

**KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES
AMONG WOMEN IN GHANA**

by

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Abstract

Support services are important to the mental and physical well-being of survivors of intimate partner violence. However, researchers and service providers note that survivors seldom report violence to formal domestic violence services in Ghana. Despite calls from service providers for Ghanaians to report domestic violence, few studies have focused on women's knowledge and perceptions of formal domestic violence services in Ghana and how these perceptions influence their help-seeking behaviour. This thesis presents qualitative findings on Ghanaian women's knowledge and perceptions of formal domestic violence services. Also, challenges to service delivery are explored. Results revealed that awareness among respondents of available services was low. Additionally, most respondents had negative perceptions of these formal services. This study demonstrates that more educational campaigns need to be carried out to raise awareness among Ghanaians on domestic violence and the formal interventions available in the country. Additionally, service providers and policy makers must formulate programmes and policies that are better suited to the uniqueness of the Ghanaian situation.

Keywords: Ghana, intimate partner violence, help-seeking behaviour, women, domestic violence services, qualitative.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Intimate partner violence is a public health threat and a violation of the fundamental human rights of women globally (Hyman, Forte, DuMont, Romans, & Cohen, 2006; Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). Studies indicate that a higher proportion of women suffer abuse, with a majority of these abusive acts perpetrated by men (Cusack, 2009; McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010). For instance, in a survey conducted by the European Union, it was found that 22% of all women had experienced physical/or sexual violence from a partner since the age of 15 years (European Agency for Fundamental Human Rights [FRA], 2014). According to Statistics Canada, 46,918 incidents of spousal violence were reported to the Canadian police in 2009 and about 81% of these incidents involved violence perpetrated against females (Zhang, Hoddenbagh, McDonald, & Scrim, 2013).

The situation is no different in Ghana where a nationwide study on domestic violence¹ found that 3 in 10 women were forced to have sex with a male partner² (Appiah & Cusack, 1999). Additionally, a review of some publications in Ghanaian newspapers between the period of 2010 and 2012 revealed that out of the 52 published articles on

¹Domestic Violence is the broad term used to refer to a variety of abuses occurring within the domestic setting. In Ghana's Domestic Violence Law the term "domestic violence" is used to describe a number of violations including but not exclusive to intimate partner violence (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). Thus, services are not described as intimate partner violence services but as domestic violence services since they also cater to the needs of victims/ survivors of other forms of abuse. With this background, in this present study, intimate partner violence and domestic violence will be used interchangeably with the primary focus being intimate partner violence.

² Further, other studies such as Issahaku (2012); Issahaku (2015); Issahaku and Williams (2016) have identified intimate partner violence perpetrated against men by women in Ghana. However, in this study, my focus is on male-on-female intimate partner violence.

spousal murders, 46 of those reported cases were perpetrated against women (Human Rights Advocacy Centre, 2012). These findings come in the wake of Ofei-Aboagye's 1994 ground-breaking work on domestic violence in Ghana that reported intimate partner violence as a pervasive social problem. Her findings also indicated that Ghanaian women's response, or lack thereof, to the problem was influenced by the absence of support systems, and their lack of knowledge about options available to help them safely navigate abusive situations (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994).

Twenty years later, Ghana has made significant improvements by providing more support services as well as passing legislation that directly deals with domestic violence. However, service providers, researchers, and gender advocates still deplore the underreporting of domestic violence cases in the country (Ampofo, Awotwi, & Dwamena-Aboagye, 2005; Human Rights Advocacy Centre, 2012). Furthermore, despite improvements in service provision, few studies have focused on women's knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services in Ghana and whether their knowledge and perceptions influence decisions to access or not access these services.

My thesis explores Ghanaian women's knowledge and perceptions of services available to survivors of domestic violence. My aim is to assess how these perceptions influence the utilisation of support services. In doing this, I also explore Ghanaian women's understandings of what constitutes intimate partner violence since one's understanding of intimate-partner violence can influence their help-seeking behaviour (Kedir & Admasachew, 2010; Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Nara, & Wientraub, 2005; Ofei-Abogye, 1994). Additionally, I explore some challenges to service delivery in Ghana since these could also influence access to intimate partner violence services.

My focus is mainly on intimate partner violence in heterosexual relationships³. I conducted interviews with women who had not sought help from any formal support agency regarding any personal case of intimate partner violence. Liang and colleagues (2005) suggest that researchers should focus not only on users but also non-users of support services, especially since the perception of help-seekers could be biased from their previous contact with service providers. Also, considering that the majority of domestic violence cases in Ghana are unreported, solely focusing on women who access services means excluding the large proportion of women who do not. Thus, focusing on this category of women will help gain an understanding of how their perceptions may impact their utilisation of these services. Additionally, I also interviewed personnel of some domestic violence services to solicit their expert opinion on service delivery in Ghana.

1.1. Research Questions

The research questions explored in this study are:

- a) How do Ghanaian women understand intimate partner violence?
- b) How knowledgeable are Ghanaian women of formal domestic violence interventions in the country?
- c) What factors influence how Ghanaian women perceive domestic violence services?
- d) What are some of the challenges (if any) to domestic violence service delivery in Ghana?

³ Intimate partner violence occurs in heterosexual and same-sex relationships. However, given the illegality of same-sex relationships in Ghana, the literature is silent on intimate partner violence in homosexual relationships.

1.2. Outline of Thesis

In the subsequent sections of this first chapter, I provide an overview of the literature on intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviour globally. I also consider the literature on intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviour in Ghana with the theoretical framework that guided this study. Finally, I highlight some formal interventions initiated by government and civil society organisations in Ghana aimed at addressing the issue of domestic violence.

The second chapter of this thesis will be a description of the methods I used in the present study. In the third chapter, I will present the results from the interviews and will discuss these results in fourth chapter. The final chapter will include a summary of the present study, a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study, suggestions for future research, and recommendations for improving service delivery in Ghana.

1.3. Intimate Partner Violence And Help-Seeking Behaviour: A Global Overview

Intimate partner violence involves a complex myriad of acts that include physical abuse, psychological abuse, economic deprivation, and sexual abuse enacted to erode the self-worth of the victim and assert the dominance of the perpetrator (Amoakohene, 2004; World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). These acts of violence are not limited to those perpetrated against the survivor, but also include implied forms of violence such as threats and intimidation (Basile & Black, 2011). Additionally, perpetrators include persons currently in intimate relationships with the survivor as well as former partners or spouses (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2008; WHO, 2013).

Several studies on intimate partner violence have noted the consequences these acts of violence have on women. These include mental illness, divorce, vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, miscarriages, low utilization of

family planning methods, physical injuries, loss of autonomy, and death (Amoakohene, 2004; Crissman, Adanu, & Harlow, 2012; Johnson et al., 2008; Tenkorang, Owusu, Yeboah, & Bannerman, 2013; WHO, 2013). Aside from the serious threat posed to women, intimate partner violence also affects societies negatively. According to True (2012), the economic impact of violence against women includes the “direct costs to criminal justice, health, employment and social welfare systems, as well as the opportunity costs of the failure to prevent violence” (p. 13). National estimates available from some countries indicate that the economic costs of violence against women run into millions of dollars every year (True, 2012). For instance, a Canadian Justice Department report estimated the economic impact of spousal violence against women on the criminal justice system in Canada as \$271,964,457 in 2009 (Zhang et al., 2013).

In light of these societal implications, researchers maintain that social support systems play a role in reducing these negative effects (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). In their interviews with women in Toronto who had accessed formal services, Pajak et al. (2014) observed that the majority of respondents felt empowered after receiving support from service providers. Support systems also provide invaluable assistance to survivors such as financial support, shelter, childcare, emotional support, prosecution of perpetrators, and referrals to other relevant resources (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Coker et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2008; Liang et al. 2005; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009; Mitchell, 2011)

Despite the ability of social support services to mitigate the consequences of domestic abuse against women, some studies indicate that women seldom use these services (Amoakohene, 2004; Bent-Goodley, 2004; Liang et al, 2005; Makahamadze, Isacco, & Chireshe, 2011). Several authors cite women’s lack of knowledge of available

support services as one of the many reasons why women do not seek help for abuse. A case in point is the study conducted by Chatzifotiou and Dobash (2001) in Greece. These researchers identified the paucity of information among women of available services as a reason they remain silent. Likewise, in a study carried out in rural Kenya, researchers identified a lack of awareness of services as influencing underreporting of abuse (Odero et al., 2013). In the same study, the lack of awareness of services was linked to the limited number of specialised services available in the respondents' communities (Odero et al. 2013).

Furthermore, the literature shows that women's perceptions of support systems influence their use of these services. Disclosing abuse is difficult for most survivors and researchers have observed that survivors prefer to report abuse to unprejudiced people (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Chepuka et al., 2014). Pajak et al. (2014) reported that participants in their study mentioned the police as a service provider that had judgemental attitudes towards survivors. Also, Angless, Maconachie, and Van Zyl (1998) noted in their South African study that women's belief that the police were unable to protect them was a strong deterrent from pursuing criminal cases against their abusers. By contrast, a study by Chepuka et al. (2014) in Malawi reported the respondents as saying that the police were responsive and focused on "mediation and conflict resolution including persuading the offenders to change their behaviour" (p.5).

Some studies have shown that survivors are more likely to utilise some forms of social support than others, depending on the type and severity of abuse. For example, Odero et al. (2013) write that participants in their Kenyan study perceived seeking support from the criminal justice system as a last resort. Participants reported that they considered the criminal justice system as a good option in situations where survivors

feared for their lives (Odero et. al, 2013). Pajak et al. (2014) also observed in their study in Toronto that respondents sought medical and housing services for physical and sexual violence, while counselling and legal support was sought for psychological abuse.

Aside from survivors' knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services, there are also cultural barriers that influence the disclosure of intimate partner violence and these are well documented in the literature (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Kedir & Admasachew, 2010; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). Chatzifotiou and Dobash (2001) explain that on a cultural level, intimate partner violence is "underreported due to it being accepted in societies worldwide, particularly those [societies] with very strong traditional values concerning gender role differentiation and power distribution" (p.1025). In such societies, women must overcome a number of obstacles to disclose abuse and seek help. These obstacles include defining the violence suffered as abusive and unacceptable, particularly in societies where spousal abuse is considered as part of the social norms (Liang et. al, 2005). A case in point is the Malawian study by Chepuka et al. (2014), where participants admitted to knowing about forced sex in marriage, but did not classify such acts as rape. Although the researchers did not elaborate on participants' reasons, they indicated that some participants were of the opinion that intimate partner violence was "expected in marital relationships" and further described "marriage as endurance" (Chepuka et al. 2014).

Additionally, there is the belief in some cultures that spousal abuse must be kept private in order to safeguard the marriage and protect the family's image (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Kedir & Admasachew, 2010). This belief is manifested in the reluctance of people to talk about matters related to other people's marriages (Chepuk et al. 2014). Nonetheless, some scholars have challenged this notion of domestic violence as a private

affair. Bassadien and Hochfeld (2005) explain that the socio-economic context in South Africa means that families live together in the same household or in close proximity to one another. Therefore, domestic violence cannot be described as private or secret since other family members are aware of violence in the home. Also, neighbours and other community members are most often aware of the violence. They further maintain that this belief hinders women from seeking help in abusive situations and also limits potential support since those who are supposed to provide assistance also subscribe to the belief that domestic violence is a private affair (Bassadien & Hochfeld, 2005).

Other constraints to help-seeking behaviour cited in the literature include the lack of financial resources, dearth of knowledge of legal rights, proximity to available services, and the risk of further violence (Angless, Maconachie & Van Zyl, 1998; Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; Hyman et al., 2006; Kedir & Admasachew, 2010; Odero et al, 2013).

In as much as the aforementioned factors influence the help-seeking behaviour of women, it must also be acknowledged that some challenges exist in providing assistance to survivors. These include lack of financial resources, limited knowledge of other services available, and the lack of sensitivity training for service providers. (Angless et al. 1998; Bassadien & Hochfeld, 2005; Odero et al, 2013; Ragavan, Iyengar & Wurtz, 2014). For instance, Vinton and Wilke (2014) found, from a survey of 279 domestic violence professionals in the United States, that service providers had limited knowledge of other services. This can pose a challenge to service delivery since survivors of intimate violence usually require help from multiple services and service providers must have this knowledge to make appropriate referrals to their clients (Vinton & Wilke, 2014).

1.4. Theoretical Framework: Help-Seeking Model

The theoretical framework that guided this study is the help-seeking model as described by Liang et al. (2005), which considers individual affective and cognitive processes in conjunction with the sociocultural and economic determinants that influence the help-seeking attitudes of women. The help-seeking model utilizes psychological and feminist perspectives to explore the processes that culminate in women's decision to seek help; whom to seek help from, whether formal or informal channels; and when to seek help. The help-seeking model consists of three stages: *problem definition and appraisal, decision to seek help, and selection of a help provider*. Liang et al (2005) explain that these stages are not fixed or linear but rather fluid, and may vary depending on the woman and the circumstances existing at the time. In what follows, I explore the literature on intimate partner violence and help-seeking behavior in Ghana within this framework.

1.4.1. Problem definition and appraisal.

The definition abused women give to their situation is pivotal in determining how they deal with violence. For instance, a woman who does not regard the abuse suffered from an intimate partner as violence is less likely to seek help than one who does. This process becomes more complicated due to the intimate nature of the relationship between the abuser and the victim, which sometimes clouds a victim's judgment of the situation, especially since some perpetrators show remorse after the abusive act (Liang et al, 2005).

It is also important to note that the assessments that abused women make of their situation are not devoid of societal influences. Liang et al. (2005) assert that the "interacting dimensions of gender, class and culture" (p.75) play a key role in a victim's definition of the problem. In patriarchal societies, social structures accord men positions

of superiority that confers certain privileges at the expense of women's rights (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Jasinki, 2001). This inequality results in power imbalances between the sexes. Ghana is an example of a patriarchal society (Ampofo, Okyerefo & Pervarah, 2009; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994), where men are often considered superior, and the patriarchal ideals of masculinity still valued. Cantalupo et al. (2006) explain that the perception of women as inferior to men in Ghanaian societies influence women's help-seeking habits since intimate partner violence is considered normal by both women and society and is therefore deemed as not worthy of reporting.

In addition to this patriarchal advantage enjoyed by men, the importance of marriage in Ghanaian society further complicates women's appraisal of domestic violence. Marriage is considered as a contract between families (Adomako & Prah, 2009; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994). In this contract, the responsibility lies with women to keep their families together (Mitchell, 2011). Certain common sayings, passed on to women from generation to generation, emphasise the importance of marriage and the need to keep this union intact. An example of such sayings is "for any marriage to succeed one partner should be a fool", where the fool referred to here is usually the woman. Another saying is "a woman should 'hold her nose' and stay in a marriage for the sake of the children" (Adomako et al., 2005, p. 231). From these proverbial Ghanaian sayings, it is evident that women are encouraged to be stoic and not complain about problems that arise in their marriages. These proverbial sayings further reinforce the gendered inequality that exists between men and women. Amoakohene (2004), in her study on domestic violence in Ghana, notes that her respondents reported that some ethnic groups believed that husbands should discipline their wives when they misbehave. In these ethnic groups, women are held responsible for abusive acts committed against them by their partners

and would rather suffer in silence than face the criticism of society for failing to live up to their traditionally expected gender roles. Some ethnic groups also consider violence as a sign of the man’s affection towards his partner. Consequently, exposure to these societal beliefs could result in distortions of women’s perceptions of violence and discourage them from seeking help.

Another illustration of how influential societal beliefs are in the Ghanaian context relates to the issue of forced sex in marriage. In protesting the inclusion of a marital rape clause in the draft of Ghana’s Domestic Violence Bill some parliamentarians argued that the Bill was purveying “foreign” ideas that threatened Ghanaian cultural beliefs and practices- in particular “the sanctity of marriage and men’s rights within it” (Manuh, 2007, para. 10). This opposition to the clause came from high profile personalities in Ghana including the then Minister for Women and Children Affairs (Adomako & Prah, 2009). Adomako and Prah (2009) note that though some participants in the 1998 nationwide study in Ghana acknowledged that forced sex in marriage does happen, it is not reported because “‘culture’ does not recognize it as an offence for a man to ‘force’ his wife to have sex if she does not spontaneously submit” (p.118). From the above examples, it is clear how societal definitions on gender roles and acts that constitute violence can influence women’s definitions of intimate partner violence and their decision to seek help.

1.4.2. Decision to seek help.

Liang et al. (2005) write that some women decide to seek help when they perceive the problem as exceeding their own coping abilities. Some researchers have also found that women decide to seek help only if they fear for their lives (Amoakohene, 2004). Therefore, it is important to understand the circumstances that precipitate

women's decision to seek help. This is because whereas some women would solicit outside help, some may decide to deal with the violent situation themselves or by doing nothing and remaining silent.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the marriage contract preclude women from talking about their marital affairs in public. Ghanaian tradition dictates that matters that arise in the home must be resolved domestically and not in public. Women who contravene this norm risk societal sanctions not only for themselves, but for their families. Adomako and colleagues (2005) explain that the composition of the family in Ghanaian society means that individual decisions and actions have ripple effects on other members of the family (p.235). Therefore, all members must be on board to keep the family boat afloat.

Aside from the fear of 'rocking the family boat', prior experience with social support providers also influence subsequent attempts to seek help (Liang et al., 2005). For instance, some service providers, both formal and informal, still hold traditional views about gender roles and the sanctity of marriage (Cantalupo et al., 2006). Thus, when women seek help from these service providers, they are advised to strive at fulfilling their feminine roles instead of receiving assistance to end abuse. This lack of assistance causes women to become disillusioned and subsequently not seek help for future abuse.

Apart from these societal costs, the socio-economic circumstances of women in Africa and the limited opportunities to engage in paid labor force has rendered the majority of women dependent on their spouses, making it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships (Bowman, 2003). This economic dependence also prevents women from reporting their spouses, as they fear the loss of the financial stability provided by them. Some Ghanaian researchers report that women cite economic constraints as reason

for not leaving abusive relationships (Amoakohene, 2004; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994).

Additionally, women who report abuse to the police have to produce a medical report to substantiate their claim of spousal abuse. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, these women are unable to obtain these medical reports and are unable to pursue the prosecution of their abusers (Cantalupo et. al, 2006; Mitchell, 2011). Therefore, the financial considerations involved in seeking help also factor into women's decision to seek help.

1.4.3. Selection of a help provider.

Closely related to the decision to seek help is the selection of a help provider. As previously mentioned, intimate partner violence is traditionally viewed as a private issue in Ghanaian society; therefore, some women feel more comfortable seeking help from informal mediators such as family members than from formal service providers. Adomako et al. (2005) expound on the traditional system of seeking redress for grievances in marriage, by pointing out the role of the extended family in conflict resolution in the domestic setting. Traditionally, family members must report marital conflicts to the head of the family who then attempts to settle the issue in the best interest of the family (Adomako et al. 2005).

