

**“Suffering in silence”: A Qualitative Inquiry of Sexual Violence against
Married Women in Ghana**

By

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Abstract

Although a global problem, sexual violence against women is more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet academic scholarship on this important topic remains scant. In particular, little attention has been given to the lived experiences of sexual violence from the perspective of married women. This gap is problematic as previous studies suggest that sexual violence is commonplace among married than single women in sub-Saharan Africa, requiring immediate research and policy attention. Contributing to the limited but growing body of literature, this study examined the lived experiences and perspectives of married women who suffered sexual violence in the Eastern Region of Ghana, one of the areas with the highest or most prevalent incidents of male-partner violence in the country.

A qualitative research approach with Heise's social-ecological framework was employed to better understand sexual violence in Ghana. Specifically, the study used fifteen qualitative recorded in-depth interviews purposively held with Ghanaian women who had experienced sexual violence in their marriages to answer two main research questions: (1) what are the reasons for married women's experience of sexual violence? (2) how does sexual violence affect married women?

Results from the thematic analysis showed that several driving forces and motivations triggered sexual violence against married women. Some of the reasons participants identified were macro-level and exosystem issues including cultural beliefs about gender division of labour, some traditional marriage practices, poverty and adherence to traditional masculine norms. Other explanations were micro-level and ontogenic issues comprising substance use, past experiences of violence and extramarital sexual affairs on the part of husbands. Due to its

perpetration, participants indicated that women did not experience only sexual violence but also physical violence and verbal violence. The results showed that the experiences of married women following sexual violence and other forms of abuse were physical injuries, psychological problems, sexual, reproductive health problems, and suicidal ideations. These negative health outcomes significantly undermined women's economic activities and depleted their income.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that sexual violence among married women is a chronic experience, with severe implications for their health and well-being. Thus, campaigns against marital violence and domestic abuse should make sexual violence a priority. It is also important that legal and policy frameworks are strengthened to address the aetiology of male-partner sexual violence against women in Ghana.

Keywords: Africa, Eastern Region, Ghana, Married Women, Sexual Violence, Violence

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Chapter One: Introduction

“Violence [including sexual abuse] against women is a heinous human rights violation, global menace, a public health threat and a moral outrage,” Ban-Ki Moon declared, “No matter where she lives, no matter what her culture, no matter what her society, every woman, and girls are entitled to live free of fear [and a decent life].”¹

Sexual violence is a common and severe public health problem globally (WHO, 2002, 2017), yet this problem has been less documented and under-researched, especially in developing countries including Ghana. My thesis examines the experiences, perspectives and consequences of sexual violence among married women in Ghana.

While conceptualized variedly in the literature, sexual violence has been defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work” (Jewkes, Sen & Garcia-Moreno, 2002, p.149). Sexual violence violates the fundamental human rights and freedoms of victims and subjects them to all kinds of risks and vulnerabilities. Sexual violence occurs in many different forms, including but not limited to forced sex, sexual slavery, forced abortion and sexual harassment (WHO, 2013). Whereas men and boys experience sexual violence, the vast majority of victims are females with males as perpetrators (WHO, 2017). Male perpetrators of sexual violence against women can vary from a friend, an intimate partner to a stranger (WHO, 2003).

Previous studies show that globally, approximately one in three women will experience

¹<http://rabble.ca/babble/sex-worker-rights/why-are-sex-workers-left-out-violence-against-women-conversation>

some form of sexual violence during their lifetime from a male-partner (Fried, 2003; Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemeiler, 2002). Data based on the WHO's multi-country study on domestic violence also revealed that between 4 and 57 percent of ever-partnered women aged 15 to 19 years experienced coerced sex at some point in their lives (WHO, 2005).

Although a global problem, sexual violence against women is more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa (Alesina et al., 2016; WHO, 2013, 2017). Analyzing data from the latest Demographic and Health Surveys for some African countries on domestic violence, Alesina and colleagues (2016) reported that 29% of women aged 15 years and above were more likely to experience either sexual or physical violence. The same study found that 46% of women reported that wife beating was widespread and acceptable. Similar to other African countries, in Ghana, research showed that sexual violence against women is common and highly prevalent (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Amoakohene, 2004; Issahaku, 2017; Tenkorang et al., 2013). For instance, nationwide Ghanaian data revealed that nearly one-third of women were directly involved in a sexually violent incident during their lifetime (Institute of Development Studies, Ghana Statistical Services and Associates [IDS, GSS, & Associates], 2016). Likewise, the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health survey reported that 38.7 % of women between the ages of 15 and 49 years experienced intimate partner violence including sexual abuse, at some point in their lives (Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service, & ICF Macro, 2009).

