In response to this research question, the results imply that rural women generally understand intimate partner violence to be a negative and unacceptable behaviour which is not only when your partner beats you but it comprises a number of interconnected variables that yield undesirable consequences.

Rural women have come to understand the concept of intimate partner violence based on their experiences and observations. According to them, when your partner's actions or inactions hurt you, make you feel sad, humiliated, causes you pain or takes away your happiness, it is intimate partner violence. For many of them, intimate partner violence cannot be said to be an acceptable behaviour or normal way of life as some of the literature indicate (Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, & Campbell, 2005:78; Hsieh, Feng, & Shu, 2009). To them, they will not approve of actions or inactions where a partner uses violence to discipline and control the other. Adinkrah (2007) recounted that in Ghana physical chastisement of wives occur frequently, as most men consider it their marital obligation to 'discipline' and control their wives. Meanwhile, even though a number of respondents agreed that some men consider it their obligation to 'discipline' and 'control' their spouses, they emphasised that it wasn't right. The

results show that quite apart from a few instances, participants in this study largely emphasised that there were no whys and wherefores that justify violent behaviours of any kind.

Consistent with previous literature on definitions, this study observed that there were no contradictions between the meanings that rural women give to intimate partner violence and the definitions given by scholars, except that respondents to some extent seem to expand the definition quite further. In a study on the ‘Prevalence of and risk factors for intimate partner violence in China’, Xu et al. (2005: 78), define violence against a woman by an intimate partner as “any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” which is similar to the definitions by these rural women. Xu et al. (2005: 78) go further to state that IPV consists of such behaviours as physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse, other forms of sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviours. In addition, they state it includes all language, manner, and actions that violate one’s physical body, sense of self, and sense of trust. This extensive definition shares commonalities with the definitions given by respondents in this study because there are similar concepts used in both definitions such as ‘physical aggression, psychological abuse, sexual coercion, controlling behaviours’ within an intimate relationship. The consequences being physical, psychological or sexual harm amongst others.

In addition, the definitions in the findings are consistent with other literature like that of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), and Heise (1999). I find that even though these two sources do not directly define intimate partner violence, they provide certain benchmarks for measuring violence against women. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) states that violence against women is any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in,

physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Here, intimate partner violence qualifies for such acts occurring in private or public life. This is because to the integrative feminist, the personal is political. That is to say, a private or personal matter is also a public or political one demanding public solutions or structural changes. Also similar to the results of this study on definitions, Heise (1999) also refers to gender based violence as the types of harmful behaviours directed at women and girls including physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse.

However, an indispensable observation in this study is that even though respondents labeled practically all undesirable actions of an intimate partner as violence, they were also quite specific about the scope of their definitions. They did not classify all familial acts of aggression by an intimate partner as only one form of violence. For instance, in previous literature, Satzman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelley (1999) define intimate partner violence only as physical violence aimed at a current or former spouse, dating partner or boyfriend or girlfriend. Findings in this study illustrated in the quotations in chapter five prove that intimate partner violence goes beyond physical violence to include sexual assault; verbal assault and humiliation; non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect; economic or financial violence; infidelity; religious coercion; and psychological and emotional violence. This finding corroborates Neustifter's (2009: 5) definition which states that in addition to physical and sexual violence, intimate partner violence can also include: "coercion and threats; intimidation; emotional abuse; isolation; minimizing, denying and blaming; using children; male privilege; and economic abuse".

Furthermore, despite the fact that some factors differed between participants (like their description of the circumstances of a particular violence), most of them identified similar

behaviours and consequences that define intimate partner violence. Largely, comparisons in the definitions between the three groups of respondents didn't yield significant differences. The exception was that victims in the in-depth interviews and the participants in the community forum, classified almost all perpetrators of intimate partner violence as being the male partner without recognising that females can also be violent. Meanwhile, although the queen mothers agreed that males are largely the abusers, they underscored the point that IPV can be committed by either partners. The stance by the queen mothers is consistent with the integrative feminist model which acknowledges that intimate partner violence is multifaceted and that women also have the propensity to be victims as well as perpetrators of violence (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 828). It is important to note however that the discourse by all three categories of respondents show a gendered analysis of IPV which locates the roots of violence within gender, male privileges in patriarchal society and other forms of oppression as emphasised by the integrative feminist model (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 825).

### **8.2.1 Application to the Theoretical Framework and Practice Implications**

This study provides a strong insight into a new way in which intimate partner violence can be looked at from the African context by recognising the resilience of rural IPV victims and in a new way, involve queen mothers and the general rural communities in addressing IPV issues in rural areas. The study also shows how rural women are becoming increasingly informed and aware of their situations and are exhibiting agency, self-consciousness and expertise with regards to the violence they have lived through. Ideally, there should be a dialogue between ideology and practice with each informing the other (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 838). In this section, I place the analysis of the data on definitions within the context of both theories which

serve as the framework for this study, that is the integrative feminist model by McPhail et al (2007) and Saleebey's (1996) strengths perspective [discussed in chapter three].