Studies have found that informal service providers sometimes play a facilitating role in women's decision to access formal services. For example, Cantalupo et al. (2006) found that some women in their study contacted formal services only after informal mediation had failed to stop the violence. They also found that some family members and friends encouraged survivors to report abuse to the police (Cantalupo et al. 2006).

Also, the majority of Ghanaians are religious and anecdotal evidence indicates that Ghanaian women are generally more religious than Ghanaian men. This has been

noted to influence the channels through which domestic violence cases are reported. For instance, Cantalupo et al. (2006) found that female participants in their study reported domestic abuse to their religious leaders. These authors also noted that some religious leaders do not encourage women to report abuse to the police partly because it might result in the dissolution of the marriage. Rabiatu Ammah-Konney (2009) reports that Muslim women usually seek redress for domestic violence from the Islamic Research (of the Ahlul Sunna Wa Jama'at) at Nima, a community in Accra, and from the Office of the National Chief Imam. She further remarks that there is some reluctance within the Islamic community to utilise state institutions since the “course of action may go contrary to Islamic teachings and destabilise the family” (p.184).

Aside from the factors highlighted above that hinder women from utilising formal services, researchers suggest that the underreporting of domestic violence could be partly due to the mistrust Ghanaians have in the ability of formal institutions to handle cases of violence (Adomako et al., 2005). Conversely, in a study conducted on service users’ perception of the Kaneshie Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), service users generally reported receiving a positive response from DOVVSU officials (Mitchell, 2011). Mitchell (2011) further explained that this positive assessment by service users was due to “service user’s feelings of being well listened to by DOVVSU and a shared focus on family reunification” (p.iv). This finding further reaffirms the importance of culture and the family in domestic violence cases in Ghana.

1.5. Formal Domestic Violence Interventions In Ghana

1.5.1. Governmental interventions.

In 2007, the parliament of Ghana passed the Domestic Violence Bill into law. The definition of domestic violence in the law encompasses all physical, sexual,

psychological, economic, or other acts which are perpetuated against a person with the intention to cause harm or erode the integrity of a person (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). This law serves as a basis for women to seek legal recourse if their rights are violated through acts of violence. It delineates the means through which a victim can seek protection and redress through the police service and the courts (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). It also makes provision for the courts to explore alternative dispute resolution measures. These alternative dispute resolution measures are explored with the consent of the complainant (Domestic Violence Act, 2007).

Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Law also makes provision for the establishment of a fund. This fund is to provide resources to aid in the effective implementation of the law. It is also to assist in the maintenance of survivors of domestic violence, provide for the establishment of shelters as well as the training of service providers (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). Sources of funding and the means through which the fund is to be managed are also spelled out in the law.

Following passage of the law, a National Domestic Violence Policy and Plan of Action was adopted in 2008. The purpose of this national policy and plan of action is to “facilitate the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act to achieve its objectives” (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs [MOWAC], 2009, p. 25). This policy and plan of action is set to run from 2009 to 2019 and includes both short-term and long-term goals. It lays out the responses for a number of formal services like the police, health services, and judicial services as well as the response from the community level through to the national level. The Policy and Plan of Action also spells out how these responses are to be monitored and evaluated (MOWAC, 2009).

Prior to passage of the law, the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs was established in 2001 to oversee matters related to women and children aimed at enhancing their status in Ghana (Amoakohene, 2004). The name of the Ministry has since been changed to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and its mandate has also been expanded. Under the Ministry, is the Domestic Violence Secretariat that is responsible for formulating policy and the coordinating programmes related to gender based violence in Ghana.

Domestic violence services in Ghana operate within an integrated network made up of legal, judicial, health, police, the department of social welfare, and civil society organisations. The Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) is a special division of the Ghana Police Service set up specifically to handle cases of domestic violence (Amoakohene, 2004; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2010). DOVVSU was established in 1998 as the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU). The name of the Unit was changed to DOVVSU to make the agency more gender inclusive (Mitchell, 2011). DOVVSU was established in fulfilment of the Ghanaian government's international obligations under a number of international treaties it is signatory to and also in response to critique of traditional police handling of domestic violence cases (Morhe & Morhe, 2013; Mitchell, 2011). The mandate of DOVSSU is to arrest and prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence in Ghana and protect persons living in Ghana from violence. DOVVSU also runs domestic violence awareness and sensitization programmes in a bid to reduce domestic violence in Ghana (Amoakohene, 2004; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2010; Morhe & Morhe, 2013).

The Department of Social Welfare is another governmental agency that works hand in hand with other public and private agencies to provide services to

victims/survivors of domestic violence in Ghana. The Department, as part of its role in ensuring the welfare of citizens is also responsible for establishing and maintaining shelters, and for preparing social enquiry reports on cases before the court (MOWAC, 2009, p. 15).

The Government of Ghana has also established three specialized domestic violence courts. Two are located in Accra and Tema in the Greater Accra Region and the third one is in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. These courts were established to help expedite the adjudication of domestic violence cases (Mitchell, 2011). There are also government-operated shelters in Ghana that cater to the needs of survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, survivors of domestic violence can receive assistance from medical facilities in Ghana. The Police Hospital in Accra, for instance, provides free medical care to survivors of domestic violence in some situations (Mitchell, 2011). There are plans to soon extend this free service to other medical centres in the country.

1.5.2. Civil society interventions.

Aside from these governmental interventions, civil society organisations (CSOs) provide support to victims of intimate partner violence in Ghana (Amoakohene, 2004). CSOs have also been instrumental in pushing for more governmental support for social services (Ampofo, 2008). The Ark Foundation is one such organisation active in Ghana. It was established in 1995 to “seek the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and children” (Ark Foundation, 2007). The Foundation collaborates with other agencies such as the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA-GHANA), the Domestic Violence and Victims Service Unit, the judicial services, health services, and financial services. It provides counselling, referral services to victims of domestic

violence and has an emergency helpline. It also operates a shelter located in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Ark Foundation, 2007).

Other civil society organisations that deal with matters related to domestic violence in Ghana include: the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, Abantu for Development; International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-GHANA); Human Rights Advocacy Centre; and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF-Ghana). These organisations engage in research and advocacy on gender issues and also provide counselling and legal services to survivors.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced this thesis by explaining the rationale behind the study and stated the research questions I explored. I also provided a review of the literature on intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviour globally and in Ghana specifically along with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided this thesis. Additionally, I presented an overview of the formal interventions available in Ghana in this opening chapter. Although there is a dearth of literature on the help-seeking behaviour of women in Ghana, the studies cited in this chapter highlighted some important themes. These themes include: the influence of societal beliefs on issues of marriage on the perceptions women have of intimate partner violence and their help-seeking behaviour; the impact of women's religious beliefs on their help-seeking behaviour, and the financial implications of seeking help. However, there is a gap in the existing literature on women's perceptions of formal domestic violence services in Ghana and the influence these perceptions have on their utilisation of formal services. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by providing some insight into the perceptions women have of available formal services in the country.

In the next chapter, I present an overview of the feminist perspective that guided this thesis. I also provide a description of the study location and methods I used.

Chapter 2: Methodology

“Feminist research in Africa has been pursued using a variety of conceptual tools drawn from feminist theory, new methods, as well as methods drawn from other critical research fields. These have always been improved and adopted for local usage, often in ways that are not fully conscious and often go unreported” (Amina Mama, 2011, p. 12)

The main purpose of this study is to assess women’s knowledge and perceptions of intimate partner violence services in Ghana. To achieve this goal, I adopted a feminist approach. Ackerly and True (2010) define the feminist approach as a “commitment to continually reviewing and challenging notions of what are appropriate and reliable ways of knowing and understanding the world, in particular by reflecting on the different ways they appear from the standpoint of different individuals and social groups” (p. 25).

Feminist research thus aims to address issues of gender and gender inequality by examining the experiences of women and other marginalised groups (Skinner, Hester & Malos, 2005). In doing this, feminists seek to challenge and destabilise dominant androcentric discourses in society and academia by positioning women and other marginalized groups as “legitimate epistemic subjects and creators of knowledge” (Chakravarty & Frank, 2013, p. 58).

Unlike the positivist tradition, which favours objectivity and considers it as a more valid or credible way of producing knowledge, the feminist approach espouses reflexivity (Ackerly & True, 2010; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Smith, 1991; Wickramasinghe, 2010). Feminist researchers insist on reflexivity based on the belief that research is an embodied endeavour in which the researcher’s epistemology and positionality come together in the constitution of knowledge (Ackerely & True, 2010).

By insisting that researchers consciously include the “self” into their writing, feminist scholars disturb the notion of the scientific method as omnipotent in knowledge production (Ackerely & True, 2010).

In the sections that follow, I incorporate a reflexive analysis of some of my experiences in the field in a discussion of the methods used in this study. First, I begin with an overview of the research location and sampling technique. I follow this with a discussion of the data collection and transcription process as well as the language and translation practices observed in this study. Finally, I discuss the data analysis process and conclude this chapter with an exploration of the ethical considerations that guided this study.

2.1. Research Method And Design

2.1.1. Background of Ghana and Sowutuom.

The Republic of Ghana is located in West Africa and has a total land area estimated at 238,537 square kilometers. It shares a border to the north with Burkina Faso, to the east with Togo, to the west with Cote d’Ivoire, and to the south with the Atlantic Ocean. With a total estimated population of 25.9 million people, Ghana is administratively divided into 10 regions that reflect the ethnic and tribal diversity of the nation⁴ (Addo, 2011; World Bank, 2015). These regions are subdivided into 6 metropolitan, 56 Municipal, and 156 district assemblies.

I conducted my study in Sowutuom, the capital of the Ga Central Municipal

⁴ The main ethnic groups in Ghana include the Ewe, Akan, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. The Ga tribe form part of the Ga-Adangbe ethnic group and are mostly found in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The Akan ethnic group can be found mainly in the Ashanti, Central, Western, and Brong Ahafo regions. The Ewes are located mainly in the Volta region while the Mole Dagbane are located in the 3 northernmost regions of Ghana. The Guans can be found in a number of regions in Ghana.

Assembly (GCMA) in the Greater Accra Region. As at the 2010 Ghana population census, it was estimated that the Ga

Central Municipal Assembly had a total population of 117,220 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). Out of this total population, 84,297 (71.9%) were migrants, with the highest group of migrants originating from the Eastern and Central Regions of Ghana (GCMA, 2014). Thus, the ethnic makeup of the Municipality consists of the Gas, who are the predominant ethnic group, followed by the Akan, Ewe, and Ghanaians from other ethnic groups. The Ga Central Municipal Assembly has an estimated 76.04% urban/ peri-urban population with the remaining 23.96% living in rural settlements (GCMA, 2014). In terms religious affiliation, Christianity is the dominant religion in the municipality. The local economy in the Municipality consists mainly of the agricultural, commerce, and service sectors (GCMA, 2014).

According to the 2010 Ghana population census, Sowutuom, which literally means “hold your gun” in Twi, had a total population of 12,520 with 6,118 males and 6,402 females (GCMA, 2013). It is also one of the most densely populated communities in the Ga Central Municipal Assembly (Ga Central District Assembly, 2014). It has a police station and a number of private clinics that cater to the security and health needs of people living in the area. There are also a couple of private tertiary institutions established by Pentecost Church of Ghana and Evangelical Church Winning All. I chose to conduct my research in this community primarily due to its diversity. Although Sowutuom is predominantly a Ga community, Ghanaians from other ethnic groups reside in the community. Sowutuom can also be generally described as a medium-income community although it is home to people of different socioeconomic statuses. Secondly, my position as a resident of Sowutuom afforded me an insider status, which enabled me

to utilise my network and prior knowledge of the community in my research, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

According to African feminist Amina Mama (2011), researchers working within the African setting can be influenced by the conditions present in their external environment(s) and might have to adapt their chosen method(s) to suit the dynamics of their localities. She asserts that the conditions that exist within the African context, such as the political and economic situations, make it difficult to conduct research in a theoretically prescribed way; particularly, since these methods “assume a level of infrastructure and stability that does not often characterize African contexts” (Mama, 2011, p. 13).

This idea of adapting methods to suit the local context fits well with the idea of flexibility espoused by Billo and Hiemstra (2013). Flexibility is the process through which the researcher navigates challenges that arise in the field by being “constantly ready and willing to assess, adjust and be creative” (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013, p. 318). Likewise, in this study I adopted the ideas of adaptation and flexibility, which helped in dealing with some difficult situations in the field. For instance, during my fieldwork the erratic power supply or “dumsor”, as it is referred to in Ghanaian parlance, influenced my study since I had to adopt a transcription style that was better suited for conducting research in those conditions. Therefore, instead of directly typing the transcripts onto a computer, I transcribed by hand and later typed them onto my computer when I had power. Additionally, the poor economic situation in the country affected my research; especially when it came to recruitment of participants. For example, one potential participant declined when she found out that there was no monetary incentive for participants because she thought it was impractical in the current economy to engage in

activities that did not earn her money.

2.1.2. Sampling.

In selecting participants for this study, I used snowball and purposeful sampling. I decided to use this mixed sampling technique primarily because it facilitated gathering data from a diverse sample of women. Recruiting a diverse sample of women was necessary for a number of reasons. First, researchers have found that a higher percentage of survivors of domestic violence are poor women (Mitchell, 2011). It is also estimated that about 65% of females (15 years and above) in Ghana are literate (World Bank, 2015). In Ghana, one's socio-economic status is mostly determined by their wealth or/and education. Liang et al (2005) have suggested that the socioeconomic status of women influences their help-seeking behaviour. For instance, women of a higher socio-economic status have more options of actions available to them because of resources at their disposal than women of a lower socio-economic status. Thus, to ensure that my sample was not skewed towards a particular group of women but included women who reflected this educational and economic diversity, these sampling techniques were chosen. These sampling techniques were also appropriate considering the time and resources I had to conduct this study.

This approach to recruiting participants took into account my knowledge of the occupational and educational dynamics in Ghana. Thus, to connect with women who had little or no formal education and fell in the lower socio-economic bracket, I knew I had to target women who owned small-scale businesses in the community. Additionally, I asked respondents and some contacts I have in the community to recommend potential participants, which enabled me to initiate the snowball sampling and helped me gain access to participants in higher socio-economic brackets. I also sent letters to three

organisations that deal with intimate partner violence cases in Accra to request interviews for my study. These organisations were: the Ark Foundation, a non-profit organization; the Domestic Violence Secretariat, a department at the Gender Ministry responsible for coordinating matters related to domestic violence; and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, a special unit of the Ghana Police Service. I interviewed one expert from each organization to solicit their expert opinion. I conducted these expert interviews to give me more insight into the services available in Ghana as well as the challenges experienced in the course of service delivery.

Unlike quantitative techniques, which utilise representative sampling to select a large number of people and are more suited for making generalisations about populations (Hesse- Biber, 2014; Mason, 2002), in-depth interviews are usually characterised by small sample sizes and are mostly non-probabilistic. Thus, Hesse-Biber (2014) identified qualitative in-depth interviews as relevant to assessing the “process” or “meaning” people give to their social situations and not for generalisation purposes (p.192). Likewise, Patton (2002) suggests that researchers consider the nature of the study, purpose, and time available for the study when making decisions about sample size (p. 244). With these suggestions in mind, I decided on a sample of 13 people not only to ensure saturation in interview data, but also to enable me to collect enough data within my two-month time frame.

2.1.3. Data collection and transcription.

During recruitment, respondents and I agreed upon convenient places and meeting times to conduct the interviews. I scheduled interviews a day apart so I could review previous interviews and minimize the risk of interviewer burnout, which could potentially negatively influence the data collected (Jewkes, Watts, Abrahams, Pen-Kekana & Garcia-

Moreno, 2000). However, due to changes in a participants' schedule, I had to conduct two interviews in a day on one occasion.

The data collection tool I used was qualitative in-depth interviews. I selected this tool because it is appropriate for unearthing women's "subjective understanding" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 189) of domestic violence and domestic violence services. The use of qualitative in-depth interviews also facilitated the creation of a space for the participants and I to discuss intimate partner violence, a contentious topic in Ghanaian society, in a safe and non-judgmental fashion.

Before entering the field, I designed separate interview schedules (See Appendix B and Appendix C) for the ten participants and the three experts using information from the literature and the research questions. The participant interview schedule had questions based on four themes: respondents' demographic data, respondents' definition of domestic violence, respondents' understanding of the Domestic Violence Act, and respondents knowledge and perspectives of domestic violence services. The expert interview schedule had questions related to domestic violence in the country. I also later included some questions that arose from the interviews with the women to the expert interview schedule such as the influence of ethnicity on domestic violence cases in the country and the impact the type of marriage, whether customary or ordinance, has on the help-seeking behaviour of women. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the participants to express their opinions freely and also allowed for the participants and I to direct the interviews. As such, the interviews did not proceed in a linear manner but in a more flexible fashion that permitted us to stay on topic and also made room for new information to emerge. The emergence of new information during the interviews caused me to revise some of the questions in the interview schedule as the data collection

process progressed. For instance, after a few interviews I noticed that participants were providing similar responses to the question on the relationship between affection and intimate partner violence. Participants were of the opinion that using violence was not a good way for husbands to express their affection for their wives. Therefore, I eliminated that question from the interview schedule after the seventh interview because I was not receiving any new insights. Additionally, during my first interview, the participant mentioned that the type of marriage, customary, could be influential in women's experience and response to intimate partner violence so I introduced a question on this in my subsequent interviews.

The interviews lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. All the respondents gave informed consent before commencement of the interviews. I went through the consent form with them to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study, their responsibilities as participants, and mine as a researcher. I then got either oral or written consent from each participant. All oral consents were audio recorded. I also recorded all interviews with the exception of one participant who did not want her interview audio recorded. I, therefore, had to write down the participant's comments during this interview. Through my follow-up questions, we were able to clarify some information I had misunderstood. Also, after the interview was completed I went through my notes with her to make sure they were accurate and we clarified and corrected any inconsistencies.

Interviews are very interesting spaces where the interviewer has to contend with "interruptions and priorities of the participant" (McNulty, 2012, p. 6), which can sometimes affect the interview. An illustration of this is an experience I had when interviewing one of the experts. My appointment clashed with another appointment the

expert had and about five minutes into the interview, she asked me to excuse her so she could attend to this other guest and continue with my interview after. Unfortunately, this guest was also there to interview her and apparently asked questions similar to mine. Therefore, when I got the opportunity to continue with my interview, I had to navigate a situation where I had to explain to the expert on different occasions that I had not already asked her some questions.

I transcribed all the interviews and ensured that the transcripts were as accurate as possible by reviewing the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings. I also developed an interview protocol to guide transcription (Poland, 1995). I transcribed all the interviews conducted in English in English and Twi interviews in Twi.