While the evidence confirms a high prevalence and incidence of sexual violence against women in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa, academic scholarship on this important topic remains scant. In particular, little attention has been paid to the sexual violence experiences and perspectives of married women in Ghana. This lacuna is problematic as research suggests that sexual violence is commonplace among married women than single women in sub-

Saharan Africa, including Ghana (García-Moreno et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2018). Indeed, a systematic review of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies showed that the high vulnerability of married women to sexual violence is deep-seated in social structures, family and community norms (Halcón, Beuhring, & Blum, 2000; Jewkes, Garcia-Moren &, Sen, 2002). For instance, in many African societies, the bride price custom is often cited for married women's exposure to sexual violence (Amu, 2005; Archampong & Baidoo, 2011; Stafford, 2008). It is often argued that the payment of bride price² allows men to exercise power and control in their marriages, thus exposing women to intimate partner violence (Amu, 2005; Ampofo, 2001).

The experiences of sexual violence among married women may be further compounded in specific cultural communities and ethnic groups in Ghana and Africa. Many married women who experience sexual violence may be powerless and may not seek help due to discrimination, stigma, and the fear of being mocked and ridiculed in public (Adinkrah, 2011; Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Chireshe, 2015; Issahaku, 2012; WHO, 2002, 2005). The most challenging problem for many African women is that reporting male-partner violence, especially, forced sex affects their status and family image, requiring research and policy attention (Moyo, 2004; Yigzaw et al., 2010). Contributing to the limited but burgeoning body of literature, this study employed qualitative in-depth interviews to examine the lived experiences and perspectives of sexual violence among married women in the Eastern Region of Ghana; one of the areas with the highest or most prevalent incidents of male-partner violence in the country (IDS, GSS, & Associates, 2016). It asked the following research questions:

² Bride price is a payment made by a man or his family to a woman's family during marriages ceremonies. This payment varies from place to place. While in some cultures animals or properties are presented to the woman's families, others make monetary payments. This custom of paying bride price is practiced in many parts of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and some pacific island cultures.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the reasons for married women's experience of sexual violence in the Eastern Region of Ghana?
2. How does sexual violence affect married women in the Eastern Region of Ghana?

1.2 Purpose and Relevance of this Study

Several reasons make this study relevant. First, it fills a valuable knowledge and research gap in the intimate partner violence literature. Evidence suggests that married women are more vulnerable to sexual violence than single women (García-Moreno et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2018). Globally, there is limited empirical research on this topic, with very few contributions from Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa. Even the reasons underlying sexual violence against women are inconclusive and remain unresolved. Whereas some findings show women are more likely to experience sexual violence (Hindin & Adair, 2002; Koenig et al., 2003), others indicated minimal risk or less vulnerability (Paul, 2016). Also, the bulk of these studies used survey methods (Fulu et al., 2013; Issahaku, 2012; Tenkorang et al. 2013; WHO, 2005). Although useful, such surveys glossed over the motivations behind the sexual violence experiences of women belonging to specific and different groups. Thus, using qualitative approaches to explore the subjective experiences of sexual violence among Ghanaian married women is relevant and complementary to ongoing intellectual discussions on this important topic.

Second, like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana has many laws to protect against domestic violence, including the Domestic Violence Act (ACT 732). Yet, sexual violence within marriage has received limited attention from Ghanaian policy makers. This may be due to the dearth of research in the area, but also because for most Ghanaians, marriage

confers the right of sexual access no matter how violent (Tenkorang et al., 2013). Thus, the findings of this study may not only create awareness among policymakers, but also influence policy directions towards reducing or eliminating this social problem.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis has six chapters. Chapter 1 has highlighted research gaps, the objective and research questions, and the rationale of the study. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework guiding the study and a literature review on sexual violence against women. And, the literature review presents: (1) an overview of the prevalence of sexual violence against women globally; (2) the determinants of sexual violence against women; (3) the consequences of sexual violence against women; and (4) the contributions of the current study to the marital violence and domestic abuse literature. Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodology. These include a background of the study area, description and relevance of the research design, the population, the sampling procedure and sample size, the data collection method and instruments used, data analysis, and a consideration of the ethical dimensions of the research. Chapter 4 outlines the empirical findings. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the reasons underlying the sexual violence experiences of married women, while the second section examines how sexual violence affects married women.

