

SAMVEN'S RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY UNIT

**THE CURRENT STATE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN AND
CHILDREN IN GHANA
(A CASE STUDY OF LA-COMMUNITY)**

BY

SAMUEL KWAKU OBENG

JULY, 2008

ABSTRACT

This study examined the current state of domestic violence among women and children in Ghana. A survey design was used for the research. The convenient sampling procedure was used to select thirty (30) men and women in the ratio of 1:1 for examination. SPSS software and Microsoft Excel were used for all the analysis. Frequencies, percentages and bar graphs were the statistical tools used to analyze the data.

From the research, 66.7% (majority) of the respondents confirmed that, despite the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill, violence is still on the increase. Also, the average rate of domestic violence in Ghana is rated at 54.5%. Further more, miscommunication, Abuse of previlage as a mother, wife, father or husband, Ignorance, Poverty, Cultural practices, Illitracy, Inhumanity and so forth are some of the factors promoting domestic violence in Ghana. Moreover, some of the effects of domestic violence are: Victimes become timid and insecure, Broken homes or increase in divorcees leading to truancy on the part of childrean and increase in diviant behaviours in the community, High prevalence of single or unmarried people, Child abuse or personal abuse and so forth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF TABLES	25-27
LIST OF FIGURES	32-35
Chapter	1-30
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Aims and objectives of the Study	3
Research Hypothesis	3
The significance of the Study	4
Limitations of the Study	4
Definition of Terms	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6-22
3. METHODOLOGY	23-24
4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS	25-28
5. SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29-30
REFERENCES	31
APPENDICES	32-36

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Violence against women and children continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures, and maims – physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. It is one of the most pervasive of human rights violations, denying women and children equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. Violence against women is present in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. Even though most societies proscribe violence against women, the reality is that violations against women’s human rights are often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

On 21st February 2007, Ghana’s Parliament passed the much-awaited Domestic Violence Bill (DVB), which had been laid before it in 2003 and had been the subject of heated debate. The process leading to the passage of the law involved not only the introduction of new legislation, but also confronting a social system that tolerates various forms of violence against women and children, especially in the context of gender relations and in the domestic sphere. It is against this background that this study is being conducted to ascertain the current state of domestic violence.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Women and children are often in great danger in the place where they should be safest: within their families. For many, 'home' is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of somebody close to them – somebody they should be able to trust. Those victimized suffer physically and psychologically. They are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further repercussions. Their human rights are denied and their lives are stolen from them by the ever-present threat of violence. On 21st February 2007, Ghana's Parliament passed the much-awaited Domestic Violence Bill (DVB). The question is, did the law change, solve, reduce, or cut down the rate of domestic violence in the country? Domestic violence is still going on unabatedly. However, this study seeks to investigate how women and girls are being treated at homes and places after the passage of the domestic violence bill.

1.2 General objective of the study

To investigate the current state of domestic violence among women and girls in Ghana.

Objectives

1. To identify the factors that account for domestic violence among women and children in Ghana.
2. To examine the effects of domestic violence among women and children in Ghana.
3. To come out with suggestions and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following question:

1. Did the passage of Domestic Violence Bill reduce the rate of violences against women and children in Ghana?
2. How do you rate the current state of domestic violence in Ghana?
3. What do you think are some of the factors causing domestic violence in Ghana?
4. What are some of the effects of domestic violence in Ghana?
5. What do you think the government should do to alleviate domestic violence in Ghana?
6. What do you think the community should do to help reduce domestic violence in Ghana?

1.4 Methodology

1.5 The significance of the study

This study would be a useful tool in the hands of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. In addition, it is envisaged that the result of this study would help policy and law makers of the nation to help solve the problem. This would also enable the nation to adopt strategies, which would help to achieve the objectives of the Ministry of Women

and Children Affairs. Finally, the findings of the study would provide evidence for further research work.

1.6 Limitation of the study

The study was limited to some selected homes in Accra. The limitation is significant because of

- Financial constraints- this poses difficulty in interviewing so many homes and places.
- Time- because the study was undertaken within timeframe of 5 months.
- Data collection – the distribution and collection of questionnaires were time consuming because of the location and dispersed nature of the respondents.

1.7 Organization of Study

The study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 consists of the introduction, statement of the problem, objective of study, significance of the study, hypothesis, and limitation of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews existing literature based on the consequences and the state of domestic violence in Ghana. Chapter 3 consists of the methodology. Chapter 4 consists of data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the main findings. Chapter 5 concludes the study with summary, conclusion and recommendations.

1.8 Definition of terms

For the purpose of the study, certain words and terms were used which may not be familiar to readers. Such words and terms have been explained as follows:

Primary data: - This is the name given to data that were collected under the control and supervision of the person or the organization making particular study.

Secondary data: - This is the name given to data that are being used for some purpose other than that for which they were originally collected.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the extant literature on the current state of domestic violence among women and girls in Ghana. The section primarily deals with what other authors have done with regard to this subject matter.

2.1 The Current Status of Domestic Violence in Ghana

To a large extent, views about, and practices within, marriage that subordinate women to men have remained unchallenged in Ghanaian society, such that when women are physically assaulted or sexually abused within conjugal relations, it is not regarded as unusual. Consequently, many women tolerate and remain in abusive relationships and do not complain publicly about their ordeals because such issues are considered ‘private’, although they may complain to family members or their pastors who usually counsel them to be patient or to behave better (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

Public effort aimed at addressing cases of abuse and domestic violence in Ghana came to the fore in 1997 following a nation-wide study on the prevalence, patterns and responses to gender violence undertaken by a partnership of NGOs under the leadership of the Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre. One in three women and girls surveyed had experienced physical, psychological or emotional abuse. This contributed to the establishment of the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU, now renamed the Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit, DOVVSU) by the Police Administration in 1998 initially

in Accra and Kumasi to respond to the increasing reports of abuse and violence against women and children. By 2002, WAJU offices had been extended to all regions, but reported increases in violence, the sheer volume of cases, the attitudes of police personnel, inadequacies in the Criminal Code and family and societal pressures on complainants led to the push for more comprehensive legislation to deal with cases of domestic violence (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