2.1.4. Language and translation.

This research is a cross-language study of interview data collected in English (target language) and Twi (source language). Ghana is a multilingual nation and language scholars estimate that Ghanaians speak about 50 non-mutually intelligible languages from various ethnic backgrounds (Anyidoho & Kropp Dakubu as cited by Arthur-Shoba & Quarcoo, 2012). Of the local languages, Twi, a variation of the Akan language group, is the most widely spoken in Ghana (Arthur-Shoba & Quarcoo, 2012). Like most former British colonies, English is the official language in Ghana and the main language of instruction in Ghanaian educational institutions (Arthur-Shoba & Quarcoo, 2012). Consequently, Arthur-Shoba and Quarcoo (2012) point out that English is the “primary language of literacy in Ghana” (p.79) and usually acquired through formal education.

In discussing language use in Ghana, it is noteworthy that contemporary Ghanaians tend to use language alternations (Arthur-Shoba & Quarcoo, 2012) when they speak and this was evident in this study. Language alternation refers to the phenomenon

where people switch between languages; that is, “the occurrence of two or more languages in the same conversation” (Torras & Gafaranga, 2002). For instance, a participant speaking in Twi would insert an English word or expression into a sentence and vice versa.

Cross-language scholars maintain that it is important for researchers involved in cross-language research to pay particular attention to the translation process as it could have methodological implications for the study (Chen & Boore, 2010; Santos, Black & Sandelowski, 2015; Temple & Young, 2004; Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010). Language is the way in which meaning is constructed. We transmit our experiences and understanding of the world through the medium of language. In the process of translation, this meaning or expression of an individual’s lived experience could be “lost in translation” (Van Nes et al., 2010). Methodologically, feminist qualitative researchers aim to present the subjective experiences of their participants; however, this aim could be compromised by the researcher due to translation challenges associated with cross-language research (Van Nes et al., 2010). These challenges include the inability to find appropriate words or expressions in the target language to adequately express what the participants said in the source language (Santos et al. 2015; Van Nes et al., 2010). Cross-language researchers also suggest that researchers pay attention to the timing of translation. Cross-language researchers propose five possible times during the research process that the researcher could consider translation. These are a) prior to collecting data, b) during data collection, c) during data preparation, d) during analysis, and e) when reporting findings (Santos et al., 2015, p. 135).

I did the translation in this study (though I did have help in some instances) because I am a native speaker of Twi and proficient in English. In this study, translation

was done before the collection of data, at the stage of data analysis and categorization, and when quotes and extracts from this thesis were used during presentations.

Before I started recruiting participants, I sat down with a lawyer who is a native speaker of Twi and who has over 10 years of experience working with people where he has to explain complex legal concepts in Twi. Together, we discussed the interview schedule and the words and expressions that could be best used to communicate the questions without imposing my understanding on the respondents. Van Nes and colleagues (2010) suggest that translators use fluid terms during translation to negotiate the challenge of being unable to find equivalent terms in the target language. I adopted this approach when engaging with translation in this study. To talk about domestic violence, we decided to use the Twi word “ayakayakadee” which depending on the context could mean violence, subjecting somebody to harsh treatment or making someone’s life miserable. Since my aim was to investigate their knowledge of intimate partner violence, I put this word into the context of intimate relationships. Therefore, during the interviews I would pose a question like “Deen na wonim fa ayakayakadee a ekoso wɔ awarefoco ntem anaa nkrofoco a ɔmo nwaree but ɔmo hyehye hɔ, dee oburoni be kase boyfriend and girlfriend no?” (What do you know about domestic violence in marital or non-marital relationships, what is referred to in English as courtship?). I noticed that in responding to these questions on intimate partner violence, respondents would use specific words or expressions to communicate their understanding of concepts. A good example of this is the use of the word “ɔhaw” (a worrying or troubling issue) by some participants to express their understanding of violence. Based on their responses, my subsequent questions would mix the words “ɔhaw” and “ayakayakadee”.

In situations where I translated excerpts or quotations from my Twi interviews, I

sent those excerpts to a friend who is also a native speaker of Twi and asked him to translate the excerpt. We would then discuss our different translations to work out the differences and similarities until we settled on a translation we thought was closer to what the participant said in Twi (Chen & Boore, 2010).

2.1.5. Data analysis.

I analysed the data I gathered using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis is a systematic method of analyzing qualitative interview data by coding and discovering patterns and themes present in the data (Burnard, 1991). I used this method of analysis with the assistance of Atlas.ti for Mac, a computer assisted qualitative research analysis programme designed by Atlas.ti GmbH. This programme allows qualitative researchers to manage, extract, compare, explore and reassemble meaningful sections of data from textual, graphical, audio, and video data (Atlas.ti 7 user manual, 2013).

In conducting the analysis, I first read the transcripts multiple times and made initial notes about themes and categories emerging from the data. The initial reading of transcripts is important as it enables the researcher to become better acquainted with the data and gain some initial understanding of the respondent's experiences (Burnard, 1991). The second stage of the analysis process involved dividing the transcript into meaningful units through the process of open coding. Open coding is the process of discovering concepts and themes from the raw interview transcripts and putting them into categories (Khandkar, 2009).

I coded inductively from the interview transcripts and deductively from existing literature and the interview schedule. For example, the literature indicates that an awareness of existing services can factor into the help-seeking behaviour of women;

therefore, I created a code for *awareness of services*. Similarly, a participant responding to a question on forced sex in marriage described this situation as “akonno bone” (unhealthy/unnatural desire or lust); this concept was used to create a code for *unhealthy/unnatural desire or lust*.

The codes resulted in a coding book or database that I used to code other transcripts. New codes emerged as the analysis progressed and these were added to the coding database. I then organized the emerging codes together under major themes and put them in categories related to my questions. Similar to the coding process, the themes emerged from the transcripts, the interview schedule, and the literature. For instance, in the literature on help-seeking, an individual’s understanding of intimate partner violence can influence the help-seeking behaviour of that person. Thus, I created a category for *understanding of intimate partner violence* in which I grouped responses corresponding to this category together.

After, I had finished the coding process, I sent the themes to a key informant who works in the domestic violence field in Ghana, and we discussed these themes as a measure of ascertaining the validity of the categories. I also contacted one of the participants and asked her to look through the categories I created from her transcript to check if they reflected her responses in the interview as another means of establishing the validity of the categories.

2.1.6. Ethical considerations.

Since my study involved interviews with human participants, I obtained institutional ethics approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHR) at Memorial University. Additionally, as my study was based in Ghana, I obtained ethics approval from the Ethics Committee for Humanities of the Institute of

Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana.

Obtaining informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research involving human participants and one I strictly observed in my study. I read through the consent form with all the participants in either English or Twi and explained the aim of the study to them. I informed participants that they could stop the interview at any time during the process and were under no obligation to answer questions they did not feel comfortable answering. Kirsch (2008) writes about the difficulty participants sometimes face in backing out due to their perceived notion of the researcher's power and the relationship the researcher may have established with them; therefore, I confirmed consent with each participant at the end of the interview. I also explained to participants that they could opt out of the study after we had completed the interviews. To facilitate this, I gave each participant my personal contact information in case a participant wished to contact me after the interview to withdraw her participation. Participants were informed that they had to contact me at most two months after the interviews if they wished to withdraw since I could not delete their information after I had published the results.

Due to the diverse backgrounds of participants in this study, I gave them the opportunity to give either written or oral consent. I stored the informed consent forms and audio recordings of consent in a cabinet and on my laptop respectively after each interview. These locations were secure and accessible only to me.

Though my sampling technique did not directly involve recruiting victims of domestic violence, I was cognizant of the possibility that some of the women in my sample may have suffered some form of abuse and this may come out in the course of the interview. Jewkes and colleagues (2000) note that both the participant and the researcher stand the risk of abuse if an abuser becomes aware of the nature of the interview. Thus, I

did not conduct interviews with my participants in their homes (Ellsberg & Hiese, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2000). After participants expressed interest in participating in the study, I made sure to interview participants at places in which they were comfortable with away from their homes. I conducted interviews with some participants' in their shops and with others in their offices.

In protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, I removed all identifying markers and used pseudonyms when reporting my findings and in the situations where I sought assistance with translation.

Finally, as a means of giving feedback to the participants, I will send a report on my findings to the agencies that I interviewed experts from. I will also send the findings to participants via email. When I visit Ghana in December 2016, I will also take physical copies to participants who requested to know the outcome of the study but do not have email access.

2.2. Conclusion

As Amina Mama (2011) notes in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, African feminist research incorporates a variety of conceptual tools from diverse fields tailored to suit the dynamics of the study locale. In this chapter, I described the feminist perspective that guided the conduct of this study and highlighted situations where I had to adopt my methods to suit existing conditions in Ghana. This chapter also contained a description of Sowutuom, my study site, and included a discussion of my sampling, data collection, transcription, translation, and data analysis techniques. I closed the chapter with an exploration of the ethical considerations I observed while collecting data. I present the results of the data analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Results

The analysis of the interview data revealed a number of themes in relation to participants' response to intimate partner violence and their perceptions of domestic violence services. In this chapter, I first present details on the demographic information of the ten female participants from Sowutuom. This will be followed by a presentation of emerging themes. Finally, I describe the suggestions made by the women regarding support that will be beneficial to survivors of abuse and the ways existing services can be improved. I use direct quotes from the interview transcripts to illustrate these results. All identifying markers have been changed or removed from the quotes used in this chapter to protect the anonymity of participants and their friends.

A note on narrations of other peoples' experiences of intimate partner violence

An interesting aspect of the interviews was that a majority of the participants shared stories of intimate partner violence suffered by their friends. These narrations are indicative of the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Ghana and also underscore the importance of informal actors, such as friends, to survivors of abuse. These second-hand accounts, in most cases, informed participants' understanding of intimate partner violence and helped shape their perceptions of available services in Ghana. Thus, in reporting these results, I will be sharing a number of these stories.

3.1. Demographic Information of Participants

The ages of the women in this study ranged from 25 to 44 years old. With regards to participants' hometowns, three women were from the Central Region while two women were from the Eastern Region. Additionally, two respondents were from the Greater Accra Region, whereas the remaining three women were from the Volta Region, Northern Region, and the Ashanti Region respectively. This information reflects the

ethnic diversity present in the Ga Central Municipal Assembly and Sowutuom as I highlighted in Chapter 2.

Aside from their ages and hometowns, I asked respondents about their educational background. Four women had attained formal education up to the junior high level, whereas six had been educated at the post-secondary level. I also asked respondents about their occupational status and two participants responded that they were students and were not working at the time of the interview. Four respondents were engaged in self-owned small-scale businesses in the areas of cosmetology, dressmaking, and food catering. Two participants were bankers, one was a teacher, and one was an administrative executive.

Seven participants were married, although one of these married participants revealed that she was separated from her husband at the time of the interview. Two respondents disclosed that though they were not married, they were currently in relationships, whereas one respondent reported that she was single.

Two out of the ten participants reported that they had had prior contact with a formal service provider though they had not done so due to any personal issues related to domestic violence. Although I did not ask respondents any questions about their personal experience with violence, one participant did disclose that she was a survivor of intimate partner violence. Despite this, she had not contacted any formal domestic violence service at the time of the interview. Additionally, though I did not set out purposely to interview only Christians, all the ten women were of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, since Christianity is the dominant religion in Ghana, this outcome was not surprising. However, this characteristic did influence how some women perceived domestic violence and formal services, as I will discuss in the subsequent sections. (See **Error! Reference source not found.** for participant demographic information)

3.2. Emerging Themes

3.2. Emerging Themes

3.2.1. Understanding of intimate partner violence.

Based on the responses from the interviews, it was evident that all the participants in the study had a general understanding of intimate partner violence. Most participants described intimate partner violence in terms of conflicts that arose between couples due to misunderstandings that were not resolved. For instance, one participant described intimate partner violence as:

A situation where there is misunderstanding between a couple which results in fighting or arguments anytime one party tries to get the other to see his or her point. (Asantewaa, 32)

Another participant also understood intimate partner violence as:

Abusive behaviour that goes beyond physical abuse and includes emotional abuse and is also within the confines of the home between people in a relationship and is not committed by strangers. (Akweley, 44)

3.2.2. Types of abuse.

a) Physical abuse

Physical abuse was the most common form of intimate partner violence mentioned by participants during the interviews. However, though all the respondents regarded physical abuse against women as wrong, one respondent felt that in some situations some women brought it upon themselves:

If her husband is beating her, it is possible she has done something that the man does not like. The person [man] cannot beat you without a cause. Maybe you are unemployed and he has tried to set up a business for you three times but you have still refused to work. Or maybe he has asked you not to associate with certain friends anymore and you continue to do so. Therefore, if he beats you it is your fault. Most times the men are not at fault but rather the women are disobedient. (Ama, 29)

Se ne kunu bo no a ebia na ɔbaa no woye biribi a obarima no mpe. Onipa no ontumi mbo wo kɛkɛ. Ebia adwuma a meka yi wonnye. W'ahye wo dwa beye three times asei. Anaa se waka kyere wo se onipa yi twe woho firi ne ho but still

no wonnye. Enti se obo wo a, eyε wo na w'ama no bo wo. Enti bebree no eyε a ennye Mmarima no. Mmaa no nso yədin.

She further stated that, in such situations, the problem would be resolved once the woman stopped acting in the manner that displeased the man:

I don't see the beating as a problem because everyone has his/her dislikes. Maybe once you stop what he doesn't like he will also stop beating you. There are also others who even when you stop they will continue to beat you. In such situations, you should leave because he could eventually kill you. If he continues to beat you without reason when you are doing everything right, then you should leave because such a situation is worrisome. (Ama, 29)

Medee εbro no menu no se eyε problem. Because obiaa wɔ dee ɔmpe. Se wogyae a ebia ɔno nso obegyae. εna yewɔ obi nso a, wogyae a ɔbekɔso abo wo. Enti eno saa no mentena hɔ ma dakɔrɔ obetumiaku wo. Se dabiaa ɔbo no na onim dee wayε na ɔe ne bebiaa pεpεpε a, esesε ɔtumi gyae awareε no. Because eno ye atiitiieε paa.

Despite this respondent's assertion that abuse was sometimes caused by disobedience, she did note, as observed in the above quote, that there were some husbands who would continue abusing their wives regardless of what the wife did. The issue of obedience to the man raised in these quotes can be linked to traditional gender role stereotypes regarding the role of women and men in marriage; these stereotypes still hold places of prominence in some Ghanaian households. It also points to how women have been socialised to accept violence as the norm, especially in dealing with conflict situations domestically. The subject of obedience raised by this participant further relates to the theme of discipline and intimate partner violence, which I will explore in Chapter 4.

b) Economic Abuse

Traditional gender roles also influenced some participants' understanding of economic abuse. Some participants understood economic abuse as a control mechanism employed by men to make women dependent on them:

I know a lady who used to have a good job and earned her pay. All of a sudden, I think about 5-6 years ago, her husband started in a subtle way telling her “I need you to stop this work and have time for the kids”. The pressure started building and she confided in me because we have been friends for some time. She told me that Kwaku wanted her out of the job. I said no! Under no circumstance should you give up your job. These modern days there are ways in which we can take care of the kids. Get a nanny, reach a compromise. But at the end of the day this guy pressured her and got her to stop her job and now she is paying dearly for it because she is at the mercy of the guy. Even sanitary pad... because right now she is economically dependent on the man and that is his strength now. (Asantewaa, 32)

This quote is particularly interesting because it also highlights how traditional beliefs about womanhood, such as her role as a caregiver, influence violence as illustrated by the woman in this narration.

Similarly, traditional beliefs surrounding manhood, such as the role of the man as breadwinner, also factored into some participants interpretation of economic abuse. For instance, the interview data revealed that some respondents considered a man's refusal to provide financially for his family as a form of economic abuse:

For example, if you have a child with the woman you have to take your responsibilities seriously. You do not need to wait to be asked before you do what you are supposed to do. Many men forgo their responsibility and women have no right to ask. (Kukua, 39)

Sε ebia wo ni nipa no awo, as a husband you have to take your responsibility serious. You need not wait sε yebe bisa wo sε this is what you have to do. Bebree no forgo their responsibility. Enti obaa no yε sε ɔkɔ bisa se anka εsεsε wo yε se a, you have no right to ask.

One respondent mentioned that, in her own experience, her husband used this form of economic abuse as a means of discipline:

He (her husband) did not give my child and I chop money for 6 months... when he was asked (by our families) why he did not send me money, he could not respond. They also asked him why he stopped paying my rent and he still did not respond. His explanation for his actions was that since I had been unfaithful he

had wanted to teach me a lesson and even if I go hungry can someone die from hunger? (Sadia, 27)

W'anfi me 6 months na wonma me ne me ba no chop money, ..., omo bisa no se adenti na w'anmani me sika 6 months ogyina ho, adeen nti na rent no w'antua, ogyina ho. Asem a okaye ne se mafa n'akyi, asotwe na otwe maso na ekom di me a ekom ku nipa?

On the other hand, not all respondents agreed that this situation should be categorised as intimate partner violence. One respondent was of the opinion that women should be able to take care of themselves without the help of the man:

As a woman you should also have your own ways and means of making money. You should not always depend on the man. So if a man is not able to cater for you then you should be able to cater for yourself. You shouldn't always depend on the man 100%. I don't agree with that. The government or whoever should not come into this. We are all empowered to work. Some men are naturally irresponsible so you should not allow that to take over you (Kafui, 33)

c) *Verbal/emotional abuse*

Another form of abuse the respondents mentioned was verbal/emotional abuse. One participant explained that the way some men were raised as children causes them to be verbally/emotionally abusive to their spouses later in life:

There are some men who do not respect anybody. This could be due to his upbringing where respect was absent. He then brings this attitude into the marriage. Maybe he is talking to his wife and the wife excuses herself for a moment, he then starts accusing her of being disrespectful and tells her that she is worthless. He uses offensive language against her (Ama, 29)

obarima bi wo ho a ombu nipa. Ebia a fie a ofiri mu no, saa obuo no nnyi ho. Enti odo ba n'awaree mu. Ebia onni ni yere kasa na ose meba koraa na aye ti tise wo wo mmua adee wo ho nni nfasoo. Kasa bia a ennye kasa papa na okeka kyere wo.

Verbal/emotional abuse was also viewed as a strategy employed by men to batter women's self-esteem and prevent them from seeking help:

These low self-esteem problems could be as a result of the verbal abuse she has been subjected to by the man. For instance the man may have said to her

“M’anware wo a anka wonnye obia” (You would be a nobody if I hadn’t married you) (Akweley, 44)

In some cases, verbal/emotional abuse accompanied other acts of violence, such as physical abuse and forced sex in marriage:

He abuses her verbally calling her names every second. At the end of the day he wants to sleep with her and she says she is tired and he is like you are a whore, you are a prostitute and this is something that keeps happening (Asantewaa, 32).

