

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

IN DARK DAYS, IN DIRE STRAITS: DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN  
GHANA

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil IN  
SOCIOLOGY DEGREE.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

DECEMBER 2023

## DECLARATION

I declare that this work is the product of my field inquiry on the effects of domestic violence on spousal victims and their children. Documents referred to in this study have their authors and sources duly acknowledged. No part of this research has been used to obtain a degree in any other institution.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to God Almighty, my late father, Mr. Stephen Geker Anaglate who I lost in the course of finishing this thesis, my mother, Mrs. Celestine Anaglate and Pastor Dr. Mrs. Selina Baidoo whose support, prayers and words of encouragement enabled and guaranteed the successful completion of this thesis.



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Tema Region, for making this study possible.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Steve Tonah and Dr. Albert Kpoor for their patience and constant readiness in guiding me to write this thesis.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                         |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| DECLARATION.....                                                                        | i    |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                                                                  | iii  |
| LIST OF TABLES.....                                                                     | vii  |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....                                                             | viii |
| ABSTRACT.....                                                                           | ix   |
| CHAPTER ONE .....                                                                       | 11   |
| INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....                                          | 11   |
| 1.1 Introduction.....                                                                   | 11   |
| 1.2 Background of the Study .....                                                       | 12   |
| 1.3 Problem Statement.....                                                              | 15   |
| 1.4 Research Questions .....                                                            | 16   |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study .....                                                     | 17   |
| 1.6 Definition of Concepts .....                                                        | 17   |
| 1.7 Limitations of the Study .....                                                      | 18   |
| 1.8 Organization of the Study .....                                                     | 19   |
| 1.9 Chapter Summary.....                                                                | 19   |
| CHAPTER TWO .....                                                                       | 20   |
| LITERATURE REVIEW.....                                                                  | 20   |
| 2.1 Introduction.....                                                                   | 20   |
| 2.2 Types of Violence Perpetrated in the Domestic Sphere .....                          | 20   |
| 2.2.1 Physical Violence.....                                                            | 20   |
| 2.2.2 Sexual Violence.....                                                              | 21   |
| 2.2.3 Psychological/ Emotional Violence .....                                           | 24   |
| 2.2.4 Economic Violence .....                                                           | 25   |
| 2.2.5 Social Violence .....                                                             | 26   |
| 2.3 Comparing Female Perpetrated Violence and Male Perpetrated Violence .....           | 27   |
| 2.4 Factors that Influence Violent Acts .....                                           | 28   |
| 2.4.1 Childhood Experience of Violence.....                                             | 28   |
| 2.4.2 Substance Abuse, Alcohol Use and Mental health issues/Personality Disorders ..... | 29   |
| 2.4.3 Patriarchal Norms/ Shifts in Gender Roles .....                                   | 29   |
| 2.4.4 Place of Residence .....                                                          | 30   |
| 2.4.5 Traditional Beliefs.....                                                          | 30   |

|                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.4.6 Marriage Practices (Type of Marriage) .....                         | 31 |
| 2.4.7 Economic Dependence .....                                           | 31 |
| 2.4.8 Lineage Ties .....                                                  | 32 |
| 2.4.9 Educational Level.....                                              | 32 |
| 2.5 The Reasons for Female-Perpetrated Violence .....                     | 33 |
| 2.6 Gendered Susceptibility to Domestic Violence .....                    | 33 |
| 2.7 Effects of Violence on Individuals.....                               | 33 |
| 2.8 The Impacts on Children.....                                          | 35 |
| 2.9 Domestic Violence and Partner Separation .....                        | 37 |
| 2.10 Domestic Violence Theories.....                                      | 38 |
| 2.11 Family Function Models .....                                         | 41 |
| 2.11.1 Introduction .....                                                 | 41 |
| 2.11.2 McMaster Model of Family Functioning .....                         | 41 |
| 2.12 Chapter Summary.....                                                 | 46 |
| METHODOLOGY .....                                                         | 47 |
| 3.1 Introduction.....                                                     | 47 |
| 3.2 Research Design .....                                                 | 47 |
| 3.3 Study Area .....                                                      | 48 |
| 3.4 Sources of Data.....                                                  | 50 |
| 3.5 Sample Size .....                                                     | 50 |
| 3.6 Sampling Technique.....                                               | 51 |
| 3.7 Study Participants.....                                               | 52 |
| 3.8 Data Collection .....                                                 | 52 |
| 3.8.1 Methods of Data collection and In-depth Interviews.....             | 53 |
| 3.9 Data Analysis .....                                                   | 54 |
| 3.10 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....                                | 54 |
| 3.11 Ethical Considerations.....                                          | 55 |
| 3.12 Chapter Summary.....                                                 | 55 |
| TYPES, REASONS AND EFFECTS OF VIOLENT ACTS .....                          | 57 |
| 4.1 Introduction.....                                                     | 57 |
| 4.1.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Interviewed Participants ..... | 57 |
| 4.2 Types of Violence Experienced by Participants.....                    | 60 |
| 4.2.1 Physical Violence .....                                             | 62 |
| 4.2.2 Psychological Violence .....                                        | 67 |
| 4.2.3 Economic Violence .....                                             | 72 |

|                                                                                                              |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.2.4 Social violence.....                                                                                   | 76  |
| 4.3 The Co-occurrence of Domestic Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment.....                               | 79  |
| 4.4 Children as Witnesses to Domestic Partner Violence and Concern for their Well-being by Participants..... | 80  |
| 4.5 Reasons for Violent Acts .....                                                                           | 83  |
| 4.5.1 The Influence of Patriarchy .....                                                                      | 83  |
| 4.5.2 Loss of Interest in the Marriage/Relationship.....                                                     | 84  |
| 4.5.3 Alcohol Use .....                                                                                      | 84  |
| 4.5.4 Third-party Influence.....                                                                             | 85  |
| 4.5.5 Attitudes of Partners.....                                                                             | 85  |
| 4.5.6 Personality Disorders/ Uncontrollable Emotions.....                                                    | 86  |
| 4.5.7 Household Maintenance or Economic Upkeep.....                                                          | 87  |
| 4.5.8 Infidelity.....                                                                                        | 88  |
| 4.5.9 Spiritual Causes .....                                                                                 | 88  |
| 4.6 Domestic Violence and its Impact on Spousal Victims and their Children.....                              | 90  |
| 4.6.1 Psychological Impacts of Domestic Violence .....                                                       | 90  |
| 4.6.2 Economic Impacts of Domestic Violence .....                                                            | 94  |
| 4.6.3 Social Impacts of Domestic Violence .....                                                              | 98  |
| 4.6.4 Physical Impacts of Domestic Violence .....                                                            | 99  |
| 4.7 Domestic Violence and Family Functioning .....                                                           | 101 |
| 4.8 Views of Participants on Dealing with Domestic Violence and Stakeholder Involvement .....                | 106 |
| 4.9 Chapter summary .....                                                                                    | 109 |
| SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS .....                                                       | 110 |
| 5.1 Introduction.....                                                                                        | 110 |
| 5.2 Summary of Findings .....                                                                                | 110 |
| 5.2.2 Violence Individuals Experience from their Intimate Partners.....                                      | 111 |
| 5.2.3 The Factors that Instigate Partner Abuse.....                                                          | 111 |
| 5.2.4 The Co-occurrence of Domestic Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment.....                             | 112 |
| 5.2.5 Effects of Domestic Violence on Participants' Family Psychologically. ....                             | 112 |
| 5.2.6 Effects of Domestic Violence on Participants' Family Physically. ....                                  | 112 |
| 5.3 Conclusions.....                                                                                         | 113 |
| 5.4 Recommendations .....                                                                                    | 114 |
| REFERENCES.....                                                                                              | 118 |
| APPENDIX.....                                                                                                | 136 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|                                                              |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Characteristics of Participants .....               |    |
| 40                                                           |    |
| Table 2: Types of violence experienced by participants ..... | 43 |



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DOVVSU.....Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit

ACEs.....Adverse Childhood Experiences

IDS.....Institute of Development Studies

MMFF.....McMaster Model of Family Functioning

WHO.....World Health Organization



## ABSTRACT

Domestic and family violence continues to be an issue which many people deal with across the globe. Research suggests that relationships among individuals experiencing violence are laden with problems which cause physical, economic, social, sexual, and psychological harm. Some studies have looked at the individual effects of domestic violence, however, the familial effects of domestic violence has remained largely unexplored qualitatively. Hence, the need to take a qualitative approach in looking at how domestic and family violence affects the family function as the family is the basic unit of every society and informs societal outcomes. This study was conducted in Tema and sought to examine how spousal victims of violence perceive the impacts of domestic violence on them and their children and consequently the family relationship. Interviews were conducted to collect data for the study using a semi-structured interview guide. In all, fifteen participants were recruited through purposive sampling and thematic analysis was used in analysing the data obtained at the end of the interview process.

The study found that victims of domestic violence in the intimate relationship suffered psychologically, emotionally, economically and in certain circumstances physically. However, they were sometimes unable to adequately pinpoint how the violence affected their children. That notwithstanding, victims attested to the fact that the loving environment needed for a healthy family relationship and proper family functioning was largely absent and explained ways in which this played out. These ways included apprehension or grief experienced by victims and children due to abuse of a parent, ineffective communication within the family because of partner abuse, which in some cases, was coupled with the direct abuse of children and the absence of family synergy. This was because the division due to recurring abuse affected the ability of the family to achieve more as a group. The findings of this study point to the need for a more victim-

centred approach to handling domestic violence reports. This means not only stopping the deprivation or hurt because of abuse but also ensuring that victims find strength to live, as much as possible, a normal life again. More effective and robust counselling services at the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, with easy accessibility, as well as financial empowerment programmes are a necessary. This is because victims of domestic violence as found in the study deal with a myriad of physical, psychological, and financial issues and need help to effectively live the life they envisage for themselves and their children. This would enable victims and their children to develop the mental strength and gain the physical and economic power to navigate their situations.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

There have been growing concerns about the occurrence of domestic violence in unions with women and children being the most documented victims. This has been attributed to the patriarchal nature of society where male dominance over women and children is seen as paramount (Mantey, 2019). Some men, however, report the incidence of violence by their partners and this comes with calls for society to desist from categorizing domestic violence in unions as males being the sole perpetrators (Mantey, 2019). The incidence of domestic violence in intimate relationships impacts all those who suffer from it negatively, that is, partners who fall as victims and children within the domestic space. The repercussions are not only individual in nature as the family relationship also tends to suffer.

Domestic violence constitutes one of other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are a host of behavioural difficulties experienced due to an exposure to unpleasant circumstances growing up (Balistreri & Alvira-Hammond, 2016). The trauma of one can become collective trauma. As such, when structures within the family dynamics become faulty, society is affected as society is shaped by these family structures. This means that, as family bonds disintegrate, community structures weaken through the existence of lack of trust. Giving these, domestic violence is a big problem in all societies and a threat to their sustenance.

In a country where spousal killings have been rife in the past three decades and form part of the news year in year out, research on its occurrence has shown that in many instances, uxoricide is a tragic end to a husband's continual physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of the wife-victim (Adinkrah, 2008). Again, prior research on spousal homicides suggested that when women kill

their husbands, it is often in response to a pattern of physical abuse suffered at the hands of their mates (Barnard et al., 1982). ACEs and spousal homicides are consequences of domestic violence by intimate partners who ought to build and raise a healthy family together especially where children are involved.

The focus of this research would be on the nuclear family structure and how violence by one partner affects the victim and children and the entire family relationship. The nuclear family is the focus here as the form and functions of the family have recently changed in Ghana because of growing societal changes brought about by commerce, migration, urbanization, the spread of education and new religions, and legal changes (Kpoor, 2014). The decline of extended families has occurred with nuclear families being created due to the factors mentioned (Kpoor, 2014). Given the illegality of homosexual and transgender unions in the country, there remains an absence of data of abuse in such unions as victims in such unions may end up rather being prosecuted for their sexual orientations. Thus, the focus of this study is on the heteronormative couple. Broadly, the impact of domestic violence on the family would be looked at in this study. This would include the social, psychological, physical and economic repercussions of abuse on the victim(s) in the union and the family.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Domestic violence is a pattern of forced or injurious behaviour (Ganley, 2008). It involves those who are in or have a domestic relationship, which according to the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 of Ghana includes a family relationship or a relationship in a domestic setting between a complainant or respondent like a marriage and/or having a child together (Act 732, 2007).

Domestic violence includes an act under the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29) of Ghana which constitutes causing injury to a person under that Act, or actions which result in physical abuse,

sexual abuse, economic abuse together with abuse which is emotional, psychological or verbal (Act 732, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, it is widely said that society is patriarchal and truly, the African society and rightly so, the Ghanaian society, appears to be one of the most patriarchal societies (Sikweyiya et al., 2020) compared to other societies or jurisdictions which have gone much further in the drive towards gender equity like Switzerland (Lucchi & Werthmuller, 2021) if not equality. As such violence against men is underreported (Mantey, 2019 ;Younger, 2011) because they are seen as the ones who always must be in the position of leadership and have to be on top of issues. This well relates with the general assertion that their position is to be the head in unions (Bukuluki et al., 2021). This is because social norms continue to construct men as the natural authority and heads of family, while women and girls are often perceived as belonging to the male, either husband or father (Ballantine et al., 2017). This is conceptualized as hegemonic masculinity by scholars (Bukuluki et al., 2021).

As a result, wife-beating by the husband or any other type of violence against a female partner by the male partner, so long as death is avoided, is seen as a form of discipline for the woman by the man she finds herself with (Cantalupo et al, 2006). Men are sometimes victims of violence where the female partner is the perpetrator (Kwabena, 2020; Mantey, 2019). Acts of violence account for poor functioning of the family and victims or those exposed to the violence suffer the negative repercussions of violence which are really traumatic and destabilizing to the family (Harrison 2021; Pingley, 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). There is a cycle of violence, a recurring process. As such, violence presents itself as a process and not a one-time event (Bowlus and Seitz, 2006) which threatens the sanity of family members. Because of this, the healthy relationship needed for individuals within the family to go through the ordinary business of life

is affected. It has been found that victims of abuse in the intimate relationship have to deal with varied forms of psychological disorders (Rakovec-Felser, 2014).

Given these repercussions, it is clear that domestic violence is a crime which endangers lives regardless of the form it takes, hence the institution of laws which makes the act punishable in most jurisdictions. In Ghana, there are steps already in place to handle the occurrence of domestic violence. This has been the institution of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) in 2005 by the Ghana Police Service which was formerly the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) established in 1998. This unit handles domestic violence cases in the country backed by the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 (Act 732). The change of name was to encourage men to likewise report incidents of abuse they may experience.

The justice system in the country makes room for the resolution of cases of violence in different ways including court or out-of-court settlement procedures as happens with Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). In essence, the various ways in which violence is handled is a major predictor for its prevention or persistent occurrence hence there is the need to carefully choose the perfect means to handle each case giving the distinct circumstances that surround each of them.

Whether in court or out-of-court settlement is used in dealing with cases, domestic violence remains a crime per Ghana's 1992 constitution which is punishable by law under the Criminal Offences Act 1960 (Act 29) and the Domestic Violence Act 2007. Other laws which spell out punishment for perpetrators of domestic violence include the Criminal Code (Amended) Act 1998 (Act 554), The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) and the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653).

It is against this background that this study examined the deep-seated issues, effects, which arise from domestic violence perpetration on families. Male perpetration of violence remains the most documented given the existence of patriarchal norms in society which justify the violence while

these same norms prevent help-seeking behaviours on the part of male victims. This study looked at the consequences of domestic violence on families and how they suffer with respect to their proper functioning.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Domestic violence is experienced by 35 percent of women the world over with emotional abuse and controlling behaviours being experienced by 75 percent of women across the world (IDS et al., 2016). Men do also, experience violence from female partners. Unfortunately, full statistics on the incidence of domestic violence are not easy to access (IDS et al., 2016).

In 2015, 13,465 females and 2,807 males were victims of domestic violence in Ghana (News Ghana, 2016). This shows the alarming incidence of domestic violence in the country. A 2016 national survey on Domestic Violence in Ghana also indicated that about 27.7 percent of women in Ghana had experienced at least one form of domestic violence (physical, sexual, economic, social and psychological) within the last 12 months before the survey in Ghana (IDS et al, 2016). With respect to the figures for males, it was reported that 20 percent of men experienced violence with figures for children not looked at (IDS et al, 2016). According to IDS et al (2016), repercussions for physical violence experienced by males and females alike include poor health (physical and mental health) outcomes.

There are several health repercussions of domestic violence particularly against women and children with the most frequently reported violence against women in Ghana being emotional violence, followed by physical and sexual violence (Owusu Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016). For men, psychological violence is also predominantly suffered (Mantey, 2019). The repercussions of violence are life-changing for the women and men concerned as well as their families, communities, and the wider society (IDS et al, 2016). This study thus examined how the

individual negative consequences of domestic violence results in the overall disruption of a family relationship as most studies have examined the individual effects of domestic violence. This study found out directly from victims how the violence affects them individually and consequently their children in their families of procreation. How violence negatively affects the various aspects of their well-being was examined.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What types of violence do individuals experience from their intimate partners?
2. How does the co-occurrence of domestic partner violence and child maltreatment play out?
3. What factors instigate abuse?
4. What are the psychological and physical impacts of the various acts of violence on family members?
5. What are the socio-economic impacts of the various acts of violence on family members?

#### **Objectives of the Study**

##### **Main Objective**

The main objective of the study is to examine how spousal victims perceive the impacts of domestic violence on them and their children.

##### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the types of violence individuals experience from their intimate partners.

2. Explore the factors that instigate partner abuse.
3. Investigate the co-occurrence of domestic partner violence and child maltreatment.
4. Examine how domestic violence affects participants' family psychologically and physically.
5. Examine how domestic violence affects the participants' family socio-economically.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

There are lots of findings on how domestic violence in intimate relationships is experienced by women with males being the perpetrators and some reasons for the actions of these males (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Asiedu 2014). Few other studies concentrate on male victims with female perpetrators mainly because of male economic non-resilience (Kwabena 2020; Mantey, 2019). Though research work exists for both sides of the divide, the implications of domestic violence in its form as involving males and females and sometimes children as victims (directly or indirectly) within the family have not been looked at jointly. Thus, how domestic violence consequently affects the functioning of the family remains largely unexplored. This study thus contributes to the literature on domestic violence by examining how the family relationship is impacted by violence by one member against the other or others giving more insight to the effects of domestic violence on families. This extends the existing knowledge of the effects of violence to not only individual but also familial levels and gives insight to organizations which develop tools needed to provide support services for affected individuals.

### **1.6 Definition of Concepts**

**Family functioning:** This is the interaction of each family member to achieve functions and goals in a family (Epstein et al., 1983). It includes a commitment to support the functions of the family

that include the economic, safety, child rearing, caregiving, and communication (Johnson et al, 2011). Family functioning includes generational relationships, unique sets of rules, priorities, and ethics (Johnson et al, 2011).

Family economic well-being: It refers to a family's economic status that has sustainably adequate economic/financial/material resources to live a comfortable life (Xiao, 2013).

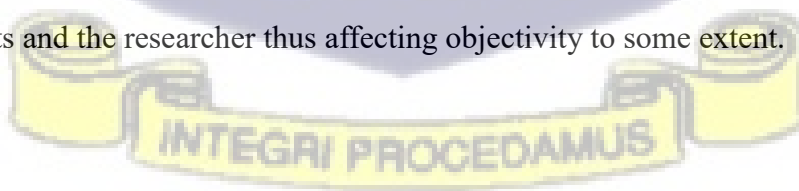
Psychological well-being: This refers to the existence of a positive attitude, good relationships with others, effectively and independently determining destiny, mastering the environment skillfully, having life goals and developing abilities (Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Social well-being: This is the subjective evaluation of personal life circumstances and functioning in society (Keyes, 1998).

Physical well-being: This consists of the ability to perform physical activities and carry out social roles without being hindered by physical limitations and experiences of bodily pain and biological health indicators (Capio et al., 2014).

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Since the study is limited to Tema, findings may not be generalizable to the whole country in every way even though the Tema area has a versatile blend of people from various ethnic groups. Also, the study employs a qualitative approach which makes findings subject to the interpretation of the participants and the researcher thus affecting objectivity to some extent.



### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This study comprises five chapters with chapter one containing the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem and the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study and the limitations of the study.

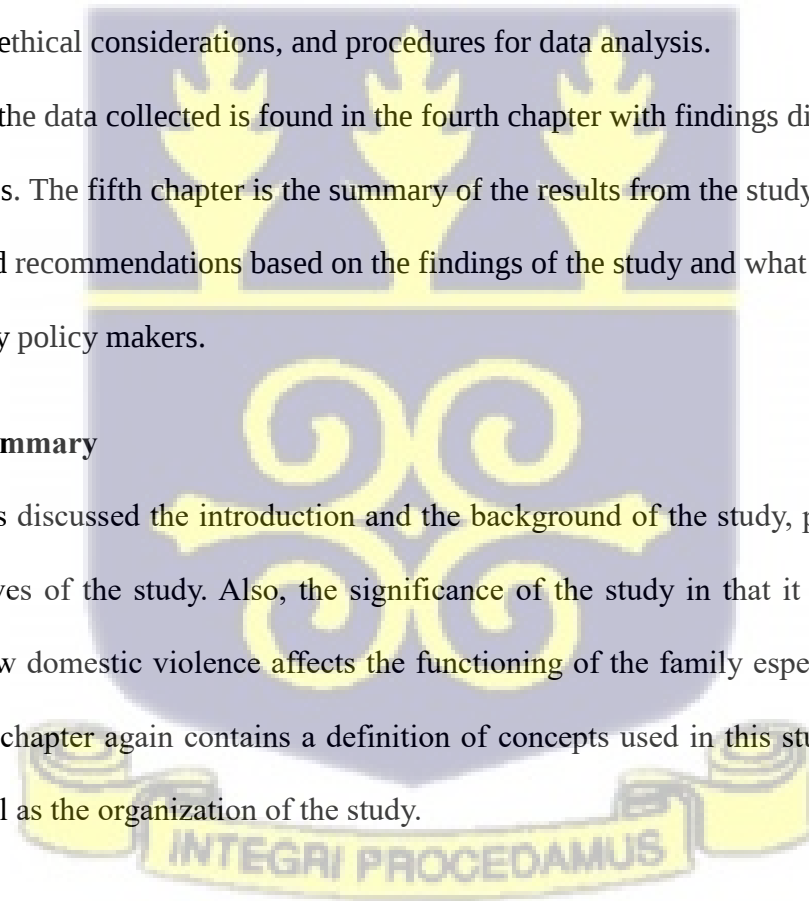
Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature on the study as well as the theoretical framework. This chapter discusses the types, causes, and effects of domestic violence. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature reviewed for the study.