The draft Domestic Violence legislation was prepared by the office of the Attorney General in 2002, and was meant to offer a holistic and effective legal framework for addressing domestic violence in Ghana; provide broad redress for cases of domestic violence, sanctions on perpetrators and protective remedies for victims; and to improve Ghana's compliance with its legal obligations under international human rights standards. The Bill contains provisions criminalizing various acts of violence – physical, sexual (within or outside of marriage, and between a wide variety of individuals in a domestic relationship including family and non-family members such as house-helpers and people who do not physically live together, economic and psychological abuse, intimidation and harassment. It makes provision for protection orders, psychological and rehabilitative services for victims or perpetrators, and processes for promotion of reconciliation (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

However, this important initiative was compromised by the shallow understanding of gender-based violence as an equality issue both within government and some organs of the state and among the general public. In contrast what emerged was fixed attitudes

about women's inferior status in marriage, the tendency to blame women for precipitating acts of violence against them such as dressing provocatively, or being unfaithful. Supporters of the bill and gender activists were portrayed as purveying foreign ideas that threatened Ghanaian cultural beliefs and practices, in particular, the sanctity of marriage and men's rights within it. The Bill was subject to an unprecedented nation-wide consultation on the grounds that its provisions had serious implications for family life and gender relations. The National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation was formed by individuals and human rights organizations which organized from 2003, a nationwide consultation to win support for passage of the DVB. Several strategies were adopted by the Coalition including a pictorial campaign entitled 'Faces of Violence,' a collection of pictures of abused women, projecting 'voices' and 'faces' of real victims of abuse in the press, a documentary on domestic violence, newspaper articles, radio & TV discussions, meetings with parliamentarians and lobbying members of parliamentarians. The major challenge faced by the Coalition was addressing the widespread view that the bill would endanger marriages and a narrow focus around the marital rape provision rather than on the bill in its entirety (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

After a protracted debate on the content of the DVB in both the media and Parliament, the law was finally passed after a number of amendments had been made to it. The law, which is in three parts, prohibits domestic violence within an existing or previous relationship and defines domestic violence to include physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuse. It also defines a domestic relationship and provides that a single act can amount to domestic violence. There are provisions on the filing of complaints to the

police, police assistance and arrests by the police. The second part of the Act makes provisions for protection orders, and procedures to activate these. The final part of the Act covers miscellaneous provisions including the relation of the Act to the Criminal Code, the promotion of reconciliation by the Court, publication of proceedings, criminal charges and protection, civil claims for damages, regulations and interpretation.

In apparent reaction to the real financial constraints faced by many victims of gender based violence and societal pressures on them not to report abuse, the Act has established a “Victims of Domestic Violence Support Fund.” The fund is to be applied to towards the basic material support of victims of domestic violence, tracing the families of domestic violence, the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of domestic violence, the construction of reception shelter for victims of 3 domestic violence, and their training and capacity needs. These funds are to be raised from voluntary contributions by individuals, organizations and the private sector, and Parliamentary votes, as well as moneys from sources approved by the Ministry of Finance (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

While the Act did not explicitly repeal § 42(g) of the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29) that justifies the use of force in marriage, it provides that “The use of violence in the domestic setting is not justified on the basis of consent.”

The passage of the Act has been lauded as an important first step towards addressing gender-based violence in Ghana. However civil right groups and the state-instituted Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) have argued that the retention of § 42(g) of the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29) reinforces popular notions that

marriage serves as an automatic consent to sex, and would make it difficult, if not impossible, for women who experience sexual abuse from their spouses to seek redress (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

Civil rights groups are also aware of the enormous challenges to be overcome in its implementation. These include training and sensitization for judges and magistrates, tracking cases reported to the court and building jurisprudence around the Act. Ensuring commitment of funds in the national budget to domestic violence is also a challenge as in practice government has relied on donors to fund gender work in Ghana. For civil society itself, several challenges remain to be addressed; these include developing broad based education on the contents of the law and translating the law into different Ghanaian languages; developing indicators and tools to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Act and its consequences; tracking cases that go to court to assess the arguments advanced by both lawyers and judges, and finding ways to hold government accountable for the commitments it has made under the law (The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002).

2.2 Theoretical Frame Work

2.3 Editorial

According to the World Health Organization (1996), the term 'domestic' includes violence by an intimate partner and by other family members, wherever this violence takes place and in whatever form. In recent years, there has been a greater understanding of the problem of domestic violence, its causes and consequences, and an international

consensus has developed on the need to deal with the issue. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly some 20 years ago, the decade-old Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, all reflect this consensus. But progress has been slow because attitudes are deeply entrenched and, to some extent, because effective strategies to address domestic violence are still being defined. As a result, women worldwide continue to suffer, with estimates varying from 20 to 50 per cent from country to country. This appalling toll will not be eased until families, governments, institutions and civil society organizations address the issue directly. Women and children have a right to State protection even within the confines of the family home. Violence against women is perpetrated when legislation, law enforcement and judicial systems condone or do not recognize domestic violence as a crime. One of the major challenges is to end impunity for perpetrators. So far, only 44 countries (approximately) have adopted specific legislation to address domestic violence. As this Digest demonstrates, domestic violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental and above all, a human rights issue. Much has been done to create awareness and demonstrate that change is not only necessary, it is also possible. Now that strategies for dealing with it are becoming clearer, there is no excuse for inaction (Germaine A., 1994).

Violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures, and maims – physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. It is one of the most pervasive of human rights violations, denying women and girls equality, security, dignity,

self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms (WHO, 1999). Violence against women is present in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age (WHO, 1999). Even though most societies proscribe violence against women, the reality is that violations against women's human rights are often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets. Moreover, when the violation takes place within the home, as is very often the case, the abuse is effectively condoned by the tacit silence and the passivity displayed by the state and the law-enforcing machinery (WHO, 1999). The global dimensions of this violence are alarming, as highlighted by studies on its incidence and prevalence. No society can claim to be free of such violence, the only variation is in the patterns and trends that exist in countries and regions. Specific groups of women are more vulnerable, including minority groups, indigenous and migrant women, refugee women and those in situations of armed conflict, women in institutions and detention, women with disabilities, female children, and elderly women (WHO, 1999).