Evidence from the data revealed that participants considered verbal/emotional abuse and economic abuse to be less serious than physical abuse and sexual assault. For instance, on asking one respondent about emotional abuse, her response was:

I would consider it as abuse though it is not as serious (Shika, 26)

Likewise, participants reported that they would rather disclose incidents of physical abuse and sexual assault to formal institutions than emotional, as I will discuss in a later section in this chapter.

d) *Forced sex in marriage*

Participants recognised sexual assault that occurred outside the confines of a legal marriage union as domestic violence. However, participants responded differently when sexual assault was examined through the lens of marriage. Indeed, forced sex in marriage is a contentious issue within Ghanaian society. As noted in chapter 1, the Domestic Violence Law does not include a marital rape clause, and despite some women’s rights activists strongly advocating for its inclusion, this clause was excluded when the law was passed. Arguments against the inclusion of such a clause were premised on the claim that marital rape was a foreign concept that did not apply within the context of Ghanaian society. However, as the quotes included in this section illustrate, forced sex in marriage/marital rape does occur within Ghanaian homes, though it is woefully

underreported. One of the experts explained that this act of violence is sometimes justified by people based on the belief that:

If you consent to marry then it virtually means that you consent to everything that has to do with marriage. So even in situations where your husband violates you sexually, it's still not rape. (Expert 2, Ark Foundation)

However, the domestic violence law states: "The use of violence in the domestic setting is not justified on the basis of consent" (Act 732, section 4). That is, spouses cannot justify forcing their partners to have sex based on the consent provided at marriage. In Ghana, forced sex in marriage is dealt with according to the act associated with it, as one expert explained during the interviews:

There has never been anything in our Act called marital rape. So there hasn't been any official report that my husband has raped me. However, any conduct that is done by the other party that seeks to traumatiser the person emotionally, psychologically, we deal with it as emotional/psychological abuse. We handle it based on the conduct. So if we investigate and we find that your conduct is emotionally and psychologically abusing the person, we may not charge directly based on something called marital rape because it is non-existent but we can charge you on emotional abuse. That is, the conduct that you are engaging in is stressing the other person so we can use that (Expert 1, DOVVSU)

During the interviews, forced sex in marriage was a topic most participants were hesitant to identify as abusive. One participant explained that forced sex in marriage should be handled delicately, and one must be cautious when categorising such occurrences as intimate partner violence. Her response was based on the importance the Christian faith placed on marriage and sex within marriage.

You know how Christians view sex and the responsibilities of men and women in marriage. So when we are dealing with such issues I would prefer that we handle it with caution. (Akweley, 44)

Despite participants' hesitation on the issue, some respondents did acknowledge that it did happen in marriages and related some experiences of friends to me. One participant described how forced sex in marriage had led to the end of her friend's marriage:

My friend is married. While they were dating she was a student so they did not see each other often -- maybe once in 3 months. So she did not know it would be like this. In the course of the relationship, she got pregnant and they got married. After moving in together, the man kept on demanding sex every time. Due to that marriage is now over. I don't think it is right to keep pressurizing your wife for sex every time because the two of you must be in agreement before it can happen. (Mansah, 29)

M'adamfo bi aware. Time a na wɔn ye courtship no na girl no kɔ sukuu enti na ɔmo ntae nhyaia. Bia once in three months na ɔmo ahyia. Enti girl no na ɔdwen se saa na etiee. Enti emu na girl no nyim ye na guy no beye ne ho adee. Enti after that na ɔni ɔbarima no kɔtena ye no, daabia ɔde taataa no. Enam so ama awaree no agu. Medwen ho se wo de taataa no dabia a enye right because eye nipa mmienu na mo beye adee no enti esese mo nyinaa mo ye adwene se mo beye.

Another participant spoke of how her boss' husband had forced her to have sex despite her ill health:

My boss is going through this situation. She says that even when she is sick the man forcefully has sex with her. On two occasions her husband has forced her even though she was sick. This situation is worrying. (Sadia, 27)

Me madam bi ɔno nso true eyi a ɔkɔ mu ne. ɔse ɔni barima no ti. ɔyari koraa ɔforce no ɔpesε ɔni no da. Two times ɔse ɔyare na ne ho nfa no na w'abre ɔde force ni no na ɔda. ɔno nso ha adwene.

A participant also recounted how her friend had gotten pregnant as a result of forced sex in marriage:

This is something a friend of mine is experiencing. She told me that her husband came back after drinking alcohol and forcefully had sex with her. She got pregnant as a result of this and now the man is denying the pregnancy (Kukua, 39)

Asem wei eyε asem a m'adamfo be efa mu. ɔse ɔkɔ (ɔbarima no) take alcohol nti ɔbaye no na w'abo the he forced her na ɔni no da ye ɛnna ɔnyim ye. Now he is denying the pregnancy.

Participants also shared their views on the reasons why perpetrators commit this act. Two participants were of the opinion that forced sex in marriage was caused by spiritual forces, since a normal person would be more considerate of the other person's feelings:

In her situation, some spirit has possessed the man. Because as a man, you should know when the woman you are living with is unwell. So when you tell him you are unable to have sex because you are not feeling well he should understand. But a spirit possesses a man who does not understand. This is lust. It is an unwanted desire that should not exist in a marriage. You would be bothering the person (wife). (Sadia, 27)

ɔno nidee no the way a etiee no honhom bi kora no [barima no]. Because ɔbarima dee woni ɔbaa ti na ni ho nfa no a onim. Wobækakyere no se ende ennye o me ho nfa me na yedi saa agoro no a meho engye me. ɔbeti w'ase. But dee ɔnti w'ase no na honhom na ekura no. Akonno bone nono. Akonno a enye se wonni nipa betina awaree ne mu. Wope se wotitii nipa no.

However, some participants did not agree with the assertion that spiritual forces played a role in intimate partner violence cases:

I don't think that when it comes to abuse a spirit is hiding behind somebody to do anything. It is possible but I will not attach a lot of weight to it. I think that some people are not thoughtful enough, they are not caring, and they do not know how to resolve issues. They don't communicate well, they don't listen they just don't care. The only thing they can do is abuse people. (Yaba, 26)

In as much as I believe in spirituality, I believe that if you give yourself the chance that the thing will happen because...Do not sit down and say "Medie me bufuo dee ennye oo" (I have a bad temper). Then at the end of the day you say that "bosam bi na eha me. Bonsam no ni wo ara" (It was the devil. You are the devil!). No, in as much as yes I know that spiritual forces are there but the point that I am making is that acknowledge that you have a problem, seek help. If it is spiritual then go for deliverance, but I will not buy it that you keep beating, doing whatever and anytime the law is catching up with you, you want to hide under the spiritual cloak. No, no, no. (Asantewaa, 32)

3.2.3. Other causes of intimate partner violence.

One participant attributed intimate partner violence to a perpetrator's psychological predisposition to abuse due to witnessing abuse as a child:

Perpetrators have mental or psychological issues. This could be from witnessing abuse as a child which could cause one to be abusive as a grown up. This is because children learn by copying or conditioning. (Akweley, 44)

Yet again, some participants were of the opinion that intimate partner violence was caused by spousal insecurity:

Probably a man has a beautiful wife or you have a corporate girl working, funding their own lifestyle, looking good and you have a husband who is not earning as much as you. That in itself is an ego problem and it tends to make them very suspicious of your actions which ordinarily should not be the case. So I would say that class difference. Education-wise too, if you are more educated than your partner sometimes you may be watching TV or having a discussion and you want to contribute and you realise that your husband is arguing from a point of view which you think it is not intellectually stimulating and he thinks... You know all these things put some fear in them and some of them are unable to handle it so they misinterpret it and think you might be cheating. So you might come home late one day and he will get angry and before you know it, one slap (Asantewaa, 32)

3.2.4. Response to abuse

During the interviews I asked participants what sort of advice they would give to persons going through an abusive situation. Some participants mentioned that they would advise the woman to leave the marriage or relationship:

Leave the relationship and seek help to avoid situations of further abuse like stalking and any further threats. (Akweley, 44)

One participant was of the opinion that it was better for women to respond to abuse by leaving the marriage than committing suicide:

She should leave the marriage and not kill herself. There are some people who say that due to the abuse their husbands are subjecting them to they will kill themselves in order to escape the marriage. That is not the right thing to say because it is likely that there is someone out there who will be willing to marry you just the way you are. (Ama, 29)

Ongyaee awaree no nnye mekume ho. Obi wo ho a, otumi ka semekunu tiiti me nti meku me ho na m'agyaee awaree. eno nnye asem ka. Because ebia obi wo baabi ope obi sennya wotie biara obeware wo.

A few participants mentioned that some women stay in abusive situations until they had reached their limit as I highlight later in this chapter. But they did acknowledge that it

was not always easy for women to leave a relationship; particularly, a marriage relationship:

I think some people decide to stay in, well for some married people till they realize that they can't do this anymore. And for people who are not married, I think some of them just walk out because it's easier for them. (Yaba, 26)

Some were also of the opinion that dealing with issues of intimate partner violence within the context of marriage deserved a different approach; particularly, since traditionally marriage is not just a relationship between two people but also a relationship between families. Therefore, abuse occurring within marriage should be treated differently from abuse occurring in other contexts:

If you are in a work environment and someone is doing that to you, you can report to the appropriate authorities. But with marriage it has to do with families so when this happens you should report to your parents or somebody who has more experience than you to have things sorted out. (Rukiati, 25)

Another common response from participants was for the woman to talk to the perpetrator to try to get him to change his behaviour. Talking to the man was for most participants the first action the survivor should take before looking for other alternatives:

You can talk to the man about it, you can try alternative dispute resolution. So if it is not a threat to your life you either go for counselling, you call somebody to step in then you go and do some ADR or if not, then you take it to the formal organisations, that is, if it is threatening your life. (Yaba, 26)

With regards to economic abuse related to maintenance or financial neglect, one participant was of the opinion that the woman could find another man who would take up the responsibility of providing for her:

For women we will not go hungry because even if you are unemployed there is a man who can help you find something to eat or help you find a job. But if it were the man going through this challenging time he would suffer. But I will not suffer and that is why I got another man in order to eat. (Sadia, 27)

Yen mmaa no yen ma akɔm ndi yen, se wo ni adwuma mpo a, obarima bi wɔhɔ a obεboa wo na w'anya biribi edi anaa wobεboa wo wɔ adwuma mu. Na owo barima

no na ɔkɔ nsohwe mu a ɔbɛbre but me menbre. eñó nti na mekɔ fa bi sɛ Kwan a menya biribi edi.

Seeking help from informal sources was also a common response among participants:

I would recommend you to the pastor of your church, that is, if it is a reliable church and not a one man church⁵... You can either go back to the family, maybe your parents or someone elderly in the family, to have things sorted out. It's marriage so I think if even the woman wants to end the marriage, it has to go back to the family. To say you are going to the police station is sometimes equal to ending the marriage so I would not recommend that. (Rukiatu, 26)

Unfortunately, these informal agents sometimes do not act in the best interest of the survivor as one of the experts explained:

They report to their close relatives, they report to pastors, they report to anybody they have confidence in that can help solve the matter. But quite often, what happens is that the people they confide in are the very people that will tell them that “ennye hwee mongyae mane nka” (it doesn't matter, you should let it go). “It is not good to send your husband to the police, it is not good to send your wife to the police, just leave it try to resolve it.” So they suppress them and by the time they come here it would have been something cyclical (Expert 3, DOVVSU)

Some participants were also of the opinion that the type of marriage could influence the actions women take when faced with spousal abuse:

Both are recognized under the laws of Ghana but the customary one has more to do with the family so if there are issues with abuse then there is a proper way to go about it. It's the family so you have to go through the family and the way customary marriages are annulled it is a different procedure from church wedding (Yaba, 26)

There were those who felt that traditional marriages were easier to leave because they were contracted between families:

It's a traditional marriage. Leaving that kind of relationship is easy unlike if you go through the “I do” [civil union] where it you have to go through a long process before you can get a divorce (Kukua, 39).

⁵ “One man churches” refers to the churches established by individuals and fall outside the traditional orthodox and protestant classifications. In Ghana, these churches could have thousands of members with different church branches locally and internationally to churches with about seven members meeting in a classroom or uncompleted building.

εye traditional marriage. eno ne gyae ye easy. enti se wakoye “I do” yi a gyi se wofa long process ansa na wagyaε

3.2.5. Response to forced sex in marriage.

Just as participants were hesitant to talk about forced sex in marriage due to the intimate nature of marriage, participants also acknowledged that women going through this situation find it difficult to talk about it with outsiders:

If she goes to church then she should see the leadership and tell them the whole truth. Marriage is one situation in which you cannot disclose everything that happens in it. And in most cases it is those issues that are the most disturbing. So when you report to the leadership of the church, they might be able to find a way to talk to the man so that he might reduce the amount of times he wants to have sex. But if you are unable to say anything and only report the normal things the problem remains. However, if you report it to your pastor, elders, and even take it to court and he still refuses to change then I think you should leave the marriage (Ama, 29)

Se əkə asore a əbetumi akə hu ni mpanifoə na w’aka nokore nyinaa. Wonim se awareε εye one thing a εnnye asem nyinaa na wobetumi aka. Deε wontumi nka na εha adwen no. Nti w’aka me kunu ni bəda a menpe, asəfоə no wə kwan a əmo bəfaso akakyere barima no a əbegyaε. Se εye adeε a əpε koraa obe susu. Na se w’antumi ankə ka na wo kəka deε εye normal no a, asem no wəhə. Enti wokyakerε wo səfоə w’antie, ebia mpanifoə wə hə wakakyere əmo w’antie, ebia mo kəə court still w’aka na ontie me metumi hu se esεse wogyae awareε no. koraa.

One participant responded that though she considered forced sex in marriage as rape, she would advise the woman to find some way of getting into the mood for sex in order to save her marriage:

I would advise the woman to get into the sex mood often because she is married to the man. She can also talk to the man or seek advice. She could take an aphrodisiac to put herself in the mood in order to preserve marriage because the woman will not want the man to cheat on her and get the sex from somewhere else. (Shika, 26)

Another participant, who narrated her boss's experience with forced sex in marriage, explained that it is difficult to offer advice to people going through this situation. However, she had advised her boss to pray about it though she admitted that prayer might not change the situation; she believed that the man's actions were due to his insensitivity:

Hmmm... its difficult to give advise in this situation. All you can do is advise her to pray about it. This is because even if you pray the person might not change his ways. This is because he is an uncaring and thoughtless person. Because if he cared he would be asking his sick wife what medicine he can get her to help her get better not try to have his way with her. (Sadia, 27)

Hmmmm... nedee n'ase no kyire no eyε din. Wonnim biribi a wobεkyire. εnoa ni se wobεkyire no se ɔnfa nkɔ mpaebɔ mu. Because nipa no mpo woyε mpaebɔ a sebia ɔni tieε a na ɔti. ɔnni abadaεε. ɔndwen nipa ho. Because wo dwen nipa ho na wo yere yare a, bia mommee me nkɔ tɔ deen aduro ma wo ho ntɔ wo. ɔnbisa saa. But ɔno dee ahia a ne dee ɔhia firi wo hɔ.

Another participant also viewed such a situation to be abusive. However, she maintained that she would not advise the survivor to go to the formal authorities immediately. Instead, she would first want to find out what the woman would like to do including what triggered the action, that is, she would investigate if there is any other underlying cause behind the abuse. She referenced the Christian belief on the importance of sex in marriage as her reason for adopting this approach and stated that she would probably recommend counselling in this situation.

3.2.6. Facilitators to seeking help

The majority of participants noted that the fear for one's life was a major factor that prompted women to seek help from formal service providers. Others also mentioned that knowledge of available services was a factor in disclosing abuse to formal services. Other participants also commented that survivors report when they have come to their limit and can no longer endure the abuse:

There are some people who want to talk to somebody because the abuse is too much for her to handle. Thus, no matter how challenging it is to get assistance she will try to get it (Ama, 29)

Obi wɔ hɔ a dee atiee bia ɔpe se ɔhu obi. Atiitii no ano ye den. Obi wɔ hɔ a anadwo ni kunu pese ɔni no da, anaa ɔtam bebia na ɔde bɔ no. Babia nipa ne wɔ bia ɔpe se ɔhu wo na se wo wɔ mmoa bi ma no wodi ama no

Others also stated that women report based on recommendations from friends and other informal sources.

3.2.7. Knowledge of domestic violence services

The data revealed that participants had limited knowledge of the services and interventions available to survivors of intimate partner violence in Ghana. All the women had heard of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana police service (or WAJU [Women and Juvenile Unit] as it was formerly known). Some also mentioned that survivors could seek help from the traditional police if they were being abused. Despite knowing about DOVVSU, the women did not know the types of services they could access from DOVVSU:

I know of DOVVSU who have really come out to support women on such issues and I know a few lawyers who take up such issues but you definitely need to report to the police first before a report is handled. (Kafui, 33)

I hear about it (DOVVSU) on the radio and the TV but to tell you the truth I do not know much about them. Just that they are an agency that deals in abuses. That is all I know (Shika, 26).

One participant mentioned that she thought DOVVSU only handled cases of financial neglect and was not aware that they handled other cases of violence:

I thought they said WAJU (DOVVSU) was a place to go to if your husband refuses to take care of your children or he doesn't give you chop money. I did not know that they did other things. (Mansah, 27)

WAJU (DOVVSU) no mekase ɔmosee se wokunu no nhwɛ mo ba anaa se ɔmma wo chop money ɛna wo kɔ hɔ. Na mennim se ɔmo ye other things

Some had heard of NGOs, such as the Ark Foundation, and international organisations like the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), but as with their knowledge of DOVVSU, they did not know what services these organisations provided. Likewise, respondents knew very little about the helplines, shelters, and medical support services available in Ghana:

I have heard of one (helpline) from the Ark foundation. Even though I do not know the hotline number, I know it exists (Yaba, 26)

Some participants expressed surprise when I informed them that there were shelters in the country and wondered why these services were not publicized extensively.

When I asked participants if they knew of any laws in Ghana regarding domestic violence, none of the women mentioned the Domestic Violence Law specifically. There were some respondents who were of the view that there must be some laws in Ghana and some international laws and treatises that Ghana is signatory to, though they did not know of any specific one:

I am pretty sure that there is a law hiding somewhere but we haven't tested the laws. I always say the laws are there but it is for us to fish it out or for somebody to bring a case. But we live in a cultural setting where these things have been,... (whispers) *lets talk at home*, but I am pretty certain that something is there though I can not readily recall, But I am certain that there should be one law or something dealing with it broadly if not specifically (Asantewaa, 32)

Two participants also mentioned the PNDC law 111, which is the Intestate Succession Law passed in 1985:

I know of the PNDC law 111, which has helped women protect their property after the passing of their husbands. That law has given women some peace because we used to go through a lot before the law. (Kukua, 39)

Dee me nim εye PNDC law 111 a abεboa mmaa na se wo kunu firi mu a abusuafɔɔ nni right wɔ agyapadeε ni ho. εnyε saa anka εno so we through a lot εwɔ that side nso. εno na abεma mma ahome kakra.