Chapter 5 discusses the empirical findings of the study. It is divided into two sections. The first section discusses factors that influence sexual violence against married women and the second section presents a discussion of the consequences of sexual violence against married women. Chapter 6 presents a summary of the findings, the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Many women are at risk of sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner. For a long time now, male-partner sexual violence towards women has been widespread, but has mostly remained hidden and disregarded, especially in many developing countries (Josse, 2010; WHO, 2014). Over the past few decades, however, male sexual violence has attracted attention as a worrying and a severe public health and development problem. Available literature revealed that in some geographical settings, one out of four women is more likely to suffer sexual violence from a male-partner during their lifetime (Hakimi et al., 2001; Mooney, 1993). In other areas, one-third of women will experience severe forms of sexual violence, and more than one-third of young females may report forced sexual initiation (Fried, 2003; Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemeiler, 20002; WHO, 2013). While this social problem may vary from place to place, these grim statistics point to the prevalence of male sexual violence against women (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005).

This chapter examines the theoretical framework adopted for the study and reviews literature on male-partner sexual violence against women.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Social-Ecological Framework

Heise (1998)'s social ecological framework is employed to explain Ghanaian women's experiences of marital sexual violence. Several qualitative studies have used this framework to analyse women's experiences of male-partner violence, including sexual violence (Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Janes, 2012; Kelmendi, 2015; Mulrenan et al., 2015; Pun et al., 2016; Terry, 2014). Heise's social-ecological framework (SEM) is a "theory-based framework for

understanding the multifaceted and interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine behaviours” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014, n.p). While credited to Heise (1998), Urie Bronfenbrenner first advanced this framework in the 1970s to examine human development with the goal of understanding the developing person, the environment and the relationship between these two entities (i.e. the biosocial environment). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), to explain human development, the entire social and ecological system in which growth occurs needs to be examined thoroughly. He conceptualized the social-ecological framework as a space consisting of different strata or systems affecting human development. These sub-systems include the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem, with each level nested within the next. The framework emphasizes the interactions between factors at each level or hierarchy. Thus, “the ecological model is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside a nest, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.2).

In the 1990s, the social-ecological framework as theorized by Bronfenbrenner was adopted by Heise and applied to the study of domestic abuse and violence (Heise, 2012). The application of the framework was widely embraced as it provided a coherent and fresh theoretical approach to understanding male violence towards women. The framework provided a theoretical lens to view male violence according to the social ecology. Prior to this framework, male violence was once largely explained by single-factor theories (Heise, 1998; Lawson, 2012). For instance, psychologists suggested that male-partner violence was a product of individual qualities including psychopathological and personality disorders (Lawson, 2012). Sociologists viewed intra-family conflicts and violence to be mediated by socio-cultural factors (Lawson, 2012). Although important in understanding male violence, Feminists rejected the contribution

of individual characteristics to the occurrence of violence and instead focused their attention on gender or family as the unit of analysis (Sabbah, Chang, & Campbell-Heider, 2017). Feminists' scholars have generally been reluctant to recognize factors other than systems of privilege and power, more broadly, patriarchy in the explanation of male violence towards women (Sabbah, Chang, & Campbell-Heider, 2017).

Some schools of thought, however, began to question these single-factor theories, indicating that they are inadequate in explaining the roots of male violence as they skew the general understanding of women's experiences of violence (Heise, 1998; Jewkes et al., 2002; Koenig et al., 2003). These scholars vehemently emphasized that abuse is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be explained by a single factor, as male violence is rooted in a complex interaction of factors at different levels of the social environment. Thus, any analysis of gender-based violence must endeavour to acknowledge factors operating at many levels. Emerging theories must attempt to explain broadly, why many men engage in violent behaviours and the reasons underlying women as the primary targets of such actions.

Heise's social-ecological framework consists of four significant levels of analysis, best described as concentric circles (see Figure 1). Each circle symbolizes a layer of factors that influence the behaviour of individuals and increase their likelihood of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The innermost ring reflects individual-level or ontogenic factors that affect how a person behaves and increase their chances of being a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Some of the commonly cited elements in this layer include substance use, past experiences of violence, age, witnessing marital violence and psychological or personality disorders. Higher rates of intimate partner violence have been associated with individual-level

factors such as substance use, age, education and childhood experiences of violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Garcia- Moreno et al., 2003; Vyas & Watts, 2008).