This Digest focuses specifically on domestic violence – the most prevalent yet relatively hidden and ignored form of violence against women and girls. While reliable statistics are hard to come by, studies estimate that, from country to country, between 20 and 50 per cent of women have experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner or family member (United Nations, 1989). For the purpose of this Digest, the term “domestic violence” includes violence against women and girls by an intimate partner, including a cohabiting partner, and by other family members, whether this violence occurs within or beyond the confines of the home. While recognizing that other forms of violence are equally worthy of attention, this Digest does not cover the violence inflicted

on women by strangers outside the home – in public places such as streets, workplaces or in custody, or in situations of civil conflict or war. It does not look at the issue of violence against domestic workers, as this is perpetrated by individuals who are not related. In other words, the term “domestic” here refers to the types of relationships involved rather than the place where the violent act occurs (Back et al., 1982).

The Digest attempts to set out the magnitude and universality of domestic violence against women and girls, and its impact on the rights of women and children.

It emphasizes the need for coordinated and integrated policy responses; enhancing partnerships between stakeholders; setting up mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating programmes and policies; implementing existing legislation; and ensuring greater transparency and accountability from governments in order to eliminate violence against women and girls (Win E., 1995).

2.4 Definitions and Key Concepts

There is no universally accepted definition of violence against women. Some human rights activists prefer a broad-based definition that includes "structural violence" such as poverty, and unequal access to health and education (United Nations, 1989). Others have argued for a more limited definition in order not to lose the actual descriptive power of the term.² In any case, the need to develop specific operational definitions has been acknowledged so that research and monitoring can become more specific and have greater cross-cultural applicability.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (United Nations, 1989). This definition refers to the gender-based roots of violence, recognizing that "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men." It broadens the definition of violence by including both the physical and psychological harm done towards women, and it includes acts in both private and public life. The Declaration defines violence against women as encompassing, but not limited to, three areas: violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the State (United Nations, 1989).

Domestic violence, as defined for this Digest, includes violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through:

Physical abuse such as slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, and murder. It also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband's brother) (United Nations, 1989).

Sexual abuse such as coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others (United Nations, 1989).

Psychological abuse which includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation (United Nations, 1989).

Economic abuse includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc. Acts of omission are also included in this Digest as a form of violence against women and girls. Gender bias that discriminates in terms of nutrition, education and access to health care amounts to a violation of women's rights. It should be noted that although the categories above are listed separately, they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they often go hand in hand. “Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women...” (United Nations, 1989)

2.4.1 Domestic Violence

The family is often equated with sanctuary – a place where individuals seek love, safety, security, and shelter. But the evidence shows that it is also a place that imperils lives, and breeds some of the most drastic forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls. Violence in the domestic sphere is usually perpetrated by males who are, or who have been, in positions of trust and intimacy and power – husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other relatives (UNICEF, 1999). Domestic violence is in most cases violence perpetrated by men against women. Women

can also be violent, but their actions account for a small percentage of domestic violence. Violence against women is often a cycle of abuse that manifests itself in many forms throughout their lives. Even at the very beginning of her life, a girl may be the target of sex-selective abortion or female infanticide in cultures where son preference is prevalent. During childhood, violence against girls may include enforced malnutrition, lack of access to medical care and education, incest, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and forced prostitution or bonded labour (UNICEF, 1999). Some go on to suffer throughout their adult lives – battered, raped and even murdered at the hands of intimate partners. Other crimes of violence against women include forced pregnancy, abortion or sterilization, and harmful traditional practices such as dowry-related violence, sati (the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband), and killings in the name of honour (UNICEF, 1999).

2.5 Physical abuse

A growing body of research studies confirms the prevalence of physical violence in all parts of the globe, including the estimates of 20 to 50 per cent of women from country to country that have experienced domestic violence. Statistics are grim no matter where in the world one looks (UNICEF, 1999). Data from industrialized and developing countries as well as from transitional countries provide an overview of the global problem. The data in this table focus only on physical assault (UNICEF, 1999). There are few comparable statistics on psychological violence, sexual abuse, and murder of women at the hands of intimate partners and other family members. As already mentioned, physical

violence is usually accompanied by psychological abuse and in many cases by sexual assault (UNICEF, 1999).

2.6 Sexual abuse and rape in intimate relationships

Sexual abuse and rape by an intimate partner is not considered a crime in most countries, and women in many societies do not consider forced sex as rape if they are married to, or cohabiting with, the perpetrator (UNICEF, 1999). The assumption is that once a woman enters into a contract of marriage, the husband has the right to unlimited sexual access to his wife. Surveys in many countries reveal that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of women report being forced to have sex with their intimate partner. Some countries have begun to legislate against marital rape (UNICEF, 1999). These include Australia, Austria, Barbados, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad & Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Although provision of such laws represents considerable progress, it is often difficult for a woman to press charges because of the evidential rules concerning the crime (UNICEF, 1999).

2.7 Psychological and emotional abuse

Because psychological violence is harder to capture in quantitative studies, a full picture of the deeper and more insidious levels of violence defies quantification. Victim-survivors report that ongoing psychological violence – emotional torture and living under terror – is often more unbearable than the physical brutality, with mental stress leading to

a high incidence of suicide and suicide attempts (UNICEF, 1999). A close correlation between domestic violence and suicide has been established based on studies in the United States, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Peru, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Suicide is 12 times as likely to have been attempted by a woman who has been abused than by one who has not. In the United States, as many as 35 to 40 per cent of battered women attempt suicide. In Sri Lanka, the number of suicides by girls and women may also experience abuse. While the impact of physical abuse may be more 'visible' than psychological scarring, repeated humiliation and insults, forced isolation, limitations on social mobility, constant threats of violence and injury, and denial of economic resources are more subtle and insidious forms of violence (UNICEF, 1999).

The intangible nature of psychological abuse makes it harder to define and report, leaving the woman in a situation where she is often made to feel mentally destabilized and powerless. Jurists and human rights experts and activists have argued that the physical, sexual and psychological abuse, sometimes with fatal outcomes, inflicted on women is comparable to torture in both its nature and severity (UNICEF, 1999). It can be perpetrated intentionally, and committed for the specific purposes of punishment, intimidation, and control of the woman's identity and behaviour. It takes place in situations where a woman may seem free to leave, but is held prisoner by fear of further violence against herself and her children, or by lack of resources, family, legal or community support (UNICEF, 1999).