It was only after I had specifically asked about the Domestic Violence law that some participants mentioned that they had heard about it. However, they admitted that they did not know what the law entailed.

3.2.8. Sources of knowledge

Most of the respondents remarked that they had heard about the services through both the print and broadcast media:

Peace FM and other radio station talk about it (services) but I haven't been there personally (Ama, 29)

Peace FM foo ka, radio stations foo ka meti but me na menkɔ hɔ da
With regards to what they hear about the services on the radio, the respondents mentioned that they hear about cases of abuse and the fact that the perpetrator has been taken to DOVVSU or to court but they never get to know the outcome of the case:

I read about it in the newspapers but at the end of the day I do not know what it amounted to. You read that maybe a man has assaulted his wife,..., at the end of the day I hear that it was taken to DOVVSU, but the media people never come back to let you know what happened. So I really don't know, I would love to know, but I don't know (Asantewaa, 32)

Others also mentioned that they had heard about these services from friends who had utilised these services and in some cases, friends who worked with DOVVSU:

I only know of WAJU because I know of a fellow parishioner who works there and that is how we were able to gain access. (Kukua, 39)

Me WAJU pɛ na menim because menim parishioner bi enti na ye nyaa access.

3.2.9. Type of abusive situation that merits seeking formal support

From the data, I noticed that there was a link between type of abuse and the type of support respondents thought survivors should seek. Most participants were of the opinion that if the perpetrator's actions threatened the life of the woman, then she should

seek help from a formal institution. In most cases, respondents associated life-threatening abuse with physical abuse:

For instance, if your husband threatens to kill you with a knife or gun, then you can seek formal help. Or if he beats you, he beats you with anything he can lay his hands on and you can feel that you might get hurt then you can seek formal support. (Ama, 29)

Bia wo kunu atwe sikan se ɔbɛku wo anaa watwe tuo se ɔbɛshooto wo. Wobetumi akɔhu saa nkɔfɔɔ no. Anaa se ɔbo wo, onya biribia na ɔde bɔ wo. Wotumi hu se adee no ebepira wo anaa se ɛbɛye wo biribi. Wobetumi akɔ saa nkɔfɔɔ no

Well if it is a threat to the person's life, then I think the person can take it to a formal institution. If it's going to kill you, you are going to die, your body is going to be dismembered; if it is a threat to your life then you can take it to a formal institution (Yaba, 26)

Marriage was a factor in respondents' decision on whether to seek formal support or not:

But if you are not married you can walk out if it is threatening your life, your well-being, your future. But if you are already married then you have to start with the process, as in you try and talk about it, if it doesn't work, you call in a third party, if it doesn't work you can take it up to a formal body (Yaba, 26)

Another situation which participants felt merited seeking support from formal services would be if a survivor migrates to another town away from her relatives, and formal services are the nearest means of support:

There are situations where the woman has been brought here from the village and (she mimics the sound of being beaten) she does not have anywhere to go. If there is a place where she can be taken to that will be good. (Mansa, 29)

Ebi wɔ hɔ a ofiri akura bi ase y'atam no abesi ha *puu puu puu puu* onnyi baabia ɔbe fa. Baabi saa wɔ hɔ na nipa no wobetumi di no akɔ hɔ a eyε.

Some also stated that in situations where survivors did not have good relationships with their families they could consult these formal support agencies:

I know of this couple, the lady wanted to marry the guy and her family told her that if you marry this guy we will wash our hands off you. For 2, 3 years things were going well. Then the fourth year the man started having an affair and the woman went to talk about it. Then the man started beating her. The woman went

to tell her family and they told her that we told you that if you marry this man we will not mind you. So it became a problem because even her family had neglected her. So in such a situation, your family is not there. Who else? Unless the government. (Kafui, 33)

3.2.10. Perceptions of domestic violence services

The majority of participants were of the view that these formal services were good in theory. However, the manner in which these institutions discharged their services within the Ghanaian context was the factor that caused most participants to express mistrust of these services. For instance, a participant who had survived abuse but had not reported the issue to any formal agency explained that:

When he did that to me, I was told to take it to WAJU, but I thought that they would keep asking me to go and come back so I told them [her advisors] to forget about it (Sadia, 27)

Time na ḡye me saa no na ɔmo se me nfa no nkɔ WAJU na me no aye me sɛ ɔmo beye me kɔ bra kɔ bra ma fa ho na me ka sɛ ɔmo forgeti.

Thus, her perception of how DOVVSU handled reports of domestic violence influenced her decision not to seek help although she admitted during the interviews that DOVVSU was a helpful institution.

Another participant stated that she would not report intimate partner violence to the formal authorities since doing so was bound to bring disgrace to the family:

Personally, I think that you can report to these formal agencies if you have no intention of returning to the marriage. Otherwise, if you go you will have disgraced the person. In that case I will not go but I would leave the marriage and not report you to anyone (Ama, 29)

But me no,..., ḡye saa na wokɔ wei na wonware dee a, but ḡye saa na woKɔ na w'agu nipa no anim ase. ḡye saa menkɔ but me a meguae awaree no. Na menfa wo nkɔ babia.

In this case the participant did not perceive DOVVSU as a reconciliatory body; instead she considered it as having some potential to further exacerbate the situation.

Additionally, one of the participants based her perception of the services on the resource challenge facing service delivery in the country:

I think that they are not fully equipped and I believe that some of them are understaffed and some of them do not have the funding to support these people in whatever shelters they are in. Probably their incapacity is due to the fact that not everybody is willing to go to them when there are issues. (Yaba, 26)

Another participant doubted the ability of formal services to handle domestic violence due to the women's reluctance to report violence to these services:

I don't think so because of the number of domestic violence cases. If they did the number of domestic violence cases would have reduced. For example, if they did a woman would be confident enough to report her husband who is a breadwinner. (Shika, 26)

3.2.11. Factors that influenced participants' perceptions of domestic violence services.

The data revealed that participants' perceptions of domestic violence services were shaped by three main factors. These were:

a) What they hear from friends.

Accounts from friends and other close relations about their experiences when accessing these services was influential in participants' perceptions of these services:

My friend told me that they will collect money from you when you go there. They will ask you questions and if they realize that you don't have money, they will not take your case seriously. Based on what I have heard, if I have a problem I will not take it there. My friend said that if she did not have money, she would not have been able to go through the process. (Ama, 29)

O madamfo no se se woko a yebegyege wo sika. Yebebisa wo nsem bi. Nsem na yebebisa wo no se yehwe na se wonnye obi a biribi wo wo nsa mu, w'ano ndruu babi a, w'asem no koraa echo nhia wɔn. Enti metii saa no, problem bi saa no menfa nkɔ. Madamfo no se na anka ɔnnyi sika ank ɔntumi nnye saa.

b) Negative perceptions of public and private institutions in Ghana.

Participants cited certain negative perceptions about public institutions, such as the need to pay bribes to get favourable treatment as their reason for mistrusting these institutions:

For instance, your husband is abusing you and you report the case to the police, the officer taking the report will ask for maybe 20 Ghana. Another will ask for 50 Ghana. You will have to hire a taxi for the police to go and pick up your husband. Probably, you might go to the hospital and you will have to give the doctor something. When I take into consideration these amounts of money I have to pay, it discourages me from reporting and I would rather stay in the abusive situation (Ama, 29)

se ebia wo kunu aye wo biribi. Wobekɔ police station, ɔbetwere ama wo ɔbɛka se ma me 20 Ghana. Dee ɔbe takee case bɛka se ma me 50 Ghana, Yɛbɛkɔ akɔfa wo kunu no mpo aba bɛbisa no asem koraa a gye se wokɔ hire taxi. Enti mehwɛ saa sika no a,,, wobekɔ hospital, ebia doctor no a ɔtwerɛ report no ama wo no agye wopɛ biribi ma no, Na ma sain koraa nti na me da ho wɔ atiitii ne mu. Because police station wokɔ gyina hɔ a ɔmo nka se aban atii se yɛdi boa wo nti w'aka w'asem a yɛdi boa wo.

Another participant also spoke about the misappropriation of funds by NGOs:

It helps. I am in support of it [NGOs] if it will not be about spending money. Because most at times, when they set up these foundations, they receive funds from outside the country. If they use the funds they receive to help people then that is good. But if they use it for their own benefit then I do not support it. (Kukua, 39)

eboa. Medee me supportu, but se enkɔ ye sikadee dea. Because most at times no, ɔmo seti up foundation a ɔmo nya funds from outside . But se eye adee a funds a eba no wɔmo di boa nipa no dee a eye. Na se ekɔ ye for ɔmo own benefit dee endee mensupportu.

c) *Personal experience*

As previously mentioned, two participants had utilised the services at DOVVSU and their experiences influenced their perception of that agency:

I doubt. I will talk from experience. I went to DOVVSU at the Ministries, I don't know if you have been there? And I wasn't the least impressed. They have a lot of cases. A woman comes in, where to sit, even the environment itself it is not welcoming. I think for a place like that you should have a very receptive environment, the ambience, even colours. But you go there and it's like a normal police station. Shouting across here and there, stern looking officials, but these

things are emotional so you should have friendly staff (Asantewaa, 32)

The other participant who had also had contact with DOVVSU felt that they had been helpful since her friend was able to get justice. However, she also articulated that it was possible that the positive outcome had been because a friend, who worked with DOVVSU, had helped them. Thus, despite the support they had received from DOVVSU she still expressed some level of distrust in DOVVSU.

This distrust was linked to the negative perceptions about public institutions in Ghana:

They are good. Just that sometimes they don't act honestly. What I mean is sometimes if the perpetrator has money, money is used as an incentive to cover things up and the victim ends up on the losing end. So if honesty were to prevail within the police system then things will work out fine. (Kukua, 39)

εye. Just that sometimes ɔmo nndi nokrε. Mekyerεse εbi wɔhɔ ɔmoba na nipa no sika wɔ ni nsem mu a, ɔmo di sika katakata nnoɔma so a womom a asem no εsεsε yedi ma wo no no na yedi asem no akyea no no. enti εye adee a nokoredie εba wɔ police side a anka εbe ma brebia aba fie.

3.2.12. Challenges to service delivery

One of the biggest challenges facing service delivery is the traditional belief surrounding domestic violence and marriage in Ghanaian society. Domestic violence is considered as a private matter that must not be disclosed to people outside the family. As a result, some women are afraid of being stigmatised and ridiculed by society for reporting and so do not seek formal help. A respondent narrated her experience with her friend who was being abused:

I have referred her [the survivor] to my friend who is a practicing lawyer but yet still I tell you, she comes in and tells me, "Asantewaa, I don't want people to say that I am taking Bonsu to court" (Asantewaa, 32)

Tradition dictates that problems in the family must be settled at home so some survivors seek informal support rather than report the matter to formal institutions:

In certain situations people use the local services that are available. Maybe there is an older family member they will like to take the matter to; and you know when such cases are settled in the family domain, nobody wants the family name to be ruined so they are always made to accept some sort of compensation; they say “let him come and pacify you” and that is settled at the family level. (Expert 2, Ark)

In some situations, survivors who report to these formal institutions would request that their cases be handled outside of court rather than push for their partners to be prosecuted:

Some will also come and tell you “I don’t want my husband to be arrested, I don’t want him to be treated like this, just call him and talk to him”. So these are some of the things. This is the way they deal with it (Expert 3, DOVVSU)

Similarly, family members, friends, and other persons close to survivors sometimes intervene and request that the case be settled informally after the survivor has made the official report:

We have had several instances where family members will come and plead that an issue should be settled out of court or out of our jurisdiction. There have been instances where people have come with money begging. Some will say, “we will give you a portion of land, we just don’t want you to take our family name into the public domain”. (Expert 2, Ark)

Though family interference is a challenge to the work of service providers, one of the experts maintained that in the Ghanaian setting, family involvement was necessary due to the existence of Ghanaian traditional values, the resource challenge facing formal service providers, and the inadequate governmental support for social services:

We cannot be like the Western world. That is a fact. We cannot be like the Americans or the British. That is a fact. Because the Americans, they have their cultural background that they have grown up with. There are certain things that they will be doing that we in Africa will say that this is not good. So we always have to look at a system that best fits us and we go with it. I haven’t been there but I am sure that this shelter thing is there [referring to the Western World] that if there is intimate partner violence the system will take care of the survivor. But in our part of the world, so the man is incarcerated, he is gone, maybe he is the breadwinner of the family, what does the state do? What role does the state play? Forget about what is theoretical or what is in the records. So those children should

end up in the streets? Is that what you are saying? Do you get it? So our problem is so complicated. So we want to pursue justice but we cannot pursue it to the letter because what we need to be able to pursue it to the latter does not exist. Do you get me? So if there is any opportunity that will help resolve the violence aspect of the home and the family will continue to have that family tree and grow, then why not. (Expert 3, DOVVSU)

The understanding people have of domestic violence is also a challenge to service delivery in Ghana. As reported earlier, some participants were of the view that some types of abuse, that is, physical and sexual, were more serious than other forms of abuse such as, emotional and economic. This perception serves as a barrier for some survivors in accessing services when needed. Indeed, this perception is limited not only to survivors, but to some service providers as well:

Most police officers who are not sensitized will ask you, “ did he slap you?” and you say “no” and they will ask you “ so what is your problem?” When you explain that he has been abusing you emotionally, they would say, “ edeen ni emotional abuse?” (What is emotional abuse?). Some do not really understand emotional abuse but it is an issue that is killing a lot of people (Expert 2, Ark)

Thus, based on the response of some service providers, some survivors decide not to seek help.

Furthermore, some service providers blame survivors who report for causing the abuse. For example one participant recounted an incident she witnessed while at DOVVSU:

I remember the day I went there to report the case and there was a rape case and the officer dealing with them,... in fact I was getting angry though it wasn't my case, but then this is an open office and the man [perpetrator] was in handcuffs and the girl was young, and I thought it was derogatory. It was a man not a woman (referring to the officer) who was shouting on top of his voice. Pardon my French, but I will tell you what he said, “Akora bone. hwe wo nofoo na atwiatwia ho. Se yedi wo na eye wo de” (Naughty child. Look at how your breasts are showing. You were happy when he was raping you). This was an open place so everybody got to know that this girl had been raped continuously and I think it was wrong. At least, lets have a partition and talk calmly, but you could see the girl in pain, crying. (Asantewaa, 32)

Aside from providing evidence of the victim blaming that is sometimes carried out by service providers, this participant's story illustrates how some formal agencies lack private interview space needed to protect the privacy of survivors who report.

Another major challenge to women who contemplate accessing formal services in Ghana is financial difficulties. Seeking redress for abuse is an expensive endeavour. For instance, after making a complaint to the police, survivors are asked to undergo a medical exam to substantiate their claim. Some women lack the resources to do so and therefore, do not pursue their case:

In certain issues, people who have good cases, for lack of financial resources, will not want to pursue the case. Because if you do not have what it takes to board transportation to report your case, even when you are being killed you will say that "ah... after all who cares" and if I go and report and I am asked to make a formal report, go to the hospital to do a medical check up you need to pay so you decide that well why don't I sit back and try to prevent myself from abuse. In certain instances, people say that if after I have been abused I have to pay for the services then it is not worth it. (Expert 2, Ark)

Service providers face financial constraints that hinder the execution of their duties. They lack the necessary resources, such as cars, and the human resources needed to effectively provide support to survivors:

Since January up till now, I have not been able to move to any region, why? It is because we have not been resourced but with this work I know I shouldn't limit myself to this table and chair alone. I must move but I only depend on the telephone. But I need to be on the ground to see what is happening. Like the establishment of shelters is key in the prevention and protection of gender-based violence. We have now completed the rehabilitation of an abandoned structure in Accra well equipped with household items. What is left is to get funding for the day to day running of the place because you can't send people there without giving them food, you can't send people there and expect them to sleep in darkness, you can't send people there to be moving around the community searching for water. So it is a challenge to put these things in place before we can send people there. Apart from this, we have other structures, one in Ho, one in Wa we need to complete the processes of refurbishing to make it more habitable. Our big challenge is funding (Expert 1, Domestic Violence Secretariat)

Civil society organisations also face financial challenges in the execution of their duties. Since these organisations do not receive any governmental support, they rely on external donors for support to finance their operations. This funding is unfortunately not always available as illustrated by one of the experts I interviewed who narrated the challenges her organisation is facing financially:

We used to be sponsored by CORDAID, a Netherlands agency. They sponsored us for about 10 years. But since 2010 they wrapped up from Ghana and since then we haven't had any major sponsor. Right now what we are doing is to rely on corporate support and philanthropic help to support our victims and as a result we shut down our legal services. We used to offer free legal services and legal representations to victims of domestic violence. But we shut it down because we had rented a place in town and we could not afford it. We used to give financial aid to victims who have come out of their situations and want to do something beneficial. We were putting children in school but all that has come to a halt. And its like most of the donor agencies are looking at outside Ghana and those who are still in Ghana are looking at policy issues, capacity building; they are no longer interested in domestic violence issues, they want the kind of support that you will task government to do something. We also realised that they would rather like to support the big agencies like the UNDP. Like the Bill Gates Foundation, they do not support individual organisation, they prefer to support the WHO. So if you do not fall in line with their thematic area then they do not have the support (Expert 2, Ark)

The time and effort involved in seeking redress through the criminal justice system are other challenges to service delivery in Ghana. The procedure for seeking redress through the criminal justice system is that the survivor must first make a formal complaint to the police or DOVVSU. An investigator reviews this complaint, and the complainant is issued with a police medical form to undergo a medical check-up. Subsequently, the police will invite the perpetrator to the station for questioning. If it is established that a crime was committed, the case is forwarded to the courts. But here too, the process, aside from being expensive, is also time consuming and can deter the survivor from proceeding with the case:

And then the fatigue/stress involved in pursuing cases at court, you go there are adjournments, postponements, judges go on leave, they look at all that and say let me just give up. (Expert 2, Ark)

However, another expert also explained that though it is true that the process can be tedious; the process cannot be rushed due to the sensitive nature of the cases involved:

This is different from the normal conventional policing where you have to go and arrest. It's about very delicate issues and you have to listen to both sides. Probably, what is eliciting all those violence, probably you [survivor] are also part of it. It's not always that you the perpetrator is wrong, sometimes you the victim too are wrong somewhere so if you also stop certain things... That is why we have to be that civil, get all of you together, listen to all the sides and look at how we can resolve the matter together with you because the solutions are always with the people in dispute and not with me because I am just the third party. I can only facilitate for you to bring your resolution. The solutions are with you; you are having your problems. So that is it. So if they say that we have been delaying; yes, delays are there. If you go to the courts the cases are many. We have only one domestic violence court that is dealing with all the cases in Accra. So you don't expect that you get to the court today and tomorrow you are done. Definitely there will be adjournments, because we have to listen to you, listen to the man, before the judge will have to go and sit down and write a judgement. So it shouldn't be a day. We cannot conjure magic. It's as simple as that. So as for the delay, it is there. (Expert 3, DOVVSU)

The time involved in seeking redress is compounded by the limited number of domestic violence services in the country as the expert from DOVVSU stated in the above quote.