Mullaly (2010:60) argues that, in order to overcome cultural imperialism, it would seem that a necessary step would be for culturally oppressed groups [like battered women] to take over the definition of themselves and assert a positive sense of group difference [as presented in Chapter Two of this study]. In this regard and for the purpose of policy implication and application to social work practice, I must emphasise that based on the results of this study, victims of intimate partner violence demonstrate that they are not without strengths, and the evidence supporting this claim is compelling. In fact, the ability of the rural women to define the concept of intimate partner violence, and be able to identify particular practices compared to others that are victimising, is in itself a demonstration of strength.

Among her three assumptions about human behaviour and experience, Saleebey (1997: 49) argues that despite life's difficulties, people have survived and have learnt from their life journeys. Therefore, social workers must try to understand those journeys and help people identify the qualities that have contributed to their survival. Saleebey (1997) and others like Cohen (1999), Miller & Berg (1995) indicate that the client is the expert on his or her life who teaches the helper, and by learning from the client, the helper can then understand the client's perceptions, experiences and strengths. No matter how simplistic or complex the IPV definitions given by these rural women are in this study, they symbolise the lessons these women have learnt in their life journeys. It then behoves on policy makers, researchers and practitioners to appreciate these qualities, and work collaboratively with rural residents to attain their goals and aspirations so that transformation can happen in their world.

Indeed, with reference to the integrative feminist model, and concluding from Mills' critique, feminist practices have been criticised as having unintended consequences that ultimately reduce victims' choice and undermine their self-determination (McPhail et al., 2007:829). The IFM on the other hand aims at increasing clients' choice, self-determination, and empowerment while acknowledging the reality of limited and difficult choices (McPhail et al., 2007:830). This is consistent with the concept of 'choice' as explained by respondents in this study. This includes the choice of learning new skills to improve their lives and having the confidence to confront the repercussions; the choice of leaving the violent relationship before the violence escalates or becoming self-determined to derive new ways of coping; the choice of being able to access particular social support systems that make a difference in one's life and that of their families as well as their communities; and using their expertise to bring positive changes in their own lives and to help others who may need help.

The results of this thesis therefore, have many implications for direct social work practice in rural areas. I therefore call for a) the couples' training to help de-escalate violence; b) the establishment of women empowerment projects to raise income for victims to be able to take care of themselves, their children and also to be instrumental at helping other women avoid or limit violence; c) and training on conflict resolution for both women and men to help stop or limit IPV.

### **8.3 Points of Convergence and Contradictions Regarding Victim's Lived Experiences**

The second research question is *what are the lived experiences of rural women who have been victimised in their heterosexual intimate relationships?* In this section, I discuss the results and draw out points of convergence and contradictions in the literature and theories. It is

important to acknowledge that this research provides valuable information on a neglected and underserved population of rural women with victimisation history. In response to the question above, I found similarities and variations in victims' lived experiences, but more so, even in the event where they shared comparable experiences, the context was indeed unique.

I observed that on the question about the forms of IPV experienced, victims often answered that in the greatest detail and for the longest period of time. In contrast, questions requesting the interviewees to discuss their reactions to the violence and the impact thereof were often met with reluctance, pauses or requests for clarification and usually yielded brief answers. This phase of the work saw the women talking extensively on the eight forms of IPV that came out earlier in their definitions, most of which corroborate Neustifter's (2009: 5) identified forms of IPV which came out in her broad definition. Respondents in this study identified eight forms of violence which are comparable to five which were among the forms Neustifter (2009: 5) mentioned in her work. The forms of IPV commonly identified in my study and in that of Neustifter (2009) are: physical violence; sexual violence; coercion and intimidation; emotional abuse; and economic abuse. However, infidelity; verbal assault; as well as non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect were three additional forms of IPV given by the rural women in my study. The forms of IPV though not entirely new, help expand and reshape previous definitions.

This point is worth underscoring because in traditional Ghanaian societies (even the matrilineal Akans), and in the gendered African society in general, the realities that have spun for most women is that generally, women do not have access to land, credit, education and so on, due to male preference which disempowers them economically, and makes them dependent on their male counterparts for maintenance and financial support. Again, women are taught to be quiet; the legality of polygamy or male privilege also supports men dating and committing acts

of infidelity which bring with it lots of health implication for women in terms of the threat of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), limited or no access to health care (such as the National Health Insurance Scheme), transportation barriers to visit health facilities and general financial barriers. These are feminine realities in Ghana which the integrative feminist model presents to researchers, policy makers, programme implementers, and social work practitioners to draw upon and empower rural women in all spheres of their lives so that they can take charge of their lives and that of their children even in times of adversity.

Despite the fact that many of the victims interviewed were still in the violent relationship, and showed sentiments and sympathy towards their perpetrators, they expressed strong feelings and thoughts, coping capabilities and resilience in their circumstances. Many of them were exploring ways of advancing in their chosen occupations and investing in the future of their children. Others [largely the married women] indicated they have learnt to cope in their relationships by deriving ways to approach issues in a manner that limits the potential for subsequent victimisation by their partners and still have their relationships intact. For those who had plans of exiting the relationship, they demonstrated increased awareness of alternative social support systems that would ensure their successful transitions.