2.8 Sexual abuse of children and adolescents

Considering the taboo in most countries that surrounds incest or the sexual abuse of children and adolescents within the family, this is one of the most invisible forms of violence (UNICEF, 1999). Because the crime is perpetrated most often by a father, stepfather, grandfather, brother, uncle, or another male relative in a position of trust, the rights of the child are usually sacrificed in order to protect the name of the family and that of the adult perpetrator. However, studies have shown that from 40 to 60 per cent of known sexual assaults within the family are committed against girls aged 15 years and younger, regardless of region or culture (UNICEF, 1999). A recent study in the Netherlands showed that 45 per cent of the victims of sexual violence within the domestic sphere are under the age of 18. Of these, girls are far more likely to be victims of incest than boys (UNICEF, 1999).

2.9 Forced prostitution

Forced prostitution or other kinds of commercial exploitation by male partners or parents is another form of violence against women and children reported worldwide (UNICEF, 1999). Destitute families, unable to support their children, often hire out or sell their children, who may then be forced into prostitution. Very often the young girl is sent as a domestic worker, in which case she may be physically and sexually exploited by her employers. For example, in West Africa – from Senegal to Nigeria – tens of thousands of children of destitute families are reportedly sent to the Middle East each year, many of them ending up as prostitutes (UNICEF, 1999). In South Africa, child prostitution is on the rise and has become an increasingly organized activity. In certain hill districts of

Nepal, prostitution has become an almost 'traditional' source of income. Women and girls are tricked or forced by their husbands and relatives into being trafficked to India for prostitution (UNICEF, 1999).

In the poor rural areas of Thailand, where poverty has given rise to the phenomenon of debt bondage, it is believed that it is the daughter's duty to sacrifice herself for the well-being of her family. Traffickers buy the "labour" of young women and girls in exchange for money. The high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country has been attributed to this trafficking in young girls (UNICEF, 1999). In Northern Ghana and parts of Togo, girls are "donated" to priests, and are forced to live as "wives" and submit sexually to the shrine priests in return for protection for the family. A similar practice exists in southern India where young women and girls (*devadasis*) are "donated" to serve a temple; and very often end up being prostituted (UNICEF, 1999).

2.10 Traditional and cultural practices affecting the health and lives of women

Around the world, women and girls suffer the harmful and life-threatening effects of traditional and cultural practices that continue under the guise of cultural and social conformism and religious beliefs. Examples include:

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): It has been estimated that nearly 130 million women worldwide have undergone FGM and that approximately two million undergo the procedure every year (UNICEF, 1999).

2.10.1 Dowry-related violence

Even though India has legally abolished the institution of dowry, dowry-related violence is actually on the rise. More than 5,000 women are killed annually by their husbands and in-laws, who burn them in “accidental” kitchen fires if their ongoing demands for dowry before and after marriage are not met. An average of five women a day are burned, and many more cases go unreported. Deaths by kitchen fires are also on the rise, for example, in certain regions of Pakistan. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reports that at least four women are burned to death daily by husbands and family members as a result of domestic disputes.

2.10.2 Acid attacks

Sulphuric acid has emerged as a cheap and easily accessible weapon to disfigure and sometimes kill women and girls for reasons as varied as family feuds, inability to meet dowry demands, and rejection of marriage proposals. In Bangladesh, it is estimated that there are over 200 acid attacks each year (UNICEF, 1999).

2.10.3 Killing in the name of honour

In several countries in the world including, but not limited to, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey, women are killed in order to uphold the “honour” of the family (UNICEF, 1999). Any reason – alleged adultery, premarital relationships (with or without sexual relations), rape, falling in love with a person of whom the family disapproves – are all reason enough for a male member of the family to kill the woman concerned. In 1997, more than 300 women were victims of these so-called “honour”

crimes in just one province of Pakistan (UNICEF, 1999). In Jordan, the official toll is rising and in reality the numbers are higher because many such murders are recorded as suicides or accidents. Victim-survivors of attempted murders are forced to remain in protective custody, knowing that leaving custody would result in death at the hands of the family. The penal codes in Jordan that govern crimes of honour also sanction killing by making the penalty disproportionately lenient, particularly if the crime is committed by boys under 18 years of age (UNICEF, 1999).

2.10.4 Early marriages

Early marriage, with or without the consent of the girl, constitutes a form of violence as it undermines the health and autonomy of millions of young girls. The legal minimum age of marriage is usually lower for females than for males (UNICEF, 1999). In many countries, the minimum legal age for marriage with parental consent is considerably lower than without it; more than 50 countries allow marriage at 16 or below with parental consent. Early marriage leads to childhood/ teenage pregnancy, and can expose the girl to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease (UNICEF, 1999)s. It is also associated with adverse health effects for her children, such as low birth weight. Furthermore, it has an adverse effect on the education and employment opportunities of girls (UNICEF, 1999).

2.11 Causes of Domestic Violence

There is no one single factor to account for violence perpetrated against women.

Increasingly, research has focused on the inter-relatedness of various factors that should improve our understanding of the problem within different cultural contexts (UNICEF, 1999). Several complex and interconnected institutionalized social and cultural factors have kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence directed at them, all of them manifestations of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Factors contributing to these unequal power relations include: socioeconomic forces, the family institution where power relations are enforced, fear of and control over female sexuality, belief in the inherent superiority of males, and legislation and cultural sanctions that have traditionally denied women and children an independent legal and social status. Lack of economic resources underpins women's vulnerability to violence and their difficulty in extricating themselves (UNICEF, 1999).

2.12 Consequences

2.12.1 Denial of fundamental rights

Perhaps the most crucial consequence of violence against women and girls is the denial of fundamental human rights to women and girls (UNICEF, 1999). International human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, affirm the principles of fundamental rights and freedoms of every human being. Both CEDAW and the CRC are guided by a broad concept of human

rights that stretches beyond civil and political rights to the core issues of economic survival, health, and education that affect the quality of daily life for most women and children. The two Conventions call for the right to protection from gender-based abuse and neglect. The strength of these treaties rests on an international consensus, and the assumption that all practices that harm women and girls, no matter how deeply they are embedded in culture, must be eradicated. Legally binding under international law for governments that have ratified them, these treaties oblige governments not only to protect women from crimes of violence, but also to investigate violations when they occur and to bring the perpetrators to justice (UNICEF, 1999).

2.12.2 Human development goals undermined

There is a growing recognition that countries cannot reach their full potential as long as women's potential to participate fully in their society is denied. Data on the social, economic and health costs of violence leave no doubt that violence against women undermines progress towards human and economic development. Women's participation has become key in all social development programmes, be they environmental, for poverty alleviation, or for good governance (UNICEF, 1999). By hampering the full involvement and participation of women, countries are eroding the human capital of half their populations.