As of November 2014, when these interviews were conducted, there were only two domestic violence courts in Ghana, one in Kumasi and one in Accra as noted in the quote above. Since then, another domestic violence court has been established in Tema but these are not enough to meet the demand.

Furthermore, due to the limited number of services, some survivors have to travel long distances to seek formal help:

Sometimes someone calls and we ask if there is a DOVVSU in their region and they say yes we have, but I have to travel a long distance to the nearest one. This is mostly so for those in the remotest villages. It means you have to come to the

city. These are some of the challenges involved. This is because if I have to travel all the way to Accra, then I won't report. (Expert 2, Ark)

Another challenge facing service delivery in Ghana is the lack of a legislative instrument (LI). This instrument is needed in order to fully operationalize the Domestic Violence Law. When the legislative instrument is passed, it will among other things, provide protocols for the establishment of shelters and the disbursement of the domestic violence fund, which the Domestic Violence law makes provision for. With access to the fund, survivors can get free medical care and also some money to support them during this challenging time. Also, the domestic violence fund will make money available for the training of service providers. As it is now, there are no protocols for establishing and governing the services that are stipulated in the Domestic Violence Law:

The passage of the legislative instrument of the domestic violence law will serve as a guideline for the establishment of shelters. We have almost completed the process of getting the legislative instrument passed so as soon as the Legislative instrument is passed by parliament, then we will just begin advocating on those issues for people to know then from that time I think things will be streamlined. But since we do not have the legislative instrument or any policy document for the guidelines for the establishment of shelters, right now we don't have anything in place,... It's like people register an NGO and they decide what to do. (Expert 1, Domestic Violence Secretariat)

I was informed in November 2014, when these interviews were conducted, that the legislative instrument had been submitted to the Attorney General's office for review and was in the final stages of being passed. However, to date, it has still not been passed.

Service providers also face interagency challenges in the delivery of services to survivors:

Sometimes too you know that we don't work in isolation we work with the police, we work with other agencies. There is that fatigue as well. You refer cases and you never get feedback. You have to keep following up and even in cases that they refer to you, you have to call to see what is happening. If one person keeps

on doing something for a long time they will also give up in a way. So there is also that structural challenge (Expert 2, Ark)

3.3. Suggestions from women

During the interviews, I asked participants to make suggestions regarding how access to services can be improved. In this section, I report some of the suggestions made by the women.

3.3.1. Education

A majority of the women felt that there needed to be more education to ensure greater awareness of the existing services in the country:

I think it comes back to awareness and education. I think people are just shy to say that the man is beating me up. So I think that if there is more education about the work that these organizations undertake, I think it would help. If there are more advertisements on the radio, billboards, and things like then it would help people because people patronise things they see; they try them out. I mean if it is something they see all the time, when it happens in their life, they will know where to access it. (Yaba, 26)

One participant also proposed that it would be beneficial to implement other forms of awareness creation strategies such as community outreaches:

They can have community-based education because if the education is only through the media, there are people who are not in touch with any of the media outlets so they may not benefit from such training. But if you are doing it on a community basis, you can have the chief assemble the women and give them the training that they need (Rukiati, 25)

3.3.2. Increase in number of services

It was suggested that more services should be introduced to increase the number of available services in the country. Participants were of the opinion that this would help solve the problem of women having to travel long distances to access formal services:

I think there should be more awareness creation and the domestic violence offices should not be only one office in a far away place. I think they should have offices all around so you can quickly approach one if you are in difficulty because the only one I know is the one in Accra, I don't know of any other Unit (Rukiati, 25)

3.3.3. Counselling and rehabilitation services

Likewise, participants were of the view that more counselling services should be set up since they felt that receiving counselling was very important for people going through abusive situations:

In every situation we need to be taught how to handle the situation, we need to know how to manage it if it comes up. You and I may be here we wouldn't know what to do in the situation but if we get an elderly person then at least the person can show you what to do. So if you get an expert the person can teach you what to do (Kafui, 33)

In the same vein, it was suggested that community counselling centres or places that will serve as safe spaces for women should be established in different communities so women can come together and receive help:

If they set up an organisation or if they announce that anybody going through this sort of problem should meet at a particular place where they will be counselled and those facing financial difficulties will be given some work then that will be helpful. (Ama, 29)

se ɔmoti kuo bi, anaa ɔmo announce se obi wɔ saa problem ɔbɛhyeamu wɔ ha,
Kasa kyere, obi wɔ hɔ a ne dee yɛ sikasɛm, yɛbɛma mo ayɛ adwuma anka ɛno nso
bɛboa.

Participants were also of the opinion that rehabilitation services must be provided for the perpetrators so as to ensure that they do not return to their abusive ways:

Therapy should not only be for you but your partner as well. Counsellors are trained to know when a person is truly remorseful. So you put them through a counselling session and you will know if they are ready to go back. Maybe there are some changes that need to be made to the home setting so that will be done. (Asantewaa, 32)

3.3.4. Building the capacity of women

Last but not least, participants suggested that it would be beneficial to build the capacity of women. That is, providing them with skills that will enable them take care of themselves in the event that an abusive partner is incarcerated. These skills will also be

beneficial if they decide to leave an abusive relationship. Likewise, participants suggested that a scholarship scheme should be set up for children of abused women. This scholarship scheme would help reduce the stress women go through with regards to their children's welfare in this critical time:

You should have a scholarship scheme for the children. There also has to be a training programme for the mothers; those who are not trained in anything. You have to help them stand on their own two feet. (Shika, 26)

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter provided a description of the results from the data analysis. Using quotes, I illustrated participants' understanding of intimate partner violence and its varied manifestations. I described their opinions on the actions survivors take in response to abuse. I also presented their perceptions of domestic violence services and interventions in Ghana and followed this with an exploration of some of the challenges to service delivery mentioned by both the women and the experts. Finally, I highlighted some suggestions the women made concerning the improvement of service delivery in Ghana.

In the next chapter, I engage in a discussion of the results revealed in this chapter. I do so with an exploration of the literature on intimate partner violence to situate these findings in existing literature.

Chapter 4: Discussion

A number of themes were identified in the analysis of the data. These include: Ghanaian women's understanding of intimate partner violence, responses to abuse, facilitating factors to seeking help, challenges to service delivery, and suggestions to improve awareness of services and service delivery in Ghana. In this chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to extant scholarship. I have organised the chapter according to the four research questions explored in this thesis.

4.1. How do Ghanaian women understand intimate partner violence?

The help-seeking model posits that a relationship exists between the interpretation women give to their situation, the level of severity they associate with the violence experienced, and the actions they take in response to the violence (Liang et. al., 2005). Findings from the current study corroborated this theoretical assertion. Participants described different forms of violence such as physical, verbal/emotional, economic, sexual, and forced sex in marriage. Their descriptions of these acts of violence revealed that physical and sexual violence were perceived by some as more serious than emotional/verbal and economic violence. Participants' assessment of the severity of the violent act influenced their opinion on whether to report the violence or not. For example, some participants responded during the interviews that they would report instances of physical and sexual violence to formal authorities rather than cases of verbal/emotional violence, which they thought should be reported to informal actors such as family members.

Some scholars maintain that it is critical for service providers and researchers to understand the interpretation survivors give to their situation (Bent-Goodley, 2004; Bonomi, Allen & Holt, 2005) as these might differ from institutional and legal definitions

used by service providers. The help-seeking model states that the meaning survivors give to their situation is not static but varies based on their background and experiences (Liang et.al, 2005). This assertion was corroborated by findings from this study. For instance, one participant was hesitant to describe a scenario as emotional abuse since she did not have prior knowledge of emotional abuse as a form of domestic violence. Some participants were also uncomfortable with using the term “abuse” to describe certain acts of violence such as forced marital sex because they viewed this term as too harsh and severe. Thus, by working from the standpoint of the survivor, and not relying solely on institutional and legal definitions of violence, service providers and survivors will be able to come up with solutions that suit the particular experiences of the survivor.

The help-seeking model identifies individual, interpersonal, and/ or social factors as relevant to women’s interpretation of their violent experiences (Liang et al., 2005). At the societal level, gender role socialisation and expectations in marriage influence the understanding women have of domestic violence (Bowman, 2003; Liang et al., 2005). In patriarchal societies such as Ghana, women are often socialised to assume subordinate roles to their husbands and are expected to be obedient to them (Ampofo & Prah, 2009). The issue of wifely obedience can be linked to the traditional notion in some societies that husbands, as heads of the household, have the duty to ‘discipline’ disobedient wives (Amoakohene, 2004; Ampofo & Prah, 2009; Takyi & Mann, 2006). Thus, a woman who has been socialised to accept this gender inequity and interprets her husband’s actions as a performance of his traditional duty may not define her situation as abusive and might not seek help. It is important to note that the majority of participants in this study disagreed with the idea that husbands had the right to ‘discipline’ their wives. This finding is contrary to other studies (Amoakohene, 2004; Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2015;

Tenkorang et al., 2013), which found that women justified violence on the basis of affection and traditional male authority. Similar to a study by Sedziafa, Tenkorang, & Owusu (2016), the participants I interviewed disagreed that domestic violence was justified for any reason due to the harm violence could cause to the woman. Participants also noted that the financial strain from the hospital bills incurred from treating the woman for abuse could result in further violence in home.

In societies where intimate partner violence is largely considered as a private matter, incidents of violence against women are unlikely to be reported (FRA, 2014; Kedir & Admasachew, 2010; Liang et al. 2005). Fear of the repercussions from bringing the private into the public domain prevents women from seeking help from formal institutions and influences their definition of intimate partner violence. Similarly participants I interviewed noted that women are concerned that speaking about their experiences with violence may result in public ridicule. Some also stated that women seek help from family members rather than formal agencies to avoid bringing disgrace to the family and causing marriage dissolution.

The secrecy surrounding domestic violence in Ghana was also reflected in how issues of forced sex are handled. Archampong (2010) notes that unlike child rape, which is openly condemned in Ghanaian society, marital rape is often not discussed at all. Similarly, participants in this study readily identified sexual assault outside marriage as violence but found it difficult to comment and describe forced marital sex as a form of violence. This finding is consistent with Amoakohene (2004) whose work also indicated that Ghanaian women were hesitant to discuss sexual violence in marriage. Amoakohene (2004) attributed this finding to the secrecy surrounding domestic violence in Ghana. With the participants I interviewed, the silence associated with domestic violence, the

intimate nature of this form of violence, and the Christian view of marital sex contributed to their reluctance when it came to forced sex in marriage.

Also, the traditional belief that husbands have the right to use force should their wives refuse to fulfil their marital role of providing sexual intercourse (Adinkrah, 2011; Ampofo & Prah, 2009; Archampong, 2010) discourages women from reporting forced marital sex. Service providers have been found to subscribe to these traditional beliefs (Cantalupo et. al, 2006), a situation which was corroborated by one of the experts I interviewed, who commented that some service providers might not take a complaint on forced sex in marriage seriously. Unsurprisingly, some participants from this study expressed doubt in their ability to report such violence to formal authorities. However, the stories narrated by participants indicates that it is a serious problem in Ghana that needs to be given more attention by the government, service providers and the general public since, as participants noted, forced marital sex causes a lot of emotional and physical harm to the survivors.

Traditional beliefs about marital sex are compounded by religious views on sex in marriage. Religion has a tremendous influence on the lives of many Africans including Ghanaians (Adinkrah, 2014; Mbiti, 1991). It was therefore not too surprising that religion, specifically Christianity, influenced participants' perceptions and responses to forced sex in marriage. Participants suggested prayer and talking to pastors as ways of dealing with forced sex in marriage. Some participants also cited the importance of sex in Christian marriages as an influence on their views on forced sex in marriage. This finding is in agreement with Adinkrah's (2010) study on the criminalisation of marital rape, where 91 out of 116 Ghanaian students sampled disagreed with its criminalisation based

partly on the fact that “Christian scripture and the vows of a Christian marriage ordain the sexual rights of husbands over wives” (p.1001).

In terms of responses to abuse, participants enumerated a number of responses including talking to the perpetrator; seeking help from family, friends, and church leaders; praying about the situation; leaving the relationship, whether temporarily or permanently; and reporting the violence to formal institutions. These findings are consistent with the findings from other studies (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Amokohene, 2004; Ampofo & Prah; 2009; Odero et. al, 2013).

The majority of women interviewed mentioned leaving the relationship, either as a temporary or permanent measure. This is interesting because although divorce is becoming more common in recent years, it is still largely discouraged in Ghanaian society and female divorcees are particularly stigmatised, more so than male divorcees (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). The women explained that a temporary separation might result in the perpetrator recognising his error and changing his behaviour, a belief similar to that of the participants in Amoakohene’s (2004) study. Permanent separation was mentioned as necessary in situations where there is a threat of bodily harm that could lead to death. One participant suggested that it was better for women to permanently leave an abusive relationship in lieu of committing suicide. Participants in Odero’s (2013) study indicated that some women commit suicide to escape from an abusive partner. In Ghana, suicide is viewed as a cultural and religious taboo and this perception, according to Adinkrah (2014), may account for its low rate of report and also serve as a deterrent for people. Statistics available indicate that 11 out of 243 fatal suicides recorded between January 1, 2006 to December, 2008 were by females, with a few of these suicide cases stemming from domestic violence (Adinkrah, 2011).

The ability of women to respond to domestic violence is further determined by their financial situation. One participant mentioned that upon evaluating the financial resources available to her when she experienced abuse, she felt that what money she had was better spent taking care of her children and investing in her business rather than pursuing a criminal case against her husband. However, she had hopes of one day pursuing justice once her financial situation improved. This finding is supported by the help-seeking model, which posits that women evaluate the cost versus benefits of seeking support, and may decide not to seek support if the costs outweigh the benefits (Liang et al, 2005). This participant's situation thus demonstrates that women are active help seekers and that they assess their situation to see if seeking immediate help will be beneficial based on their situation. Their assessment of the situation may or may not result in them seeking help immediately.

4.1.1. Emphasis on physical evidence⁶

While collecting data, I noticed that a lot of emphasis was placed on physical evidence regarding intimate partner violence in Ghana. For example, participants emphasised physical abuse and sexual abuse outside of marriage than emotional abuse because the former could result in physical harm. Emphasis on physical evidence was also present in pursuing cases through the criminal justice system. When survivors report cases to the police, they are given forms to undergo medical examination. This medical exam provides physical evidence to substantiate a survivor's claim of abuse. Cantalupo et al. (2006) commented that some judges would refuse to hear a case without a medical form. Archampong (2010) also writes about this emphasis on physical evidence in her

⁶ I use the term “physical evidence” in this section to describe visible signs of violence such as bruises, documentary evidence, and eyewitness accounts that proof that someone has been abused.

article on marital rape in Ghana. In reviewing sexual assault case files, she found that in cases where the complainant won it was because there were witnesses to corroborate her claims of sexual assault, while the complainant lost in cases where there were no witnesses.

This observation caused me to raise questions about the protocol for dealing with cases of emotional abuse, where there is no physical evidence. I was informed that such cases would be referred to counsellors. One of the experts agreed that the emphasis on physical evidence was a problem in Ghana. She stated that this emphasis on physical evidence is a challenge service providers face in obtaining funds from donors because they want quantifiable evidence for the work service providers do with the funds. Netty Musahnu, the executive director of the Musasa Project in Zimbabwe, also identified this desire for quantifiable evidence as a challenge to service delivery in Zimbabwe (Musahnu, 2013).

This emphasis on physical evidence has implications for the help-seeking behaviour of women. This is because people will not report these non-physical forms of abuse and as was mentioned by one of the experts, emotional abuse is a serious problem in Ghana though not acknowledged as such. Therefore, this problem must be given attention by policymakers and service providers.

4.2. How knowledgeable are Ghanaian women of the available formal domestic violence interventions in the country?

Results revealed that women have limited knowledge of available domestic violence services in Ghana. Participants were aware of the police and DOVVSU; however, they did not know the kinds of services they could access through these agencies. They were also unaware of other agencies in Ghana that provided shelter,

counselling, and legal support to survivors of intimate partner violence. These findings are consistent with other research which found that women had limited knowledge of the services available to them in the event of intimate partner violence (Bent- Goodly, 2004; Odero et al, 2013). That participants were mostly unaware of available services could be due to the low publicity these agencies receive in Ghana. With the exception of DOVVSU, which gets a considerable amount of publicity in the media (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) News, 2009; Ghana News Agency (GNA), 2011; Owusu-Akyaw, 2015), the other agencies are not publicised much. The fact that there are so few support services, with few employees to draw attention to those services' existence, could also account for participants' being unaware of agencies other than DOVVSU. Researchers note that in situations where there are limited number of services, women's awareness of these services and their ability to report cases of domestic violence are hampered (Bates, Hancock & Peterkin, 2001; Odero et al. 2013).

The nature of intimate violence is such that survivors require multiple services like medical support, counselling, and shelter to deal with the effects. But due to their limited knowledge, survivors are unable to request all the support they need. This dearth of knowledge of available services has implications for the help-seeking behaviour of survivors of violence in Ghana, as it hampers their ability to make informed decisions about the kind(s) of support best suited for dealing with their situation. For instance, Mitchell (2011) notes in her study of service users of the Kaneshie DOVVSU that all respondents chose a single support service when asked to identify which ones they expected to receive. Thus, even in situations where there are multiple services available, women may not request them because they are unaware of their existence.

Participants also lacked knowledge of the Domestic Violence Law though some mentioned that they knew of other laws in Ghana that protected women's rights to inheritance after the death of a spouse - an event that has been a source of violence against women in Ghana (Amokohene, 2004). Some participants reported that they had heard of the Domestic Violence Law only after I specifically asked them about it. However, they were still unaware of the specific provisions in the law. Women's lack of knowledge of the Law could be a result of the low levels of awareness among Ghanaian women of their legal and civil rights (Adomako et al., 2005). The need for more education was evident in this study since the women stressed that awareness campaigns be increased in Ghana to equip women with knowledge of their rights. A lack of knowledge of their rights makes Ghanaian women vulnerable to manipulation from perpetrators, informal support providers, and formal service providers (Adomako et al., 2005; Cantalupo et al., 2006; Liang e. al., 2005). As noted by the experts in this study, though services provided to survivors were supposed to be free of charge, some women were made to pay monies to obtain assistance. A police officer who participated in the study by Adomako et al., (2005) admitted that some officers take advantage of Ghanaian women's ignorance of their rights and intimidate them into dropping their cases.

Likewise, Mitchell (2011) found that women who sought help from the Kanesie DOVVSU in Ghana did not know about the Domestic Violence Law. She noted that officers at DOVVSU did not inform service users of their rights under the law or advise them of other services and referrals they could access. This is problematic since it implies that women who report abuse are denied the right to be fully informed of the options available to them. The failure of DOVVSU officers to explain to women their rights could be as a result of the officers' lack of knowledge of the Law. One expert I

interviewed mentioned that there are some instances where trained DOVVSU officers are transferred to other units of the police service and are replaced with untrained ones. Therefore, if women encounter such officers it is likely that the kind of support they receive may be limited.