Chapter three is on the methodology for the study. The research design, population, sample, and sampling procedures are found in this chapter together with the research instruments used in collecting data, ethical considerations, and procedures for data analysis.

The analysis of the data collected is found in the fourth chapter with findings discussed under the emerging themes. The fifth chapter is the summary of the results from the study as well as the conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of the study and what it means for policymaking by policy makers.

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the introduction and the background of the study, problem statement and the objectives of the study. Also, the significance of the study in that it contributes to the literature on how domestic violence affects the functioning of the family especially in Ghana is looked at. This chapter again contains a definition of concepts used in this study, limitations of the study as well as the organization of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses research which has addressed the types of domestic violence perpetrated, male- and female-perpetrated violence, causes and effects of domestic violence, how exposure to violence affects children in families, domestic violence theories and the theoretical framework. The focus on how violence affects adult victims and children gives insight into how consequently spousal violence affects the family relationship.

#### **2.2 Types of Violence Perpetrated in the Domestic Sphere**

Researchers note that one in every three women in Ghana are victims of domestic violence which can include physical, economic, emotional, and sexual violence (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018) with emotional violence being also known as psychological abuse (Act 732, 2007). The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2012 reported that violent behaviour in intimate relationships consist of acts of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional (psychological) abuse and controlling behaviours (WHO, 2012). IDS et al. (2016) also found that there are five types of domestic violence in Ghana. They include physical, economic, psychological (emotional), social, and sexual violence with the incidence of domestic violence remaining generally lower among men than among women based on reported cases.

##### **2.2.1 Physical Violence**

Research on the prevalence of domestic violence for female and male victims has had varying results, although most studies point to women being disproportionately victimized by male perpetrators (Adu, 2020; Apatinga et al., 2020; Appiah & Abubakari, 2013). A multi-country study on health of women and domestic violence by the WHO (2012) collected data on partner

abuse from over 24, 000 women in 10 countries representing diverse cultural, geographical, and urban/rural environments. The prevalence of relationship violence was discovered to be high, with 13–61 percent of female respondents reporting having been physically abused by a male partner and 4–49 percent also reporting having been severely abused by a partner. The nations examined included Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand, the former state union of Serbia and Montenegro, and Tanzania. Of 1178 respondents from a survey conducted in Zambia and Zimbabwe on dual violence, 12 percent experienced physical violence (Mabena et al. 2025).

IDS et al. (2016) found that in Ghana both men and women reported experiencing physical abuse. The survey found that physical violence is nearly the least documented violence experienced by women as it constituted 6.0 percent out of 27.7 percent of women who reported suffering various acts of violence. This gives insight and eliminates the wrong notion that physical violence towards females is the only form domestic violence takes. For male victims, physical violence comes last constituting 2.1 percent of 20 percent of men who had reported cases of violence. Wife-beating by husbands remains a regrettable outcome of our society due to the existence of patriarchy. There remains a contention and opinions remain divided as to whether wife-beating by the husband constitutes partner violence or is a form of discipline wives require to be of good behaviour. This debate continues although per our statutes, wife-beating by the husband is an act of domestic violence which is punishable by law.

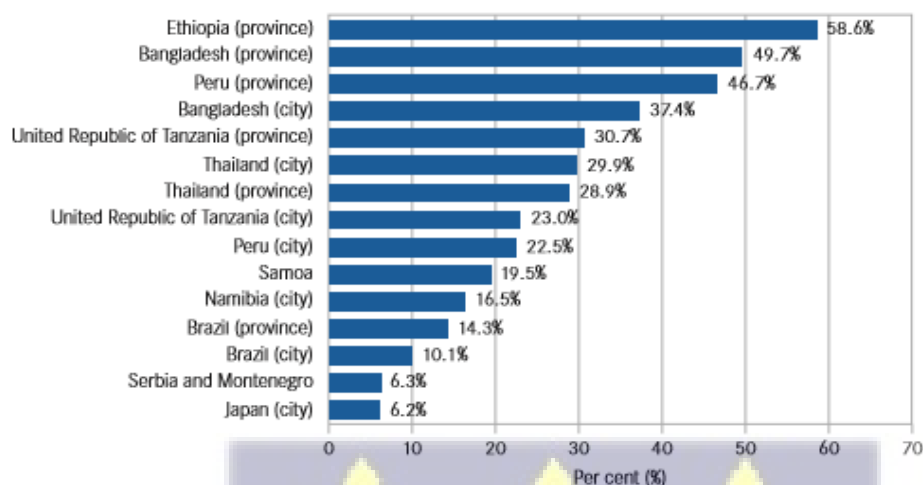
### **2.2.2 Sexual Violence**

Female victims of violence aged 15 to 49 who participated in a WHO multi-country survey, were found to have a lifetime prevalence of sexual partner violence which ranged from 6 percent in Japan to 59 percent in Ethiopia, with rates in most areas falling between 10 percent and 50

percent (WHO, 2010).

FIGURE 1

**Percentage of ever-partnered women aged 15–49 years who reported sexual intimate partner violence ever, after the age of 15 years (3)**



Source: WHO, 2010

Some statistics on the prevalence of intimate partner sexual violence are based on reports made by the offenders. For instance, a cross-sectional study of a random sample of South African men revealed that 14.3 percent of them admitted to sexually assaulting their wife or girlfriend, which means non-consensual sexual activity, either currently or in the past (Jewkes et al., 2011). Even though sexual violence has both genders as victims, often, women are the victims and in most cases the perpetrators are men known by the victim (Alkan et al., 2021).

In Ankara, Turkey, a study showed that of 1178 women surveyed, 31.3 percent of them mentioned having experienced sexual violence from their husbands at least once and 25.8 percent of the respondents reported having been forced into sexual intercourse (Alkan et al., 2021). Nearly one in ten American women (9.4 percent, or 11.1 million) have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetimes (Black, 2011).

Often, unwanted sexual behaviour happens in intimate relationships (van Berlo & Ploem, 2018), which is partner violence. In such instances, factors responsible include power imbalance, unequal expectations of partners in the relationship based on gender, a sense of entitlement to have sex and a drive to exercise controlling behaviours (van Berlo & Ploem, 2018). Sexual violence is a global public health crisis happening across geographic and cultural spaces. It is part of a greater problem in society where gender inequality and socially accepted implied standards make gender-based violence (GBV) acceptable (Munro-Kramer et al, 2020).

Mutual dependence of both perpetrator and victim, like traumatic attachment where perpetrators play the role of protector and provider of consolation has resulted in the occurrence of sexual violence in such instances. Such complicated attachment in intimate relationships explains the difficulty to break the cycle of violence by leaving the relationship (van Berlo & Ploem, 2018). Since men are socialized to be the head of families in Ghana, they also tend to be in charge when it comes to reproductive behaviour which includes sexual encounters (Dobash et al, 1998; Horn et al, 2014). Although it is not expressly prohibited by Ghanaian law, the country's Domestic Violence Act, which was passed in 2007, implies that marital rape is a crime. According to a survey on public perceptions of the criminalization of marital rape in Ghana, only 3 percent of married men and 18 percent of married women viewed non-consensual sexual actions in marriage as rape (Adodo-Samani, 2015 as cited in Dako-Gyeke, 2019).

The cultural setting effectively offers a belief framework that supports the preservation of the current gender related patterns (Amoakohene, 2004) leading to abuse of this nature.

Unfortunately, violence against women is frequently motivated by the perception that they are sex objects rather than independent human beings (Gervais et al. 2014 as cited in Dako-Gyeke et al, 2019). However, since sexual violence is largely regarded as a private issue, it is likely that

the incidence is largely underreported in Ghana constituting 2.5 percent out of 27.7 percent and 1.4 percent out of 20 percent of reported cases of domestic violence for females and males respectively (IDS et al., 2016).

### **2.2.3 Psychological/ Emotional Violence**

An American study conducted in the state of Texas found that prevalence rates of emotional abuse average around 80 percent with 40 percent of women and 32 percent of men reporting expressive aggression and coercive control (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). In Ghana, verbal abuse is explained as the result of female dependence within particularly patriarchal communities (IDS et al., 2016). Given this situation, gendered inequalities may be made the order of the day through such controlling behaviours hence allowing men to mistreat women, regarding them as their property especially in instances in Ghana where a marital union has been established through the payment of bride price (Dery, 2014). It is argued that men's propensity to psychologically mistreat their female intimate partners correlates with how much they objectify women (Gervais et al. 2014 as cited in Dako-Gyeke et al, 2019).

This type of abuse appears to be the most frequent but may be least reported as it affects the victims psyche creating fears as well as loss of confidence which could affect the ability of victims to come forward and report such cases (Asare, 2019). This is the most common form of domestic violence experienced by men (Mantey, 2019). According to IDS et al. (2016), the highest form of violence reported by men in Ghana was psychological violence constituting 7.9 percent out of 20 percent of all cases of violence reported and is the third highest for females constituting 9.3 percent out of 27.7 percent of reported cases of domestic violence.

#### 2.2.4 Economic Violence

Economic abuse is one of the non-physical abuses that has historically received little attention and is sometimes lumped in with psychological or emotional abuse, if not outrightly ignored (Stylianou, 2018). Riger et al. (2000) examined the employment sabotage of 57 primarily African American female victims of domestic violence living in domestic violence shelters in Chicago and discovered that offenders used every tactic at their disposal to prevent victims from maintaining jobs, including destroying cars, making physical threats against them, restraining them, and refusing to pay child support.

Another study by Anderson et al. (2003) that examined why female victims of violence do not just leave in Dayton, Ohio, in the United States of America discovered that 38 percent of the 485 women who need treatment from a programme for victims of domestic abuse noted that their partners had embezzled money. Women reported more instances of economic abuse than men, and when economic abuse occurs, women are more likely to experience physical abuse, according to the National Violence Against Women Survey, a nationally representative survey that was conducted through random digit dialling (RDD) from households in the United States (Outlaw, 2009).

Economic control, employment sabotage, and economic exploitation are the three components of economic abuse (Stylianou, 2018). Employment sabotage is behaviour that stops the victim from finding or keeping a job, economic control happens when the offender denies the victim access to or knowledge of the finances as well as any financial decision-making authority and economic exploitation is the deliberate use of behaviours intended at ruining the victim's financial resources or credit (Stylianou, 2018). There is also economic deprivation according to Tenkorang

and Owusu (2019) where males in Ghana with the desire to maintain economic dominance in the family refuse to give housekeeping money to their female partners.

In Ghana, this form of violence according to the study by IDS et al. (2016) is first on the list when it comes to the types of violence women experience and comes third for male victims. In contrast to other types of partner violence, female victims of financial partner violence connected it to the children and the family economics where men predominate as breadwinners, according to a qualitative study in Ghana on how gender norms affect the prevalence of partner abuse (Dako-Gyeke et al, 2018). It was found that women and children are impacted by the male partners' disrespect for their obligations (Dako-Gyeke et al.,2018). In IDS et al. (2016)'s study, the most common form of domestic violence reported by women in the 12 months prior to the survey was economic violence constituting 12.8 percent out of 27.7 percent while for men it constituted 7.3 percent out of 20 percent of domestic violence incidents.

### **2.2.5 Social Violence**

Stalking has received more attention in the last ten years as a problem that affects both men and women in the United States (Black, 2011). A National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that 16.2 percent of American women who had experienced stalking were living in constant fear of being hurt or killed as a result, or that someone close to them might be hurt or killed (Black, 2011). In contrast, 5.2 percent of American men out of every 19 reported having experienced stalking, which left them constantly concerned for their safety or the safety of a loved one (Black, 2011). In Ghana, stalking ranks as the second most frequent form of violence among both genders (IDS et al., 2016) constituting 7.7 percent of recorded cases of violence for men and 11.6 percent for women.

### 2.3 Comparing Female Perpetrated Violence and Male Perpetrated Violence

It has been found that when females are the perpetrators of violence, they are more inclined towards the use of controlling or coercive behaviours, basically psychological and emotional abuse, towards their male partners (Barton-Crosby & Hudson, 2021). Some women may intentionally harm their partners, according to recent research, which has led to significant controversy regarding discussions of partner violence in the home being symmetrical in terms of gender (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). With regard to female perpetrated violence towards males, some evidence suggests that when women perpetrate violence against men, it is not always perceived as abuse by men (Coleman et al., 2008). In addition to difficulties in identifying experiences as violence by an intimate partner, when men in the long run identify as victims, gender socialization may result in the likelihood for these men to minimize or trivialize their experiences of violence by their intimate partners (Hamberger & Guse, 2002). While being physically “forced “into sex or sex acts may remain gendered in heterosexual relationships, where women are more likely to be victimized by male partners, the use of broader definitions of sexual violence reveals different prevalence rates for men (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Emphasis on male perpetrated violence is not wholly out of place as there are more documented cases of female abuse victims than male ones arguably due to the existence of patriarchy and the power relations that come with it. The relative scarcity of literature with respect to the experiences of male victims of domestic violence by an intimate partner is because past research on partner violence has largely focused on the experiences of female victims and male perpetrators with research investigating and emphasizing the case of female victims (Talbot, 2021). Hence, identifying the prevalence and the physical and psychosocial effects of violence on women is the most common occurrence in research (Talbot, 2021).

With respect to male-perpetrated violence which is commonly the first thing people envisage in talking about domestic violence especially in African settings, there has been intense work in ensuring its prevention in Ghana given the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill into law in 2007. Worldwide, there is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as well as Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1979 and 1993 respectively aimed at eradicating all forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

## **2.4 Factors that Influence Violent Acts**

Research has indicated that there exists consistent risk and protective factors for violence perpetration in unions (Capaldi et al., 2012). While partner violence perpetration is linked to gender inequality as well as intimate partner violence normalization, both males and female report such acts of violence regardless of the disparity in rates of perpetration per statistics (Khalaf et al., 2022). It is believed that early intervention to mitigate these influences is key in dealing with partner violence within the domestic space at individual and societal levels (Han & Choi 2021). The factors which influence violent acts in relationships are subsequently discussed in detail.

### **2.4.1 Childhood Experience of Violence**

Men with histories of violence have ecological factors that influence partner violence perpetration (Capaldi et al., 2012). These risk factors include exposure to family as well as neighborhood-based violence (Capaldi et al., 2012). Several men who witnessed domestic violence in their homes from childhood to adulthood grow up and use violence to settle misunderstandings within the family (Ademiluka, 2018). According to Dery and Diedong (2014), family history of violence plays a part in increasing a woman's risk of domestic violence in that there is a greater tendency for women to experience domestic violence if they have had past

exposures to violence (Krug et al. 2002; Kumar et al., 2005). This violence could involve a father abusing a mother or the other way round and exposure to harsh physical discipline during childhood (Krug et al. 2002; Kumar et al., 2005). This is because early exposure to violence can foster an acceptance of the occurrence as being characteristic of ‘normal life.’

#### **2.4.2 Substance Abuse, Alcohol Use and Mental health issues/Personality Disorders**

Some studies have found mental health problems and substance abuse to be key risk factors of partner violence perpetrated by men (Kiene et al., 2017). The cumulative risk of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and depression coupled with substance abuse are associated with partner violence perpetration (Kiene et al., 2017). Alcohol use by husbands also succeeds in increasing a woman’s risk of domestic violence (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016; Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018; Dako-Gyeke et al., 2019). Ademiluka (2018) noted that personality disorders go hand in hand with habits like alcoholism and drug abuse thus the resultant decrease in one’s self-restraint contributes to an increased likelihood of being abusive. According to South (2014), personality disorders (PDs) account for a lot of interpersonal issues and these include intimate relationships laden with conflict. Individuals with personality disorders have a higher tendency of committing domestic violence, though at first glance such capabilities remain hidden (Robb-Dover, 2021).

#### **2.4.3 Patriarchal Norms/ Shifts in Gender Roles**

In a patriarchal culture, men often wield more power than women. As such, one explanation of violence against women is the existence of patriarchy (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). For example, Cantalupo et al.’s (2006) conclusion is that patriarchal customs support domestic violence in Ghana. In that there are widely held notions that women are subordinate to and must submit to males. Since patriarchal cultures tolerate behaviours that exalt males and suppress

females, a problem arises when power relations are reversed so that a man becomes subservient to a woman mainly because she controls essential resources. Efthim et al. (2001) further explain this as shifting gender roles between men and women which involves the intra- and inter-personal negotiation of changes to gender roles. This means changing parenting and employment expectations which creates a strain in the intimate partner relationship (Efthim et al., 2001). In these situations, men use externalizing behaviour such as violence to deal with painful emotions of guilt and shame when the traditional gender role identity seems to be interchanged (Voith et al, 2020). However, having the mindset of gender equity plays a key role in the prevention of partner violence (Abramsky et al, 2011).

#### **2.4.4 Place of Residence**

Also, place of residence plays a role in partner/domestic violence according to Dery and Diedong (2014). There is an increase in the probability of women experiencing domestic violence if they resided in urban areas compared to those residing in rural areas (Adjah & Agbemaflle, 2016). This is largely because women who reside in urban areas may have more wealth, and as such challenge the traditional gender roles, thus increasing their risk of domestic violence (Adjah & Agbemaflle, 2016).

#### **2.4.5 Traditional Beliefs**

Traditional beliefs are used to justify abuse by males towards their female partners in Ghana. Traditional beliefs such as the notion that men can discipline their wives by beating them, perpetuates violence (Cantalupo et al, 2006). African traditional norms that view wife and children beating as a normal form of discipline are a cause of violence in the domestic space (Aihie, 2009). This is because such power tends to be abused in certain instances.

#### 2.4.6 Marriage Practices (Type of Marriage)

Marriage practices like polygyny are also a basis for spousal abuse because more often than not these practices are rooted in the belief that wives need to be disciplined to control them due to their numbers being more than one (Cantalupo, 2006). Another influencing factor is the type of marriage as against men's attitudes towards beating their wives. Those in marriages which have no legal obligations (consensual and customary marriage) which include polygyny supported the beating of their wives. However, those in marriages with legal obligations (a combination of customary, religious and civil marriages) had most men not supporting the beating of wives (Osei-Tutu & Ampadu, 2017).

#### 2.4.7 Economic Dependence

The economic dependence of Ghanaian women on their husbands and male partners is also a contributing factor of partner abuse and it also complicates domestic violence in several ways (Cantalupo et al., 2006). Anxiety about money and resources can result in violence. This is when women may be seen as "provoking" husbands by protesting their failure to provide sufficient maintenance (Cantalupo et al, 2006). Economic standing may be a better term compared to economic dependence as a reason for partner abuse as surprisingly; women suffer from violence when they are with jobs or without jobs. When they are without jobs, there is an overdependence on their male partners and when they have jobs, they are more independent because they have a higher income than their male partner and can result in a shift in gender roles. Both situations can trigger abuse towards women (Adjei, 2015; Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018).

In terms of women's social and economic dependence on partners, particularly married women with children, it is found that those with little financial support may have or see themselves as having few alternatives to marriage, and thus may be more accommodating of spousal abuse

(Yount & Carrera, 2006). Also, financial difficulties with respect to the husband's poor income and/or the wife having a higher income can cause domestic violence. In addition, workplace stress, a lack of anger management skills, and frustration and anger related to expectations left unfulfilled, can lead individuals (male or female) to indulge in violent behaviour (Deshpande, 2019). In Mantey's (2019) work on female perpetration of domestic violence in Ghana, it was found that men's poor economic standing and inability to meet financial obligations as desired by their female partners is a leading cause of violence, particularly, psychological violence suffered in their intimate relationships.

#### **2.4.8 Lineage Ties**

Results of a study by Asiedu (2014) on lineage ties and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) show that women from patrilineal societies are about 1.4 times more likely to experience domestic violence in intimate relationships or IPV than women from matrilineal societies. This is because although being matrilineal does not customarily confer decision-making power to women, women do experience more autonomy than those in patrilineal societies. This is due to the marked support which comes from the continuous link with their families even in marriage. How lineage ties affect men in abusive relationships, however, seems not to be an area to be looked at within our context as men experience autonomy irrespective of lineage ties (Asiedu, 2014).

#### **2.4.9 Educational Level**

There is a connection between men's educational level and their attitude towards wife-beating where the well-educated ones, on one hand, have a negative attitude towards wife-beating and the not well educated, on the other hand, condone wife-beating (Osei-Tutu & Ampadu, 2017). This proves that partner education, precisely, higher than secondary education of husband or partner helps prevent domestic violence (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016).

## **2.5 The Reasons for Female-Perpetrated Violence**

Although the factors that influence male perpetration of violence on their female partners are numerous, the motivation for a female perpetrator of domestic violence, according to Mantey (2019) points to low financial standing of male partners as the motivating factor for the abuse of males by their partners. This is evident also in the work of Obi and Ozumba (2007) as cited in Aihie (2009) as they found that domestic violence was significantly associated with financial disparity which gives the female the advantage. According to Kolbe & Büttner (2020), triggers for female abuse of male partners are mental disorders suffered by these females, financial worries as well as accusations of unfaithfulness. Again, risk factors for violence against husbands include lower income of the husband compared to the wife, nuclear family setup which prevents extended family intervention in situations of abuse by the wife, and alcohol use by the female partner (Deshpande, 2019). Risk factors for bidirectional physical violence included an earning spouse with a higher level of education (Deshpande, 2019).

## **2.6 Gendered Susceptibility to Domestic Violence**

Women were far more likely than men to be strangled or suffocated, slammed against something, stalked by a current or former partner, or beaten (Black et al., 2011). Close to four times more women experienced injury-causing domestic violence and nearly five times more women need medical care (Black et al., 2011). These statistics show that more women than men have experienced domestic violence (Sullivan, 2012). That notwithstanding, there is female-perpetrated violence (Alsawalqa, 2021; Kolbe & Büttner, 2020; Kwabena 2020; Mantey, 2019).

## **2.7 Effects of Violence on Individuals**

Domestic violence continues to be a problem among families (Pingley, 2007) as the impact on the individual eventually affects the family unit. Violence affects everyone who is a witness to it:

perpetrators, victims, and the children who are exposed to the violence (Pingley, 2007). According to IDS et al. (2016), in Ghana, physical injuries and poor mental state of victims is a possible repercussion of violence from an intimate partner. Aihie (2009) mentions that, not all injuries are physical, some are emotional and constitute the experience of low self-esteem by victims. An example of a non-physical repercussion is the ability to develop trust issues because of the violence one suffers, particularly, trust in a loved one.