True indicators of a country's commitment to gender equality lie in its actions to eliminate violence against women in all its forms and in all areas of life (UNICEF, 1999).

2.12.3 Health consequences

Domestic violence against women leads to far-reaching physical and psychological consequences, some with fatal outcomes (UNICEF, 1999). While physical injury represents only a part of the negative health impacts on women, it is among the more visible forms of violence. The United States Department of Justice has reported that 37 per cent of all women who sought medical care in hospital emergency rooms for violence-related injuries were injured by a current or former spouse or partner.³² Assaults result in injuries ranging from bruises and fractures to chronic disabilities such as partial or total loss of hearing or vision, and burns may lead to disfigurement (UNICEF, 1999).

The medical complications resulting from FGM can range from hemorrhage and sterility to severe psychological trauma. Studies in many countries have shown high levels of violence during pregnancy resulting in risk to the health of both the mother and the unborn foetus. In the worst cases, all of these examples of domestic violence can result in the death of the woman—murdered by her current or ex-partner. Sexual assaults and rape can lead to unwanted pregnancies, and the dangerous complications that follow from resorting to illegal abortions. Girls who have been sexually abused in their childhood are more likely to engage in risky behaviour such as early sexual intercourse, and are at greater risk of unwanted and early pregnancies. Women in violent situations are less able to use contraception or negotiate safer sex, and therefore run a high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The impact of violence on women's mental health leads to severe and fatal consequences. Battered women have a high incidence of

stress and stress-related illnesses such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, panic attacks, depression, sleeping and eating disturbances, elevated blood pressure, alcoholism, drug abuse, and low self-esteem. For some women, fatally depressed and demeaned by their abuser, there seems to be no escape from a violent relationship except suicide (UNICEF, 1999).

2.12.4 Impact on children

Children who have witnessed domestic violence or have themselves been abused, exhibit health and behaviour problems, including problems with their weight, their eating and their sleep. They may have difficulty at school and find it hard to develop close and positive friendships. They may try to run away or even display suicidal tendencies (UNICEF, 1999).

2.13 Female Genital Mutilation

As a “traditional practice prejudicial to the health of children”, governments now have to take measures to abolish FGM in accordance with their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24.3). While legislation to address FGM is important, cooperation at the community level is essential to the process of FGM eradication. The most successful campaigns of recent years have had their roots very firmly in the villages and communities where FGM is traditionally practiced. One of the most striking examples of change has taken place in Senegal, where the movement to end FGM began with the women of one village – Malicounda Bambara. As a result of their courage, 148

communities have now publicly renounced the practice and national legislation is in place banning FGM (UNICEF, 1999).

In 1995, the women of Malicounda discussed the previously hidden subject of FGM during debates on human rights and public health issues organized by the NGO Tostan (*Breakthrough*). Once the discussion began there was no stopping it, with friends, husbands, village leaders, the local midwife and the “cutters”, drawn into the debate and the entire village acknowledging, for the first time, the scale of the problem. Religious leaders also played an active and crucial role. By mid-1997, the practice had been abolished in Malicounda and former cutters were being given encouragement and support to find alternative sources of income. Spurred on by this success, the women spread the word to other villages, with continued support from Tostan, UNICEF and the Government. These efforts culminated in the Diabougou Declaration of February 1998, when the representatives of 13 communities publicly and formally renounced FGM. And in April 2000, the women, men and children of 26 islands in the Sine-Saloum river gathered on the island of Niodior to celebrate the end of FGM. The traditional cutters from the islands wrapped their mystical cutting knives in cloth to hide them from the public eye. Then, in formal procession, they put the knives into a traditional straw basket, symbolizing the end of FGM (UNICEF, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter therefore discusses the research design, the population and sample. It also discusses the instruments used in the data collection, the procedure for data collection and the method for data analysis.

3.1 The research design

The research design used was a survey. Research design is the specific data analysis techniques or methods that the researcher intends to use. The survey design involves the collection and analysis of data, and finding out the answers concerning the current status of the subject. In addition, it is a study of variables in their natural setting or under usual circumstances. This comprises observation of facts, formulation of hypothesis, collection and classification of data, interpretation of data, formulation of theories, application of facts and predictions.

3.2 Population

The target population is the inhabitants of La Community (Market area), Accra. La is located at the southern part of Accra on the beach road to Tema Industrial area. The main occupation of the inhabitants is fishing since the town is located along the sea. La is currently the leading populated area in Accra. The population is about one million (1000000) people.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

The convenient sampling procedure was used to select thirty (30) men and women in the ratio of 1:1 for examination. This was done because; the researcher wanted fair responses.

3.4 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was the major instrument that was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was used in order to get a standard form of answers or response. A questionnaire is a set out questions based on a researcher's objectives in a sequential order in order to get solutions or opinion from people to solve a problem. Both closed and opened questions were asked.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Thirty questionnaires were used, one for each person or respondent. The questions were read out to them. At least ten (10) questions were asked in all.

3.6 Procedure

After collection of the data, SPSS software and Microsoft Excel were used for all the analysis. Frequencies, percentages and bar graphs were the statistical tools used to analyze the data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This Chapter consists of the data analysis and the interpretation of all the findings of the research.

4.1 Findings from the respondents

Table 1 Age Distribution of the respondents

	Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	26-35	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
	36-45	5	16.7	16.7	50.0
	Above 45	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 1, 50% of the respondents are within the ages of 26-45. Whiles the other half are above the age of 45. Also none of them are below the age of 26. This is represented graphically in the Figure1 below.