The findings regarding knowledge of services and the Domestic Violence Law are consistent with other studies which found that women fail to access formal support services because they are unaware of the existence of these services and laws aimed at protecting them from domestic violence (Bentley-Goodman, 2004; FRA, 2014; Makamahadze et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2011; Odero et al., 2013; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). Bentley-Goodman (2004) found in a study of African-American women living in the United States that they did not seek support because they lacked knowledge of the services available to them. Makamahadze et al., (2011) in their study of Zimbabwean women's perceptions of the Domestic Violence Act found that a majority of participants did not know about this Law. Makamahdze and colleagues (2011) further cited a report by the South African Research and Documentation Centre that concluded that limited knowledge of legal provisions aimed at protecting the rights of women is a prevalent problem in the Southern part of Africa.

Another notable finding in this study was the sources of women's knowledge of domestic violence services. Despite the fact that participants did not know much about services such as shelters, helplines, and organisations like the Ark Foundation, the majority of participants mentioned that they had heard of domestic violence cases through the media. Through these reports they had heard of DOVVSU and the courts that deal with domestic violence cases, thereby reaffirming the role of the mass media as a tool in educating Ghanaians about intimate partner violence (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014;

Gadzepko, 2009; Mitchell, 2011). Interestingly, participants mentioned that they did not hear the outcome of these cases after the initial media report. This indicates that it is important for media houses and service providers to publicise the outcomes of cases since they could serve as a deterrent to perpetrators and further raise awareness about domestic violence. In light of the negative perceptions participants had of service providers in Ghana, publicising the outcome of these cases might help improve the image Ghanaians have of these services and change their attitudes towards reporting and seeking help from formal agencies.

4.3. What factors influence how Ghanaian women perceive domestic violence services?

The interviews indicated that participants had mainly negative perceptions of DOVVSU. This finding is particularly important since DOVVSU is the principal provider of formal support to survivors of domestic violence in Ghana and the only service provider present in all ten regions. Reasons participants cited for this distrust included: increased rates of domestic violence, issues of corruption, long procedures to attain justice, expense of seeking justice, insensitivity of officers, and lack of privacy at DOVVSU offices. Interestingly, these perceptions of DOVVSU expressed by participants in this study mirror the reasons for underreporting violence to the police in the study by Ampofo et al., (2005). This suggests that despite improvements in the provision of services and the passage of legislation to mitigate cases of domestic violence, these negative perceptions still persist.

Some participants had misunderstandings as to the nature of the services provided by formal services. The expert from the Ark Foundation explained that some survivors are disappointed after accessing formal services because they do so without having a full

understanding of their functions. She cited an example of a teacher who entered the shelter system and found it difficult to adapt to life there because the standard of living was lower than the one she was used to. Likewise, a participant in this study was under the impression that formal service providers did not offer support in local languages. Another participant was under the impression that DOVVSU dealt with only non-maintenance cases⁷. Her impression of DOVVSU's role was based on what she had heard from others. However, given that non-maintenance cases form the majority of cases handled by DOVVSU (Mitchell, 2011) it is not surprising that she was only familiar with this specific function of DOVVSU.

The perceptions women have of services could serve as barriers to the utilisation of formal services since survivors will base their decisions to seek help or not on inaccurate information about these providers and the kind of assistance they might receive. If they do seek support and their expectations are not met, that could also potentially prevent them from seeking support in the future. Service-users might further dissuade other potential service-users from utilising formal support by sharing their negative experiences with them.

A number of factors emerged in this study as shaping respondents' perceptions of domestic violence services. Key among these were experiences they had heard from friends, common negative perceptions of public and private institutions in Ghana, and personal experience. These factors made respondents sceptical about utilising these services. The participants' scepticism is explained by the help-seeking model, which

⁷ Non-maintenance cases refer to those related to a man's failure to cater for his wife, partner, or child.

states that women's perceptions' of domestic violence services can influence their decision to seek help and their choice of a service provider (Liang et al. 2005).

The common feedback majority of participants received from friends related to corruption in the police department, reflecting the common negative views of public and private institutions in Ghana. A number of public surveys conducted in Ghana in recent years suggest a growing distrust of state institutions among Ghanaians. These surveys include: the Global Corruption Barometer released by Transparency International in 2013, the Afrobarometer Report released by the Centre for Democratic Development in 2014, and the Socio-economic and Governance Survey conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) which was released in 2015. All these surveys ranked the Ghana Police Service as the most corrupt public institution in Ghana (Essel, 2014; Kwawukume, 2015). The survey by the Institute of Economic Affairs also found the Office of the president to be the second most corrupt public institution in Ghana (Kwawukume, 2015). Information about the corrupt nature of these service agencies circulating within the Ghanaian populace does not bode well for help-seeking in Ghana since it causes Ghanaians to be distrustful and wary of these officials and reduces the likelihood that they will report cases of domestic violence to them.

Personal experiences also shaped respondents' perceptions of formal services. Some of the experiences participants cited were the insensitivity of some service providers and the lack of privacy at DOVVSU offices due to the lack of private interview rooms. Mitchell (2011) observed this uncondusive atmosphere at DOVVSU during her investigation of service users' perceptions of the Kanesie DOVVSU. Unlike participants in the current study who had negative perceptions of DOVVSU due to the unfavourable conditions, Mitchell noted that her participants had positive perceptions of DOVVSU in

spite of the unfavourable conditions present. Mitchell (2011) commented on the inconsistency of the conditions at DOVVSU with the favourable feedback she received from service users, which included sentiments of “safety, comfort, privacy, time, and encouragement” (p.12). She explained that this disconnect between the conditions present at DOVVSU and respondents’ perceptions could have been a result of the family values perspective espoused by DOVVSU officials. Mitchell (2011) defines the family values perspective as “the core belief that the interest and rights of the family are above those of any individual member and gives central priority to family unity” (p. 2). Thus, the participants’ shared commitment with DOVVSU to preserve family unity influenced their perception of the agency. Similar to the study by Mitchell, the DOVVSU expert I interviewed noted that the Domestic Violence Act mandated DOVVSU to keep family unity at the core of its operations; a mandate he felt was necessary in the Ghana context due to the lack of more effective alternatives to dealing with the domestic violence situation. Intriguingly, the women I interviewed cited their fear of causing a breakdown of family relations as a deterrent from accessing formal support. The contradictory findings from these two studies, which sampled service users and non-service users, provide support for Liang and colleagues’ (2005) recommendation that comparative studies be conducted of users and non-users of formal services to assess their help-seeking behaviours.

4.4. What are some of the challenges to service delivery in Ghana?

One of the challenges to service delivery is the traditional perceptions surrounding domestic violence and gender relations in Ghana. A number of scholars have observed that in societies where domestic violence is viewed as a private matter, women are discouraged from seeking support (Chatzifotiou & Dobash, 2001; FRA, 2014;

Kedir & Admasachew, 2010, Odero et al., 2013). Wives are also expected to be subservient to their husband who is the head of the home (Bowman, 2003). The fear of societal backlash for reporting abusive spouses prevents women from reporting cases of domestic violence to the formal authorities, or in some cases from reporting at all. Women who do speak out turn to informal institutions such as family elders to mediate in these cases. This traditional view of domestic violence and gender relations limits women's avenues of support and subverts their agency since in most cases the informal institutions they consult are motivated to salvage the family and sometimes do not act in the interest of the survivors. Furthermore, some formal service providers are not immune to these traditional views as such notions sometimes influence their responses to domestic violence (Catalupo et al., 2006). As one expert I interviewed noted, some service providers counsel women to take their cases to the family instead of pursuing a formal case.

The bureaucratic procedures involved in pursuing domestic violence cases through the criminal justice system is a challenge to service delivery in Ghana. Survivors have to go through DOVVSU before their case is taken before the courts; therefore, it can take months before a case is resolved. One of the experts explained that, most often, survivors are in need of a solution that will end the violence, but that will not necessarily result in the arrest, the prosecution, or the incarceration of their partners. Thus, if informal mediation will bring them immediate relief from abuse, then they would rather prefer that than to pursue the case through formal legal channels. Therefore, survivors often make initial complaints to DOVVSU only to withdraw the case or fail to follow up later (Ampofo et al., 2005; Catalupo et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2011). Furthermore as another expert elaborated, pursuing traditional forms of mediation may result in the

survivor receiving some compensation, whereas taking the case to court may not. Mitchell (2011) writes that the courts in Ghana rarely award compensation to survivors. Receiving compensation, be it monetary or otherwise, maintaining family unity, and avoiding the bureaucratic process involved in seeking formal support is a better option for most survivors so they opt for informal mediation.

Another challenge to service delivery in Ghana is the lack of a legislative instrument that ensures the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Law. For instance, The Domestic Violence Law makes provision for a domestic violence fund established to provide resources of survivors. However, due to the lack of a legislative instrument, this fund has not been made available to the public. In a 2014 report by the Gender Ministry, it was stated that the fund “became fully operational with its first disbursement in May 2014” (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2014, p. 22). However, when conducting the interviews I was informed that the fund had been used only once due to extenuating circumstances but was not operational due to the lack of a legislative instrument. The legislative instrument is also needed to establish protocols for the establishment of shelters and other services needed to fight domestic violence in Ghana and its absence is a hindrance to service delivery in the country.

Service delivery is further hampered by financial challenges. Ideally, accessing formal support is supposed to be free of charge; however, that is not the reality in most African countries where financial resources are scarce (Bowman, 2003). Ghana is no different and as the results from this study showed, survivors still have to pay for medical examinations to substantiate their claims of abuse and in some cases pay bribes to the police to have their cases heard. These financial demands serve as a deterrent to seeking formal help and cause women to resort to informal mediation and individual coping

mechanisms. Also, the financial costs involved in accessing support increases when one considers that the costs include that of seeking initial help and the aftermath of reporting, especially since a majority of survivors are poor and economically dependent on their partners (Bowman, 2003). To echo a question posed by one of the experts, “who is to take care of the family if the breadwinner is arrested?” This question is particularly relevant in the Ghanaian context where there are no structures currently in place to provide for such families affected by domestic violence. Women sometimes consider the aftermath of seeking help and decide not to report their spouses since the economic climate in the country is already not favourable to them and reporting might result in additional hardships to their families. This finding is consistent with that of Odero et al., (2013) who also found that the financial burden involved in seeking formal support serves as a barrier to help-seeking in Kenya. They described this situation as the “double burden of women”, who must suffer from violence and also the economic consequences if they choose to press charges against their abusive partners. Service providers also lack the necessary human and capital resources to effectively discharge their duties. They lack cars, trained personnel, shelters, amongst others. Service providers have had to cut back on the services they provide to survivors to enable them do the best they can with the limited resources at their disposal.

The limited number of services available in the country is a challenge to service delivery. Although DOVVSU is the service provider with the highest number of offices, DOVVSU’s geographical reach only covers about 50% of the nation (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2014). Odero et al. (2013) observed that in environments with limited services women are less likely to report domestic violence. The limited number of services means that survivors have to travel long distances to get

formal assistance. For instance, there is no DOOVSU office in Sowutuom. Thus, survivors who report abuse to the Sowutuom police station have to be referred to the nearest DOVVSU office which is at Odorkor, about 8 kilometres away from Sowutuom. The commute to Odorkor is another challenge because it increases the financial burden of women and adds to the already stressful process of seeking help.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented an in-depth discussion of the findings from this study in relation to the four research questions this thesis sought to answer. I also explored how the findings were consistent or inconsistent with existing literature. In the next chapter, I conclude this thesis by considering some of the strengths and limitations of this study and make some recommendations for future studies and the improvement of service delivery in Ghana.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Previous studies have established that domestic violence is a pervasive social problem in Ghana that disproportionately affects more women than men. Domestic violence is a threat to the socio-economic development of Ghana, and a violation of its international obligation of ensuring gender equality and the protection of its citizens' right to live free from violence (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Amoakohene, 2004; Cantalupo et al. 2006). Despite its pervasiveness, domestic violence cases are woefully underreported in the country.

This thesis contributes to the existing literature by assessing the perceptions Ghanaian women have of formal domestic violence services and its potential influence on their help-seeking behaviour. This thesis also explored their knowledge of the Domestic Violence Law and some challenges to service delivery in the country. This thesis concludes with a discussion of some limitations of this study and recommendations for future research and service provision in Ghana.

5.1. Strengths and Limitations

The key strength of this thesis is the prominence accorded to women's voices. In honouring the voices of the women, I strived to present their opinions in a respectful manner and not misrepresent them in the writing of this thesis. The feminist approach and the qualitative method used gave the women the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions in their own words. The compelling narratives shared by the women provided insights into the experiences women face with domestic violence and help-seeking in Ghana, and emphasised the relevance of the method I used in exploring questions of intimate partner violence. The women's accounts also corroborated findings from other studies on intimate partner violence and help-seeking behaviour. These

findings include how the fear of societal and familial sanctions prevent women from seeking formal help, and the influence women's financial situation have on their ability to seek help. There were also disparities between some findings in this study and that of other studies such as whether women viewed violence as justified in some situations and the perception participants had of DOVVSU.

Another strength of this study is that it explored the perceptions of women who had not sought help from any formal service provider. The focus on this category of women is unique in the literature on domestic violence in Ghana. As I noted in Chapter 1, assessing the knowledge and perceptions of women who had not accessed formal services is a critical area of research in Ghana which has not received enough attention from researchers. Additionally, since evidence exists that majority of domestic violence cases are unreported in Ghana (Cantalupo et al. 2006), targeting only women who seek help from these formal agencies means neglecting the majority of women who do not report intimate partner violence. By focusing on women who had not sought formal support, the findings from this study add to what is already known about the help-seeking behaviour of women and creates avenues for further exploration in future research.

The policy contributions made by this study are an additional strength. For policies to be effective they have to reflect the needs and concerns of the people they are aimed at impacting (Bowman, 2003; FRA, 2014). The findings from this study will be beneficial in developing domestic violence related policy in Ghana.

The diversity of the sample used is an important strength of this study. I sampled women from different ethnic, educational, age, and occupational backgrounds. Despite the small size of the sample, this diversity is partially reflective of some of the diversity in the general Ghanaian population. The fact that all the women interviewed were

Christians serves as a potential limitation since the sample does not reflect the religious diversity of Ghanaians. Notwithstanding, the characteristics of the women and the findings from this study serve as a foundation for future quantitative and qualitative explorations of women's knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services in Ghana. The inclusion of the three experts further strengthened this thesis by providing more insight on domestic violence services and the help-seeking behaviour of women in Ghana.

The limited knowledge participants had of the Domestic Violence Law meant that I was unable to explore women's understanding of the policy and assess its potential to influence their decision to seek formal support as I had originally intended. As I mentioned in the results, some participants indicated that they had heard of the law only after I had specifically asked them about it. This could be a potential case of interviewer bias since participants may have responded to my questions based on their desire to provide a response that they felt might be what I was expecting. To avoid influencing participants' responses I left the explanation of the available services and the law till the end of the interviews.

5.2. Way Forward

There is the need for nationwide qualitative and quantitative studies that will provide a comprehensive understanding of women's help-seeking behaviour in Ghana including the impact of their knowledge and perceptions on their access of formal services. The limited knowledge participants had of the other domestic violence agencies in Ghana means that most of the perceptions presented in this thesis were about DOVVSU. However, formal services in Ghana are made up of different actors including the courts, medical services, and non-governmental services. Future quantitative and

qualitative studies should include the perceptions women have of these other formal service providers in Ghana in addition to DOVVSU. Further research in this area will extend the conversation on service provision in Ghana and provide additional information to the limited findings on these agencies provided in this study.

Additionally, researchers should conduct comparative studies on the perceptions of users and non-users of formal services. Liang et al. (2005) maintain that researchers must study users and non-users of formal services to attain a deeper understanding of their help-seeking behaviour since each group's perceptions will be shaped by their different experiences. For example, Liang et al. (2005) note that the perceptions of services-users might be influenced by their contact with service providers. As was demonstrated in the discussion of some of my findings in comparison with those of Mitchell (2011) in Chapter 4, there are some similarities and differences between the perceptions of these two groups. Thus, a comparative study will help unearth the different factors that shape their perceptions of formal services and provide more information on their help-seeking behaviour.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, there is an emphasis on physical evidence in domestic violence related issues in Ghana. More research is needed to investigate the various manifestations of this emphasis on evidence. For instance, researchers can evaluate the ways in which the emphasis on physical evidence functions in shaping women's understanding of domestic violence and influences their help-seeking behaviour in Ghana. Additionally, emotional abuse was identified by one of the experts as a serious problem in Ghana although it is not given much attention due to the lack of physical evidence. Amoakohene (2004) found that participants were of the opinion that the effects of emotional abuse were serious and longer lasting than physical abuse. Against this

backdrop, future researchers should investigate how the emphasis on physical evidence influences identification and response to emotional abuse in Ghana.

On the policy front, it has been noted that most policies, especially in developing countries, become ineffective because the conditions necessary for their implementation are absent (Bowman, 2003). Ghana finds itself in such a situation with regards to the implementation of the Domestic Violence Law due to the absence of a legislative instrument to support the implementation of the Law. A legislative instrument is needed to ensure that provisions in the Act, such as the disbursement of the domestic violence fund, can be fully executed. Policymakers in Ghana must make the passage of the legislative instrument a priority since it will help reduce some of the challenges to service delivery in Ghana and bring relief to survivors of domestic violence.

This study also demonstrates that more educational campaigns need to be carried out to raise awareness among Ghanaians on domestic violence and the formal interventions available in the country. Educational campaigns should be more detailed and focus on specific issues such as different provisions in the Domestic Violence Law, the different types of domestic violence, the different kinds of domestic violence services available, and campaigns to dispel myths around domestic violence. This will enhance the knowledge of Ghanaians on legislative measures and other policy initiatives that aim to protect and support survivors of domestic violence. It will also ensure that women are able to make proper assessments of violent situations devoid of cultural and/or religious influences. It will also ensure that survivors receive the justice and support they deserve. Education will help to change the misconceptions some Ghanaians have of these services and make sure that they have enough information to make informed decisions about which form of assistance would best suit their needs. Raising awareness about the

available formal services will equip informal supporters with information on formal services to make recommendations to survivors.

Additionally, service providers must explore and develop alternative approaches to raising awareness about issues related to domestic violence other than the conventional methods such as media campaigns. As participants suggested, service providers should use community events and church gatherings. These will ensure that more people are sensitized on domestic violence issues.

More importantly, this education must be accompanied by an improvement in the available services as well as the creation of more services to augment the existing ones. Based on the suggestions made by participants, more counselling services and community programmes geared towards supporting survivors of intimate partner violence are needed in Ghana.