For women, reproductive health challenges forms part of physical injuries they could acquire because of domestic violence such as still birth, premature delivery, neurological complications to foetus which include long term disability (IDS et al, 2016). In looking at its impact on men specifically, domestic violence in intimate relationships is a serious social problem for millions of men as it leads to their depression, suicidal ideation, and physical harm (Chan, 2008). In unbearable situations, domestic violence in intimate relationships may lead to divorce and separation (Anderson and Saunders, 2003) with its attendant consequences and/or opportunities given each unique family setting.

Partner violence results in diminished productivity for partners who are either employees or in self-employment. Apart from workplace productivity being affected by violence, social reproduction, which includes care work and unpaid household work, could also be affected when an adult care giver experiences violence (Duvvury et al., 2021). Domestic violence affects the individual's day to day routine like work and school and diminishes people's level of self-esteem and causes fears (IDS et al, 2016). Any violent act which reduces individual output in the workplace could likewise hinder one's capability to care for themselves as well as others in the household. In relation to productivity in unpaid caring tasks such as cooking, cleaning, playing with and caring for children, family welfare is adversely affected (Duvvury et al., 2021).

## 2.8 The Impacts on Children

Children can easily become the main victims of domestic violence by witnessing the abuse or residing in a place where someone else more often, a care giver, is a victim of abuse which can psychologically disturb a child (Aihie, 2009). Children who are exposed to violence across all stages of development can become traumatized as the impact of the abuse ripples through a family hurting not only the victim, but also the children (Pingley, 2007). Children can be affected indirectly by violence occurring at home by seeing or hearing it occurring (Lloyd, 2018). Also, children living in abusive environments face various problems or risks such as being exposed to traumatic situations, being neglected, being ignored, being abused directly, and the possibility of losing one parent or both parents which can be devastating for children (Bragg, 2003).

“Child witnesses” or “children who are witnessing” domestic violence, that is, children living in homes where a parent or caretaker is going through abuse or children exposed to domestic violence have their caretakers believe, often, that they are keeping these children from witnessing their abuse, however, this is not the case per what these children report (Bragg, 2003). There is the issue as to whether abuse perpetrators can still play an instrumental role and positively impact the lives of their children. There are situations where perpetrators have positive interactions with their children and provide for their financial and physical needs and do not abuse them while on the other hand others neglect or physically harm their children (Bragg, 2003).

Children exposed to violence can be described as growing minds tied emotionally to the perpetrators and victims of abuse and with such an occurrence, the family no longer can be an original space of support and acceptance. It is a place with brewing tensions thus an obstacle to the child’s development (Lourenço et al., 2013). They are likewise susceptible to having issues

with respect to emotional, cognitive, and social development and functioning resulting in difficulties in their behaviour and learning, greater risk of mental health issues which includes depression and anxiety disorders, issues with education as well as employment prospects. Again, they may turn out to often condone or be willing to excuse the use of violence against women and engage in violent relationships with peers. It is known that being in an abusive relationship could affect one's capacity to parent (Australian Attorney-General's Department, 2010).

The available literature creates a foundation for understanding domestic violence. However, the more complex cultural meanings and underpinnings remain under-studied with emphasis placed more on prevalence and determinants. In essence, pathways to systemic disruptions in the family remain limited.

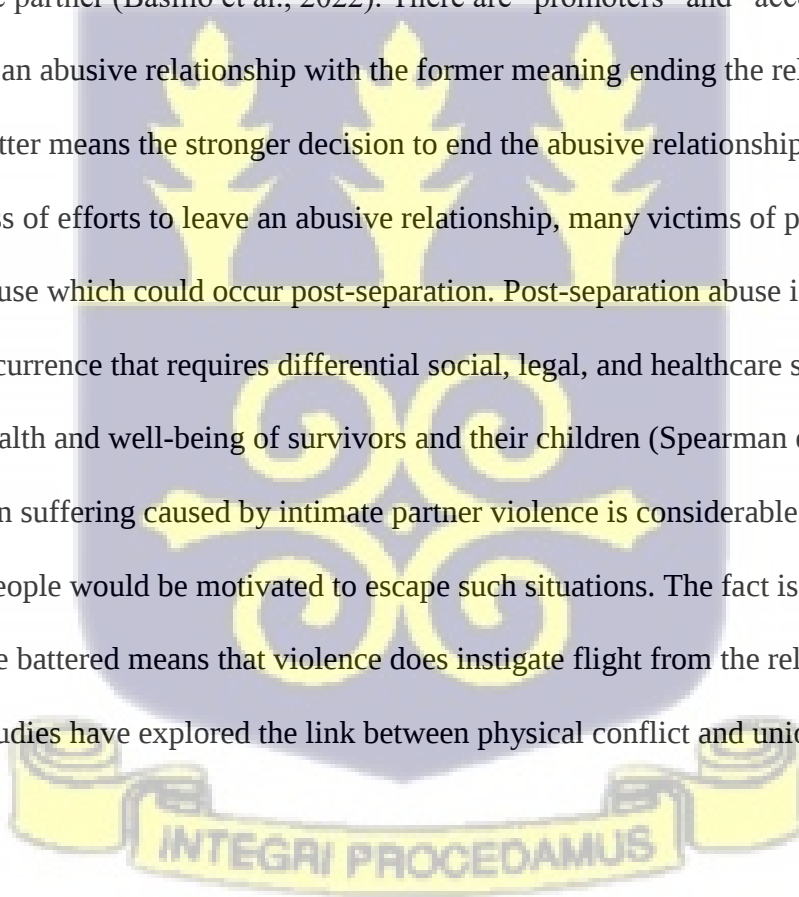
The vast research on the issue of domestic violence focuses on the forms of violence as well as its effects on victims, especially women, however, there is a dearth of research on its effects on the victims' families (Koenig et al., 2003) and most of the literature about male victims and the effects on their families in the developing world remains relatively scarce.

In other words, the literature mostly examines domestic violence in intimate relationships experienced by women with males being the perpetrators and the reasons for the violence. Fewer studies also concentrate on male victims with female perpetrators mainly due to male economic non-resilience (Kwabena 2020; Mantey, 2019). Each form of family violence and as it relates to this study, partner violence within the domestic space, happens mostly in the presence of children (Hamby et al., 2011) as such it produces other forms of violence. Thus, the cycle of abuse never ceases. This is because children continually exposed to violence reproduce such behaviours in their adult relationships and even towards the care of the elderly (Huecker et al., 2023). This shows that violence has ripple effects and goes far beyond the now and is detrimental in the

future if not handled properly per the dictates of societal codes of proper conduct. Though research work exists for both sides of the gender divide, the implications of domestic violence involving males and females and children as victims within the family have largely remained unexplored. This means the full scope of harm and intergenerational impacts are ignored which ultimately affects how interventions can be created.

## **2.9 Domestic Violence and Partner Separation**

Domestic violence and partner separation run nearly in tandem as there are various complexities as regards the ability of victims to stay or opt-out of the relationship where they suffer violence from the intimate partner (Basilio et al., 2022). There are “promoters” and “accelerators” when it comes to ending an abusive relationship with the former meaning ending the relationship over time while the latter means the stronger decision to end the abusive relationship (Basilio et al., 2022). Regardless of efforts to leave an abusive relationship, many victims of partner abuse must still deal with abuse which could occur post-separation. Post-separation abuse is a complex, multi-faceted occurrence that requires differential social, legal, and healthcare systems responses to support the health and well-being of survivors and their children (Spearman et al., 2022). The toll in human suffering caused by intimate partner violence is considerable. Per intuition, it may seem that people would be motivated to escape such situations. The fact is the proliferation of shelters for the battered means that violence does instigate flight from the relationship. However, few studies have explored the link between physical conflict and union disruption (Kurz, 1996).



## **2.10 Domestic Violence Theories**

Some sociological theories like symbolic interactionism, conflict theory and structural functionalism make a great attempt at fully explaining the incidence of domestic violence in intimate relationships. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals interpret and create meaning through social interactions. In the context of domestic and family violence, this theoretical framework explains how individuals within a family interpret and attribute meaning to their interactions and actions which ultimately lead to the occurrence of violence. That is, for symbolic interactionism, failure of couples to understand each one's symbols and meaning accounts for violence.

### **2.10.1 Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Domestic Violence**

Having its key proponents being Mead and Blumer, the symbolic interactionist perspective propounds that actors attribute meanings to an event where the meanings given are dependent on social context and subject to actors' interpretation. Symbols which have meanings allow us to express and understand each other's thoughts, ideas, and feelings (Redmond, 2015). Society is and is produced by the shared experiences of individuals, that is, their interactions. The pragmatist theory of knowledge which forms the backbone of the interactionist perspective means the world is looked at according to how it appears at a particular time. Truth then, as it exists, is advanced through collective associations and experiences. In this study as in other post-modern studies on domestic and family violence, there exists the wide acceptance of acts of domestic and family violence as criminal because of the shared meanings given to such acts in that they are thoroughly injurious to individuals who suffer it and constitutes an infringement of their human rights.

According to Rorty (1993) as cited in Blumenson (2020), human rights are subjective provisions deemed useful at a particular point in history. This means they remain ever changing based on the extent of the society's evolution of symbols and meanings that are given to actions. Since socially constructed meanings are reflected in individual acts, an individual's behaviour can only be understood in relation to the larger social units of which he or she is a part (Mead, 1934).

Therefore, in this study, it is expected that age old entrenched patriarchal norms may form the basis of abuse suffered by victims. This is because rights which protect humans although presented as universal are affected by symbols and meanings across groups and what should be, based on evolving standards and what the reality is may remain not in tandem. Consequently, this study would see greater female victimization as societal meanings given to domestic violence in the study population continue to be divided on the basis of hegemonic masculinity. According to this ideology, male dominance is not wholly out of place although efforts are in place to counter this with the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 in Ghana. With respect to male victimization, reasons expected include the absence of the needed controls (Hirschi, 1969) necessary to effect conformity to acceptable standards of behaviour as wife or partner. This could be the repression of shame or isolation from intimate bonds (Scheff, 2003). The absence of the required controls could likewise cause female victimization.

A person's actions towards their bonds, which includes their partners, depends on attachment levels created and the common values shared in these bonds which ultimately determines why people act the way they do. These common values define actions in every context or situation hence they determine whether a behaviour is appropriate or not as shared by those within the bond. It is thus expected that the absence of commonly held values between couples together with associations with others who hold true to a varying position could bring about domestic

partner violence as personalities alter or develop on the basis of one's associations. As individuals interact with others, the self is developing through reflections and internalization of symbols and expressions of the group. Hence, violent behaviour can be attributed to the nature of one's associations and how victims see themselves in the midst of partner violence alters based on their experiences. People make sense of social situations by interpreting cues from others and deciding what is appropriate to do. In all, the whole of the action is taken into consideration, including external social stimuli, personal motor reactions, and the regulating mental processes that define and interpret the circumstances (Anderson, 1988) and informs one's reaction to the situation hence the classification of injurious acts in the family as domestic violence.

An interactionist perspective not only clarifies how abused intimate partners understand their abusive situations but also, is key for conceptualizing how abuse affects individual's sense of self (Redmond, 2015) and as relates to this study, everyone's sense of self within the family (the family's outlook) hence its functioning (Edel Harrelson, 2013). The interaction within an abusive relationship modifies the self through role taking. Role taking is one of the processes through which the symbolic interactionist perspective conceptualizes the self as a social product. Role-taking includes being able to identify the other's feelings as we become objects to ourselves (i.e., develop a self) through being able to see others' perspectives. In this sense, an individual's identity and self-esteem are influenced by the opinions others believe it to be (Anderson, 1988). Role taking can also be interpreted as being empathic (Redmond, 2015), because one will be able to infer the other's feelings more readily if they are able to take the other's role. If an abuser cannot take the role of the other, he will be less likely to feel empathy toward his or her partner or feel his or her partner's emotions. This presents itself as an underlining factor and reason for violence perpetration in intimate relationships. Individuals who refuse to see how their actions

and inactions affect their families are continually violent, creating a volatile environment. The abusive partner thus engages in controlling, degrading, and violent behaviour with little remorse or understanding of the effect their actions have on their partner and families. In such instances, family members may develop altered behavioural patterns based on the circumstances which prevail as they develop a “new identity”. This perspective would inform one possible reason for the incidence of violence in this study in that victims of violence would give reason to the violence they face as the inability of their abusive partner to exercise empathy.

## **2.11 Family Function Models**

### **2.11.1 Introduction**

In looking at family function, assessing how a family turns out, there is the result-oriented approach and the process-oriented approach where the former refers to specific family features and the latter refers to description of tasks families need to complete (Dai & Wang, 2015). The McMaster Model of Family Functioning (MMFF) is a process-oriented approach to family function (Dai & Wang, 2015) and provides an avenue to effectively measure how a family functions to ensure the well-being of family members.

### **2.11.2 McMaster Model of Family Functioning**

The McMaster Model is based on a systems theory and the key assumptions of systems theory which underlie the model are:

1. All parts of the family are interrelated.
2. One part of the family cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the family system.
3. Family functioning cannot be fully understood by simply understanding each of the individual family members or subgroups.

4. A family's structure and organization are important factors that strongly influence and determine the behaviour of family members.

5. The transactional patterns of the family system strongly shape the behaviour of family members (Miller et al., 2000).

This means the family and interactions within it are webbed. Hence, everyone has a role to play in ensuring the well-being of all family members. As proposed in 1987 by Epstein, the family system is seen as the core and the family's role or function is to provide everything needed for the development of members physically, psychologically, socially among other things and includes:

1) Problem solving: This is where the family solves problems or issues which affects the family completely and its capacity to function (Dai & Wang, 2015). Problems could be instrumental and affective in nature. Instrumental problems are the problems of everyday life which are mechanical in nature such as money management or deciding on a place to live while affective problems are linked to feelings and emotional experience (Miller et al, 2000).

2) Communication. This is where information can be known directly at any time through communication among family members (Dai & Wang, 2015) and refers to how information is exchanged within a family (Miller et al, 2000).

3) Family role: This refers to the behaviour patterns established by the family members to ensure that the family functions (Dai & Wang, 2015). They are the recurrent patterns of behaviour by which individuals fulfil the family's function such as routine family tasks (Miller et al, 2000).

4) Affective response: This refers to the extent of emotional response of members of the family to stimuli (Dai & Wang, 2015) with the appropriate quality and quantity of feelings (Miller et al, 2000).

5) Affective involvement: This refers to the degree of concern and attention of family members to the activities of one another (Dai & Wang, 2015). In other words, it is the extent to which the family shows interest in and values the activities and interests of individual family members (Miller et al, 2000).

6) Behaviour control: This refers to the pattern a family takes up to control behaviour in three types of situations which are physically dangerous situations which require monitoring and control of the member's behaviour as well as instances which require meeting and expressing psychobiological needs or drives like eating. Finally, there are instances where there is the need for interpersonal socializing behaviour with members of the family and people outside the family (Miller et al., 2000).

The McMaster model of family functioning (MMFF) offers a comprehensive means of understanding how family members ought to be thus influencing the effective functioning of the family. The above six dimensions presents a relatively more detailed way of assessing the paths families chart, that is, moving towards an effective and well-functioning family or battling with undesired outcomes for the family.

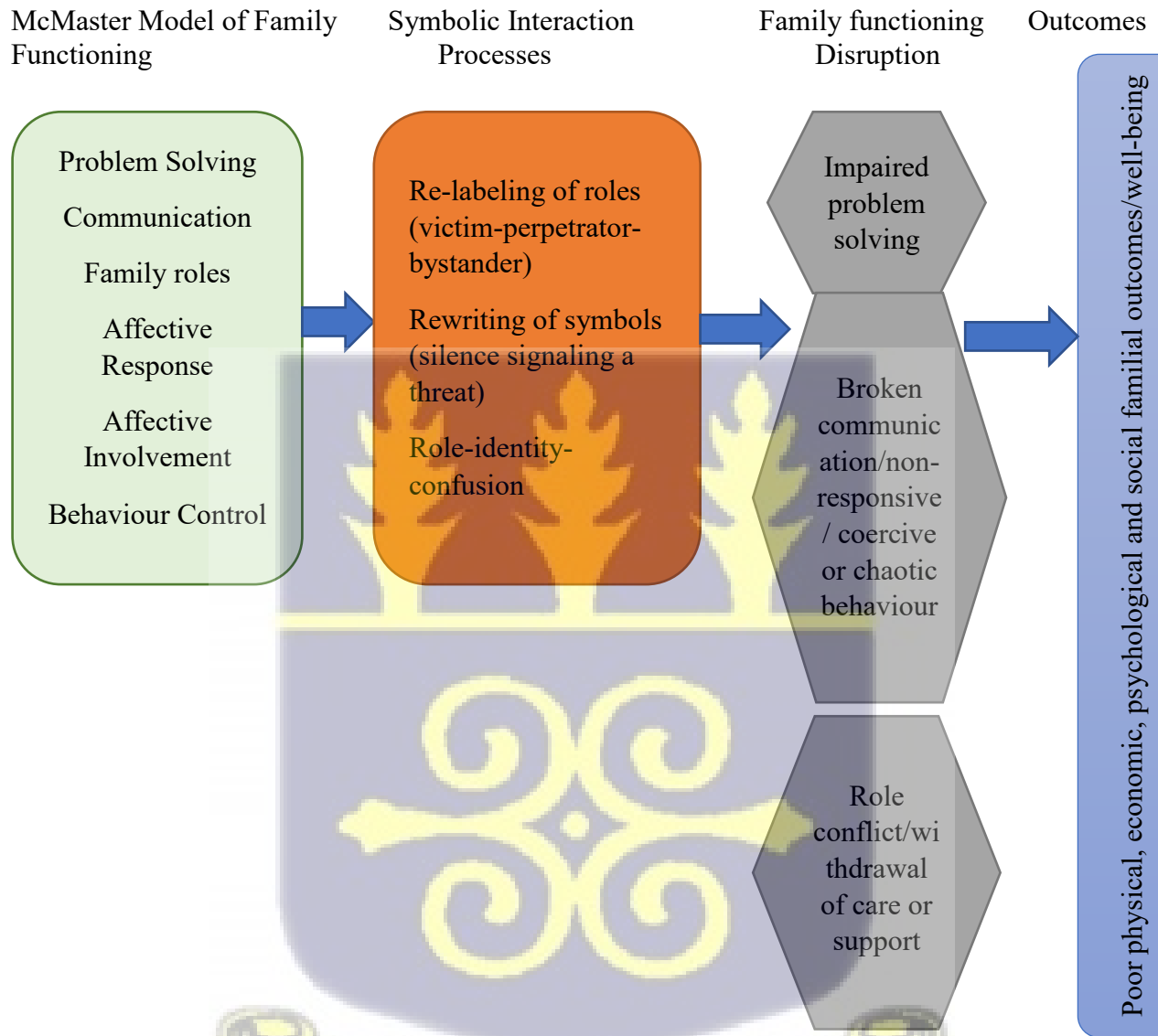
Though the MMFF does not specifically explain the occurrence of violence as symbolic interactionism does, it can be used to understand the impact of violence on family functioning. Domestic violence disrupts core dimensions of family functioning creating a hostile and unsafe environment as affective and emotional bonds are eroded. As such possible outcomes of this study based on MMFF include reduced communication among family members due to the absence of commonly shared values, symbols and meanings. In such situations, family members would disagree on commonly taken decisions in the family and would find no equal ground when it comes to such instances. Violence erodes trust and open communication and creates an

environment where family members are unable to express themselves freely. Again, the volatile environment would suppress emotional responses of family members which are connected to the absence of communication or the poor quality thereof which negatively impacts affective responsiveness. This is because there are severe emotional and psychological consequences for family members where they experience anxiety, depression and low self-esteem hence affect the quality of feelings they extend to each other. In such instances, victims of domestic partner violence may become distraught and give out the wrong set of feelings to other members who are the children in the relationship and/or perpetrators unintentionally.

Affective involvement is also compromised as victims emotionally distance themselves or disengage in order to deal with the situation. Hence, in situations where communication is poor together with affective responsiveness, affective involvement is disrupted due to violence and it remains largely impossible to effectively engage in problem solving (Gawulayo et al., 2021). Roles within the family also that ensure the smooth running of everyday life are also impeded as parent-child relationships become strained because children become fearful, withdrawn or exhibit behavioural problems. The family which ought to provide nurturing for children within it now becomes an avenue for negative role modelling as children may end up accepting violence as the way to solve conflicts by witnessing its occurrence. The family's role in providing for its members becomes compromised since it is difficult to maintain employment or financial independence in domestic violence situations. Behaviour control, such as the fulfillment of psychobiological needs would remain unguided by the prescriptions of right behaviour for these families and relationships with others within and outside the family remain uncoordinated as divided opinions and unacceptable behaviours prevail. The absence of shared meanings leading

to violence and consequent disruption in the family's function breeds a myriad of difficulties across all six dimensions.

**Figure2. Conceptual Framework**



This framework shows how domestic violence affects a family's proper function. The theoretical basis is the McMaster Model of Family Functioning and symbolic interactionism discussed and shows how the daily changes in meanings and roles produce negative identities/outcomes.

## 2.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the types of violence perpetrated in unions, compared female perpetrated violence and male perpetrated violence, looked at the factors that influence violent acts, the reasons for female-perpetrated violence, gendered susceptibility to domestic violence, effects of violence on individual she impacts on children, domestic violence and partner separation, domestic violence theories and family function theories. The literature extensively covered the physical, psychological, and economic effects of violence from an intimate partner on individuals. However, more research is needed to uncover the effects of violence on the family where abusive acts compromise the smooth functions of the family. These include the economic well-being, safety of family members, child rearing (education), caregiving and communication (Johnson et al, 2011). These remain largely unexplored and the findings of this research gives insight to these.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

According to Kothari (2004), research methodology refers to the way to solve or address a research problem in a systematic manner and is based on or founded on the nature of the study at hand. This chapter discusses the research design, study area, study participants, sources of data, sampling technique, sampling size, data collection and data collection instrument, methods of data collection, in-depth interviews and data analysis, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and finally ethical considerations.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The research followed a qualitative approach to get in-depth knowledge and answers with respect to the research questions and objectives. Creswell (1994) explains qualitative research as “...an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting”. According to Yilmaz (2013), it involves a naturalistic approach to studying phenomena in their natural space to derive the meanings that come with their world experiences.

In other words, qualitative research is founded on the epistemological premise that social phenomena are too complex and intertwined to be reduced to separate variables. To uncover in descriptive terms, it is the meanings that people attach to their perceptions of the world. This approach uses an emergent, inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to investigate people, cases, phenomena, social situations, and processes in their natural surroundings. Both

definitions do emphasize the natural space and the way individuals come to terms with what happens within it.