The second circle represents interpersonal-level or microsystem factors. This layer is the immediate environment in which abuse occurs and the influence of relationships with family and friends. Examples of factors in this ring include family stressors, family interactions, parenting skills and family environment. For instance, family stress combined with chronic poverty and unemployment are identified as major problems that can affect the ability of family members to function and to cater for children. Thus, the perpetuation and perpetration of male-partner violence is linked to the stress and strains associated with socioeconomic hardships (Ackerson & Subramanian, 2008; Jewkes, 2002).

The third layer is the community-level or exosystem factors. This stratum is the environment where social interactions occur including churches, schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces. Some of the factors that may facilitate the perpetration or experiences of violence in this layer include peer groups of family members, social networks, the justice system, and the availability of and access to community services. For instance, living in poor communities may increase women's vulnerability to sexual and intimate partner violence (Cunradi et al., 2000; Gage, 2005).

Societal-level or macro-system factors constitute the last stratum. Such factors include gender inequality, disregard for women's rights, poverty, general acceptance of violence, sexism, and male dominance. These factors fall under the broad categories of (1) gender regime, (2) macroeconomic factors like globalization, modernization and economic development, and (3) other socio-cultural factors. Economic and social policies that create inequalities between men

and women, socio-cultural norms that support male dominance over women and accept violence as a means of resolving conflict may influence male-partner violence. Figure 1 is a social-ecological framework adapted from Heise (1998)

Understanding Intimate Partner Violence and Ecological Model: Application of the Ecological Model

- Ontogenic system:**
 - Witnessing marital violence as child
 - Being abused oneself as a child
 - Absent or rejecting father
- Microsystem:**
 - Male dominance in the family
 - Male control of wealth in the family
 - Marital/verbal conflict
 - Use of alcohol
- Exosystem:**
 - Low socioeconomic status/ unemployment
 - Isolation of women and family
 - Delinquent peer association
- Macrosystem**
 - Male entitlement/ownership of women
 - Masculinity linked to aggression and dominance
 - Rigid gender roles
 - Acceptance of interpersonal violence
 - Acceptance of physical chastisement

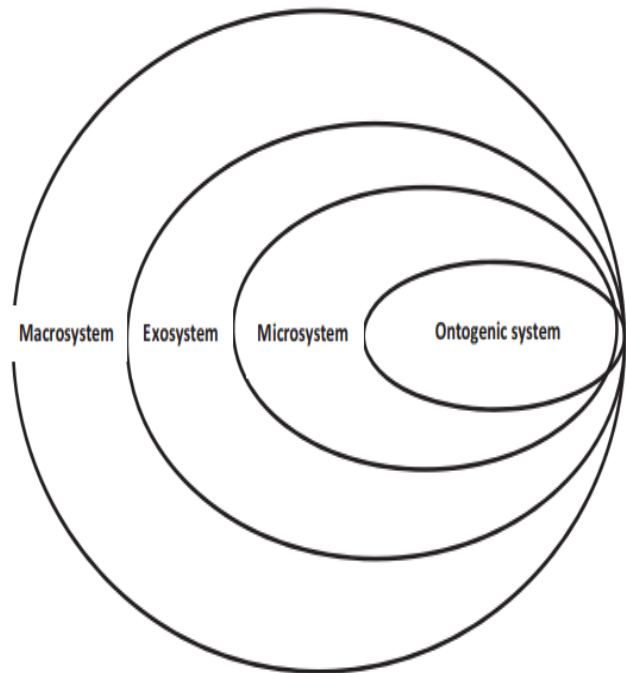


Figure 1. Ecological Model of Gender-Based Violence (Heise, 1998)