Service providers should be trained to ensure that they provide the right support to survivors and not cause them further harm. For instance, training for service providers should include education on the help-seeking model (Liang et al. 2005) and other theoretical frameworks of help-seeking to increase their understanding of the various interrelated factors and processes that influence women's decision to seek or not seek help. Training provided to service personnel should also include information about the other services and the Domestic Violence Law so that they will be better equipped to make appropriate referrals and also advise service users on provisions in the Law. Service providers must undergo regular refresher courses to keep them abreast with the latest research and developments in help-seeking behaviour and domestic violence.

Due to the critical role the media plays in educating people about domestic violence as was demonstrated in this study, it is important that media reports reflect the

sensitivity of domestic violence issues. Studies indicate that mass media coverage of domestic violence cases sometimes negatively influence public perceptions of domestic violence and reinforces myths surrounding the topic (Carlyle, Slater & Charkoff, 2008; Gadzepko, 2009; Kohlman et al, 2014). Some negative actions by the media include selective coverage of stories involving types of violence considered more sensational and newsworthy, which in most cases is physical and sexual abuse. Considering the educative role of the mass media, service providers and media houses should collaborate to provide domestic violence sensitivity training for journalists to ensure that the right message is communicated to Ghanaians.

More sustainable long-term and short-term funding options must be made available to tackle the issue of domestic violence and service delivery in Ghana. Sustainable funding is needed to ensure that services are widely accessible and free of charge. Findings from this study indicate that aside from cultural barriers to the utilisation of formal services, the next major challenge is funding. Thus, coming up with sustainable funding options will go a long way in mitigating the challenges faced in Ghana.

Drawing on the suggestions made by the women, I would like to recommend that specialised programmes be developed to equip women with entrepreneurial and employable skills. The majority of women who suffer domestic violence are uneducated and living in poverty (Mitchell, 2011). The introduction of such programmes will improve the status of women in Ghana and reduce their financial dependence on their partners. These programmes will equip women with skills to enable them support themselves and their families, especially when they leave an abusive relationship, and encourage them to seek help since they will have the necessary resources to pursue justice against perpetrators (Bowman, 2003).

Service providers and policy makers must also be mindful of the complexities inherent in the Ghanaian context when it comes to domestic violence. For instance, failure to understand and account for the influence of gender and power in Ghanaian society, especially in terms of social and economic inequality, will result in ineffective programmes and policies on domestic violence. Thus, efforts must be made on keeping the unique experiences and situations of Ghanaian women at the fore of domestic violence programming and policymaking.

Bowman (2003) notes that African women do not report domestic violence to the police due to their disillusionment about police support and the fear of societal and familial repercussions. She recommends a two-part response to service providers and policymakers to reduce the problem of underreporting. This two-part response is “1) to work with the police to increase the help they are likely to offer and to improve their ‘image’ and 2) to develop nonpolice substitutes and remediation as well” (Bowman, 2003, p. 487). I agree with Bowman’s recommendation since my research indicates that Ghanaian women do not report domestic violence to the police for the same reasons she cited. However, I am of the opinion that in applying Bowman’s recommendation to the Ghanaian context, we need to work with the structures already in place. Therefore, I would like to recommend that policymakers consider making DOVVSU an autonomous agency separate from the traditional police service. DOVVSU is an effective agency but it faces a lot of challenges in the performance of its duties. One such challenge is the replacement of trained DOVVSU personnel with untrained officers due to structural changes in the police service. There is also a lack of distinction between DOVVSU and the traditional police service in the eyes of Ghanaians, which partly accounts for the distrust they have for DOVVSU. Officially making DOVVSU an autonomous body and

rebranding it as “nonpolice substitute” to the traditional police service will allow them to provide better services to Ghanaians since they will be able to focus all their resources on combating domestic violence and not have to compete with other units of the police for scarce resources. It will also help curb the challenge created by the transfer of trained DOVVSU officers to other units of the police department. Most importantly, it will change the perceptions Ghanaian women have of DOVVSU and increase their likelihood to report domestic violence.

Finally, in addition to making DOVVSU an autonomous body, service providers and policy makers must explore the use of alternative dispute measures to help reduce the underreporting of domestic violence to formal authorities in Ghana. The results from this study indicate that women are not motivated to seek support from the criminal justice system for reasons including the stigma associated with using the criminal justice system, the conflicts between the criminal justice process and tradition, and the financial expense involved in the process. From the study, it is evident that the formal domestic violence service response is heavily dependent on the criminal justice system. Indeed, domestic violence is a criminal offence and the perpetrators need to be punished, but there needs to be a solution that finds a balance between the complexities of the Ghanaian context and the processes of the criminal justice system. The availability of such alternative measures might encourage more women to seek support from formal services. Currently, the Domestic Violence Law does make provision for the use of alternative dispute resolution in matters of domestic violence and DOVVSU does provide alternative dispute resolution services. However, Mitchell (2011) reported in her study that the form of alternative dispute resolution provided by DOVVSU does not meet international standards. Furthermore, with the negative perceptions women have of DOVVSU, it might be

beneficial if these alternative dispute resolution measures are provided by agencies other than the police.

5.3. Conclusion

The results of this study showed that participants had limited knowledge of the formal domestic violence interventions in Ghana. Although participants knew of DOVVSU, they unaware of the other formal support services available to protect them from intimate partner violence. Participants also had limited knowledge of the Domestic Violence Law. In addition to the limited knowledge of the services and the Law, participants' perceptions of formal services were mainly negative, with the majority articulating that they were unlikely to seek assistance from these institutions in the event of domestic violence. These perceptions were largely informed by feedback from friends who accessed these services, their own personal experiences, and prevailing negative opinions of the performance of some public and private institutions in Ghana. Women's understanding of domestic violence and their interpretation of the severity of the violence were also found to influence their likelihood to seek formal help. The results also indicate that societal and religious beliefs about domestic violence and gender roles in marriage play a key role in Ghanaian women's understanding of intimate partner violence and actions taken in response to the violence.

The findings from this study point to the need for comprehensive nationwide education among all Ghanaians, including service providers and policy makers, on intimate partner violence and the available services. Service providers and policy makers must strive to formulate programmes and policies that are better suited to the uniqueness of the Ghanaian situation. The achievement of these recommendations will result in a change in the discourse around intimate partner violence and domestic violence services

in Ghana and ensure that survivors of intimate partner violence get the adequate assistance they need.

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APPENDICES

Appendix Table1. Participant Demographic Data

Category	Frequency (N=10)
Age	
• 20-29	6
• 30-39	3
• 40-49	1
Religion	
• Christian	10
Hometown	
• Volta Region	1
• Central Region	3
• Northern Region	1
• Ashanti Region	1
• Eastern Region	2
• Greater Accra	2
Occupation	
• Seamstress	1
• Banker	2
• Caterer	1
• Teacher	1
• Hair dresser	1
• Student	2
• Administrative Executive	1
• Beautician	1
Education	
• High school & below	4
• Tertiary level	6
Marital Status	
• Married	6
• Married but separated	1
• Not married but in a relationship	2
• Not married	1
Prior contact with formal service provider	
• Yes (But not for personal reasons)	2

• No	8
Admitted to Abuse	1

Appendix A. Informed Consent Form

Title: Knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services in Ghana

Researcher: Akua Anyemedu, Department of Gender Studies, Memorial University, email: aa6357@mun.ca, Phone: +233 244952162/ 276981338 (Ghana), +1709660 0308 (Canada).

Supervisors: Dr. Patricia Dold, Department of Gender Studies, Memorial University, email: pdold@mun.ca.

Dr. Eric Tenkorang, Department of Sociology, Memorial University, email: eytenkorang@mun.ca.

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services in Ghana”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Akua Anyemedu, if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction

I am a graduate student with the Gender Studies Department at Memorial University. As part of my Master’s thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Dold and Dr. Eric Tenkorang. This study focuses on the knowledge and perceptions women have of domestic violence services in Ghana and how

these factor into the utilization of these services. Additionally, this study aims to explore Ghanaian women's understanding of intimate partner violence and the Domestic Violence Act.

Purpose of study:

The following research questions guide this study:

- a) How do Ghanaian women understand intimate partner violence?
- b) How knowledgeable are Ghanaian women of formal domestic violence interventions in the country?
- c) What factors influence how Ghanaian women perceive domestic violence services?
- d) What are some of the challenges to service delivery in Ghana?

What you will do in this study:

Your participation in this study involves engaging in an interview with the researcher, Akua Anyemedu, regarding your knowledge and understanding of the roles of domestic violence services in Ghana. During the interview, we will also consider factors that shape your perception of these services and how these factors may either hinder or facilitate your access of these services.

Length of time: This interview will last approximately 1 hour

Recording of Data: The interview will be audio recorded.

Withdrawal from the study:

Participation is purely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in the study. You can stop this interview at any time. You are also free to refuse to answer any question(s) you do not want to answer. Should you decide to withdraw from the study, your interview recordings, transcripts and other related data will be removed. If

you choose to withdraw from this study after this interview, you must contact the researcher, Akua Anyemedu, to do so. Though you can withdraw from the study, you should note that after the results from this study are published the researcher will not be able to remove quotations or excerpts which have been put out in the public domain. Therefore, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at most 2 months following this interview if you decide to withdraw from this study.

Possible benefits:

This project will benefit the participants and the community by providing information on the knowledge and perceptions of women in Sowutuom of domestic violence services available in Ghana and its impact on their decision to access these services or not. Furthermore, participating in this study can serve as an avenue for interested participants to gain or expand their knowledge of intimate partner violence and services in Ghana. This study is also relevant to public policy formulation in Ghana. This is because, information on the knowledge and perceptions women have of domestic violence service can be used to formulate policies targeted at increasing the utilization of these services by victims. Thus, the results from this study will be presented to some domestic violence agencies and policy makers in Ghana to enable them develop more programmes and strengthen, by way of amendments, the existing laws on domestic violence to ensure that these laws are more suited to the needs of domestic violence victims.

Possible risks:

Individual participants may have unanticipated emotional distress to some of the issues discussed in the interview. Should this happen, you may skip any questions you do not want to answer. You may also stop the interview at any time, without any penalty.

Also, the researcher has a list of resources you can access should you require further assistance.

Confidentiality and Storage of Data:

All electronic formats of interview materials including audio recordings of interviews and typed interview transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer. Your name will not appear on the audio file or interview transcript. A separate password protected file will link participant names with identification codes. Only the researcher, Akua Anyemedu, will have access to this file. Additionally, only this identification code will appear on interview transcripts or in data analysis files. Furthermore, all hardcopies and duplicates of interview documents will be kept in locked cabinets in the researcher's home and in her supervisors' offices. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Only Akua Anyemedu and her supervisors will have access to the interview data.

Participant confidentiality will be breached only if legally obligated to. Ghana has certain constitutional provisions such as The Whistle Blowers Act, 2006 (Act 720), which affords any person the right to report or make disclosures of any wrong doing to the appropriate agencies, where such wrongdoing if reported or such disclosure if made, will among others, save and /or protect the lives and properties of persons and of the State. With this in mind, should you disclose any abuse you are presently suffering to me during the interview, I will assist you seek the necessary help within my capabilities to do so if you so wish.

Recording of Data: The interview will be audio recorded.

Reporting of Results:

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity in the reporting of research results. The data collected in this study will be used in writing my final thesis for my Masters in Gender Studies. In addition, quotations and excerpts from this interview may be used in conference presentations and academic publications such as in journal articles. Also, excerpts from this interview may be used in subsequent interviews with personnel of some domestic violence agencies in Ghana. Pseudonyms and non-identifying descriptors will be used in these situations to conceal your identity.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

After your interview, and before the data is included in the final thesis or any other publications, the researcher will contact you to enable you to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, change, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. A summary report of this study will be made available to domestic violence agencies in Ghana. You can also access a summary report of this study by contacting Dr. Owusu at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana via email at ayowusu@isser.edu.gh / gaowusu@ug.edu.gh or via phone at +233 032512502.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Akua Anyemedu, email: aa6357@mun.ca ; Phone: +233 244952162/ 276981338 (Ghana), +1709660 0308 (Canada), or her supervisors Dr. Patricia Dold, email: pdold@mun.ca and Dr. Eric Tenkorang, email: eytenkorang@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's

ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at +1 709-864-2861.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to stop the interview at any time during the process.
- You understand that you can refuse to answer any question(s) you do not want to during the interview.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at most 2 months after this interview without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that any data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be destroyed.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your signature:

I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

- I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.
- I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.
- I agree to the use of quotations, with the understanding that my name will not be identified in any publication resulting from this study.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Oral Consent:

I read and explained this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

Identification code of participant

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix B. Participant Interview Schedule

Interview Number:

Date:

Time:

Introduction:

Tell the participant my name and where I am from.

- This interview aims to assess the knowledge and perceptions held by Ghanaian woman about domestic violence services in Ghana. The questions that are going to be asked in this interview explore your knowledge and understanding of the role of some of the services available in Ghana to victims of domestic violence and how these knowledge and perceptions might influence your utilization of these should there be the need. They also seek to examine your understanding of domestic violence and the domestic violence Act.
- The interview will take approximately 1 hour minutes to complete

Go through the consent form with them and get them to sign if they agree to or give me a recorded verbal consent if they cannot read and write.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is the name of your hometown?
2. How old are you?
3. What work do you do?
4. What is the highest level of formal education you have attained?
5. Are you currently married or in a relationship?
6. Do you hold any religious affiliations? What are they?
7. Have you contacted any domestic violence service provider (*Provide examples of such providers eg. DOVVSU, Ark Foundation*)?

Section 2: Domestic Violence

8. What do you understand by the term ‘Domestic violence’?
 - i. **Follow up:** What acts would you characterize as domestic violence?
 - ii. **If applicable:** Try to find out what difference the participant makes between domestic violence and discipline.
9. What in your opinion are some of the factors that result in or can result in domestic violence?

(Use hypothetical scenarios to try to explore the participant’s understanding of intimate partner violence/ domestic violence and the sort of actions they think are best suited to take in these situations)

10. Let us say that a woman confides in you that her husband has been forcing her to sleep with him even when she does not want to.
 - i. What do you think about this situation?
 - ii. What will you advise the woman to do?

11. What are some of the actions or measures women take in response to intimate partner violence?
 12. Do you think the type of marriage (customary/ ordinance) influences women's response to violence?
- Section 4: Domestic Violence services?**
13. Let us say that a woman confides in you that her husband is beating her, (*refer to the acts she listed earlier as constituting violence*), what would you advise her to do?
Follow up: Substitute “husband” with “boyfriend” and ask the same question and find out how the participant will respond.
 14. What are some of the formal services for domestic violence victims in Ghana you know?
- Prompts:**
- a. Legal services
 - b. Police services- Do you know where the nearest DOVVSU office is ?
 - c. Shelter
 - d. Health services
 - e. Non-governmental organisations
15. What kinds of violence do you in your opinion feel merits seeking assistance from these service providers?
 16. How did you become aware of these Domestic violence services?
 17. What do you think of the capacity of these services to protect Ghanaian women against violence?
 18. What, in your opinion, are some of the barriers to the utilization of these services?

19. What, in your opinion, are some of the factors that facilitate the utilization of these services?
20. Have you seen or heard any of the public awareness campaigns on Domestic violence (posters, TV and radio commercials)?
21. How effective do you think these are in sensitizing people on Domestic violence in Ghana?
22. Which type of support, formal or informal, do you think should be sort first?
 - i. Why?
23. What kinds of support do you think women going through this challenge need?
24. What do you think about the involvement of family members in marital issues?

Follow up: Ask questions about informal services here.

Prompts:

- a. Family
- b. Friends
- c. Religious leaders
- d. Community leaders

(You can link it to participant's responses on formal services)

Section 4: Domestic Violence Act

25. Are you aware of the Domestic Violence Act?
- Possible follow up:** How did you find out about it?
26. Can you tell me a bit about what you know about it?
 27. What is your understanding of your rights as a citizen of Ghana as provided under this Act?

Section 5: Conclusion

28. Is there anything or question on the topic you would like to address which you think was not tackled in this interview? Any clarification on what has transpired here?
29. Would you like to me to give you any more information on some the services available for victims of domestic violence in Ghana?

Appendix C. Interview Schedule for Experts

Interview Number:

Date:

Time:

Introduction:

Go through the purpose of the interview with the expert

- The questions that are going to be asked in this interview explore your opinions, based on your experience in the field, on how women's knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence services in Ghana might influence their utilization. Questions will also be asked based on some of the emerging themes from my interviews with women in Sowtuom.
- The interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete

Section 1: Domestic Violence services in Ghana

1. What are some of the services available in Ghana to victims of domestic violence?
 - iii. **Follow up:** Which ones do victims/ survivors of domestic violence utilize most?
 - iv. **Follow up:** Why?
 - v. *(Ask questions based on the least utilized services)*
2. Based on your experience, how knowledgeable would you say Ghanaian women are of the services available to domestic violence victims/ survivors?
3. What do you think of the capacity of these services to protect Ghanaian women against violence?
4. What, in your opinion, are some of the challenges to service provision in Ghana?
5. What are some of the reasons women cite for not accessing these services?
 - i. **Follow up:** What are some of the facilitating factors?
6. How effective do you think efforts (by government, civil society organization and other actors) have been in sensitizing people on Domestic violence in Ghana?
7. What do you think about the involvement of family members in marital issues?

Follow up: Ask questions about informal services here.

Prompts:

- e. Family
- f. Friends
- g. Religious leaders
- h. Community leaders

Section 2: Domestic Violence Act

8. Do you think the Domestic Violence Act has had an impact on the number of reports of intimate partner abuse in Ghana?

i. **Follow up:** (*Depending on the response the expert provides ask for further elaboration.*)

9. In your opinion, has the Domestic Violence Act helped increase awareness among Ghanaians of domestic violence?

- i. Follow up: (If yes) in what way?
- ii. Follow up: (if no) why not?

10. Based on your experience, how knowledgeable would you say Ghanaian women are of their rights provided in the Act?

Section 3: Questions based on interviews

11. Does the type of marriage play a role in women's response to intimate partner violence?

12. What are some of the actions/measures women take in response to domestic violence in Ghana

13. Majority of the women I interviewed were of the opinion that one should leave an abusive relationship. Is that a response you see in the field/

14. Does ethnicity play a role in domestic violence?

15. Does education play a role in domestic violence?

16. What is the reach of the work done by your organisation?

17. Do you charge for your services?

18. Does the DV Law criminalise forced sex in marriage?

19. What is the Legislative Instrument (LI)?

20. How do you fund your activities?

21. Are there any programmes for perpetrators in Ghana?
22. Is there a directory of services available in Ghana for referral purposes?
23. Is there an emergency helpline in Ghana?
24. How does one gain access to a shelter?
25. What is the process for getting support from your organisation?
26. What is being done about the time it takes to get support?
27. What is the procedure should someone report emotional abuse?
28. Is there any alternative to prosecution?