Figure 1

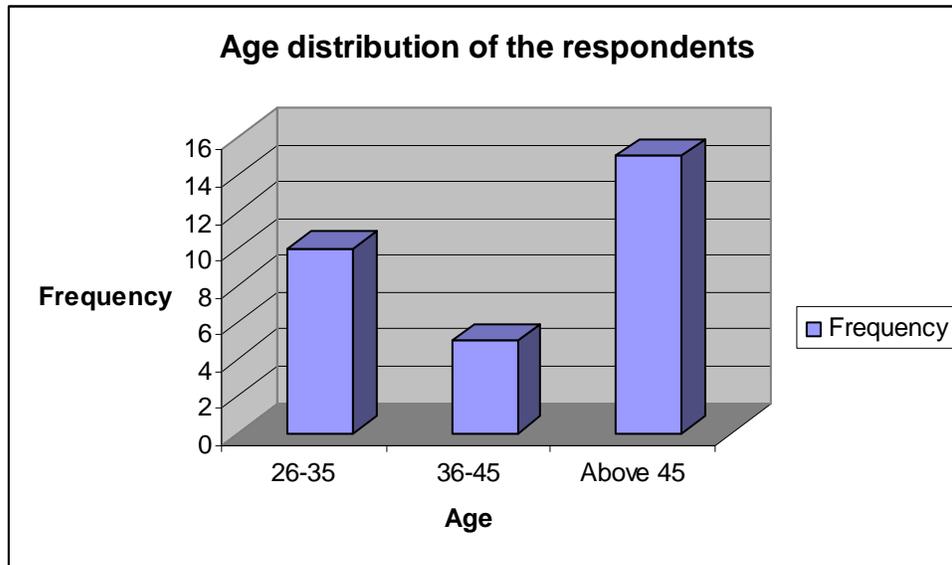


Table 2 Gender Distribution of the respondents

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 2, we could see that half (50%) of the respondents are males. 50% of them are females. They were studied in the ratio of 1:1 since the researcher wants to have equal information from both sexes. The graphical representation of this information is shown in the Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

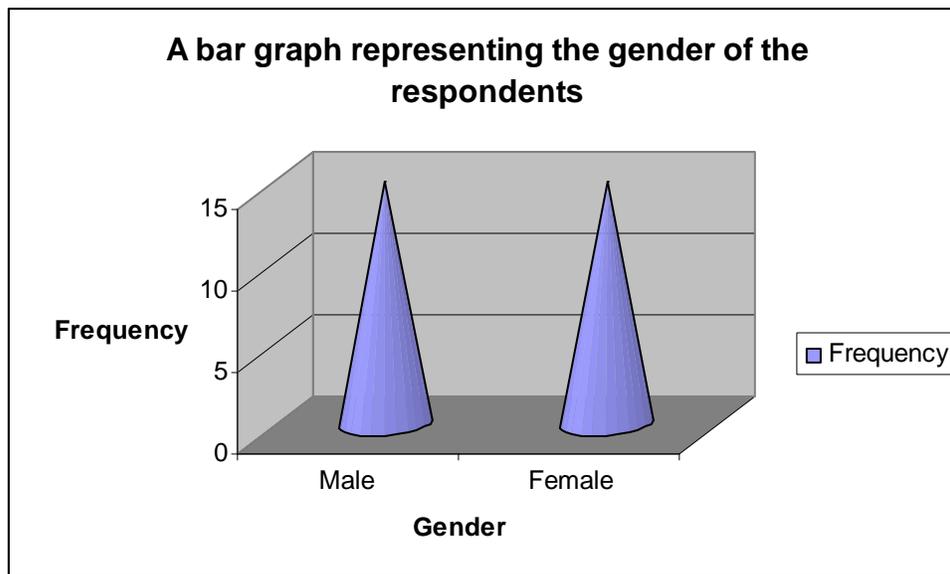


Table 3 Level of education

	Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	J.S.S.	8	26.7	26.7	46.7
	Tertiary	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 3, it is obvious that more (53.3%) of the respondents are University or polytechnic graduates. Few of them are primary or J.S.S. graduates. This does not mean that one has to be educated before he or she gets married, but it advisable to be educated. More light is thrown on this in the Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

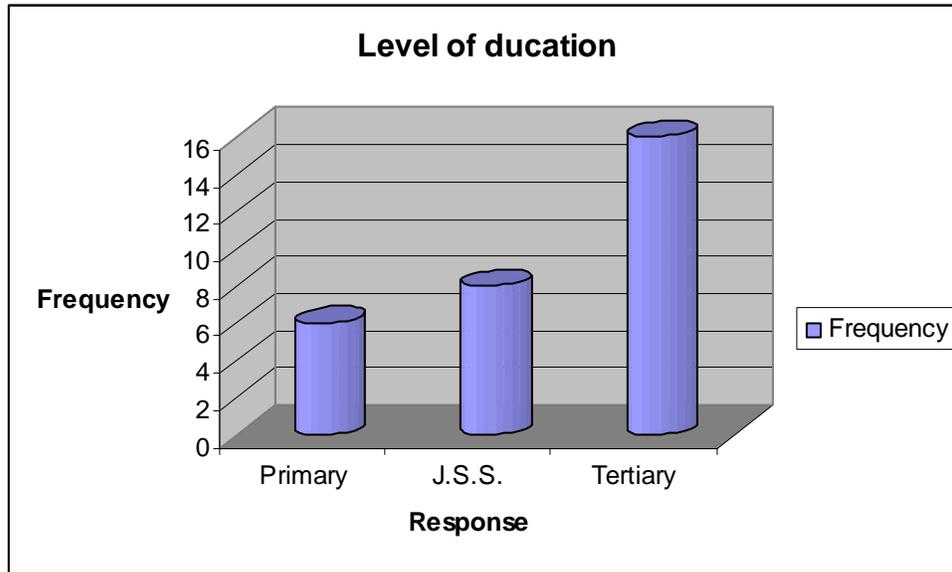


Table 4 Marital status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Married	25	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 4, majority (83.3%) of the respondents are married, just to signify the saying “behind every successful man there is a woman, vise versa”. Only 16.7% of them are not married. Figure 4 throws more light on this.