2. 2 Literature Review: Prevalence of Male Sexual Violence against Women

Sexual violence against women is a major global problem that cuts across social class, race, religion, occupation, and urban and rural communities (WHO, 2002, 2005). In western advanced societies, sexual violence has attracted research and policy attention given its prevalence and severity. For instance, in Canada and the United States, it was reported that

many women experience sexual violence almost every day (Benoit et al., 2015; WHO, 2014). Records from a nationwide household survey on crime in Canada showed that females between the ages of 15 and 24 face high rates of sexual abuse (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). A study conducted in Toronto, Canada, indicates that one out of three girls in high school reported being coerced into having sexual intercourse on school premises, and 29% reported other forms of sexual assault (Falconer, 2008). Regarding rape, evidence showed that in Canada and the US, one-quarter of young female students have been raped or nearly raped (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010; WHO, 2010, 2014). The National Organization for Women (2009) reported that 232,960 American women experienced sexual assaults in 2006; close to 4.8 million physical assault and rape cases occur annually with those between the ages of 20 and 24 most likely to be victims. These statistics are staggering, explaining the commitment by governments in many advanced countries to address sexual violence against women through specific policies and programs (Benoit et al., 2015).

Data on sexual violence in developed countries are similar to others in developing countries. For instance, in a study on the prevalence of and factors associated with male perpetration of intimate partner violence in Asia and the Pacific, Fulu and colleagues (2013) found that men committed sexual assaults including rape against women and girls in their lifetime. However, their research revealed that the rate and forms of sexual assault varied widely across the study locations. Akin to other areas in the developing world, a few African studies have reported higher rates of sexual violence against women. In sub-Saharan Africa, the World Health Organization (2002) found that many women experience non-consensual and unsafe sexual intercourse. For instance, in Zambia, 42% of women were raped in marriages, and 16% of women testified to different forms of sexual assault including rape, attempted rape and unwanted

bodily touching in Kenya (Kenya Demographic Health Survey, 2003). In rural Ethiopia, 59% of women experienced sexual violence, and 31% of ever-partnered women were sexually abused in Tanzania (WHO, 2005).

In Ghana, like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls suffer higher rates of sexual assault (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit [DOVVSU], 2005). A 2005 WHO report showed that the first sexual encounter of 21% of women in rural Ghana was non-consensual (WHO, 2005). Recent reports showed that the total number of rape cases increased from 292 in 2012 to 315 in 2013 (DOVVSU, 2011, 2013). Other empirical studies in Ghana reported that more than one-third of women experienced forced sex and other forms of sexual violence from their husbands (Adinkrah, 2011; Amoakohene, 2004; Chirwa et al., 2018; IDI, GSS, & Associates, 2016). These grim statistics demonstrate how widespread male sexual violence against women is in less advanced countries.

In general, these findings showed that sexual violence is a serious problem for many women globally. However, a direct comparison of the prevalence and incidence of sexual and domestic violence against women across countries may be problematic because of the differences in measuring the scope and nature of this issue. For instance, how researchers described sexual violence, the instruments and language used for data collection, the sampled populations and sample sizes, and contextual factors underlying abuse may be different from place to place. These challenges could have affected the information on the prevalence of women's experiences of sexual violence across time and space. In addition, sexual violence is an underreported crime in some countries and cultures, especially in the developing world, making the collection of data on this problem inadequate (Roze & Koss, 2001; WHO, 2013).

Due to low disclosure of sexual assaults, anecdotal evidence suggests that male sexual violence against women is widely undocumented in many low-and-middle income countries. It is, therefore, suspected that actual cases of sexual assault are much higher than what is reported and documented, especially in many African countries where women are socialized to believe that marriage confers the right of sexual access no matter how violent (Tenkorang et al., 2013). This situation calls for research and policy attention. Nonetheless, the few studies reviewed here facilitate a better understanding of the magnitude and nature of male sexual violence against women.

2.3 Reasons underlying Male Sexual Violence against Women

Understanding sexual violence against women includes identifying the driving forces and motivations for its occurrence. In this regard, social researchers have often asked the questions: Why do some men sexually assault women? And why are women often the primary targets of sexual violence? Scholars have provided reasons that may be categorized under macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem and ontogenic level of the social-ecological framework as theorized earlier (Heise, 1998; Krug, Dalhberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002).