In addition, the study reveals rural women's lived experiences and resourcefulness, and highlights their agency in response to IPV, despite their sentiments and sympathy towards their perpetrators. This research again shows that most respondents know of both formal and informal social support systems but will not seek them due to the stigma that is caused when partners are jailed, or publicised and the entire community becomes aware of their actions. The Ghana Government can therefore work on planning and implementing their services in a confidential

manner so that IPV victims are not stigmatised. For example, the Intimacy Abused Circles or Family Tribunals format could be used inside the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Units, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, non-governmental organisations like the ARK Foundation and others committed to addressing intimate partner violence issues or in the palaces or other enclosed places deemed safe in the various communities. Special senior officers could invite partners and only arrest them if they fail to show up. They could have powers to place liens on properties and farms to assure child maintenance and spousal support.

### **8.3.1 Application to the Theoretical Framework and Practice Implications**

First, the strengths perspective by Saleebey (2002) emphasises that those who have experienced IPV, and/or other types of trauma cannot be presumed to lack the ability and desire to continue to contribute to their communities and relationships. Indeed, nearly all of the participants expressed the desire to see their businesses grow, and they demonstrated great commitment at working to increase their sources of income to be able to cater for their children. This supports the strengths and resilience-based research by Walsh (2003: 4), which shows that traumatic experiences can lead to increased strength and resourcefulness. Policy initiatives and social work practice should therefore aim at empowering victims as well as their communities to identify and also make the most out of the strengths within them and the resources in their environment communities so that they can contribute to enhancing their own lives and that of the world around them.

Furthermore, in a nation struggling with poverty as evidenced by the rural women's stories on non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect, it is in order to recommend economic empowerment programmes in rural communities. This should be designed, especially, in the area

of micro financing to target rural women to help make them financially independent, so that they and their children do not starve or wallow in poverty. The results of this study show that victims, the queen mothers and the women in the community forum call for economic support for rural women in their trade to enable them sustain the upkeep of their families. For instance, in the response of queen mother No. 2. in the results section, she discussed how she made useful her status as queen mother to advocate ‘soft loans’ for women in her community through what was popularly called ‘Kufuor loans’. The term came about as a result of the credit facility being instituted during the time when Ghana’s former president John Agyekum Kufuor was President of the nation.

#### **8.4 Points of Convergence and Contradictions on Social Support Systems and Resilience**

This research was also guided by both the strengths perspective from social work as espoused by Saleebey (1997), and the integrative feminist model by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007) as the theoretical framework to explore supportive and unsupportive social networks that connect the process of resilience. The research question was: *How significant are the roles of social support systems at contributing to victims’ resilience?* Similarly, like in the preceding sections, I discuss the results and draw out points of convergence and contradictions in the literature and theories. In this section, I find out which social support systems were available in the respondents’ respective communities and how supportive were these resources in helping the victims thrive. While studies examining intimate partner violence in rural areas are limited, the existing literature suggests that rural dwellers are disadvantaged by many factors. Key amongst them is the problem with social support systems.

I found that, majority of the rural women were very much aware of the social support systems they had at their disposal to enable IPV victims thrive and bounce back. To them, a supportive community helps them to recover without judging them or showing any form of stereotype or being prejudiced. For many victims, different individuals and groups were supportive in different ways while for others, some support systems were completely unsupportive and this was confirmed by the general women's group. There were also mention of others who passively withheld support for unknown reasons which compounded victims' plight.

According to the respondents, social support systems are very significant because they play giant roles that contribute to the ability of victims to pull through violent experiences. I found in this study that social support came in many different forms including; the provision of emotional strength, inspiring or encouraging words, overnight lodging, childcare, home or farming chores, mediation, counselling, prayers of support, respite from daily chores, financial assistance, useful information, escorting a victim to a resource, companionship, recreation, personal sharing experiences aimed at cheering a victim up, rescue efforts when there is violence, fight disruptions, and medical care among others. All these equipped victims with increased strength and helped them to be able to thrive.

This evidence is supported by Coker, Davis, Arias, Desai, Sanderson, Brandt, et al. (2002) who suggest that the use of supportive resources serve as a cushion that protects individuals from the effects endured from violence. Also, Amoakohene (2004) based on her findings, proposed that urgently needed are direct formal support systems for abused women and their dependent children such as in the form of shelters. All these give emphases to the importance of social support networks for victims' survival.

Regarding the forms of social support systems that were available, respondents listed parents, children, the ‘abusuapanin’ (family heads), neighbours, uncles and aunts, in-laws, religious leaders, chiefs, queen mothers, other community leaders, friends, the police, hospitals, social welfare and the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Units (DOVVSU). Nevertheless, these rural women indicated that, the mere availability of some of these resources did not mean they were supportive. In fact, the supportive people or groups in their lives were usually their families with parents and children being mentioned as the most supportive. Even with parents, mothers were particularly talked about often as the most supportive, perhaps because of their investment in and love for their child. The ‘abusuapanin’, in-laws, and neighbours were identified as quite supportive, whilst the other social support systems were said to be either less supportive or unsupportive.