The use of the qualitative research design was aimed towards getting and assessing the real-life experiences of families who must deal with domestic and/or family violence to ascertain how the family relationship is affected by it. The qualitative data collection instrument adopted was the semi-structured interview guide to ascertain the types, causes as well as effects of domestic and family violence on the family relationship ensuring that an in-depth perspective to the situation is attained as participants take time to recount their experiences with no restriction.

The ability to probe further because of the use of the semi-structured interview guide gives the opportunity for the research to uncover many dimensions as relates to the study's objectives. The study also takes on a phenomenological perspective hence it has to do with the world as people experience it, describing that experience where the subjectivity of the observer is key. However, subjectivity is not confined to the individual level. Basically, lived experiences are examined.

### **3.3 Study Area**

The study was conducted in the city of Tema in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The Greater Accra Region is located in the south of Ghana. Tema is also known as the “Harbour city” because of the location of the harbour in the city which is on the bight of the Atlantic Ocean. The Greenwich Meridian Line passes through this city which comprises twenty-five communities and was the mastermind of Ghana's first president, Osagyefo, Dr Kwame Nkrumah and grew very quickly with the harbour's construction. Home to many industries and businesses, the people engage in numerous types of commercial activities. Initially home of the Ga people, it has turned into a city filled with migrants coming from different parts of the country and this has even led to

the move from speaking the Ga language to Asante Twi as the most broadly spoken local language within the city. As history has it, Tema was built on the site of a small fishing village called Torman which refers to the local calabash plant and Tema is a mispronunciation of Torman.

As of 2021, the population of Tema stood at approximately 374,148 people (GSS, 2021). Known for its numerous industries both light and heavy like the Ghana Textile Printing (GTP), Ghana's first indigenous textile brand, the Cocoa Processing Company of Ghana, the Tema Oil Refinery and the Volta Aluminium Company (VALCO), Tema is a great industrial hub which sees the production of many products necessary for living. Also, various steel industries, plastic manufacturing industries and beverage producing industries exist. As the harbour city close to the Atlantic coast of Ghana, fishing remains a major pre-occupation of some of the inhabitants most especially those in the Tema Manhean (Newtown) area. As such fish processing and sale is also an occupation mostly indulged in by the women in this area. In all, the major occupation includes industry workers, market women, fish processors, people who work in the various hospitals like the Tema General Hospital, which remains a major referral centre for the city's inhabitants, and others working in banks and other offices which handle and offer administrative services.

Life is bustling in Tema with many revellers at certain times like weekends partly due to it being a major entry point for foreigners who work on the coast, particularly those who work on fishing vessels. In August every year, the Homowo festival is celebrated in the city to thank the gods for a bountiful harvest as the city is part of the Ga Traditional area. The Tema Metropolitan Assembly and the Tema Development Company oversees the development and smooth running of activities within the city. The harbour and industries and most recently the Tema-Akosombo

Railway line forms one of the key infrastructure in the city. The choice of Tema as a study area is because it is an ethnically heterogeneous settlement and as such varied reasons for one's experience and response to the violence was discovered based on the various ethnic backgrounds of the people in the area. This gave the study the capacity to have its findings generalised to an appreciable level with respect to the national situation.

### **3.4 Sources of Data**

Primary data was obtained through interviews using a semi-structured interview guide with secondary data obtained from articles, journals, reports, and theses. Secondary data were obtained also from a review of written documents, which included but were not limited to relevant data from working papers, published books, newspaper articles and other internet sources.

### **3.5 Sample Size**

A sample size of fifteen (15) participants was chosen for the study. This included fifteen (15) families with cases of violence to ascertain the repercussions of the violence on the family. A sample size of fifteen (15) participants was chosen with sample saturation being determined by the amount of new information that was obtained with every subsequent interview. According to Sim et al. (2018), the decision of what constitutes an adequate sample size depends on the study's aim and remains a process of ongoing interpretation by the researcher as an iterative process, brought about by incoming themes and the relationship between them. As such, the decision of not recruiting more participants was taken at the point where no new themes or insights were emerging after the interview of the twelfth participant. Themes which remained recurring at this instance included the absence of healthy communication within the family, family members becoming divided where children and adult victims remain on one side and the

perpetrator on the other side and psychological trauma as children and adult victims see and remember acts of domestic violence by the perpetrator who is a parent.

### 3.6 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in the study. Participants were selected based on their reporting violence by their intimate partners at the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Tema region. Purposive sampling was used as people who came in person to DOVVSU to lodge complaints of partner violence were interviewed after duly informing them about the research objectives and obtaining their consent. This sampling technique was used in selecting the study participants because domestic violence occurrences vary in nature according to Ghana's Domestic Violence Act of 2007. In this study, the focus was on intimate partners who lived in the nuclear family set-up (family of procreation). Phone calls were made to potential participants who had cases of partner violence with DOVVSU Tema region with help from DOVVSU officials to seek their willingness to participate in the study. This included individuals who had reported cases at DOVVSU offices in the region. Contact numbers of willing participants were made available and interviews were scheduled. Participants lived in places in Tema namely Tema Manhean (Newtown), communities eleven and seven. The use of purposive sampling meant only those who had experiences on how the violent acts affect them personally and subsequently the family were made to participate in the study. Given the limited number of participants willing to communicate their experiences over the telephone, individuals who had families and came to DOVVSU to report incidence of violence by their partners were told about the intent for the study in seeking their willingness to participate with the support of DOVVSU officials and these formed the majority of participants in the study. Many such individuals had come to the unit to report cases. Two male participants declined being interviewed due to issues

of immediate benefits to them for their participation in that they looked for an end to the violence they suffered as an outcome of their participation. One such male participant asked if my role was to advise his wife against her behaviour and remove the negative third party influences which resulted in her behaviour. When it was explained that the objectives and authority of the researcher was limited in that sense this male participant was no longer available to speak with over the phone. That notwithstanding, at least two interviews were conducted daily after duly introducing the research to these participants as a means of uncovering the challenges they face so policy makers can fine-tune and create tailor-made interventions and strategies to meet the needs of their families.

### **3.7 Study Participants**

The population for the study consists of nine (9) currently married and six (6) cohabiting adults, both male and female, and of different ages in Tema. The inclusion of cohabiting participants was to further deepen the viewpoints and experiences participants would present since cohabiting partners also form intimate domestic relationships, under the Domestic Violence Act. Participants were fifteen (15) in total and comprised twelve (12) females and three (3) males which ages ranging from twenty-nine (29) to forty-nine (49) years.

### **3.8 Data Collection**

In all ten (10) in-person interviews and five (5) telephone interviews were conducted. Interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed. The data collection instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide for one-on-one interviews of participants. According to Adams (2015), the semi-structured interview is a conversational survey that is administered to one respondent at a time. It combines closed and open-ended questions, frequently, with follow-up why or how questions. Instead of strictly keeping to verbatim questions as in a standardised

survey, the conversation can meander around the agenda items and may go into completely unexpected areas. One way this played out was in the interview process for the participant who had been married for 23 years but currently 37 years of age. In explaining how this happened, she explained that she was quite sickly as a child and had to stop school at Primary Four. Her parents felt marriage at the age of 14 years was the best thing that would be beneficial to her given the prevailing circumstances hence her early marriage which is quite a common occurrence for people in the part of Ghana where she comes from, Northern Ghana.

### **3.8.1 Methods of Data collection and In-depth Interviews**

Questions asked bordered on the physical, psychological, economic, and social impacts domestic violence has on the family relationship. Participants also answered questions on reasons for the violence they suffered and the duration of the various violent acts towards them. Again, participants gave their opinion on how violence should be handled by individuals and stakeholders. Questions were asked in English for some participants while others opted for the local language, specifically, Asante Twi and Ewe. Given the fact that participants had to recount traumatic incidents, it was not surprising that three (3) female participants were very emotional and cried at certain points of the interview process. In such occurrences, participants were allowed some time before the interview continued. Scheduling participant interviews was easy with respect to the telephone interviews. This is because these participants were able meet to answer the questions asked at the times given though for two out of five telephone interviews some rescheduling had to be done. Though some individuals who could participate in the study declined to be interviewed because they felt the research would not immediately eliminate or stop the violence they suffer, a good number did consent to in-person interviews and few to telephone interviews.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the qualitative data. Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) involves, familiarizing oneself with data, assigning preliminary codes, searching for patterns and themes across different interviews, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes and producing the report. With each answer to interview questions, the underlying occurrences were captured thus themes such as children's mindset, unhealthy communication, extended frustration, and mental breakdown were captured. These themes emerged as participants recounted the various types of violence they experienced and the perceived effects of these acts on themselves and their children. All interview answers were transcribed into the English language and interviews spanned from thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour. Themes included poor family synergy hence the absence of proper functioning of the family as the value individuals within the family put on one another was diminished. Other themes included grief and apprehension as a potential outcome of the domestic violence participants suffer. Codes included economic deprivation, denigrating statements, accusations, threats to leave marriage, poor communication and provocation, mental breakdown, insults, beating and lowered productivity each of which were categorized under the broad themes of the various types of violence suffered in intimate relationships which include physical, psychological/ emotional, economic and social violence. The impacts of each type of violence are discussed given these broad categorizations of violence types.

### 3.10 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Nuclear family relationships established by marriage or as a consensual union were the family type looked at in this study and the participants were chosen especially if there are children involved to understand how male and female victims in families perceived the effects of violence

not only for themselves, but also for their families, that is, having the children also as victims (directly or indirectly).

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The main ethical consideration for participants in this research was confidentiality and informed consent where the latter entailed telling the participants about what the study would look at and what their participation would involve. This basically meant telling participants what would be asked of them, how the data will be used and what the consequences would be if there were (Fleming & Zeegwaard, 2018). Confidentiality meant withholding their personal details like names and using pseudonyms. This means the participants are de-identified (Fleming & Zeegwaard, 2018) with only the researcher knowing the real identity of participants and involves degree of access to data by outsiders (Cacciattolo, 2015). The permission of participants was sought with authorization from the University of Ghana ethics committee and each respondent could withdraw from the research if they are no longer willing to participate.

### **3.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter looked at the research approach of this study. This study takes a qualitative approach to explore the varied effects of partner violence on family members for participants in Tema. Study participants were currently married and cohabiting adults, both male and female, and of different ages in Tema. While primary data was obtained through interview using a semi-structured interview guide secondary data was obtained from articles, journals, reports, and theses. Purposive sampling was used in the study with ten (10) in-person interviews and five (5) telephone interviews conducted. Interviews spanned from thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour and ethical considerations included confidentiality and informed consent. In all, fifteen participants

were interviewed. There were twelve (12) female participants and three (3) male participants in this study. The next chapter discusses the findings of this research.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TYPES, REASONS AND EFFECTS OF VIOLENT ACTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the types of violence experienced by participants in this study and the period for the occurrence of the violence suffered. Also, the perceived reasons for the violence suffered from their intimate partners as well as the psychological, physical, and socio-economic effects of violent acts on family members is discussed. In addition, this chapter gathers ways they deal with the violence as individuals and the views they have concerning how the relevant authorities can prevent and punish domestic violence.

##### 4.1.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Interviewed Participants

The participants interviewed all had children and were mostly female. In all, twelve (12) participants were female while three (3) were male victims of partner violence. In terms of their marital status, nine (9) participants were married while the others, that is, six (6) participants were cohabiting. The predominant ethnic group was Akan. While two participants out of will did not specify their exact ethnic belonging, all other participants were willing to disclose this. All participants were Christians with relationship durations ranging from 1 year 2 months to 23 years.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants**

| Name       | Age | Sex    | Marital Status     | Number of children | Ethnic group | Religious affiliation | Relationship Duration | Education | Occupation |
|------------|-----|--------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Asante waa | 30  | Female | Cohabitation/ Pre- | 2                  | Northerner*  | Christian             | 4 years               | SHS       | Cleaner    |

|         |    |        |                |   |             |           |                 |          |                  |
|---------|----|--------|----------------|---|-------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|------------------|
|         |    |        | liminary rites |   |             |           |                 |          |                  |
| Araba   | 40 | Female | Married        | 5 | Akan        | Christian | 15 years        | Tertiary | Caterer          |
| Akosua  | 37 | Female | Married        | 4 | Frafra      | Christian | 23 years        | Primary  | Trader           |
| Esi     | 32 | Female | Married        | 3 | Akan        | Christian | 8 years         | Tertiary | Teacher          |
| Kwesi   | 39 | Male   | Married        | 2 | Akan        | Christian | 10 years        | Tertiary | Office Assistant |
| Estelle | 29 | Female | Cohabitation   | 1 | Akan        | Christian | 9 years         | Primary  | House help       |
| Nancy   | 49 | Female | Married        | 3 | Ewe         | Christian | 3 years         | Primary  | Trader           |
| Queen   | 38 | Female | Married        | 2 | Ewe         | Christian | 8 years         | Primary  | Seamstresses     |
| Sarah   | 37 | Female | Married        | 2 | Ga          | Christian | 12 years        | JHS      | Hairstylist      |
| Cynthia | 32 | Female | Married        | 3 | Akan        | Christian | 15 years        | JHS      | Trader           |
| Dave    | 29 | Male   | Cohabitation   | 1 | Akan        | Christian | 1 year 2 months | SHS      | Trader           |
| Nick    | 38 | Male   | Married        | 3 | Akan        | Christian | 17 years        | JHS      | Industry worker  |
| Gloria  | 32 | Female | Cohabitation   | 3 | Northerner* | Christian | 10 years        | SHS      | Trader           |
| Emefa   | 40 | Female | Cohabitation   | 1 | Ewe         | Christian | 22 years        | JHS      | Caterer          |
| Gift    | 32 | Female | Cohabitation   | 3 | Ga-Adangbe  | Christian | 10 years        | SHS      | Trader           |

Many studies have concentrated on the prevalence and the physical, psychological and social effects of violence on women (Cantalupo, 2006; Talbot, 2021). Seeing that DOVVSU was previously known as the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police Service it is not surprising to find more female participants in this study as patriarchy and the power relations that come with it tend to perpetuate the occurrence of domestic violence worldwide even to the point where male-perpetrated violence is commonly the first thing people think about in talking about and discussing the issue of domestic violence especially in African settings. This is, however, not the reality. Per statistics world over more women report violence more than men as the latter tend to trivialize (Hamberger & Guse, 2002) or hide behind hegemonic masculinity and suffer in silence. The idea that women must be subservient to men affects help-seeking behaviours of

male victims of domestic violence hence for most of the time they suffer violence. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that more women than men report violent hence reflecting in the gender of participants for this study. In addition to this finding, it is seen that because differences between the results of studies on family conflict and crime could be attributed to the fact that many victims, men especially, do not consider their experiences as crimes, as well as the fact that men are generally less frightened and hurt less frequently than women (Coker et al., 2002) fewer male participants compared to female participants is an outcome.

In terms of educational levels of participants, three (3) have tertiary education as the highest educational attainment and four (4) have Senior High School as their highest level of education. The eight remaining participants have four each having either Junior High School or Primary School education as the highest educational attainment. Previous research by Abramsky et al. (2011) discovered that higher formal education of both partners is a protective factor for partner violence perpetration or the experience of partner violence, that is, being the victim. Increased autonomy of Ghanaian women as a result of having higher education allows women to have a voice when it comes to household decision making (Tenkorang, 2018). As such, it is not surprising that higher educational attainment for women is a preventive measure and plays a role in reducing the incidence of partner violence suffered by women in the domestic space. In this study, only two (2) out of twelve (12) female participants have higher than secondary school education.

Some other studies on the prevalence of partner violence in Ghana (IDS et al., 2016; Kwabena, 2020) have gathered data on its occurrence using focus group discussions hence have remained limited in uncovering characteristics of victims. Others have directly engaged victims of partner violence (Adu, 2019; Amoah, 2019) and in comparing this study to these, it is realized that

participants are also mostly female with lower educational attainment, that is, the Primary and Junior High School level or no education at all. With respect to the role of religion in influencing the occurrence of violence, it is believed that religion is a protective force which seeks to eliminate the justification of partner violence (Adjei & Mpiani, 2020). However, many people like the participants of this study endure domestic partner violence for considerable time lengths thus raising questions as to the potency of religious ideologies such as love in preventing abuse of such nature. Based on this reality, religion can be said to be a double-edged sword as it also gives backing to patriarchal notions and make women acquiesced in their marriages as they are admonished to remain submissive in their marriages.

#### **4.2 Types of Violence Experienced by Participants**

Study participants all recounted various acts of violence which falls into four out of the five categories of violent acts mentioned in the Act 732 of the Ghana Domestic Violence Act. Violent acts identified were physical, psychological, economic, and social. None consented to having experienced sexual violence. Some of the participants also experienced a combination of some of the violent acts consented to with some being able to recount the exact duration and beginning of violence in their relationships. Family violence researchers have long recognized emotional, physical, sexual, and economic abuse as distinct types that often co-occur in the lives of victims, but many studies consider one type of violence in isolation from the others.

In the past decade, new research on poly-victimization documented the extent of this co-occurrence and its importance for understanding the effects of abuse on victims (Anderson, 2010). Of the fifteen (15) participants interviewed for this study, eleven (11) participants reported being abused physically and psychologically/emotionally. For economic violence, nine (9)

participants reported being abused in that manner. Four (4) participants recount experiencing social violence. Below are the types of violence experienced by each participant.

**Table 2. Types of Violence Experienced by Participants**

| Participant | Types of violence experienced                | Duration of violent acts |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Asantewaa   | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic            | 2 years                  |
| Araba       | Psychological                                | 7 years                  |
| Akosua      | Physical and Psychological/ Economic         | 23 years/10years         |
| Esi         | Psychological/ Social                        | 8 years                  |
| Kwesi       | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic/<br>Social | 10 years                 |
| Estelle     | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic/<br>Social | 5 years                  |
| Nancy       | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic            | 3 years                  |
| Queen       | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic            | 5 years                  |
| Sarah       | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic            | 18 years                 |
| Cynthia     | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic            | 15 years                 |
| Dave        | Physical/ Psychological                      | 1 year                   |
| Nick        | Physical/ Psychological                      | 6 months                 |
| Gloria      | Psychological                                | 2 years                  |
| Emefa       | Physical                                     | 2 months                 |
| Gift        | Physical/ Psychological/ Economic/<br>Social | 6 years                  |

#### 4.2.1 Physical Violence

Participants recount various forms of physical violence which they suffered. They included acts such as beating, slapping, kicking, and strangling. These occurred for varied periods and for some specified time lengths. In the quote below Asantewaa a thirty-year-old female participant expresses the situation where she was constantly being beaten by her partner who she cohabits with. She says:

The beating “deɛ” (as for the beating) my partner beats me a lot with his hand. As I speak...I’ve had to go to the hospital. This has been happening for the past two years. It can happen for more than one hour, the beating.

Though preliminary marriage rites have taken place for this couple, final marriage rites are yet to be completed. They have two children. Asantewaa expresses her predicament and must seek medical treatment for her injuries. She mentions that the physical abuse she suffers is repetitive and happens in a reasonable period. Physical violence comes in various forms. It includes slapping, hitting, kicking, choking, strangling, and beating. Sometimes abusers do not only make use of bodily force but employ the use of various objects to inflict pain on their partners. In some cases, the abuse is carried out publicly, making it very humiliating for the abused partner who undergoes the pain of physical violence.

Roles, behaviours, and interactions within the relationship are given meanings and interpretations that influence this circumstance. Using violence as a sign of power and control, the abuser may see their role as one of authority. The two people's definitions of the situation are very different: the victim feels trauma and terror, while the abuser may justify the violence. The victim's self-concept is shaped over time by these interactions, which may result in feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness. These symbolic meanings are reinforced by the regularity of the abuse, which normalizes violence as a component of the dynamic of the relationship.

Akosua who is thirty-seven years and a female participant, recounts the condition in which she lives together with her abusive husband. According to her, he hits her with objects and beats her to the extent that sometimes she becomes naked. She says:

There is hitting with objects like belt, anything at all and before I know it I faint. One time, I woke up at Tema General Hospital. In fact, I'm tired; my husband really abuses me physically. It's not a pleasant experience at all, my sister. It's no joke. He beats me till I go nearly naked or naked. People in the area are witnesses to this. I can confidently say that even before marriage rites were concluded, I was being abused by him, he beats me. Unfortunately, I did not raise it as an issue probably because I was young and naïve so both families contracted the marriage, and this has been my predicament since.

Examining this situation through the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective and McMaster Model of Family Functioning, the abuser can see violence as a valid way to assert authority, discipline, or entitlement, particularly if their own family or social milieu accepts such behaviour. Having been abused from the beginning of the relationship, the victim may have internalized negative meanings, such as the idea that marriage requires silence, perseverance, or shame. Tragically, the definition of the situation is distorted; turning what should to be a partnership into a vicious circle of oppression and pain. As feelings of helplessness and loneliness are reinforced by public humiliation and a lack of assistance, the victim's self-concept gradually deteriorates. The victim's desperation is heightened by the presence of community witnesses who choose not to take action, thereby solidifying the abuse's symbolic significance as something accepted or unseen. The victim's self-concept is eroded over time, especially as public humiliation and lack of intervention reinforce feelings of helplessness and isolation. The presence of community witnesses who do not intervene further entrenches the symbolic meaning of the abuse as something tolerated or invisible, deepening the victim's despair.

On the other hand, the literature on female perpetrated violence in Ghana points to females equally exhibiting physically damaging actions towards their partners (Kwabena, 2020; Mantey,

2019). Though research points to females using psychological violence more often compared to the other forms of violence (IDS et al., 2016), males may equally be physically abused by their female partners for reasonable lengths of time, just like females. This is the situation faced by Kwesi, a thirty-nine-year-old male and father of two children. He mentions that his wife is aggressive. She hits and slaps him. He says:

My wife is physically aggressive; she exhibits behaviours such as hitting me with objects and slapping me. This has been happening for the past six years. She does these things as and when there is an argument.

Here, relationship roles are misaligned, with the victim being pushed into a defensive and vulnerable stance while the abusive partner takes on a dominant, punitive role during conflict.

Other participants mention similar experiences of physical violence which they suffer for certain periods and lengths of time:

My boyfriend beats me with his hard hands and would even put my things outside, “onyɛ” (he does not have a good character). Whenever he beats me, it can last several minutes. The beatings began three months after the birth of our son, almost every day he beats me (Estelle, 29-years-old, female).

For Nancy, a forty-nine-year-old female participant, the physical violence she suffered happened not long after her marriage with her husband was contracted. In her case, she had to return her partner's physical abuse with physical abuse as a form of defence. This is usually employed by women who suffer domestic violence at the hands of their intimate partners (Larance et al., 2019). She recounts her experience by saying that he husband choked and hit her. She says:

My husband held my neck, hitting me severally on the head, he choked me so to be honest I also bit him to free myself from his grasp. Also, he kicked me three weeks after our marriage ceremony. That one happened once.