2.3.1 Macro Level and Exosystem Factors driving Male Sexual Violence against Women

At the societal and community levels, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies reported some reasons underlying male sexual violence against women: discriminatory socio-cultural norms and practices, weak community and societal responses to violence against women, and harsh economic conditions such as poverty (Heise, 1998; Jewkes, 2002; Krug et al., 2002)

2.3.1.1 Socio-Cultural Norms and Values

Studies have reported that different socio-cultural norms in many developing countries including patriarchal systems, religious beliefs, and harmful traditional practices contribute significantly to women's vulnerability to sexual violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; WHO, 2002). Patriarchy, for instance, has been offered as a plausible explanation for the objectification of women, as men are socialized to believe that they wield authority and power over women in partner relations or marriages (Eswaran & Malhotra, 2011; Jewkes, 2002). Thus, Harcourt (2009) noted that the "widespread of violence against women, whether physical, sexual or psychological, has its roots in the power of patriarchy" (p. 95). Other socio-cultural factors promoting male violence in many developing countries include the payment of bride price. Some scholars have argued that bride price payment enhances male power and provides the social contexts for male-partner violence against women (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Amoah, 2007; Tenkorang et al., 2013). The bride price tradition in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa is often interpreted as transfer of rights from the woman's family to the husband, allowing men to think they 'own' their wives (Archeampong & Baidoo, 2011; Stafford, 2008; Tenkorang et al., 2013). Some authors have argued that this patriarchal entitlement is a strong basis for male-partner violence, including sexual violence against women (Amoah, 2007; Amoakohene, 2004; Tenkorang et al., 2013).

Likewise, adherence to and reinforcement of traditional masculine norms exposes women to sexual and domestic violence (Edström, Das, & Dolan, 2014; Freedman & Jacobson, 2012). Empirical evidence suggests that the association of masculinity with male dominance, power and possession in some cultures and ethnic groups significantly increases women's vulnerability to sexual violence and abuse (Anderson et al., 2008). This view is corroborated by some feminists,

who maintain that all forms of male-partner violence emanate from rigid traditional gender roles and men's desire for power and control (Giardino & Giardino, 2010). Feminists argue that sexual and domestic violence reflects the patriarchal social organization and that men use violence mostly to exert control in the family (Giardino & Giardino, 2010). For instance, in a Ghanaian study, Mann and Takyi (2009) found that ideas about masculinity that construct men as breadwinners in the family were connected to the belief that men are justified in using violence in the household under certain circumstances. Thus, the pressure put on men to conform to certain socio-cultural norms of masculinity creates conditions for gender-based violence.

2.3.1.2 Poverty

Some scholars reported that in addition to the many social and cultural factors involved, there are other driving forces behind domestic and sexual violence against women, including unemployment and lack of income (Faramarzi, Esmailzavi & Mosavi, 2005; Wenzel, Tucker, Hambarsoomian & Elliot, 2006; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). Poverty within families is a significant determinant of sexual violence and abuse against women (Jewkes, 2002, Jewkes et al., 2011; WHO, 2010). For instance, in the United States, Aizer (2011) asserted that poor women were highly vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence from male-partners. Likewise, in a study involving 2,410 women in Palestine, Haj-Yahia (2000) found that unemployment and the lack of income among women increased their vulnerability to male sexual violence and abuse. These findings parallel observations reported in other studies elsewhere in the world. For instance, across the sub-Saharan African region, emerging studies on domestic violence against women have consistently revealed that unemployed women were more likely to experience male physical, sexual and psychological violence (Alesina et al., 2016; Issahaku, 2012; Obi & Ozumba, 2007; Tenkorang et al., 2013). This circumstance arises because poorer women are

more likely to depend on their husbands or partners and such dependence may be used as a primary tactic for controlling women's sexuality and sexual behaviours (Adjei, 2016; Issahaku, 2012; Mann & Takyi, 2009). As a result, there have been calls for the economic empowerment of women to help reduce the level of domestic and sexual violence against them. Following this, some research in South Asia including Bangladesh and India reported that women who were gainfully employed experienced less male violence compared to the unemployed (Panda & Agarwal 2005). Similarly, women who had access to property were less exposed to marital violence than those who lacked property (Lamichhane et al., 2011; Panda & Agarwal, 2005). Comparable findings were reported in Africa (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2013; Jewkes, 2002; WHO, 2010). For instance, in Ghana, research found that employment and ownership of property among women considerably reduced their vulnerability to domestic and sexual violence (Adinkra, 2011; Amoakohene, 2004; IDS, GSS, & Associates, 2016). As explained by Lamichhane and colleagues (2011), employment and ownership of property empower women to exercise more autonomy in intra-family decision-making and to promote their interests, thereby reducing their risk for sexual and domestic violence.