Quite apart from access, lack of knowledge about particular services, and the fear of stigmatisation associated with reporting, formal social support systems like the Police Service, the Department of Social Welfare, hospitals, and DOVVSU may have been seen as less supportive or even unsupportive because rural residents complained about issues of proximity and financial cost involved in following up cases. This finding corroborates Thorngren’s (2003) observation that while rural inhabitants may benefit from an informal support network among their extended families and community members, this may also weaken their view of the need for formal support systems. Also, this result is consistent with the work of Grossman et al. (2005: 75-80) who found that some rural victims do not at all know about services that do exist or the problem is about how to access them. In addition, the results in this section is comparable with previous research which found that close-knit families, kinship, and friendship networks which are characteristics of rural communities, reduce the ability and willingness of rural abused

victims to seek help (Grossman, Hinkley, Kawalski, & Margrave, 2005: 71-81) in general perhaps, due to stigma.

Also, chiefs, queen mothers, religious leaders and other community heads were largely considered as less supportive and sometimes unsupportive especially because either their services were not sought at all or community members had doubts about confidentiality issues. These findings are consistent with previous studies like that of Dekeseredy & Schwartz (2008) who explain that there is an entire spectrum of barriers blocking rural women's efforts to find help and among them are less social support, lack of confidentiality, lack of phones and transportation, isolation, lack of medical care and inadequate legal representation.

#### **8.4.1 Application to the Theoretical Framework and Practice Implications**

First and foremost, the results of this study endears it to the assumptions of both the strengths perspective and the integrative feminist model. The inclusion of the strengths perspective challenges the existing orientation which often depicts battered women, as 'total preys' who are weak and without options by offering an alternative view [ of battered women] which highlights their strengths and self-determination. This includes their survival skills, resilience, aspirations, and expertise on their lives (Saleebey (1997: 10). The integrative feminist model, on the other hand, further critiques the traditional notion that intimate partner violence is a private matter. The IFM as such demands both interpersonal and socio-political interventions in addressing intimate partner violence. This multi-dimensional perspective is similar to Thompson's (2002:44) PCS model of analysing oppression and understanding the concept of cultural imperialism where P is for personal, C is for cultural, and S is for structural. This perspective has also been explained by McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice (2007: 818) that

many of the problems faced by women, including violence are caused by social, cultural, and political forces requiring action at the policy level.

In addition, the results of this study prove that quite apart from few respondents who did not seek help basically because of confidentiality concerns and sometimes due to lack of information about where to seek help, the great majority reported the violence to someone for help. The results also show that neighbours and the general community members usually stepped in to provide some form of social support out of concern which victims say were important for their resilience. These findings confirm the belief encapsulated in the feminist mantra, that ‘the personal is political’ (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 818). In that way, integrative feminist theorists demand public solutions to personal problems, with focus on the political and structural problems that affect people at the personal level.

Again, it must be understood that rural communities are not without their strengths. The strengths of the rural communities include the agency and resilience of women, the local expertise of community members which can be effectively mobilised and harnessed; the existence of social support systems which can be trained to be supportive like the traditional authorities, family heads, family members, neighbours, and the religious communities. The use of the integrative feminist model as a practice-based model is to focus on how it builds on its response to domestic violence matters by mapping resources and exploring community based alternatives to intimate partner violence (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni and Rice, 2007: 819). This becomes a good practice especially for rural communities whose dwellers are disadvantaged by several circumstances such as the lack of a coordinated system of social support, be it formal or informal. Indeed, given the nature of rural life, interventions geared toward helping victims may be unsuccessful if there is no consistent support from the community. In response, queen mothers

and other supportive members of the traditional authority, family heads/elders, religious leaders, and various community group leaders should be targeted, trained and equipped to effectively handle intimate partner violence in rural communities. Also, services provided by social support systems in rural areas like in all other places must be safe and accessible. Again, interventions must be tailored to each victim's dynamic needs since each person's lived experiences is unique.

Also, it will be useful for researchers, social workers, policy makers and implementers to explore the differences between supportive and unsupportive social support systems. The difference between these two concepts are striking. Stakeholders in the fight against IPV must therefore learn to apply these concepts usefully both in academic circles, and for the purpose of policy designs. This is because, the findings of this research establish strongly that not all available community resources are supportive hence, using the term 'available' social support systems do not necessarily mean they are 'supportive' networks. Again, since some individuals [as observed in this study] may simply not know about the existence of particular support systems or how to access them, the ability of social work practitioners and other community support systems to provide victims with useful information and linkages to needed resources in rural communities would be important. By linking victims to needed resources and providing them with useful information, it would enhance victims' strengths and resilience, increase their choice, and promote their self-determination.

Further, the research has strongly documented that the family of the IPV victim, members of the partner's family and neighbours provide the greatest social support in the lives of the IPV victim. The government has limited funding and resources, but together with traditional leaders they could provide interested members of the community training in conflict resolution and management and teach people how to stop or de-escalate violence.

Even more, the government can acquire mobile vans to serve rural communities by carrying out preventive campaign programmes on the implications of intimate partner violence, and as a curative measure provide useful information that will link victims to supportive resources. The mobile vans can also be useful for conveying IPV victims to needed facilities like healthcare and resource centres to limit the transit barriers and financial difficulties rural abused women face. These exercises and programmes would help save lives, limit injuries and reduce intimate partner violence in rural areas.