In other instances, family and friends may condone and even participate in the violence suffered by a partner. This points to the issue of influential in-laws (Obi & Ozumba, 2007 as cited in Aihie, 2009) who help perpetuate violence towards an intimate partner. This is the case of

Queen, a thirty-eight-year-old female participant. She says that her husband beats her and there was one occasion where his sisters joined in beating her. She says:

There is a lot of beating even one time together with his sisters, they sometimes join him in beating me since he's told them he no longer wants me. One time, he held my dress at the neckline, choking me. It was my daughter shouting "People come o, daddy is killing mummy" that made him let go. I have been experiencing this beating for the past three months. This happens often when he comes back from work.

Sisters' participation serves to further the symbolic message that the victim is no longer protected or respected inside the family unit. The definition of the situation becomes dangerously distorted, turning what should be a loving and safe home into a place of control, humiliation, and terror.

Particularly where a child observes and reacts to the abuse, the victim's self-concept may be severely impacted, adding to her feelings of helplessness, shame, and sorrow. Violent encounters alter the symbolic meaning of marriage, family, and women, giving the abuse a sense of both personal and systemic nature.

For thirty-seven-year-old Sarah, she recounts that she is beaten by her husband resulting in her living outside his roof for certain periods. She mentions:

...I've been in and out of his house three times. My uncle at ... always settled the disputes. On one occasion he beat me upon our return. He has been doing this from day one of our marriage, from the very beginning of the marriage. At least every month.

Again, Cynthia, who is thirty-two years old and a female participant mentions:

I've been receiving beatings since the beginning of the relationship, since our relationship started, as and when he feels what I have done displeases him. Recently, he punched my mouth and injured it in the process.

Nick, a thirty-eight-year-old male also finds himself in the same situation as Kwesi albeit for a reduced period. He recounts how the physical abuse, relatively minimal at the beginning of its occurrence has grown and intensified and has become an everyday happening. He mentions that his wife beats him and says:

She beats me and when I complain her father tells me to drink my issues away. We've been together for seventeen years, fifteen years of cohabitation and two years of marriage but the physical violence has been happening the past six months and intensified two days ago where she hit me with a chair at a point. I can say the physical violence has been occurring everyday these last six months.

Compared to participants suffering from physical violence, Emefa, a forty-year-old female participant has her experience for a shorter period and just like Queen she has her abusive partner receiving support for his misconduct from his siblings. Her partner who she cohabits with beats her and she tells the story:

My partner has been beating me these past two months. This past Saturday he beat me twice. The first time he beat me was at his sibling's place and his siblings show support for him when I informed them about what is going on... whenever he beats me, it lasts for several minutes. At least once a month, even more, since these past two months because last Saturday he beat me twice and in the process hit my eye with an object I did not see because it was dark.

Gift, a thirty-two-year-old female participant also talks about being physically abused by her partner who she cohabits with. She says she constantly receives slaps from him. She recounts:

My partner is beating me, and he is always slapping me, "kakraanaw'abo m'asom (the least thing, he slaps my cheeks) for six years now. He does this almost every day and at any time.

Physical violence by a partner continues and acts of violence committed by men against their female partners in order to obtain control and power within the relationship are still seen as a matter of male dominance (Straus, 2011). When acknowledged, violence by women against their male partners is understood to be self-defense or a reaction to abuse that the partner has been committing on a regular basis (Dasgupta, 2002, Larance 2019). Successes chalked, however, include the fact that the past handling of domestic partner violence as a private issue that couples should settle privately (Gelles, 1985) is no longer the widely accepted notion and physical abuse committed by men against their female partners is now acknowledged as a significant social issue. Thus, more and more people like this study's participants are able to report the violence

they suffer though help-seeking and reporting is less common when males suffer physical violence from their partners as these are less injured compared to women (Coker et al., 2002). However, the degree of violence suffered may well be severe and this is seen in the case of Nick and Kwesi who suffer significant forms of physical abuse. Evidence of more female victimization is seen as more females than males participants recount being physically abused by their partners thus laying claim to the assertion of male dominance. According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, role-taking allows individuals to take cues from others which propel actions performed as a response to the actions of others. For this study's participants they do not respond to violence suffered with violence except for Nancy. This is thoroughly based on her definition of the situation, that is, what is expected of her given the situation. For her, defending herself was the answer necessary to prevent injury from the physical violence she experienced.

#### **4.2.2 Psychological Violence**

Participants recounted various acts of psychological violence towards them. They included expressions of disdain for a partner, threats to kill, leave the marriage or relationship, frustrate the partner till he or she leaves the marriage or relationship, intentions to belittle such as accusations of poor housekeeping and threats to take away children. Most of these behaviours are largely erratic in its occurrence and thoroughly damaging to victims per the findings. For Asantewaa, who is thirty years old, mentions that apart from physical abuse she experiences from her partner he is verbally abusive even in the presence of their children. This violence which co-occurs with physical violence is the most frequent form of abuse she suffers from her partner and gives evidence to literature which speaks to the multiplicity of violent acts when they occur in a relationship (IDS et al., 2016). She says:

My partner insults me, there is humiliation and he abuses me verbally in the presence of our two daughters for more than one hour. He can go on and on with the insults and humiliation. The insults even more frequent compared to the physical violence.

The inactions of partners could also constitute psychological abuse aside their actions. Araba tells how she experiences silent treatment from her husband aside the threat to dissolve their union. He shuts her out as he does not eat her food and has no sexual relationship with her. For her, the violence she experiences does not co-occur with any other violence. She says:

My husband, for seven years now, does not eat my food, no sex and mentions that he would leave the marriage.

Just like Asantewaa, who experiences multiple forms of violence, Akosua, a female participant says the psychological violence surpasses the physical violence her husband metes out to her.

The quotation below speaks about her experiences of insults and constant humiliation as her husband refers to her using derogatory words:

There are insults, threats, humiliation, my husband calls me a non-entity, he calls me worthless for as long as he wishes... He even said he will kill me like a dog. The psychological violence is more frequent compared to the physical violence and has been the case since we got married.

For her, the humiliation spans from the beginning of the marriage and her husband and father of her four sons has continually exhibited this behaviour. In the quotation below, Esi, thirty-two years, a female participant tells of similar experiences of psychological abuse by her husband and hers is mainly in the form of comparison with other women which leads to intimidation and her husband also threatens to leave the marriage:

My husband issues threats to leave the marriage, there is a lot of comparison, he compares me to other women, more like they are better than me. Also, there is intimidation because of the constant comparison, hurt and emotional trauma. It started since they started living separately after the marriage due to work location and demands, about 3 years ago. It happens as and when he comes over the weekend to spend time with the family.

Other participants recount:

My wife also insults me, issues threats to hurt me, damage my property which she eventually carried out (breaking my car window), raining curses and threats, I also experience humiliation as the children are around when she is abusive. It occurs from several minutes to hours. This form of violence, the psychological violence, is more frequent compared to the hitting and began as far as I can remember, from the early years of our marriage (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male)

He threatens to throw me out and this culminates into him even taking out my clothes and stepping on them. It has been the case this last five years, that is, three months from the birth of our son. You know before the child came in; in the early years of our relationship, he was very nice to me. None of these abusive behaviours were exhibited by him. He was pretending. Almost every day, he would issue threats (Estelle, 29-years-old, female)

The above quotes speak to Goffman's (1971) concept of "possessional territory" which is conceptualised as one component of the extended self, a means of physically and symbolically extending the self in the world via specific objects (Allen-Collinson, 2011). For Goffman, possessional territory comprises: "Any set of objects that can be identified with the self and arrayed around the body wherever it is" (1971:38). This concept is applied to partner violence in intimate relationships where victims often report having their possessions violated by an abuser (Stephens et al., 2005), which can be conceptualised as an act of violence upon the self (Allen-Collinson, 2011).

Nancy, a forty-nine-year-old female participant also receives abuse verbally from her husband and this comes in the form of threats to take her life and she receives insults from her husband in that she does not have a high educational background. Also, she mentions that her husband tells her not to, as he would put it, pester him. She says :

My husband insults me, insults like, I did not go to school, threats to stab me, ignoring me telling me that I should leave him and telling me to grant him his peace of mind. He says, "ma me ndwene me ho", "wo ha me" (allow me to live my life, you are worrying me). Didn't he know I was semi-literate before marrying me? That I am an ordinary primary school drop-out? Since the beginning of the marriage, he switched character immediately.

This situation of receiving threats to be killed is equally suffered by Queen, a female participant.

She just like Nancy has received threats of being killed aside the physical violence she

experiences from her husband. This form of violence, that is, the threat to kill, is a determinant for help-seeking, externally where an individual is abused by the partner (IDS et al., 2016) with males and females reporting such threats for external help 0.9 percent and 0.5 percent of the time respectively. She says:

For insults and constant humiliation, it is there. He calls me a prostitute and that I am offensive in terms of smell. He has even threatened to kill me. This ... has been happening for the past three months whenever he comes back from work.

Cynthia, a thirty-two-year-old female participant is also dealing with threats to kill from her husband apart from experiencing physical abuse from her partner, the father of her three children and she says:

He insults me and that's not all, he threatens to kill me, stab me to death. He has made this threat including the threat to take away children severally. This happens almost everyday.

Sarah, a thirty-seven-year-old female participant, also finds herself in a situation where inactions constitute abuse as just as Araba, her husband does not eat her food. This is in addition to the physical violence she suffers. She mentions that her husband insults her, using words which are derogatory on her thus causing her a lot of pain:

Psychologically he traumatizes me by insulting me whenever he pleases. Also, he does not talk to me or eat my food although he is in good terms with the children. He calls me "ntomago" ("rugs"). He even refers to me as "rubbish". It happens alongside the physical violence within the same time space...He says he no longer loves me.

For twenty-nine-year-old Dave, he says his partner uses words which belittle on him and she threatens to act in a way that would ultimately land him in trouble with the police. He recounts:

My partner insults me a lot. She calls me "stupid" and that I'm not a man worthy to call her my wife. She also threatens me that she would misbehave in such a manner that I will end up having a case with the police. When I complain to her father, he insists his daughter is now in my complete care and does nothing about the issues I raise concerning her behaviour towards me. When she was pregnant, her father said the attitude was because of the pregnancy and the misconduct during the pregnancy really escalated. Her

brothers whenever they come around sometimes insult and beat me. She sings “akotianwom” (songs which provoke a negative reaction from those almost indirectly referred to in it). It has been on and off and almost every day since we started living together.

Also, Nick mentions that his wife is verbally abusive and must deal with issues of self-worth as her partner, just like Dave, says he does not have enough worth to be called her partner. The quotation below talks about his experience:

Different men call my wife, I don't see her with her ring, and she insults me, she has no respect for me whatsoever, so I have also threatened to take away the children. She can even say to me “wo so baa ne me? (Are you the calibre of man I deserve?), from the beginning of our marriage, as and when, maybe there is an issue we don't agree on she does this.

For Gloria, a thirty-two-year-old female participant, her partner always abuses her psychologically by humiliating her in public and, in an instance, words were exchanged. She says:

My partner humiliates me in public. Just recently I spoke about his misconduct, and we exchanged words. He said things that belittled me, and I also told him God will punish him. In fact, it was not a nice incident. It's been like this for the past 2 years when fees must be paid or food, anything for the children must be bought.

Aside physical violence Gift, a female participant also suffers from psychological violence. She mentions that he husband tells her she is useless and dirty and utterly dislikes her:

He calls me “useless” and “dirty”, and he has dislike for me.

Verbal abuse, threats, disrespect, humiliation, lack of recognition, neglect, and any other form of psychological manipulation intended to subjugate an individual's rights and freedom are all considered emotional forms of domestic violence (Asare, 2019). Psychological violence is a significant form of intimate partner violence, despite the fact that it does not always result in obvious consequences like physical harm or trauma (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Psychological partner violence has been linked to an increased risk of mental illness (Al-Modallal, 2012).

Psychological abuse is frequently a prelude to physical abuse (Karakurt & Silver, 2013), therefore, it comes as no surprise that ten (10) out of the fifteen (15) participants of this study, all female, consent to the co-occurrence of domestic partner psychological abuse and domestic partner physical abuse. This is because verbal abuse of intimate partner violence (IPV) is a manifestation of female dependence in patriarchal societies. Language is a key system of important symbols which aids communication and shapes self-awareness (Anderson, 1988). Thus utterances deemed negative based on shared meanings constitute acts of violence based on the nature of words used as words shape notions held about self. Consequently, the abused partner would struggle with conflicting roles. For instance, being a caregiver versus being a victim.

#### **4.2.3 Economic Violence**

In instances of economic violence, participants recount various types of deprivation mostly in terms of the provision of money itself for the upkeep of the family. Concerns raised include the absence of money altogether or the insufficiency of money given as maintenance. In this study, most of the female participants, nine (9) out of the fifteen (15), reported being economically abused directly by their partners. Thirty-year-old female participant, Asantewaa, apart from physical and psychological violence suffered, does not receive the needed maintenance for the family's sustenance, that is, for herself and the children. She mentions that this has been happening for a considerable period and does not receive enough income necessary for her to sustain her family single-handedly as her partner expects. She says:

He does not provide the needed maintenance necessary for our sustenance that is me and the children, he expects me to depend solely on my meagre salary as a cleaner, that is, 500 cedis to cater for myself and the children which includes school costs. This has been happening for two years. Whenever there is a family need that must be catered for like the children's upkeep he refuses to contribute.

Another participant recounts how directly she suffers from economic violence. Not only does her husband not provide the needed maintenance for the upkeep of the family, but also, he makes her hawking of wares a difficult task known as economic sabotage (Stylianou, 2018). The means for her acquisition of income is tampered with:

My husband does not provide the needed maintenance; I have taken many loans and in great debt. Unfortunately, I must cater for all four children single-handedly. What I do is that I hawk many things depending on the season, watermelon, wax print, name it. I borrow the wares and pay back after I have sold them while I keep the profit. The last thing I was selling was the wax print, but he beat me, destroying the wares and that kept me indoors for a while. Eventually, I was unable to pay the person who gave me the wax print on credit hence my debt (Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

For Gift, she suffers economic sabotage (Stylianou, 2018) just like Akosua as her partner prevents her from earning a living making her dependant on her partner who also physically abuses her:

The care of the children is not sufficient. He buys provisions like rice and spaghetti for the children, and he doesn't provide anything for me, for six years, everyday, when there is always one need or the other. I used to sell small, small things in the market, tomatoes, but he stopped me from selling with the birth of our first child, so I haven't been working since then. I must depend on what he provides for the children.

Given the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society, often, it is the responsibility of male partners to see to, particularly, the needs of their children even if the female partner can see to the children's needs. Most of the time, however, women tend to earn less income compared to their male counterparts and must receive money or other necessities from their male partners to serve the family's needs. This is the situation twenty-nine-year-old Estelle faces as a house help because her salary remains insufficient for her and her son. She says:

He is not providing the needed maintenance for the upkeep of the child particularly his school fees payment and his feeding while he is in school. What my boyfriend does is dress up and goes out every day. When he comes back, he brings nothing to the table since the birth of our son five years ago. It happens whenever a need to provide for the home arises.

Nancy, a female participant in this study laments not only the lack of the provision of maintenance, but its insufficiency. For her the money she receives from her husband does not meet the current economic situation and must solely provide certain household necessities although her husband, for her, can meet these needs because he is gainfully employed as a mason, earning appreciable amounts of money. She recounts this situation she finds herself:

Almost every day, since the beginning of the marriage, he gives me 40 to 50 cedis to prepare food for the whole month which lasts us for nine days. This is woefully insufficient so I go out of my way to support so we can still eat although he has the means to fully provide. It was during Easter this year that he started giving me 60 cedis. I must collect cassava flour (“kokonte”) from people to sell so I can make some money and I prepare some of it for us to eat. On one occasion, we had nothing at home because he did not provide although as a mason, he has the money. I slept on an empty stomach. I must provide for the family by paying utilities like the electricity we use, buy the water, buy Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), because he claims he has no money. I experience this as and when money is needed for one thing or the other.

Queen, a female participant also speaks about the insufficiency of maintenance for her family as her husband only pays the school fees of the children.

For the past 5 years “I have not seen his thousand cedis” (I have not received up to a thousand cedis as maintenance from him), the only thing he does is pay the children’s school fees, the other things are left to only me. One time I called him and said that could he give me 10 cedis for the children? He insulted me and hung up. I did that to make him aware of his neglect if he unfortunately is not.

Sarah, another female participant shares the same experience as Queen and says:

Apart from the children’s school fees he does not provide the necessary maintenance, nor does he provide money to pay for utilities. For the past eighteen years I’ve known him and with the birth of our children what he does only is pay school fees.

In certain instances, provision made is erratic and inconsistent and this form of economic violence sees most female partners having to come in and see to the needs of the family since the provision from their male partners is not forthcoming. The quotation below talks about one such instance:

At a point he started ignoring us and whenever he is angry, he does not provide money for maintenance so on such occasions, I must provide. This has been for the past one year.... This happens whenever I ask him for money, or I must buy or pay for something for the family (Cynthia, 32-years-old, female).

Thirty-two-year-old Gloria like the other female participants shows displeasure for their partners' insufficient provision and she says:

There is insufficient support and provision for the children. If not for this, I would have a piece of land right now. The entire burden rests on me.

Women's economic, physical, and psychological well-being can be adversely affected by economic violence (Adams et al., 2015). This is seen in the statements given by the female participants in this study giving the fact that little (insufficient) or no support comes from their male partners to serve various purposes. These women are unable to gain grounds financially as a result of this type of violence. For one of these women owning property becomes a problem. Gloria's statement of her inability to buy land as she must single-handedly provide the children's needs speaks to this. This means that victims of economic aggression have negative effects on their financial strength (Alkan et al., 2021). In this study, it is recognised that economic violence is not only when one's partner (the abuser) controls money, economic activities and resources as well as maintain control over family finances thus making their partner's completely dependent on the financial decision making power of abusers (Fawole, 2008). It also involves placing untoward pressure on the resources of the partner when it comes to the upkeep of the family when the abuser refuses the needed support or refuse to give support to the tune necessary to efficiently meet the family's needs. Varied degrees or levels of economic deprivation (Tenkorang & Owusu, 2019) all constitute acts of economic violence and these are mostly experienced by women (IDS et al., 2016). In this study, all the victims of direct economic violence are female.

Essentially, repeated financial interactions shape how people see themselves and their relationships, helping to understand economic abuse more clearly. The abuser may believe that controlling money proves superiority especially if their culture supports this idea. Instead of being a relationship where both partners share and support each other, it becomes one where control and lack take over. This changes how the victim sees the relationship and roles within it. Confidence and self-worth may slowly fade, especially if there is constant isolation and powerless due to financial control. In terms of family function, financial decisions are made independently of the spouse and are frequently made to exert control or dominance rather than promote mutual understanding. Instead of collaborating to discover solutions, disagreements about money are resolved by punishment or rejection. The victim loses independence and self-respect and becomes dependent on the abuser, who has complete control over financial resources. The victim's emotional needs related to financial stability are ignored, and their financial struggles and goals are treated with apathy. To limit the victim's freedom and sense of security, controlling strategies include limiting access to funds or prohibiting employment.

#### **4.2.4 Social violence**

Some participants mention their inability to be with family and/or friends. Their partners do this directly by stopping them as a rule in the family or making the means to see friends and family inaccessible. They are prevented from moving to be in contact with them or they make the stay of friends and family uncomfortable through violence as a more indirect means of partner social violence. Esi, apart from suffering psychological violence from her husband says she is not allowed to stay out at family functions for more than two hours. On one occasion she got locked out of the house. She recounts:

I am not permitted to go for family gatherings and whenever we go, we do not stay for more than two hours. The last time he locked the gate while I wanted to get in after attending a family programme. It has been like this since the beginning of the marriage. Whenever I need to attend a function, he prevents me from attending or gives me time, not more than two hours.

The economic violence Gift's partner makes her experience contributes to her inability to connect with family as she is prevented from working so she can pay the transportation fare to see them. This clearly shows that some forms of violence create and reinforce other forms of violence. Her partner, however, is in constant physical contact with his family and hardly misses a function. She remains isolated from family together with the children and mentions that:

He prevents me from taking the children to the village to go see my family but whenever the need arises like a funeral at his hometown, "kakraa na w'ako" (he always attends) but I cannot go since I don't have money for transportation because he has stopped me from working. I can say for the same six-year period when I gave birth, all the time I don't get to see my family.

For the other participants who suffered social violence rather indirectly they mention:

My brother can come over to visit me. He is my source of comfort now and only surviving close relative. However, one day, my brother was around while my husband was at home and he beat up my brother, leaving him seriously injured. His in-law was served a fair share of the violence, that is, my brother (Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

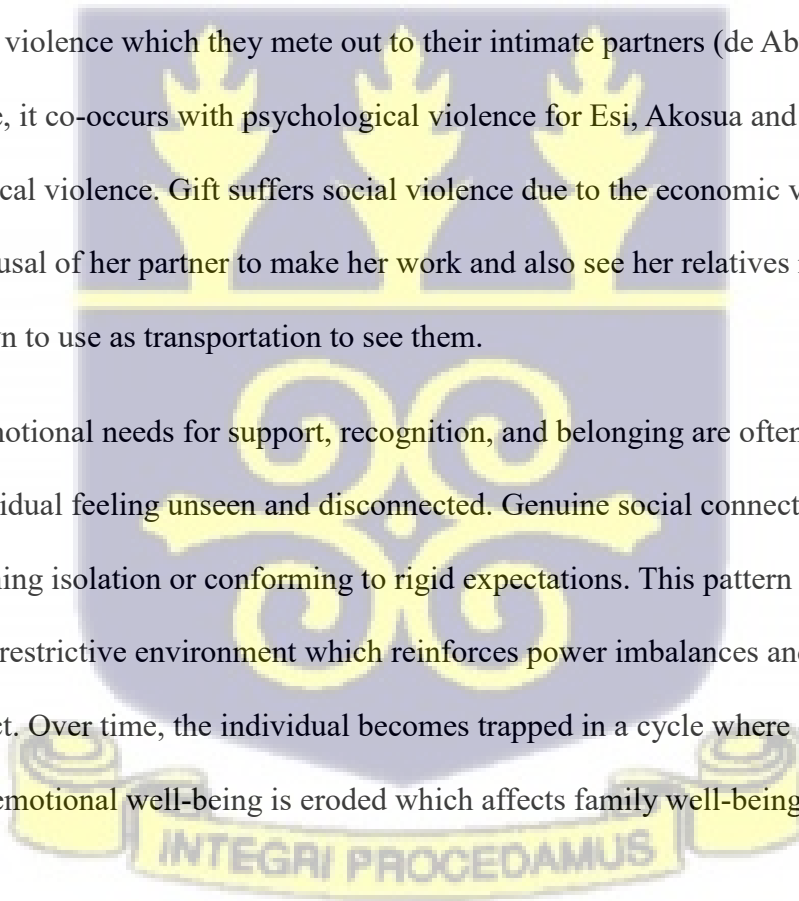
She has problems with her in-laws and my friends who come around. She refuses to entertain their presence in the house for about a year now as and when friends and family wish to come around (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male).