Figure 4

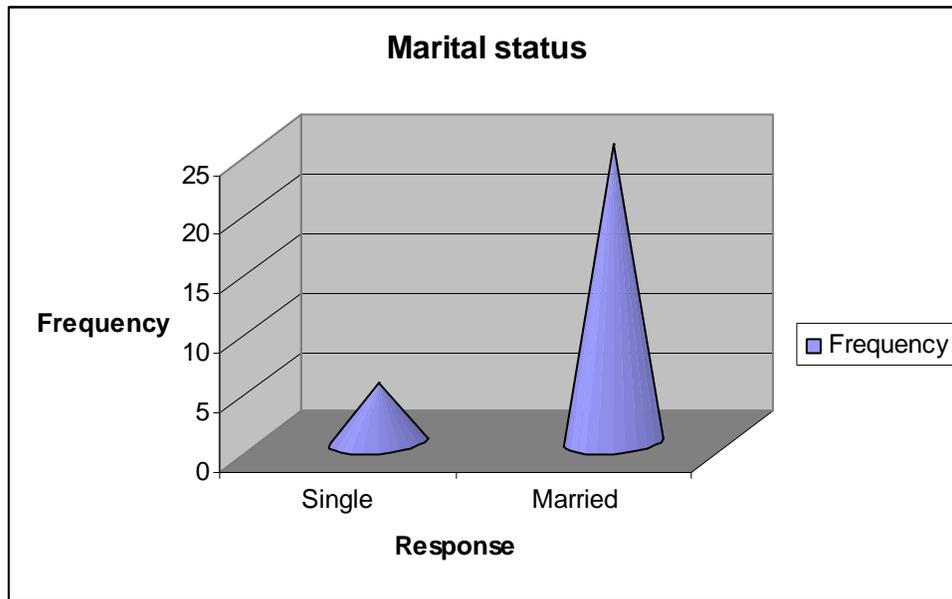


Table 5 Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Trader	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
	A professional worker	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 5, 46.7% of the respondents are into trade (that is distributors, importers and exporters). 53.3% of them are professional workers (that is teachers or school proprietors, beauticians, fashion designers, caterers, drivers, furniture designers, auto mechanics, contractors, doctors or hospital owners, etc). This is shown graphically in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5

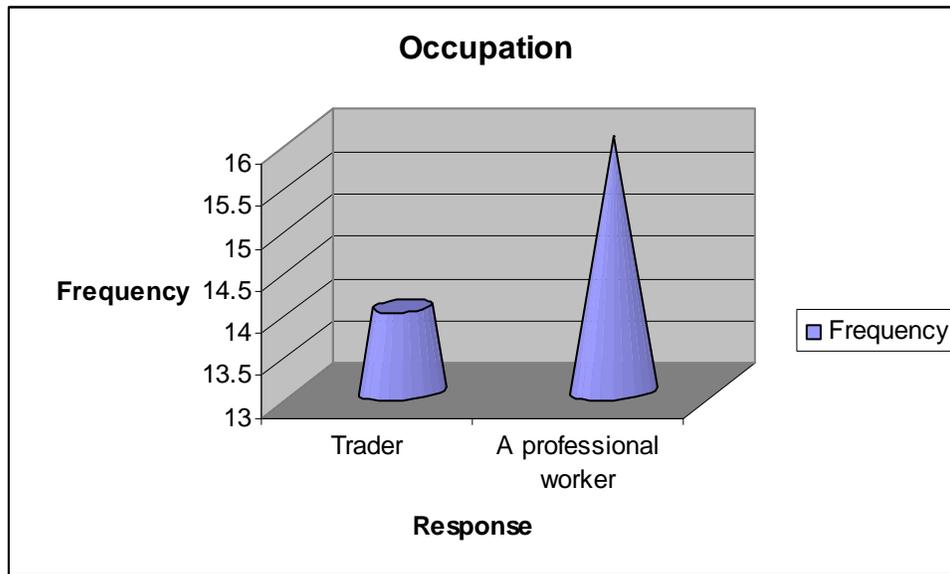


Table 6 Frequency distribution representing the question ‘Did the passage of Domestic Violence Bill reduce the rate of violence in Ghana?’

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
	No	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
Total		30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 6, 66.7% (majority) of the respondents confirmed that, despite the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill, violence is still on the increase. 33.3% of them also said, the passage of the bill has cut down the violence in the country. Figure 6 below gives the pictorial view of this information.

Figure 6

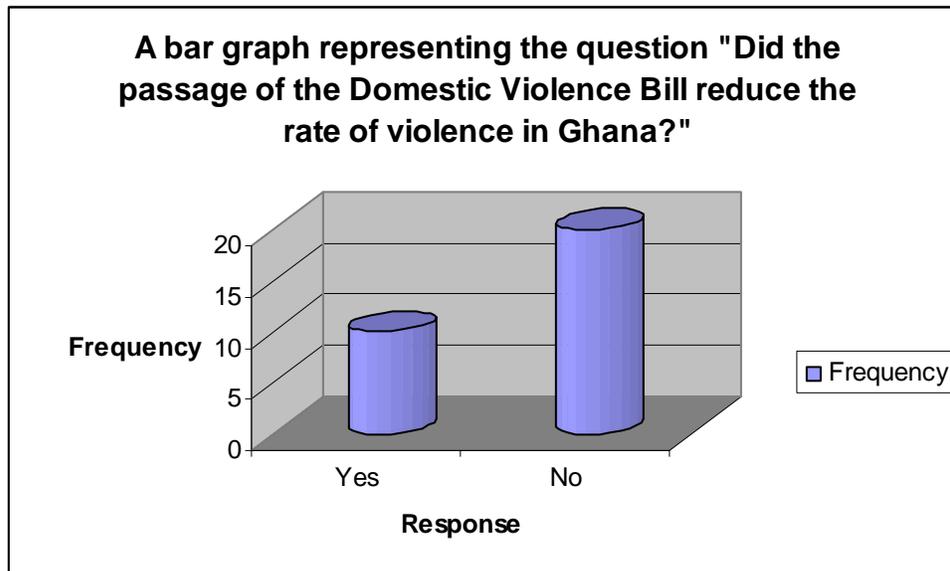
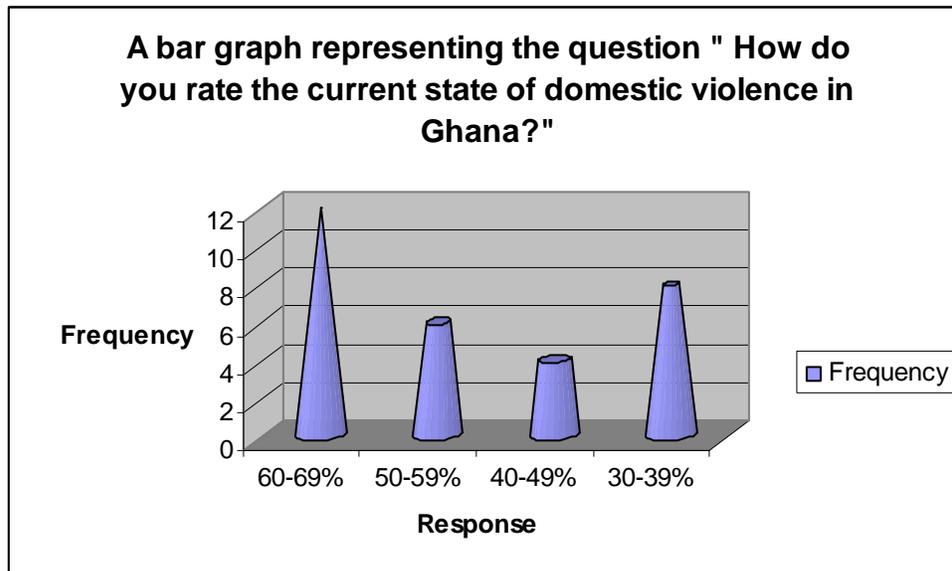


Table 7 Frequency distribution representing the question ‘How do you rate the current state of domestic violence in Ghana?’