Also, despite the limited roles of traditional leaders such as queen mothers, this research has shown that they [queen mothers] have the capability of providing support services for IPV victims. Part of the problem is that IPV victims generally do not utilize their services due to the threat of losing confidentiality of what was happening in their lives. Therefore, the policy and practice implication here is that queen mothers should set aside a special private and enclosed room in the palace for women and ensure there is consistency in the service provision for these women. The various women groups can then start to use the room on a regular basis to celebrate many events they usually have like for education purposes in the event of girls starting menstrual cycles, the birth of a new baby, marriage preparations or to console each other in times like becoming a widow, losing a family member and many others. This same room could ultimately be used to have a confidential session around intimate partner violence or to serve as a place of respite for women and their children.

Additionally, in community development practice, social support networks are great assets, and thus these support systems should be resourced and equipped with useful information, skills, and funding from both government and non-governmental institutions so that they can offer progressive support to their communities. For example, some of the things that victims,

queen mothers and community members complain about such as social support systems are lacking, and should be provided to complement the efforts of the informal support systems in rural areas. They therefore called for the establishment of a unit of the Department of Social Welfare in the rural communities and/or the extension of the services of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service. The services from both the formal and informal social support systems should be well coordinated in order to limit duplication of efforts and rather yield the best outcomes.

### **8.5 Key Practice Implications for Social Workers in Rural Ghana**

Batterer intervention programmes and social work practice in general occurs at three different but interconnected levels. These levels are micro, mezzo, and macro. According to Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen (2002), knowledge of and skills in practice methods vary depending on the populations being served. Therefore, in order for practitioners to be effective especially, in rural areas where social support services are generally few or non-existent, it requires that professionals demonstrate knowledge at all the three levels of practice.

The micro level practice includes work with individuals, couples, families, and small groups. This is normally referred to as direct practice or clinical practice because practitioners deliver services directly to clients in a face-to-face manner. The mezzo level practice generally includes work with groups which requires minimal face-to-face contact with clients, and usually involves the process of social work administration. Meanwhile, the macro level practice includes interventions at the community, organisational, and or national levels, and may involve the processes of social planning, community actions, and policy implementation.

Working effectively in rural communities in Ghana at any of these levels calls for practitioners to understand the problem, the target population, and the communities in which the problem occurs. In the write-up that follows, I discuss the implications of my findings for social work practice in rural areas and provide directions for social workers practicing at any of these levels, be it at the micro, mezzo or macro level.

To begin with, victims of intimate partner violence indicated the need to access financial support so that they can maintain their families. Social work practitioners working in the rural areas should be able to link victims to community resources and refer them to needed social support networks. It is therefore important for practitioners to be aware of and connect rural women to local support services and programmes offered by the government like the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), micro credit loans among others. Social workers should also be able to link clients to non-governmental organisations, training institutions, and civil society organisations whose services are needed. Practitioners again need to help rural women see their choices, create local rural resource kit, map community resources, and also learn the basics of 'susu' (savings).

Also, IPV victims require skills to help maintain their relationships. Social workers must learn and train rural residents with the skills in conflict prevention; conflict management and resolution; problem solving; positive decision making; and peaceful de-escalation of violence.

Furthermore, IPV victims stated that they do not want the violence to affect their children. Social workers in the field therefore need to support victims to learn to recognise signs of violence; to develop escape plans; locate safe havens for themselves and their children in or outside their communities; and teach parents the techniques to discuss violence with their children and teach them positive problem resolution.

In addition, IPV victims need short-term places to stay when violence cannot be de-escalated. Social workers practicing in rural communities need to learn to map and develop resources among families, traditional leaders and the larger community institution to help victims. Social workers must also develop rural projects for victims by approaching rural churches, traditional authorities like the queen mothers, including identifying stable and supportive families who will provide a day or two of safe spaces for affected families.

This study has also uncovered that rural victims of IPV need emotional and psychological support. Social workers must provide basic counseling training to queen mothers and other women leaders to help rural women develop problem-solving skills, build the self-esteem, promote hope, encourage resilience, educate, support, encourage and motivate themselves. This can help them to cope better, and deal more effectively with the myriad of difficulties they may encounter in future, and these principles can be readily transferred from one situation to another.

Social workers can also establish and promote group support and mentoring among victims in rural areas. There is also the need for religious support for victims who find solace in their faith and belief systems. Social workers could therefore identify people such as religious leaders in the community who do not promote negative passivity but build the spiritual and emotional strength of victims of intimate partner violence.

Lastly, the findings reveal that most IPV victims could not access medical services especially those who experienced sexual and/or physical assault. They suffered dire consequences due to lack of funds, and the cumbersome procedures involved in obtaining medical or police reports. Social workers should therefore be able to identify positive persons in the nearest health facilities and police units (such as DOVVSU) to work out a system to facilitate getting free hospital care for victims as allowed by the Ghana Health Services. Social work

professionals in rural areas also need to identify and mobilise relevant persons with the needed training or expertise in the communities (e.g. midwives, traditional birth attendants, bone setters, herbalists and others and set emergency first aid systems. By so doing, practitioners would promote communism and may themselves learn basic first aid practices to help save lives and restore hope for victims.