Estelle must deal with her partner's constant calling at her workplace which constitutes stalking. She says her partner, for a certain period calls her all the time due to suspicions of infidelity. This violence is in addition to the physical, psychological, and economic violence she suffers from her partner:

It happened that my madam and I's relationship became strained because he kept calling me at work and was a major distraction.

Acts of controlling behaviour include forcing women and girls to have abortions, stopping someone from leaving the house, preventing someone from seeing friends or family of origin, spreading false information, videos, or photos without permission and stalking all constitute acts of social violence (IDS et al., 2016). This type of violence limits women as it reproduces patriarchal culture and male dominance at the micro level (Baskan & Alkan, 2023). While stalking is mentioned in most literature on social violence as a form of intimate partner violence (Palarea et al., 1999; Southworth et al., 2007), this study focuses on other forms of social violence that were examined by IDS et al. (2016). A study conducted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil found that isolation is still one of the strategic tools used by those who commit acts of violence to perpetuate the violence which they mete out to their intimate partners (de Albuquerque Netto et al., 2017). Hence, it co-occurs with psychological violence for Esi, Akosua and Kwesi in addition to physical violence. Gift suffers social violence due to the economic violence she suffers as the refusal of her partner to make her work and also see her relatives means she has no money of her own to use as transportation to see them.

Basically, the emotional needs for support, recognition, and belonging are often dismissed, leaving the individual feeling unseen and disconnected. Genuine social connection is replaced by control, maintaining isolation or conforming to rigid expectations. This pattern creates a socially and emotionally restrictive environment which reinforces power imbalances and deepens emotional neglect. Over time, the individual becomes trapped in a cycle where connection is conditional and emotional well-being is eroded which affects family well-being.



#### 4.3 The Co-occurrence of Domestic Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment

Sometimes, the children receive an equal share of abuse from both perpetrators and victims as partners transfer negative sentiments to them. Some participants recounted how some of the children in the family also experienced violence directly from their abusive partners giving evidence to the literature on direct victimization of children where violence occurs in the relationship. In certain instances, children are not only witnesses to violence by a parent, but also experience it firsthand. One participant also said that her son is severely beaten by her husband which made him fearful. She says:

My first son experiences a fair share of the violence, the way he beats him eh... but he gets over it. At first it made him timid.... The children know what is on the ground (Esi, 32-years-old, female)

Just like Esi, Asantewaa recounts how her partner equally abused her young daughter as her partner slapped her at a point in time. She says:

The three-year-old also experienced her fair share of violence. There was a point in time where her father slapped her.

Another participant said his children are insulted by his wife as she makes reference to them picking up his character which she deems undesirable hence the beatings:

Sometimes I feel the insults she rains on the children are to get at me, some of the insults are related to me like “you have picked up your dad’s character “. Sometimes she hits them with some to kind of anger and this affects me in some way (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male)

Akosua’s husband issues threats and one of her children was not left out as he threatened to kill him and she recounts:

He threatens the children as well like the one who just finished writing his Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), he has threatened to kill him before.

Also, Cynthia mentions that ‘one time my husband threatened me that he would stab one of the children’ and this is like the situation Akosua and Gift find themselves in.

Co-occurring physical maltreatment in the family is a serious issue whose exact prevalence is unknown and involves cases where one parent is physically aggressive to the other parent and physically maltreats a child (which is the common occurrence in this study); one parent is aggressive towards the other parent who is physically abusing a child; or one or both parents are aggressive towards the other and both are physically abusing a child (Knickerbocker et al., 2007). Approximately half of all domestic violence situations involve direct child abuse (Lloyd, 2018). The findings of this study runs nearly in tandem with this finding as three female participants and a male participant as seen above mention this co-occurrence of domestic partner violence and child maltreatment. This also supports findings by Bragg (2003) that while some parents are nurturing towards their children while being aggressive toward their partners, others equally neglect and harm them.

#### **4.4 Children as Witnesses to Domestic Partner Violence and Concern for their Well-being by Participants.**

Children’s exposure to domestic violence includes children seeing, hearing, being aware of, becoming directly involved in, that is, intervening to stop abuse or dealing with the aftermath of intimate partner violence (Murphy et al., 2013). Participants mention that children are aware of the abuse they suffer from their spouses and there is concern for their well-being by the abused parent. Although most participants, except for Araba, Asantewaa, Esi, and Sarah, did not detect marked or grave changes in their children’s relationships with the rest of the community and ability to engage in school and play activities, they foresee challenges in their children's understanding of how the family works. The witnessing of violence is potentially devastating for

children just like child maltreatment. Sometimes, victims seek to protect children and prevent their exposure or manage their emotions if they are unable to prevent children from seeing or witnessing violence. Akosua explained her inability to prevent the exposure of her children to the violence she suffers to the absence of separate rooms for the children so as to prevent their seeing the abuse:

The children know what is going on and it might affect them in the future. There have been cases where my elder son has saved me from his physical attacks. My children are worried for my safety and well-being since they have had to come between my husband, their father and I during occurrences where I was being abused. I'm completely helpless. "Agye mensam" (I have no control over the situation). It is just one room, so the children have seen everything he is doing and continues to do (Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

Just like Akosua, Asantewaa is unable to stop her children from seeing and hearing the abuse she suffers as her partner does not take into consideration the presence of their children. Though they engage in play the situation dawns on them at certain times:

They play freely but I am concerned about the state of their thinking, how they may grow up, they may learn to accept violence. Whenever they are indoors, I see that they feel troubled by the turn of events. Their father abuses me in their presence and there is very little I can do to make them respect me in such a situation.

Similarly, Emefa's son is exposed to the partner's violent outbursts:

I think what he saw his father do to me made him so unhappy that he fell ill. He does not make his negative actions towards me discrete, and I don't know how to stop my son from witnessing his abuse.

Sarah, a female participant also recalls the exposure of her children to her husband's violent behaviour as her husband tried to keep the children from being close to their mother:

All the children know what was transpiring because he did not want the children to get closer to me.

Araba, who suffers from psychological abuse attempts to salvage the situation where children must deal with seeing their parents' alienation. She says:

I talk to them and make them understand that the issue is between their daddy and me and that they are not the reason why this is going on.

Victims attest to the fact that children are aware of the violence being perpetrated hence the children's "involvement" and their consequent attempt to salvage the situation. The quotations below indicate children's knowledge of abuse and "involvement" as well as the inability of victims to thoroughly protect them from the knowing the brewing tensions between them and their partners:

One of my children told me to go and tell the police about the physical violence I suffer so they would go and arrest daddy. The children are not happy at all. On one occasion I collapsed, and they went to inform a woman we know; they were crying I was told. During one of the attacks I received, the older children were saying "Daddy please forgive mama". What can I do? My partner does not care where he does what he does, outside the house, inside, he just abuses me anywhere (Gift, 32-years-old, female).

The children know what is going on and even their aunt told me they told her what is happening at home, that is my wife's behaviour towards me and even then since they receive or let me say experience abuse to a considerable degree. In such, instances I talk to them to be of good behaviour and console them. The children know what is going on and it might affect them in the future. I always tell my wife not to involve the children, but she sometimes says things to them to put me in a bad light almost all the time and there are future implications for that with respect to the children (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male).

They are concerned about my welfare giving the situation we find ourselves in. My eldest child asked that we leave, the children said we should leave dad and go on vacation (Cynthia, 32-years-old, female).

There is now a lot of evidence to suggest that children who witness domestic violence may suffer negative effects (Lloyd, 2018). Research indicates that children in violent homes frequently witness, hear, and participate in episodes of marital violence, despite the fact that many parents claim to try to shield their kids from such behaviour (Fantuzzo et al., 1997). This is seen in the accounts of Gift and Akosua where there is an attempt to salvage the situation their mothers find themselves as they show concern for their mother's well-being. Youngsters frequently look to their carer to meet basic needs like safety and self-control modelling and studies reveal that a risk in one of those domains as happens in Asantewaa's family can influence the other's development

which in this case is the loss of recognition for their mother who is a caregiver. Developmental necessities in terms of proper caregiving becomes possible only in a non-violent setting (Howell et al., 2016) as violence complicates positive development and caregiving in many negative ways due to the volatile environment created.

#### **4.5 Reasons for Violent Acts**

There are varied causes of violence according to available literature (Ademulika, 2018; Adjah & Agbemaflle, 2016; Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018; Dako-Gyeke et al., 2019; Keine et al., 2017; Krug et al., 2002; Kumar et al., 2005). In this study, four out of fifteen participants attributed the violence they suffered to personality disorders. Other factors included the influence of patriarchy, the presence of a third party in the union, a growing dislike for the partner or attitude of the partner, the inability to manage emotions like anger and having other women at one's disposal or infidelity. For each form of violence suffered by each participant, they mention their perceived reasons for the abusive behaviours of their partners. For some participants, however, it was difficult pinpointing the exact reasons for the abusive behaviour of their partners.

##### **4.5.1 The Influence of Patriarchy**

The influence of patriarchy continues to be one of the strong reasons for domestic partner violence suffered by females (Tracy, 2007). Feminist theories are based on the premise that men are domineering and women become victims to their dominance. This informs violence suffered by some females. Thirty- year-old female participant, Asantewaa, says that her partner prevents her from expressing her displeasure on events which she views as negative on the part of her partner as she must be subservient to her partner. She mentions that this has resulted in the desire of her partner to have her leave the relationship. This is what he ultimately intends to achieve by abusing her. She explains:

For the physical violence, he says I am too vocal and speak my mind and this accounts for the physical violence I suffer. He says he will do this as a means of discouraging me from continuing the relationship, for the psychological violence, anytime I contest an attitude which I find unpleasant he retorts with insults; he does not permit me to register my displeasure and for the economic violence, he is doing this to ensure that I leave the relationship. He said it himself that he will continue to be like this until I leave by myself.

#### **4.5.2 Loss of Interest in the Marriage/Relationship**

The absence of love, love turned sour over time, a growing dislike and disinterest in a relationship also brings about violence in different ways. This is the case in some relationships as forty-year-old Araba attributes the psychological violence she suffers to a loss of interest in the marriage by her husband. In the quotation below she mentions that:

His reasons are feeble as he appears to be fed up with the marriage that is why. This is also the underlying reason for the physical, social and economic violence this participant suffers:

He now dislikes me which affects the way he treats me and the provision he makes for the children sometimes (Gift, 32-years-old, female).

Akosua similarly experiences a loss of desire for her by her husband and consequently the husband does not acknowledge her as he should. There is no love and it appears he does not see a future with her anymore. She says:

For the economic violence I experience, I believe it is because he has no regard or love for me anymore. He just does not see me anymore.

In the quotation below, another participant bemoans the occurrence of love turned cold which influences how her partner also treats their children. She says:

For the economic violence it appears he is fed up with me and he is taking it out on the children as well (Queen, 38-years-old, female).

#### **4.5.3 Alcohol Use**

Alcohol by a male partner is the strongest correlate for the perpetration of domestic partner violence (Coker et al., 2000). Alcohol use according to Ademiluka (2018), go hand in hand with

personality disorders thus the result is a decreased self-restraint leading to an increased likelihood of being abusive. Again, according to Abramsky et al. (2011) odds of domestic partner violence were higher in relationships where one or both partners had problems with alcohol, compared to relationships where neither of them did. This is one of the reasons for the physical violence one participant suffers and she mentions that:

For the physical violence, I believe everything has to do with anger and alcohol use.  
(Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

#### 4.5.4 Third-party Influence

Third-party influence is another reason some participants give for the violence they suffer from their partners in the domestic space. This means the presence of other people who are friends to the partner who perpetrates the violence and their role in advising that violence is a way to go in the relationship. Third-party influences affect the ability of Nick's wife to behave according to his desire and he tells of this occurrence:

For the physical violence I experience, she keeps bad company nowadays, these other women; friends who she moves with, none are legally married. They want her to also be in the same category and she has allowed herself to be misled.

This could also happen indirectly as is the case of the participant below as the presence of other women pushes him to compare his partner to these other women, making her feel she does not measure up to their standards deemed desirable by her husband. She says:

For the comparison (psychological violence) I think he has other women all over him making him swollen headed and feeling spoilt for choice (Esi, 32-years-old, female).

#### 4.5.5 Attitudes of Partners

The attitudes partners have towards partners who suffer violence in their hands are also a reason for the occurrence of violence in the intimate relationship. One participant recounts:

The physical and psychological violence I suffer happens anytime she is upset, angry or there is something she is not happy about, like a family decision where she has a different

opinion, but I go ahead to do what I want to do and my staying out for too long . (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male).

Attitudes of partners who perpetrate violence are largely attributed to the absence of attitudes which nurture respect, understanding, concern for the partner's current situation or condition and selfish considerations which ultimately hurts the partners. This is seen in the quotations below:

For the psychological violence I experience, she does not respect me, that is it (Nick, 38-years-old, male).

He feels that since both my parents are no more, he can treat me anyhow (Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

For the economic violence I experience, it is that he's bent on keeping money for himself. It is not like he does not have it. One of the days I searched his pocket while he was bathing, I found some good money in there, but he tells me to borrow money to augment the small chop money he gives me (Nancy, 49-years-old, female).

For the economic violence I experience it appears that he just does not want to join in the care of the child and gives himself the excuse that he does not have the means to provide. He says that he is not working but he goes out every day, he operates forklifts at the Tema Harbour (Estelle, 29-years-old, female).

For the economic violence, he feels school fees is his bit and that's all he must provide but that shouldn't be the case. He makes money as a footballer so he can do better (Sarah, 37-years-old, female).

#### **4.5.6 Personality Disorders/ Uncontrollable Emotions**

According to South (2014), personality disorders (PDs) are the reason for many interpersonal issues thus it is not surprising to find it as one of the reasons for conflict within the intimate relationships in this study. For twenty-nine-year-old Estelle, she believes that her partner's misbehaviour has to do with the inability to effectively manage his emotions as well as a lack of concern for the well-being of the family. She says:

He gets angry easily that's why. You know, he stammers a bit and I believe this makes him easily irritated and aggressive as he finds difficulty spelling out his displeasure due to the stammering, so the anger escalates.

The quotations below by other participants also give evidence to this reason for the occurrence of domestic partner violence. Other participants recount:

He manages his anger very poorly and I suspect a personality disorder. One of the officers at DOVVSU, where I reported the case, even asked if he has experienced any mental health problems before because they just could not understand his physically aggressive behaviour... for the psychological violence I experience it is same as above (Akosua, 37-years-old, female).

For the psychological violence I experience I think it is a personality disorder because women keep coming into his life and leaving. When you have a certain unpleasant character as an individual I believe as you grow, you should mature and let go of it, but he is still the same old person (Nancy, 49-years-old, female)

For the psychological abuse it is because of his anger issues, he manages his anger very poorly. According to him, he says my financial input in the family is very little that is why he does not provide sufficient maintenance. After giving me money to put into jewellery business, he feels he has done a lot and even expects me to pay the money back from the profits I make but we are all responsible for the family upkeep. Whatever money I make is for the benefit of everyone (Cynthia, 32-years-old, female).

For the psychological violence I experience it is a personality disorder I believe; he does this to spite me. (Queen, 38-years-old, female)

Twenty-nine-year-old male participant, Dave also attributes his partner's psychological abuse to one thing—the inability for his partner to act in the right manner and he says:

Hers, I believe is a personality disorder.

#### **4.5.7 Household Maintenance or Economic Upkeep**

This is one of the major reasons for partner violence (Cantalupo et al., 2006; Dery & Diedong, 2014). Fights occur between couples because of the insufficiency and non-availability of resources needed for the sustenance of the home. This is the reason Nancy attributes to the physical violence she suffers and she mentions that:

For the physical violence I experience it was when I persistently asked that he provides sufficient maintenance.

In Ghana, this household or maintenance money is largely referred to as “chop money” which is money usually expected to be provided by the male partner mostly for feeding the family. It constitutes a major issue of contention in most unions whenever the amount given is not agreed on.

#### 4.5.8 Infidelity

Challenges in the relationship challenges including breakdown of trust, quarrels about resources, conflict, controlling behaviours, and ultimately, physical and emotional partner violence could arise as a result of jealousy when it is suspected that a partner (either the perpetrator or victim) has a relationship with another person (Kyegombe et al., 2022). This study found this as a reason for violence suffered by some participants and they attribute the violence they suffer to the desire of their abusive partners to have other partners in addition to them or suspicions of their infidelity. This is seen in the following quotations:

For the physical violence, another woman is in the picture, he wants to bring her into the house we both contributed to build perhaps at least that is what I know. (Queen, 38-years-old, female)

For the physical violence other women are in the picture, it is because he wants to have his way with other women. The other women, that is where the problem lies (Sarah, 37-years-old, female).

For Queen and Sarah, their husband's infidelity is a contributory factor to the violence they experience. Estelle mentions that her partner thinks she could go in for another man and this informs her partner's abusive behaviour. She says:

For the psychological violence I experience, his reason for the threats is that he does not want me to work because he fears that by so doing, I would go in for another man. I work as a house help and then he keeps calling while I am at work, if I don't pick up it means I am with another man (Estelle, 29-years-old, female).

Thirty-two-year-old female, Cynthia who must deal with suspicions of infidelity from her husband just as Estelle's whose partner has suspicions of her cheating says:

He says he suspects I am unfaithful that's why he physically abuses me.

#### 4.5.9 Spiritual Causes

Thirty-two-year-old Gloria equally attributes her partner's psychological and economic violence to a problem with his character. However, she alludes the situation also to spiritual causes:

His problem should be a personality disorder. Also, I realised it began to escalate when he asked that we see a “spiritualist” because we were making plans to finally get married.

Similarly, Araba mention that a pastor has told her husband that she is a witch hence the abuse she suffers from her husband.

Also, he accuses me of being a witch because that is what a pastor has told him about me. He also says I do not keep the house well and that I want to poison him... For the past year, his economic strength has come down which the pastor in question has made him think it is because I am a witch.

It may not be wholly out of place to find male dominance and control as a notable reason for domestic violence perpetration in the case of the female participants in this study because “unacceptable” attitudes of these female participants as judged by their male partners warrants discipline or forced conformity. This comes about per the symbols and meanings which shape “hegemonic masculinity” in the patriarchal society in which this study is situated. Since the idea of forced acceptance of proper behaviour as determined by their male partners is not desirable, violence persists over considerably long periods of time. The perpetrators of the violent acts towards male partners appear to be contravening the dictates of hegemonic femininity (having a nurturing attitude). This shows that in these bonds, with regards to shared meanings and values there is the disregard for societal notions of female subservience leading to male victimization and this contravenes domestic violence laws like female victimization. Female victimization in this study aligns with shared norms of a part of society which accepts disciplining of one’s spouse. It can be said that role-taking which helps prevent acts such as physical violence becomes nearly impossible if there is no agreement in terms of values and ideologies accepted for couples. Hence, violence continues for appreciable and significant length of time.

For the male participants in this study, self-defence according to their accounts is not an underlying cause of the violence they suffer in the domestic space rather the defiance of the

nurturing roles women must display is a reason. Thus, these females have behaviours that run counter to the notion of “hegemonic femininity” where women must be gentle and exude qualities in tandem with their perceived nurturing qualities such as having and keeping a home. The controls (Hirschi, 1969) necessary to ensure conformity is absent.

#### **4.6 Domestic Violence and its Impact on Spousal Victims and their Children**

##### **4.6.1 Psychological Impacts of Domestic Violence**

Victims mention suicidal ideation and mood swings as one of the key reactions to violence. This primarily is a product of internalizing negative labels from the abuse. Mental well-being is necessary for a family’s proper function. This study found that sometimes children suffer negatively from the poor psychological well-being of parents and the violence experienced makes them unhappy in different ways. For forty-year-old Araba, she mentions having to battle mood swings and living with the thought of possibly losing her life. She says:

I would say I become happy and sad, a mixture of the two. I have not healed completely I remember the abuse, this week I was very down reflecting on the things that have passed, I didn’t go anywhere. For the overall mood of the family, it is happy and sad, we have our moments especially for the kids. I take the witchcraft accusation seriously and you know since it appears that I disgust him, I feel he can at any point in time pick up something to hit and eventually kill me.

For a participant like thirty-two-year-old Cynthia, she is constantly in thought because of the violence she suffers from her husband while the children also live in fear and says:

I think a lot and the psychological trauma makes me think I made a mistake entering the relationship. I have regrets. The children now fear their father and don’t ask him for anything. It appears I must do all it takes to be a father figure in the lives of my children since technically speaking, there is none now.

Estelle tells of her sadness because of the violence she suffers and suicidal ideations she has and says:

I am not happy with the turn of events ...I am not happy at all, and my son is not always bubbly because of what I go through. Sometimes, I contemplate suicide, just to end everything...I think about my present state and that makes me sad, people can even identify that you are distraught even in the dressing or physical appearance because you do not have the means to keep a pleasant appearance like “wo tinwi gu so” (Not having styled your hair nicely).

Just like Estelle, forty-nine-year-old Nancy also contemplates suicide as she is troubled by the turn of events in her marriage. She says:

I get suicidal at times because of his threat to kill me. Sister, “me le ha ham” (I am troubled and worried).

For some participants, the children are quiet and coil into their shells as and when they hear or witness violence towards one parent and this even leads to loss of recognition for the abused parent:

The children no longer regard me, they have lost the respect they have for me, and communication is marred. The violence breeds tension within the family and sometimes everyone is just quiet. I talk a lot to myself, and the children have, because of the violence I experience from their father, built up a mindset and attitude of disregard for me. We are not happy at all as a family, that's the thing. Everyone is just moody (Asantewaa, 30-years-old, female).

Examining this through the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, it is seen that communication is not only ineffective but becomes a weapon as pain replaces words, everyone becomes quiet and fear replaces understanding. The roles within the relationship are dangerously skewed: the abuser assumes ultimate authority and dominance, while the victim is stripped of agency and dignity. Affective responsiveness is severely impaired, as the abuser shows no empathy or emotional connection, instead inflicting trauma. Affective involvement is distorted; the relationship lacks genuine emotional connection and instead revolves around control and fear. Most critically, behaviour control is violently enforced, with the abuser using physical force to regulate the victim's actions, appearance, and even consciousness.