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	60-69%	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	50-59%	6	20.0	20.0	60.0
	40-49%	4	13.3	13.3	73.3
	30-39%	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
Total		30	100.0	100.0	

From Table 7, 40% of the respondents rated the current state of domestic violence in Ghana as between 60-69%. The second highest is for 30-39%. Therefore, when we take the average of the midpoints for the two highest responses, we will get 54.5%. This signifies that, the rate of domestic violence in Ghana is rated at 54.5%. The graphical representation of this information is shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7



In addition to the above analysis, miscommunication, abuse of privilege as a mother, wife, father or husband, ignorance, poverty, cultural practices, illiteracy, inhumanity and so forth are some of the factors promoting domestic violence in Ghana. Some of the effects of domestic violence are:

- Victims become timid and insecure
- Broken homes or increase in divorcees leading to truancy on the part of children and increase in deviant behaviours in the community.
- High prevalence of single or unmarried people
- Child abuse or personal abuse

Therefore, to reduce domestic violence in the country, the following suggestions should be implemented:

- The law should be enforced
- Culprits should be punished
- Victims should be compensated by the culprits

- Proper investigations should be done before judgment since others may take advantage of it
- People should be educated about human rights and effects of domestic violence
- Social clubs should be set up in the communities to enhance on the education, unity and love
- Cases should be brought to the notice of law enforcers

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

5.1 Summary of findings of the study

This study examined the current state of domestic violence among women and children in Ghana. It was found out that 50% of the respondents are within the ages of 26-45. While the other half are above the age of 45. Also none of the respondents are below the age of 26. In addition, 50% of the respondents are males while the other half (50%) are females. It was also found from the research that, more (53.3%) of the respondents are University or polytechnic graduates. Few of them are primary or J.S.S. graduates. Also, majority (83.3%) of the respondents are married. 46.7% of the respondents are into trade (that is distributors, importers and exporters). 53.3 percent of them are professional workers (that is teachers or school proprietors, beauticians, fashion designers, caterers, drivers, furniture designers, auto mechanics, contractors, doctors or hospital owners, etc).

In addition, 66.7% (majority) of the respondents confirmed that, despite the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill, violence is still on the increase. Also, the average rate of domestic violence in Ghana is rated at 54.5%. Further more, miscommunication, Abuse of privilege as a mother, wife, father or husband, Ignorance, Poverty, Cultural practices, Illiteracy, Inhumanity and so forth are some of the factors promoting domestic violence in Ghana. Moreover, some of the effects of domestic violence are: Victims become timid and insecure, Broken homes or increase in divorcees leading to truancy on the part of

childrean and increase in diviant behaviours in the community, High prevalence of single or unmarried people, Child abuse or personal abuse and so forth.

5.2 Conclusion of the study

The findings of this study show that, domestic violence is still on the increase despite the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill.

5.3 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of the research, the following suggestions or recommendations are made:

- The law should be enforced
- Culprits should be purnished
- Victims should be compensated by the culprits
- Proper investigations should be done before judgment since others may take advantage of it
- People should be educated about human rights and effects of domestic violence
- Social clubs should be set up in the communities to enhance on the education, unity and love
- Cases should be brought to the notice of law enforcers

REFERENCES

1. Back et al. (1982) *A Study of Battered Women in a Psychiatric Setting, in Women and Therapy.* www.google.com
2. Germaine A. (1994) *Violence against Women. The Hidden Health Burden.* Discussion paper No 225, p.46. Washington DC: The World Bank.
3. UNICEF (2000) *State of the World's Children,* New York: UNICEF
4. The Ghanaian Chronicle 2002; The Ghanaian Times 2002
5. *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics.* United Nations
6. United Nations (1989) 'Violence against Women in the Family', New York
7. UNICEF (1997), Progress of Nations.
8. UNICEF (1999) *Women in Transition, Regional Monitoring Report, No. 6.* Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.
9. United Nations ECOSOC, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, E/CN.
10. WHO (1999) 'Putting Women's Safety First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women'. WHO/EIP/GPE/99.2 Geneva: World Health Organization.
11. Win E. (1995), *The Private is Public: A Study of Violence in Southern Africa,* Harare: Women in Law and Development in Africa.
12. World Health Organization (1996) 'Violence Against Women'. WHO Consultation, Geneva

APPENDIX

The questionnaires of the research

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

Research instrument (Questionnaire) for the locality

This research instrument is designed to study **the current state of domestic violence among women and children in Ghana**. This is just a study for academic purposes. It has no bearing on anyone. The respondent is assured of full confidentiality.

Please tick and fill in the blank spaces appropriately.

1. Where do you live?
2. Age? Below 15() 16-25() 26-35() 36-45() Above 45()
3. Gender? Male() female()
4. Level of education? Primary() J.S.S() S.S.S() Tertiary() other specify.....
5. Occupation?
6. Did the passage of Domestic Violence Bill reduce the rate of violences against women and children in Ghana? Yes() No()
7. How do you rate the current state of domestic violence in Ghana?
8. 100%() 90-99%() 80-89%() 70-79%() 60-69%() 50-59%() 40-49%() 30-39()
9. What do you think are some of the factors causing domestic violence in Ghana?
10.
.....
.....
11. What are some of the effects of domestic violence in Ghana?
12.
.....
.....

13. What do you think the government should do to alleviate domestic violence in Ghana?.....

...

14. What do you think the community should do to help reduce domestic violence in Ghana?.....

...

Thank you.