### **8.6 Limitations of the Study**

My research design (qualitative; phenomenological; descriptive), and method of data collection (semi-structured in-depth interviews, and unstructured community forum) did not allow for deeper interactions and comparisons between the victims and queen mothers. The lack of interaction between these two categories of respondents did not flush out the issues [except to the researcher and readers]. There were some very different views from the two groups of respondents (i.e. victims and queen mothers) in terms of resources and service provision. The results clearly demonstrate the need for both parties to communicate and understand the needs of each other but this wasn't quite carried through. For example, IPV victims revealed they want privacy, confidentiality and consistent support from traditional leaders like queen mothers. The queen mothers on the other hand, felt they provided the needed resources and were available. As a researcher, the limitation I encountered was that even though I could see this need, I could not facilitate the effort to engage dialogue to look for problem resolution.

Another limitation of this study is that due to the relatively small sample size, the results of this research may not be generalised and the findings may therefore not be a reflection of the overall dynamics of intimate partner violence in all rural areas in Ghana.

Further, my research focused on recording the perspectives of IPV victims in rural Ghana, and did not gather perceptions from significant others like the children of victims and key significant others like family members. A longer period of time, finances and involvement would be necessary to get data from these key people. This could help develop a broader understanding of IPV. It would also be a new and needed approach to help uncover the views of key informants in the lives of victims who provide support in times of violence.

### **8.7 Implications for Further Research**

This research has provided valuable information about a neglected population of rural victims of intimate partner violence whose voices and lived experiences are often overlooked. This study has discovered new areas of research and I therefore recommend that future research endeavours should focus on the areas discussed below.

First, I recommend a longitudinal study on the strategies that rural IPV survivors who have demonstrated resilience and expertise of their life experiences, and have discovered ways to reduce violence do maintain peace and stability in their families. The study could explore the tools and resources that helped victims along the way; the things that worked for them and those that didn't work; and recommendations we can fall on to direct the course of social work practice in rural Ghana. This is a valuable cache waiting to be tapped into and such information would add to the academic discourse and possibly be utilised for counselling services. It could also be used in peer mentoring or support groups by social workers practicing in rural communities. Such information can also be gathered, analysed and considered as strategies to help potential victims of intimate partner violence.

Second, I recommend that both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the context and process of developing, planning and implementing services for women in traditional leadership in rural areas be conducted. The outcome of such a study can help queen mothers and other traditional leaders in rural communities to truly monitor what they do; how they do it; and the impact of such services. More so, this research and practical reflection of their work could help queen mothers and other traditional leaders in their work with victims of intimate partner violence and help direct the future of social work practice with rural women.

Third, I make a recommendation that research on institutional failures and the challenges of providing services to rural IPV residents by the government of Ghana be undertaken. The findings indicate that women in this study consistently pointed out barriers of access to the police, counselling services, medical facilities and other support services. With approximately half of Ghana's population (49.1 percent) living in rural areas (Ghana Statistical Service 2010 PHC Report), we cannot let these concerns continue. We need to encourage active social options and create a more informed citizenry with greater opportunities to have a more informed perspectives and make better decisions about their lives and that of their families. This is a mission possible through research.

Fourth, the review of relevant literature shows that most of the research on intimate partner violence in Ghana have been done on women. My research clearly documented that some of the women admitted being perpetrators of violence at one point or another when the men became old or weak. This is consistent with the Integrative Feminist Model which recognises female aggression too and female role in violence which establishes that women can also be perpetrators as well as victims of violence. This phenomenon must therefore be studied because

men are also becoming victims. Is it retribution; counter aggression; the victim becoming a victimizer, or something else? These need to be explored further.

Fifth, I propose a nationwide study of rural victims of intimate partner violence to get a more heterogeneous population to bring out other dynamics that this study could not identify. Such a study should however include recruiting and interviewing frontline domestic violence workers to find out the scope of their operation in rural Ghana, how their activities affect the lives of IPV victims, the specific strategies that work for them, and the areas that need improvement. Such a study could also find out which aspects of the Integrative Feminist Model and the Strengths perspective that are being used in their practice and what could be changed to suit the Ghanaian context. Professionals to be recruited for such a study could come from the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Units of the Ghana Police Service; the Department of Social Welfare; the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; and other domestic violence oriented institutions like the ARK Foundation, the Federation of Women Lawyers, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, selected healthcare units amongst others. In this way, IPV in rural Ghana would be understood from a broader perspective and would also be enriched with the perspectives of professionals in direct practice.

Sixth, another great area for future study would be on how IPV victims who have become survivors and are in non-violent relationships have made successful transitions and kept their relationships intact. Women could benefit from such knowledge and practitioners can also borrow from their expertise to improve their work with rural population groups. I personally look forward to carrying out an ‘IPV survivors’ project’ using a participatory action research.

Lastly, future research need to be conducted to examine the effectiveness of the current legal strategies used by the criminal justice system to handle intimate partner violence. How

effective are the key players such as the police, courts, laws and policies, penal systems, and attorneys at handling IPV issues and restoring justice? Do they continue, stop, or reduce after processing within the criminal justice system? Are victims and their families better or worse off after the involvement of the criminal justice system? Similarly, non-legal options or alternative legal techniques must also be studied to consider more effective ways to serve victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence in rural areas.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

The purpose of exploring this sensitive topic was to document the conceptualisation of intimate partner violence from rural women's own perspective. It was also to examine the lived experiences and resilience of IPV victims. Overall, sixty-seven rural women from three communities in the Upper West Akem District of the Eastern Region were interviewed for this study. Out of this number, twenty-four were victims of intimate partner violence who were recruited and interviewed; three of the respondents were queen mothers from the respective communities who were interviewed in the capacity as key informants; and forty were women from the general communities who volunteered to participate in the community fora which were held in three sessions, each in a selected community.