In every setting, authority figures are necessary for order and progress. Hence, if respect is lost for any parent because he or she is being ill-treated, it results in not only the build-up of negative mentalities but also children lose the right mentoring needed for their proper upbringing.

Denigrating statements has an impact on how children see their abusive parents. Here, there is the creation of a new label which is victim. The family in most instances also experiences fear at the presence of the abuser, and this affects the ability of members of the family to sit and have quality time together. This is the situation for thirty-two-year-old Esi and her children. She says:

Whenever he is coming everyone rushes to put things in order. The tension in the home because of the violence is on and off. Sometimes for a week we do not talk as a family.

For Kwesi, he expresses the fear and unhappiness he lives in due to the abuse he suffers from his wife. He says:

I live in fear especially when it comes to keeping some stuff at home because she broke my car window one day, raining curses and threats. I am always unhappy, and it is visible at my workplace as colleagues ask if I am okay.

Similarly, thirty-eight-year-old Queen lives in fear. In addition, her children as she has observed are unhappy and equally afraid of her husband who abuses her.

My children and I are not happy with their father ... My son; the younger boy is silent and afraid of his father. We all live in fear, really, no one is happy anymore.

Since it is everyone's desire to live in a loving environment, children may express their desire to have parents live together harmoniously especially in patriarchal societies where a man's presence in the home is cherished. This is mentioned by one of the participants:

They suffer, the children but we do not know...I once asked one of my children if she wished we were a family again and she said yes (Araba, 40-years-old, female).

Abuse is not a problem for just victims but also children who become concerned for the safety and well-being of their abused parent. This is the reality for thirty-seven-year-old Akosua and her children. She says:

In the family, we are not on good terms, it's difficult getting along with one another... I live in fear because of the threats to kill me...am not stable in terms of my thought pattern ...I sometimes feel like killing myself...Like I said we are not happy...My children are worried for my safety and well-being since they have had to come between my husband, their father and I during occurrences where I was being abused.

Dave, a male participant who has two children with his abusive partner admits that he regrets having met his partner. He says:

To tell you the truth I am very sad and regret meeting her.

For thirty-two-year-old Gift, she says she keeps talking to herself due to the violence she suffers and her children fear their father and are unhappy:

It is obvious that all is not well. I tend to talk a lot when I am all by myself which is not normal. "Me nam a na me kasakasa" (I keep talking to myself when walking) ...I want a way out of this relationship because it has become very draining for me mentally... my four-year old and six-year-old are afraid of him.... Because he is openly violent, the children are generally not happy.

Gloria, a female participant also mentions that her children may be bearing the brunt of the violence she suffers at the hands of her partner. She says this because the children become unreasonably quiet at times:

Sometimes the children go quiet, and I don't know why.

For Sarah she recounts that her children suffered academically due to the tension at home and the school had to intervene. She says:

It got to the point when they began to suffer academic failure due to the situation at home so the school called to find out what the problem could possibly be, and I told them about the situation at hand. The school helped counsel the children to manage the situation.

Participants recount their fears, anxieties and apprehension due to the various forms of violence they experience. This supports the finding that victims of domestic violence are depressed, anxious, and experience somatic stress-related symptoms often diagnosed as neurosis (Pastwa-Wojciechowska et al., 2013). They may also exhibit symptoms of disorganised behaviour and thoughts which are seen as some participants recount persistently talking to themselves due to the violence they suffer. Acts of aggression primarily target the physically weaker, such as women and children and results in a chronic feeling of threat and powerlessness against the situation which also leads to the disturbance of the victim's emotional balance (Pastwa-Wojciechowska et al., 2013). It is thus common to find the women and children in this study becoming emotional distraught. Additionally, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are also quite common. A large body of research has documented the harmful consequences unique to emotional or psychological abuse (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). This includes low self-esteem and depression, which leads to the dissolution of the union due to its severity in comparison to physical violence in the union. Physical violence severely damages the psychological well-being of its victims, causing them to lose confidence and self-respect (Asare, 2019). There is the occurrence of suicidal ideation when it comes to the psychological impacts of violence which is seen in the accounts by participants such as Akosua, Estelle and Nancy.

#### **4.6.2 Economic Impacts of Domestic Violence**

There are varied expressions of economic violence (Stylianou, 2018) and they happen directly or “indirectly”. Directly because when one withholds the ability to earn an income or acquire the necessary resources for the maintenance of the family, it constitutes violence in that regard. On the other hand, one form of violence can lead to one’s inability to concentrate on work and be productive. This includes psychological or physical violence which impedes one’s productivity.

Here, economic violence occurs “indirectly”. Though most of these women had some employment or trade for a reasonable period they looked to the support of their male partners except for one because this female participant had built the notion that the violent acts of her partner does not afford him the opportunity to be good to her and their children. Hence, there is the absence of the desire to receive from the abusive partner. This participant also mentions how the economic violence she suffers as a hair stylist impacts her finances. She says:

I met him 18 years ago and all these years he never pays for maintenance or utilities. He just pays the school fees of the children, that is all...I handle everything and honestly, I don't look to him for financial assistance. I just want to take care of my children.... My business has really felt the impact of the abuse I suffer, he scattered my shop one time, and this financially destabilized me for some time, affecting my productivity (Sarah, 37-years-old, female).

One other participant also recounts how the physical, psychological, and social violence he suffers affects his work output and income. He says:

This physical abuse and every other abuse I suffer at the hands of my wife affects my work output, specifically, my appraisal at my workplace. I have lost some good money at certain times because I kept thinking about the poor and broken relationship with my wife. I could not meet up with the requirements for obtaining some particular remuneration which I could have obtained through connection with friends. This is aside the regular work I do. Sometimes, she goes and leaves the children alone in the house even while I am at work, sometimes, I must take them to school and bring them back while she remains at home (Kwesi, 39-years-old, male)

Just like Kwesi, thirty-year-old Asantewaa experiences the inability to do her work freely. She says that due to the violence she talks to herself:

It has affected my ability to work freely without having thoughts of the violence I experience. “Me nam kraa a na me kasakasa” (I keep talking to myself when I am walking). Someone might even think I am not mentally sound, talking to myself all the time at work. I struggle to provide the children's needs nowadays. We are distant now, so we no longer pool resources to meet the family's needs as such basic needs suffer in terms of providing for them (the children).

For Akosua, the refusal of her husband to care for the family has led to the situation where she has a lot of unpaid borrowed money and is without the ability to pay these debts because the abuse is draining. Her situation affects her ability to take care of her children:

I have taken many loans and in great debt. Unfortunately, I cannot adequately cater for my four sons; I am not stable in terms of my thought pattern as such I don't have the strength to go about my hustle.

Also, thirty-eight-year-old Nick mentions how his concentration at work has diminished which has affects his wages as without working for a day he gets nothing for that day. He says:

I lack concentration for my work because of the violence I suffer; sometimes she leaves the children in my care when I should be at work. I don't understand her behaviour.

Also, Queen just like Nick expresses her lack of concentration at work because of the abuse suffered:

As a seamstress, I am unable to adequately concentrate on the work I do, and it is a big problem since I must provide for the children's feeding in school because my husband pays only fees.

Partners suffering from economic neglect in one way or the other bemoaned the stress of having to provide for themselves and their children. This is because there is a decline in financial resources for victims and their children (Bhuller, 2022; Babatunde et al., 2015) largely because males are supposed to be the main breadwinners in this patriarchal society. Tenkorang and Owusu (2019) examined the effects of particular forms of economic abuse, such as economic exploitation, employment sabotage, and economic deprivation, on the outcomes of physical health. Employment sabotage was linked to worse mental health but not physical health. Economic exploitation and deprivation were both significantly associated with cardiovascular disease. Additionally, economic deprivation was linked to poorer perceptions of overall health. Ultimately, economic security is affected and constant thoughts on the availability of resources for family maintenance has adverse mental implications (Yount et al., 2016) such as suicidal

ideation for some participants. Also, physical effects such as the development of stomach ulcer as is mentioned by one of the female participants is one negative health outcome. Anxiety and sadness are also linked to economic violence (Davila et al., 2017) as well as increased risk of depression when it comes to higher levels of economic aggression (Outlaw, 2009; Stylianou, 2018). Economic violence has also been linked to worsening anxiety and depressive symptoms as well as a lower standard of living (Adams et al., 2019) which affects the well-being of participants and their children in this study. This means the physical health impacts and economic impacts of domestic violence are linked and this is seen in this study. The participants in this study find it difficult making a living and growing in their respective job earnings and careers as a result of violence suffered.

Essentially, where economic violence occurs, financial decisions are frequently made unilaterally or as leverage rather than through collaborative discussion, and communication is frequently forceful or deceptive. When financial demands or disagreements are addressed through control, denial, or punishment rather than cooperative planning or compromise, problem solving is ineffective. The roles in the relationship are not aligned thus the victim is deprived of autonomy and resources, and the abuser may take on the role of financial gatekeeper. Affective responsiveness is compromised because the abuser uses money to punish or establish dominance rather than demonstrating empathy for the victim's financial struggles or goals. Distorted affective engagement is characterized by conditional support or emotional detachment, where collaboration or affection is linked to monetary compliance. Economic constraints, such as withholding money, preventing employment, or restricting access to profession, are used to enforce behaviour control while eroding the victim's sense of security and independence.

#### 4.6.3 Social Impacts of Domestic Violence

The subjective evaluation of personal life circumstances and functioning in society refers to social well-being and includes social integration which is the quality of one's relationship to society and community as well as social acceptance which is based on notions of individual's ability to be trustworthy and kind (Keyes, 1998). Good communication is key in sustaining every quality or good relationship and the family relationship is thus not an exception. However, this is absent for all the participant's families. For Araba, communication has not been possible giving the violence and her recent separation:

Since he left initially I would call him over the phone, all communication was done over the phone, but I realised at a point the response was not forthcoming so I picked up an alternative and that is WhatsApp audio messages and with that he replies and gives me the thing I need which is mainly the needs of the children. When he was around you would not find us like the normal family where father, mother and children sit down and chat. He was mostly not around and, in the evenings, when he is, he is mostly in his room.

Her relationship with other people outside the immediate family setting is also affected by the violence which occurs:

I have withdrawn from attending these functions (social events) with him as a family especially those from his side. Even if they tell me I won't go and now they don't even tell me anymore.

The social well-being of victims of partner abuse is compromised as children's school fees or medical (health) bills are sometimes not provided for due to economic violence suffered. Thus, children's education and health could be affected. This is experienced by Estelle who is physically, psychologically, socially, and economically abused by her partner:

Paying hospital bills becomes a huge problem. The hospital even seized my phone on one occasion where I was unable to pay the rest of the hospital bills. It is not every cost incurred that is covered by the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). We owe school fees, about 600 cedis and our son's academic performance is quite poor because the fees remain unpaid, so he is asked not to come to school sometimes. Even when he is

considered, school costs include feeding which I also cannot pay for. As we all know without the needed nourishment, a child cannot adequately concentrate and study in class.

It is important to consider the variation in how children react to domestic violence because some students who are impacted by it will see educational environments as a source of stability and security, while others will view them as difficult (Lloyd, 2018). For Estelle's son it is difficult to navigate the school environment not necessarily because of the violence that exists but rather the economic violence suffered prevents the smooth execution of his academic work as no money for food means his inability to adequately concentrate in school. In relation to the McMaster Mode of Family Functioning, behaviour control which includes meeting psychobiological needs such as eating is negatively impacted mainly due to role neglect by Estelle's partner. Without money to serve health and educational needs the child is impacted negatively.

#### **4.6.4 Physical Impacts of Domestic Violence**

Some participants who experienced physical violence recalled the bodily harm they experienced and continue to experience. This included injuries to body parts, headache, and high blood pressure. One participant also alluded to ill health of a child because of witnessing the abuse suffered. In most situations participants are unable to seek medical attention due to financial constraints. Nancy, developed a terrible headache from her partner hitting her, she mentions that:

I had a terrible headache. Unfortunately, I could not afford to go to hospital because I had no money.

For other participants who can afford medical bills they seek for medical attention for their injuries. Asantewaa, nursing wounds inflicted by her partner, says "I've had to go to the hospital." Another participant, Emefa, who alludes to her child becoming physically ill by seeing her partner, his father, beat her also recounts:

I've had to go to the hospital to take care of my eye injury which stemmed from his beating. Our child saw what happened and fell ill which I believe is because of what he witnessed (Emefa, 40-years-old, female).

For Gift she says her hearing is receiving a considerable amount of damage:

I have some level of hearing problem due to the constant slapping, but I don't have money for hospital bills.

Estelle also mentions that:

As I speak now, I have stomach ulcer because he does not provide the needed support. My eyes can no longer look at the sun directly because he beats my face in addition to the other parts of my body.

In the accounts of the participants of this study, it is seen that chronic physical health conditions and acute injury for women constitute some of the major health consequences of domestic partner violence. In Coker et al.'s study (2000) in Columbia, South Carolina, United States of America, 53.6% of the 1152 women who participated in the survey reported having ever experienced partner violence of any kind; 13.6% reported psychological partner violence but not physical partner violence. Women who experienced psychological partner violence were significantly more likely to report having poor physical and mental health. In this study, psychological battering, which is characterized by women's continuous feelings of susceptibility to danger, loss of power and control, and entrapment (Coker et al., 2000) could not be linked to negative physical health outcomes. In Coker et al.'s study (2000) psychological partner violence was also linked to a number of negative health outcomes, such as a disability that prevented them from working, arthritis, chronic pain, migraine and other frequent headaches, sexually transmitted infections, chronic pelvic pain and stomach ulcers. In this study, poor mental health outcomes are attributed more to psychological violence compared to negative physical health outcomes which are largely attributed to physical and economic forms of violence.

#### 4.7 Domestic Violence and Family Functioning

Family functioning is a key concept in this study and refers to how the family's everyday patterns practised within the context of the family create favourable environments necessary for family members to thrive (Mousavi et al., 2015). The McMaster Model of Family Functioning views the family system as the core and the family's role or function is to provide everything needed for the development of members physically, psychologically, socially among other things (Epstein, 1987).

Problem solving is where the family solves problems or issues which affects the family completely and its capacity to function (Dai & Wang, 2015). The family's ability to solve problems has a key role to play in its proper function. The inability for partners to understand each other's way of viewing occurrences and violence affects how families deal with problems that confront them. Problems are either instrumental or affective and violence stands in the way of obtaining solutions to these issues. For Araba, the witchcraft accusation from her husband, who believes that the witchcraft is the cause of his financial woes is unable to, together with her, make the decision on where added financial resources would come from for the sustenance of the family. The psychological violence, given that her husband shuts her out is a barrier to dealing with this problem in the family as they are unable to come together to reach a consensus on the issue. She says:

I have had to deal with hearing “kɔ pɛ adwuma yɛ” (go and look for a job) from my husband. Having limited resources on his part sparked this outburst. Initially, he said that I should not work but I later asked if I could join him at his workplace and he refused given the strain in our relationship. This problem of me being a housewife amid financial difficulties or working hang in the balance because of the accusations and abuse (Araba, 40-years-old, female).

Communication is where information is exchanged within a family (Miller et al, 2000), which is part of the McMaster Model of Family Functioning. For many families experiencing volatile

environments due to domestic violence, it is one of the major disruptions families must deal with. One participant mentions that the beatings and insults she receives from her partner, affects the way their children see her. The abuse, according to her, has resulted in the children losing the recognition they have for their mother, as such, the children no longer see her or respect her. This has affected their ability to talk to her. She says:

The children no longer regard me, they have lost the respect they have for me, as a result, communication is marred (Asantewaa, 30-years-old).

Dave, another male participant says:

Communication is very poor. When I met her, she already had a 4-year-old son with another man. I'm unable to make her go back to learning a vocation as was the plan at the beginning. Because of her attitude, there are many things I do not tell her such as lands and properties I own.

For this participant, his partner's incessant insults and songs which incite violent behaviour from the one it is directed to makes him hide many things from her as the unpleasant conduct does not give way to the sharing of thoughts and ideas. It appears that he wants to, as much as possible, not get into trouble as she has threatened to act in a way that would land him in trouble with the police. Cynthia also makes reference to the issue of poor communication in the family due to the beatings and divided opinions like those which have to do with resources for maintenance. She recounts her predicament:

In fact, communication is poor. We do not sit down as a family to talk. Whenever we sit to discuss issues there is a lack of consensus. We remain divided. Even one evening, we quarreled so much that he asked me to leave the room with my children.

Recurrent patterns of behaviour by which individuals fulfil the family's function such as routine family tasks are likewise affected (Miller et al, 2000). This is the situation for Dave as the spite for him by his partner has affected caregiving for his two young children. This role designated largely to his stay-at-home partner must be taken up by him in addition to his work to ensure the gap is filled. He explains that the insults and acts to provoke him to misbehave (psychological

violence) eventually leads to the lack complete concern for the well-being of their children as such the children bear the brunt of the disdain she has for him:

The children...are not cared for properly. Quite recently, I had to wash the children's clothes myself, the twins. Our land lady who used to help no longer does so because she picked up a fight with her. The inadequate care for the children is due to her despising me... Even one of them caught pneumonia due to her lackadaisical behaviour towards our children.

For affective response, that is, the extent of emotional response of members of the family to stimuli (Dai & Wang, 2015) it is largely compromised. Affective response involves acknowledging activities of family members. Esi explains that her gesture of love and concern for her husband's well-being is met with a cold shoulder. This is because he no longer takes the extra food she prepares for him to take back to where he stays:

I perform my wifely duties cooking, washing, previously, I used to prepare food for him to take along on Monday after staying the weekend at my grandma's house where I stay with the children, but he no longer takes it.

Since he constantly compares his wife other women, he appears dissatisfied with everything she does. One way this plays out is his refusal to take food back home. The psychological abuse he makes his wife suffer means he is unable to reciprocate the care that this participant extends to him. Queen shares the expression of the absence of affective response by saying:

We were a happy family; the love for one another was there. At first, he takes the children so they can all go have fun at the mall. Now, all these fun moments have ceased. We used to go to church together; we had plans like finishing our house but now, nothing.

Due to the physical abuse, economic abuse and insults she suffers at the hands of her husband, coming together for entertainment, spiritual upliftment and the completion of tasks suffers in Queen's family. This is because infidelity and the existence of a personality disorder on the part of her husband shrouds his ability to concentrate on their family's prospects.

Affective involvement, the degree of concern and attention of family members to the activities of one another (Dai & Wang, 2015) is yet another marker for families in assessing proper functioning. The quotation below gives evidence to its non-availability:

As a family we do not go to church together anymore ... sometimes she goes and leaves the children alone in the house even while I am at work, so I must take them to school and bring them back (Kwesi, 39-years-old).

For Kwesi, his wife who disapproves of certain decisions he takes resulting in her physically abusing him and his children as well as raining insults on them leads to the absence of concern for the day to day dealings of her family which includes work and school. She sometimes plays no role in ensuring the smooth coordination of activities within the family leaving the burden on this participant on such occasions.

For behaviour control, which includes standards of acceptable behaviour, there are problems. Psychobiological needs like eating and sleeping remain unmet. In many instances, the varied needs of participants remain unattended to which includes sex for Araba. The desire for adequate provision and the absence of the provision of maintenance for the family indicates a breach in standards of prescribed behaviour. For Estelle's partner who should take up the role as father and breadwinner of the family his non-fulfilment of his duties creates problems in meeting needs such as eating and sleeping which are psychobiological needs:

My salary as a house help is not enough for feeding my son and I, paying my son's school fees I mean a whole lot. You know since the birth of our son when the abuse started, he will go out and come back late and because the sound of his coming wakes our baby up, I had to stay up with him. This is when he was an infant. When you do that God will punish you. Because our son was very young my work was to sell toffee at home so I can get small change to buy diapers for my son then. All this while, I got no help from him. Right now, the thought of where adequate provision will come for my son and I gives me sleepless nights.

Also, interpersonal socializing behaviour which involves family members and those in the community is compromised. This is seen as the absence of the feeling of a united family hence, the relationship of the family as a unit with the rest of the community is non-existent. Queen explains this in that “there is nothing like ‘us’ anymore.”

The findings of the study prove that the six dimensions of family functioning under the MMFF show problematic occurrences for each one of them as core family functions are disrupted by domestic violence. Emotional and affective ties are weakened and creating an unfriendly and unsafe environment. This can be attributed to the lack of commonly held values, symbols, and meanings among family members leading to violence and results in a decrease in communication, according to the MMFF model. Members of the family often disagree on decisions that are routinely made in the family and in these circumstances, as relates with this study, are unable to find common ground when it comes to decision-making like work and the determining the right amount of resources needed for the family (especially the children’s sustenance). Family members are unable to express themselves openly in a violent environments because trust is undermined giving the differing ideologies and the absence of consensus based on shared meanings. Once more, the unstable atmosphere stifles family members' emotional reactions, which is linked to a lack of communication or a communication that is of poor quality. All these have detrimental effects on affective responsiveness hence families of this nature as found in this study have members being generally moody, sad, quiet and distant with no form of family entertainment which is a key avenue for sharing positive attitudes and feelings. The reason for this is that family members in this study suffer from severe emotional and psychological effects, such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which negatively impacts the quality of feelings they have for one another.

Affective involvement is also compromised as estrangement of family members from each other occurs with family members particularly partners become isolated from each other with children mostly taking sides with the mother. Children taking sides with the mother is seen particularly in the accounts of Gift, Cynthia and Akosua where they intervene in calming the brewing tensions. Roles within the family that ensure the smooth running of everyday life are also impeded as parent-child relationships become strained because children become fearful, withdrawn, or exhibit behavioural problems. This is seen in the case of Esi's son as well as Asantewaa, Queen and Gloria's children. These children are either fearful or unreasonably quiet at certain points. The family, which should provide nurturing for children within it, now becomes a place for negative role modelling as children may develop negative attitudes towards their parent(s) as seen in the lack of respect or disregard for Asantewaa by her daughters. It can be noted that where the victims are female, the devastation on proper family functioning as a result of domestic violence are more far-reaching in patriarchal societies as it is the responsibility of women to make and maintain the home, As such caregiving becomes compromised where the physical and psychological strength to execute these duties is diminished as a result of experiencing violence. Behaviour control which includes relationships with family and community suffers in the event of violence hence it comes as no surprise that there is the withdrawal from family functions by Araba.