My approach that shaped the process of this work is the descriptive phenomenological paradigm, and for the theoretical framework I synthesised two theoretical strands to provide a more robust approach to our understanding of intimate partner violence. Surely, like all other human problems, the lens through which we can understand the phenomenon of intimate partner violence is not an either or situation, but by an interactional effect between the integrative feminist model and the strengths perspective. The quotes provided by respondents in this study

suggest that focusing on one approach would be limited. Research participants themselves draw on the strengths perspective and the integrative feminist model to talk about their perspectives and experiences.

Essentially, three overarching themes emerged from the analysis of data namely, conceptualisation, lived experiences and resilience or the ability of victims to thrive and bounce back. Each major emergent theme produced four sub-themes [as discussed at the beginning phase of chapter five], and in presenting the results and the interpretation of data in chapters 5, 6 and 7, I have put into themes the results along the lines of the research questions and the interview guide. The discussion in chapter eight has also been done in a way that draws out the points of convergence and contradictions in the literature and theories.

The study speaks clearly about rural women's understanding of intimate partner violence, and extends the definition of IPV to include eight categories. These are physical violence; sexual violence; non-maintenance, deprivation and neglect; economic and financial violence; verbal assault and humiliation; infidelity; psychological/emotional violence; and coercion/intimidation. In addition, this thesis discusses rural IPV women's lived experiences, and reveals that the use of both formal and informal social support systems have many negative consequences that make victims choose not to use them. The research also confirms institutional failures, and exposes the limited roles of queen mothers.

Furthermore, this research provides social work practitioners with important intervention strategies. Overall, this research project makes important contributions to the literature on intimate partner violence, and provides potential practical implications that can happen here in Ghana. Practice based suggestions which have been spelt out above strongly provide a good platform where I direct social work practice in rural areas not only in Ghana but in Africa and

beyond. Social support services in rural areas must be safe and accessible. More so, both formal and informal systems of social support should engage and work together with rural community members on intervention programmes especially in conflict resolution strategies, and create an environment of ‘zero tolerance’ to intimate partner violence. Again, these social support systems must enhance victims’ resilience and protect clients’ confidentiality so that they will be more willing to report IPV cases and seek help.

Finally, in the debate over intimate partner violence against women, it may appear as if every facet has been analysed yet as has been discussed in this study, the conceptualisation of IPV from rural women’s own perspective, victims lived experiences and their ability to demonstrate resilience have not been explored enough. Therefore, documenting these components that have been overlooked in the discourse on intimate partner violence has essentially been what this study has aimed at doing. Indeed, we might not want to roll back the past regarding how poorly we seem to have done for rural victims of intimate partner violence. However, we can certainly think harder about the future by incorporating the voices of rural women into policy initiatives through community mobilisation and discussions, and allow their perspectives and lived experiences to influence policy initiatives, direct research, and shape social work practice in Ghana.

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## APPENDIX 1

### CONSENT FORM

**Topic:** The Dynamics of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Rural Ghana

**Principal Investigator:** Harriet Jennifer Boatemah Baffoe, +233 208 372 664, [harrietbaffoe@yahoo.com](mailto:harrietbaffoe@yahoo.com)

**Address:** University of Ghana, Department of Social Work, P. O. Box LG 419, Legon, Accra.

#### **General Information about the Research**

The objective of my research is to find out your views about violence that is caused by a spouse or an intimate partner. I also want to learn about the support systems or community resources that are available to support women who experience any form of intimate partner violence. This is part of my study as a student at the University of Ghana and the data I collect from you would be used purposely for my research. I kindly ask your permission to participate in this study by responding to some questions I will be asking shortly on the topic. I expect this session to take about two hours.

#### **Possible Risks and Discomforts**

During this process, it is possible you may recall some experiences which could make you sad. You are however at liberty to refuse answering particular questions and you have the right to also decide to withdraw from the study.

#### **Possible Benefits**

This study will help provide evidence-based knowledge from rural women's own perspectives on intimate partner violence. It is important to have you tell your own story so that you can influence policy direction, research and Social work practice in this country.

#### **Confidentiality**

I will safeguard the information you give me and solely use it for academic purpose. I will ensure that I protect your safety, and maintain the confidentiality of records identifying you by the use of (false name) pseudonyms or codes.

#### **Compensation**

At the end of the session with you, I would give you compensation in the form of GHC 30 for the time you would have to leave your work to participate in this study.

#### **Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from my research without any penalty.

### **Contacts for Additional Information**

You may contact me or my supervisors or the head of department below if you need answers to some issues about my research.