#### **4.8 Views of Participants on Dealing with Domestic Violence and Stakeholder Involvement**

Participants talk about ways they navigate their domestic violence situations as well as steps that can be taken for key stakeholders to adequately address the problem in the country. Views were varied as participants mention both legal as well as family or community involvement. With respect to how participants navigate the abuse they suffer one says:

I got help from friends, family, and church to overcome feelings of humiliation....I believe that no one should make their partners God, don't put your whole hope in them, and support yourself. This makes you less susceptible to violence, be independent and if violence occurs seek for help. The advice DOVVSU gives is timely, they call to check up on you. I'm very satisfied with the work they do. If you find a learned person in the family you belong, talk to the person, see a trusted pastor, take the advice, get the good advice from television programmes. Coiling into one's shell is not the solution. Don't make the abuse change you into something you are not. Be who you truly are rising above the turmoil (Araba, 40-years-old, female)

In proposing ways of handling abuse in intimate relationships, Nick mentions the need for effective counselling as a means of preventing such situations altogether. He says:

I believe the laws still work but couples more and more should be enlightened on the right behaviours in a marriage.

Unfortunately, one participant, unlike Araba showed no confidence in reporting the violence she experiences as her incessant complaints have largely yielded little result.

Honestly, I am tired I've reported severally to the police station, but I am told they do not dissolve marriages (Akosua, 37-years-old).

Participants' views on dealing with violence between intimate partners varied with some showing support for heavy punishment while others show support for counselling:

I think abusive partners should receive heavy punishment. My husband does not heed to advice. He deserves to be locked up and that should be the fate of others like him, and victims should receive compensation (Cynthia, 32-years-old).

Violence is a pervading issue; men are really beating their wives. It is a major problem, and they think they are getting away with it hence the need for stricter laws to ensure prevention (Asantewaa, 30-years-old, female).

I believe they should make laws against abuse stricter, like my husband for instance, they should imprison him (Nancy, 49-years-old).

Dave toes the line of prevention of the drastic effects of violence on the family and the need for addressing marital disputes and he says:

Parents and elders should help settle marital differences and children must not suffer from conflict between partners. Government has a role to play to ensure that conflict between

couples are handled in such a way that families of such nature do not become dysfunctional.

Many times, people who suffer violence may opt for more lenient ways of solving or navigating the abuse they suffer for the sake of children. This is the position taken by another participant and she says:

Since our child has a strong bond with the father, I think jail could be detrimental to children who are involved in terms of their welfare. Perpetrations can be made to sign an agreement for good behaviour (Emefa, 40-years-old).

For Kwesi separation is a way to go in situations where violence becomes an everyday unpreventable occurrence. This in his estimation is necessary to maintain the sanity of family members. He mentions that:

When counsellors come in, I think they should reconsider trying to keep the couple together for the sake of the children as such a toxic environment is detrimental to the children's well-being. Sometimes the best is to separate as the violence the children are exposed to takes a huge toll on them.

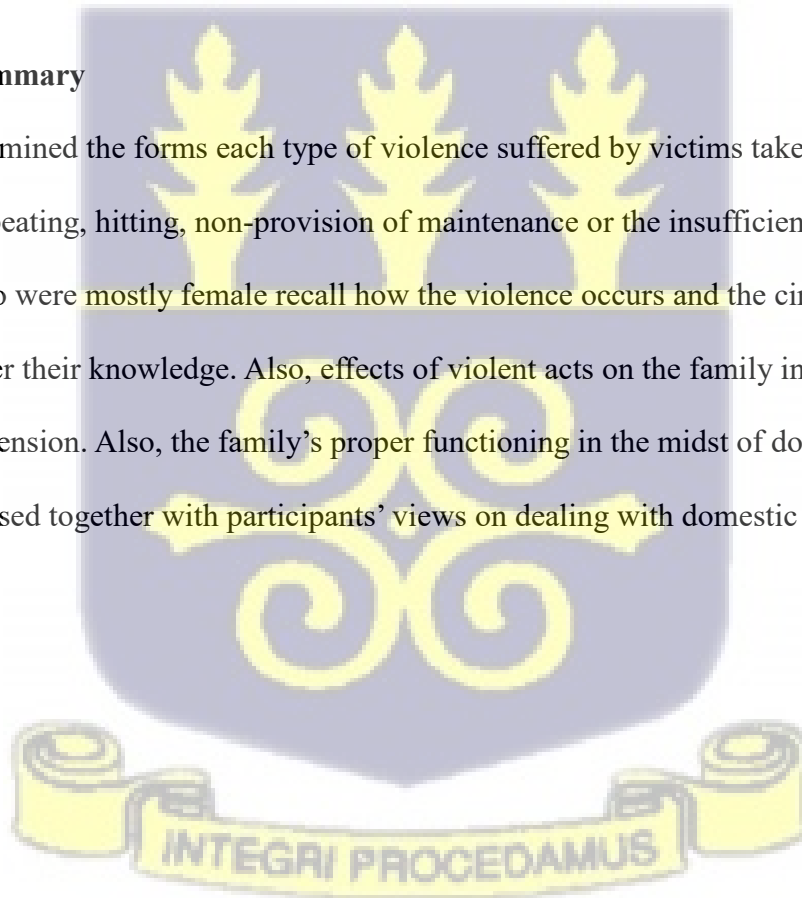
Essentially, children tend to associate family life with fear, instability, and emotional pain where violence occurs. Their self-concept can be profoundly affected and the symbolic meaning of home, love, and safety becomes corrupted.

The body of research on therapies for domestic partner violence survivors offers a great deal of support for the use of structured therapy and counselling in minimising the harmful effects of abuse, such as depression and PTSD symptoms (Eckhardt et al., 2013). However, counselling as a means of prevention of violence altogether is suggested by male participant, Nick. These initiatives, therapy and counselling, are predicated on causal logic of mediation, which holds that by altering the victim, the intervention will influence the abuser's behaviour despite not receiving services directly. This is largely the intervention strategy implemented by DOVVSU. This involves a difficult, two-step procedure, just like any other model for mediation where first and

foremost, the victim client must experience meaningful changes as a result of the intervention followed by alterations in the behaviour of the perpetrator. However, the efficacy of intervention can break down at either or both levels—failing to produce the desired changes in the victim and/or changing the victim in ways that fail to produce desired changes in the perpetrator's behaviour (Eckhardt et al., 2013). For the female participants, varied degrees of punishment would be effective strategies with no recourse to interventions channelled towards their rehabilitation as victims except for Araba. She mentions the need for a new beginning by opening up to the right people and cultivating an attitude of not wholly looking up to one's partner.

#### **4.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter examined the forms each type of violence suffered by victims take and included acts of humiliation, beating, hitting, non-provision of maintenance or the insufficiency thereof. In all, participants, who were mostly female recall how the violence occurs and the circumstances for its occurrence per their knowledge. Also, effects of violent acts on the family included tension, grief and apprehension. Also, the family's proper functioning in the midst of domestic and family violence is assessed together with participants' views on dealing with domestic violence.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to examine how spousal victims perceive the impacts of domestic violence on them and their children. This objective is premised on the need to adequately ascertain how family members suffer when violence occurs regardless of the form it takes and gender of the perpetrator. This chapter focuses on the key findings of this study which answer the research questions bordering on the types, reasons, and effects of domestic partner violence on the family as a unit. This chapter also discusses the conclusions of the study as well as recommendations based on the findings of the study.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

##### 5.2.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

In terms of marital status, nine (9) participants were married, while the remaining six (6) participants were cohabiting. The majority ethnic group of the participants interviewed was Akan, while two participants out of will did not specify their exact ethnic belonging, all other participants were willing to disclose this. Twelve (12) participants were female and three (3) were male victims of partner violence. The focus was on the ability of these families to perform their functions thoroughly. This formed the basis for five research objectives which were to tell the types of violence individuals experience from their intimate partners, factors that instigate abuse, the psychological, social, economic and physical impacts of the various acts of violence on family members as well as how the co-occurrence of domestic partner violence and child maltreatment play out.

### **5.2.2 Violence Individuals Experience from their Intimate Partners**

With respect to emotional or psychological violence, acts included provoking a partner to leave a union or expedite the complete dissolution of a union with perpetrators of violence being no longer interested in the relationship. Sometimes, partners were humiliated publicly to frustrate and psychologically disturb the abused partner. Also, perpetrators showed open disregard for the well-being of victims based on their utterances showing the absence of affection for their partner. Accusations of infidelity, denigrating statements, insults, threats to leave the marriage and/or take away children results in family distress, particularly for victims and their children. Also, participants recounted acts of violence such as beating, hitting with objects, slapping, choking and strangling all of which constitutes physical abuse. In addition to this, withholding money or not providing sufficient money for household upkeep or concentration on only one aspect of responsibilities for men, that is, only paying school fees were forms of economic violence found in this study. Acts of physical violence included choking, hitting (with objects), beating and slapping resulting in various forms of injuries for victims of such acts of violence.

### **5.2.3 The Factors that Instigate Partner Abuse**

In this study, nine main factors account for the perpetration of violence for both male and female perpetrators. They include the influence of patriarchy, the influence of a third party in the union, attitudes of partners, personality disorders/uncontrollable emotions, infidelity, a loss of interest in the marriage/relationship, household maintenance or economic upkeep, alcohol use and spiritual causes. This means the influence of male dominance ideologies, intrusion in the affairs of couples by those outside the union, patterns of behaviour, absence of sobriety when it comes to emotions, unfaithfulness, absence of willingness and desire to stay in the relationship and withholding the needed financial provision/resources all culminate in the occurrence domestic

partner violence. Also, the use of alcohol and supernatural causes are linked to domestic partner violence perpetration by partners.

#### **5.2.4 The Co-occurrence of Domestic Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment.**

In this study it was discovered that sometimes children bear the brunt of domestic violence perpetration not only as witnesses but sometimes as victims. This happens where the abuse parent extends anger, frustration and deep dislike for the abused partner towards the children. Some children of participants receive threats to be stabbed, are slapped and are beaten beyond the normal levels of reprimand (giving severe corporal punishment) meted out to children in the society and even neglected. In this study, it is seen that dislike for the abused parent results in abuse towards the children as they are viewed as products of the victim.

#### **5.2.5 Effects of Domestic Violence on Participants' Family Psychologically.**

The study found that domestic violence affects the psyche in varied ways (Aihie, 2009; Bhuller, 2022). For the families in this study, it was found that effective and pleasant communication which arouses the right set of feelings among family members is impossible as these families experience hurtful words, actions and inactions such as assault and economic deprivation respectively. For some of these families, individuals battle suicidal thoughts or become detached from each other as they are generally moody in the household. Tensions affect the sense of belonging of family members and participants together with their children experience great feelings of fear and apprehension towards the abusive partner.

#### **5.2.6 Effects of Domestic Violence on Participants' Family Physically.**

In this study, notable negative physical health outcomes from participants who experience violence are found. These include headache from hitting on the head, pain in the ear from

constantly receiving slaps as well as eye injuries and injuries from beating as well as stomach ulcers and high blood pressure. Some of these injuries were not taken to a health facility for attention due to financial constraints. One of the participants alludes to health implications for her son witnessing the violence she suffers. In all, physical impacts of violence on the family are more pronounced where adult victims and children are being abused physically.

#### **5.2.7 Effects of Domestic Violence on Participants' Family Socio-economically.**

Though some participants mention that their children's school work and play is not negatively affected by the violence which occurs, one participant indicates that it is a possible outcome of domestic violence in the family. Also, resources to seek for medical attention, clothing, food and shelter become a near impossibility especially with the occurrence of economic abuse by a male partner. Adequate care and attention to the needs of family members thus becomes a problem and mothers mostly must go out of their way in ensuring the gaps are filled. Spending quality time together as a family is impossible due to the existing relationship strain especially where child maltreatment co-occurs with partner violence.

#### **5.3 Conclusions**

The effects of domestic violence on adult victims and children are numerous and life changing as it stands in the way of these families to live meaningfully as a unit. If family synergy is to be considered, hence, the family's proper functioning, these families are unable to work together to see to the needs of each member hence fulfil the mandate that families have towards their members which includes the socialization of children, giving emotional comfort, and giving an identity to the individuals that make up the family (Arslan, 2023). This is the case where there is a negative attitudinal change in children, the inability to sufficiently meet the physical needs of family members as well as the absence comfort giving the psychological or mental breakdown of

victims of acts of violence. Across the six dimensions of the MMFF, domestic violence negatively affects outcomes in these areas in that there are difficulties in problem solving, behaviour control, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, communication and family role. When violence occurs, there is decreased family communication. Family members disagree on issues that are routinely made in the family in these circumstances and would not reach a consensus. Also, family members are unable to express themselves freely in a violent environment, which undermines trust and open communication which has a detrimental effect on affective responsiveness. This is due to the serious emotional and psychological effects on family members, who may suffer from anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem, all of which have an impact on the depth of their interpersonal relationships. Victims who emotionally disengage or distance themselves from the situation also compromise affective involvement making it difficult to solve problems effectively. The family's ability to support its members is jeopardized because it is challenging to continue working or being financially independent when there is domestic abuse.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **Short-Medium Term Interventions**

Since most interventions in Ghana by DOVVSU are channelled towards primarily stopping the violence experienced, it is seen that very little resources are available in ensuring that victims of domestic violence get their lives back. The Domestic Violence Fund set in place together with the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 does not receive consistent and sufficient funds with the most funding received in the year 2022. This calls for the adequate allocation of sufficient and consistent government funds to solve the issue of having domestic violence victims and children find their feet and live their lives to the very best given government support. This goes beyond

the provision of sufficient government owned shelters nationwide. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection which oversees the activities of DOVVSU in addition to the Ghana Police Service must roll out policies aimed at equipping victims with, first of all, a means for economic independence as economic violence is the highest reported form of violence by women, the most victimized group of people when it comes to domestic violence perpetration. This could be in the form of training and skill development in various vocations such as craft-work to augment incomes of these victims of violence mostly suffering economic violence (economic deprivation) in addition to other forms of violence. These women more often than not are being treated poorly as a result of power dynamics which support male dominance in society even to the point of males having greater earning power than females. Also, psychological counselling should be extended to children who suffer violence directly or indirectly in addition to adult victims to ensure a stable psyche necessary for engaging in everyday activities such as work, school and play. Efforts should be made to make these services easily accessible (close to the community DOVVSU unit) and in closed spaces where victims would feel very comfortable to open up due to the absence of others who are not directly involved in the counselling service being rendered. Counselling outcomes should be case specific and must serve the best interest of each individual concerned. This would improve each family member's contribution hence positively impacting the overall family function. Since associations and shared meanings account for behaviour, attitudes can be unlearnt and learnt through such counselling services where perpetrators can be required to take programmes which reshape negative ideologies which creates volatile environments in families with domestic partner violence perpetration. This would go a long way to effect the necessary rehabilitation. In this way, the negative repercussions of violence which affects the family's proper function would be curtailed.

In addition to counselling, health services which provide the factual basis for the incidence of domestic violence must be expanded and be well-equipped to improve reporting rates and provide the evidence needed for justice processes which can serve as a deterrent to offenders or potential offenders.

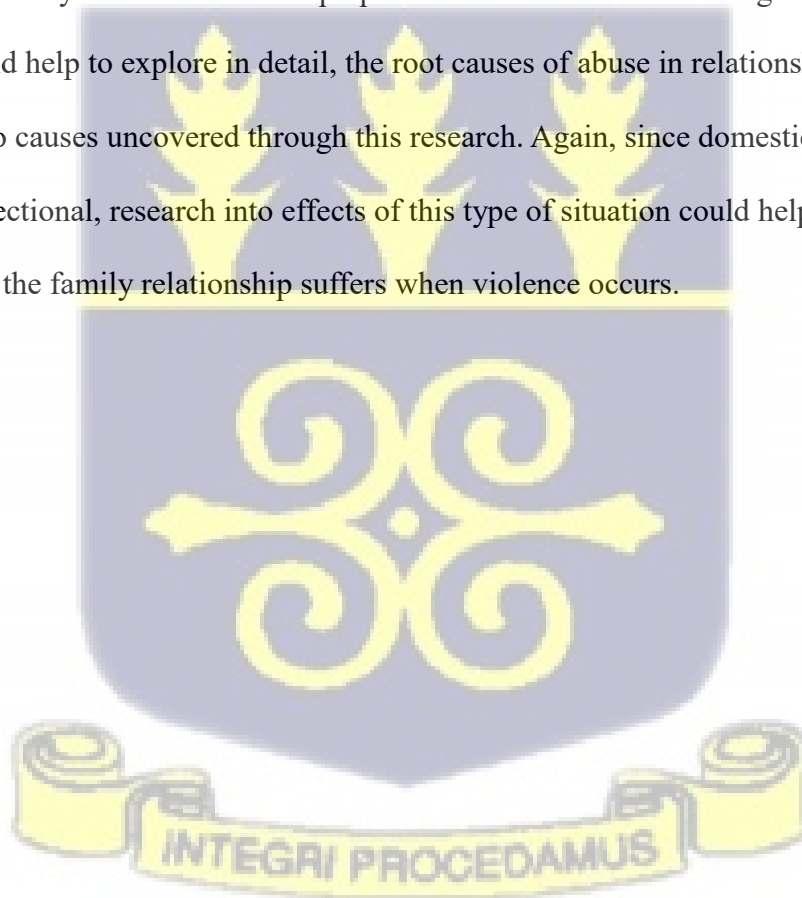
### **Long-term Interventions**

As part of efforts to break societal norms which perpetrate violence, traditional and religious leaders such as chiefs of communities and leaders in churches and mosques can lead efforts towards re-socialisation as gate-keepers of cultural change. This is because platforms exist to reach a wide number of audiences for change. As an addition to these efforts, civil society organisations can consequently intensify advocacy messages towards behavioural change using indigenous knowledge. The media could use their platforms to push messages further with support from the community gatekeepers and government. For government support and advocacy, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should be involved to drive conversations towards mitigating this menace.

For a functional domestic violence response system, there is the need to establish data systems which are interconnected, well-defined and properly structured. This means integrating legal, health and social/community support systems. Legal services provide a deterrent to perpetrating violence while health and community support ensure a sustained recovery process for victims. Feedback from advocacy efforts of civil society organisations can improve policy making and resourcing. By building the capacity of individuals across systems, institutionalising budgets and establishing measureable indicators to establish positive change, each stakeholder fulfils its role in tandem with others.

In this study, some participants could not adequately pinpoint the effects that the abuse which happens within the family had on their children. For these participants, children did not suffer academically or no marked differences in behaviour were observed. Effects of violence on the children were mostly based on the abused parent's perceptions or estimations of impact on them. As such, further research could seek the direct views from children. Though ethical concerns exist for such a move, benefits of hearing the voices of children would enrich stakeholders with the necessary amount of information to not only reach out to adult victims of domestic violence but also children who find themselves in families of such nature.

Also, the further study on reasons for the perpetration of domestic violence given by perpetrators themselves would help to explore in detail, the root causes of abuse in relationships and give more evidence to causes uncovered through this research. Again, since domestic violence is sometimes bidirectional, research into effects of this type of situation could help determine in more detail how the family relationship suffers when violence occurs.



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## APPENDIX

### UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

#### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COLLECTING DATA ON THE TOPIC, “IN DARK DAYS, IN DIRE STRAITS: DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN GHANA

I am Demakpor Anaglate, a Masters’ student at the University of Ghana and I would like to humbly ask about your family’s experience with respect to domestic and family violence. Your participation is purely by choice, and you could opt out of the study if you so desire or refuse to answer a particular question. However, your input would go a long way in informing law and policy makers on how to effectively deal with this situation. I would take about an hour of your time. I would like to seek your permission to record the interview and the information given would solely be used for this study and your identity would be duly protected.

Consent forms would then be filled. Thereafter, the discussion starts.

#### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADULTS (either couple)**

##### **Section A: Background information of participant/Demographic Characteristics**

1. What is your age?
2. Which sex do you identify yourself with?
3. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
4. What is your marital status?
5. How long has this relationship/marriage lasted?
6. How many children do you have (if any)?
7. What is your religious affiliation/ denomination?

##### **Section B: The Type of Violence Experienced by Participants**

8. What physical violence do you experience/ have you experienced? (Slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating or sexual violence)
9. How long do you experience this violence? / What is the duration of the violence act?
10. How often do you experience this/these?

11. What psychological violence do you experience/ have you experienced? (Insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation, threats of harm, threats to take away children)
12. How long do you experience this violence? / What is the duration of the violent act?
13. How often do you experience this/these?
14. What economic violence do you experience/ have you experienced? (Restricting access to financial resources and employment)
15. How long do you experience this violence? / What is the duration of the violent act?
16. How often do you experience this/these?
17. What social violence do you experience/ have you experienced? (Isolating a person from family and friends)
18. How long do you experience this violence? / What is the duration of the violent act?
19. How often do you experience this/these?

**Section C: The factors that influence the abusive behaviour (reasons)**

20. What are the reasons for the physical violence you experience?
21. What are the reasons for the psychological violence you experience?
22. What are the reasons for the economic violence you experience?
23. What are the reasons for the social violence you experience?

**Section D: The effect of violent acts on the family relationship**

24. In what ways has the physical violence you experience affected the family socially? (Education, religion, family relationship, interaction with friends)
25. In what ways has the physical violence you experience affected the family economically?
26. In what ways has the physical violence you experience affected the family emotionally?
27. In what ways has the physical violence you experience affected the family psychologically? (Mental well-being)
28. In what ways has the psychological violence you experience affected the family socially? (Education, religion, family relationship, interaction with friends)
29. In what ways has the psychological violence you experience affected the family economically?
30. In what ways has the psychological violence you experience affected the family emotionally?
31. In what ways has the psychological violence you experience affected the family psychologically? (Mental well-being)

32. In what ways has the economic violence you experience affected the family socially?  
(Education, religion, family relationship, interaction with friends)
33. In what ways has the economic violence you experience affected the family economically?
34. In what ways has the economic violence you experience affected the family emotionally?
35. In what ways has the economic violence you experience affected the family psychologically?  
(Mental well-being)
36. In what ways has the social violence you experience affected the family socially? (Education, religion, family relationship, interaction with friends)
37. In what ways has the social violence you experience affected the family economically?
38. In what ways has the social violence you experience affected the family emotionally?
39. In what ways has the social violence you experience affected the family psychologically?  
(Mental well-being)

**Questions concerning the child in the relationship (if any)**

40. What type of violence has your child/ have your children also experienced?
41. In what ways have the violent act (s) affected them socially?
42. In what ways have the violent acts affected them economically?
43. In what ways have the violent acts affected them emotionally?
44. In what ways have the violent acts affected them psychologically?
45. What efforts have you made to ensure that the children do not experience violence?
46. How did you cope during the lockdown period? Did his/her actions towards you grow worse or improve? How did it express itself?

**Opinion on violence in the family and how it can be solved.**

47. What is your opinion on violence in the family and what measures do you think can be put in place to address the situation?

Thank you so much for the time given for the interview. The information given would be very useful in dealing with this occurrence which affects the lives of many individuals.