**Principal researcher:** Harriet J. B. Baffoe, +233 208 372 664, [harrietbaffoe@yahoo.com](mailto:harrietbaffoe@yahoo.com)

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#### **Your rights as a Participant**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR-IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the IRB Office between the hours of 8am-5pm through the landline 0302916438 or email addresses: [nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org](mailto:nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org)

**APPENDIX 2**

**VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

The above document describing the benefits, risks and procedures for the research title (*The Dynamics of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Rural Ghana*) has been read and explained to me. I have been given an opportunity to have any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate as a volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and signature or mark of volunteer

**If volunteers cannot read 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and signature of witness

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

**APPENDIX 3**  
**RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
PHD CANDIDATE: HARRIET J. B. BAFFOE

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SESSION WITH WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED IPV**

This interview guide is designed to gather information from you about your experiences on intimate partner violence. The study is purely an academic exercise, the data gathered will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your anonymity will be protected. I would appreciate it if you could spend time carefully to respond to the questions that follow.

*This is the beginning phase of the interview. I will therefore ask you questions about yourself.*

**13. Socio-demographic characteristics**

Please tell me something about yourself

14. Age
15. Educational qualification(s)
16. Marital status
17. Number of children (if any)
18. Occupation
19. Ethnic origin
20. Current community of residence

*In the next set of questions, I will be asking you questions about your understanding and experiences of intimate partner violence. For the purpose of this study, an intimate partner may be referred to as your husband, fiancé, boyfriend or an ex-partner etc.*

### **21. Conceptualisation of intimate partner violence**

22. What are some of the things that create happiness in an intimate relationship?
23. How will you define intimate partner violence?
24. Explain why you would consider the above mentioned behaviours as forms of violence.
25. Under which circumstance would these violent behaviours be approved?

### **26. Experiences of intimate partner violence**

*Let's now talk about your lived experiences of the intimate relationship(s) you have been involved in.*

27. Kindly discuss specific behaviours your partner exhibits that you consider violent? Tell me what you remember about any form of violence you have experienced from your partner.
28. How did you react to his violent behaviour? What did you do immediately when the incident happened?
29. How did his actions affect you or anyone else?

### **30. Factors that contributed to Victims' Resilience**

31. Mention specific forms of social support systems that were available to you when you needed help. Did anyone come to your rescue? What kinds of help did you seek?
32. Did you inform the queen mother about it? How has the queen mother been involved in resolving this issue of intimate partner violence or which particular roles has she played in this regard to support you?

33. What constraints have you encountered with the use of the social support systems available to you?
34. What has happened between you and your partner after that incident? Is the perpetrator the same person you are currently in a relationship with? What are your reasons for staying in the relationship or leaving? What are your plans about the future?

**35. Suggestions/comments/recommendations**

36. At this point you have the opportunity to give your final suggestions, comments or recommendations to the discussion.

*We have come to the end of our in-depth interview. Thank you very much for your time.*

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SESSION WITH QUEEN MOTHERS AS KEY INFORMANTS

#### **A. Background information**

1. Age
2. Marital status
3. Number of children (if any)
4. Occupation
5. Educational qualification(s)
6. Community
7. Roles as a queen mother

#### **B. Queen Mothers knowledge on intimate partner violence and the role they play**

*For the purpose of this study, an intimate partner may be referred to as a wife/husband, fiancée/fiancé, girlfriend/boyfriend or any other person with whom one has an intimate relationship?*

8. How would you define intimate partner violence in your own words?
9. How is intimate partner violence a problem in this community?
10. Please identify the forms of intimate partner violence that come to your attention.
11. Kindly discuss the role you play in addressing issues of IPV in this village.
12. From your experience, what are some of the implications of IPV on victims, their families and the community?

#### **C. Social support systems available in the community**

13. What social support systems are available within this village for victims of IPV and how are the actions of perpetrators checked? Also, kindly talk about any additional support

services this community receives from outside to enhance the lives of victims of intimate partner violence.

14. What roles must the community play as a whole to deal with or prevent IPV?

**37. Suggestions/comments/recommendations**

38. We have come to the end of our interview so at this point you have the opportunity to give your final suggestions, comments or recommendations to the discussion.

*We have come to the end of our key-informant interview. Thank you very much for your time.*

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### COMMUNITY FORUM WITH WOMEN

#### A. Background information

1. Age
2. Educational qualification(s)
3. Marital status
4. Occupation
5. Ethnic origin
6. Current community & Region of residence

#### B. Conceptualisation of intimate partner violence

*For the purpose of this study, an intimate partner may be referred to as a wife/husband, fiancée/fiancé, girlfriend/boyfriend or any other person with whom one has an intimate relationship?*

7. What are some of the things that bring happiness into marriages and other intimate relationships?
8. Discuss behaviours a partner may display that you will consider violent.
9. Under which circumstances would you consider these same violent behaviours as acceptable?
10. How would you define intimate partner violence in your own words?
11. What has been your observation of intimate relationships in this village? How do women also contribute to violence in an intimate relationship?

**C. Community response to addressing the issue of IPV in rural areas**

12. In which way is the queen mother involved in addressing issues of IPV in this village?
13. What are the social support systems in this community for IPV victims and what roles must the community play as a whole to deal with the issue of IPV?
- 1.4 What problems are associated with the use of available social support systems in this village?

**D. Suggestions/comments/recommendations**

14. We have come to the end of this forum so at this point you have the opportunity to give your final suggestions, comments or recommendations to the discussion.

*We have come to the end of our community forum. Thank you for your participation.*