Despite the protective effect of women's employment against male-partner violence, evidence shows that economically independent women may also be prone to intimate partner and sexual violence (Alesina et al., 2016; Naved & Persson, 2005). For instance, in a quantitative study that examined the correlates of intimate partner violence, Alesina et al. (2016) asserted that spousal violence was higher among working women. The authors explained that women's economic independence might increase their bargaining power in domestic interactions, which can generate negative reactions from men, and consequently lead to domestic and sexual violence. In particular, in some African societies, economic independence for women may be

perceived as a challenge to traditional masculine norms and gender roles, which may lead to violence including sexual abuse (Alesina et al., 2016; Ganle, 2016). These mixed findings show that the relationship between women's economic status and violence is inconclusive in the literature.

A further review of the literature showed that unemployment and the accompanying lack of income among men might indirectly expose women to sexual violence and abuse (Ackerson and Subramanian, 2008; Jewkes, 2002). Macmillan and Gartner (1999) noted "women's labour force participation...lowers risks of spousal abuse when their male-partners are also employed but substantially increases risks when their male-partners are not employed" (p.957). In a quantitative study in the Philippines, Hindin and Adair (2002) found that joblessness among men increased the risk of women experiencing sexual abuse and violence. In Ghana, studies found that poor economic status of men, especially the lack of income is a factor that contributes to male violence against women (Chirwa et al., 2018; Ganle, 2016). A common explanation offered regarding the link between husband's unemployment and violence against women is the concept of masculinity (Ganle, 2016). For instance, in some cases, men who are unable to fulfil their traditional breadwinner role may deploy violence to exercise and maintain power and control over women (Ganle, 2016; Krug et al., 2002; Heise, 2002). In all, these studies illustrate that women's joblessness or employment might make them vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse. Also, the low economic status of men can indirectly make women vulnerable for sexual and domestic abuse.

2.3.1.3 Laws and Policies

Research showed that male violence against women has harmful effects, requiring effective interventions to mitigate its manifestation. In this regard, several countries have passed laws to protect against gender-based violence. However, evidence shows that there is weak societal and institutional response to violence against women, especially in many low- and-middle income countries (Bashiru, 2012; Boateng, 2015). For instance, in 2007, the government of Ghana approved the Domestic Violence Act to prevent abuse in domestic interactions (IDS, GSS, & Associates, 2016). Despite the passage of these laws, acceptance and implementation is a problem. These laws are not strictly enforced (Agbitor, 2012). The laws also may be applied leniently to abusive husbands, while women are often scrutinized and required to provide witnesses and hospital reports to prove their case.

In addition, sexual violence against women may be overlooked, as law enforcement agencies such as the police may be biased toward survivors in handling assault cases (Adinkrah, 2011; Bashiru, 2012; Boateng, 2015). Boateng (2015) reported that Ghanaians sanction rape myths and the police often have stereotypical attitudes by blaming women survivors for being the reason underlying male-partner violence. Similarly, many of the sampled participants in Fugate et al.'s (2005) study complained that reporting assaults to formal bodies (i.e. the police, law courts etc.) was not helpful because of poor attitude among many police officers in addressing complaints. These findings demonstrate that response to sexual and domestic violence cases is a severe challenge in some countries. Even sometimes accessing these services becomes traumatizing and threatening, as negative attitudes are pervasive in the broader society, especially among the police who are entrusted to protect the rights of women and citizens (Boateng, 2015). Such situations are significant

deterrents, making it problematic for survivors to access protection from the justice system and recover from their experiences after surviving assaults. It may also lead to repeated assaults against women due to their non-help-seeking behaviour and the lack of punishment for perpetrators.

Some group of scholars, however, believe that the many challenges facing law enforcement institutions in less developed countries makes it difficult to respond to the incidence of sexual and domestic violence (Agbitor, 2012; Mitchell, 2011). Some commonly cited challenges include lack of staff, the slow pace of court rulings, and inadequate support services such as emergency shelters, medical facilities, and legal advice (Agbitor, 2012; Mitchell, 2011). Analyzing court reports on domestic violence in the Mampong city of Ghana, Adu-Gyamfi (2014) found that the number of abused cases increased drastically after the Domestic Violence Act (237) was passed; but the percentage of prosecutions had declined significantly. The 2011 Domestic Violence Unit annual reports in Ghana also showed that 12,706 cases of domestic abuse were registered in 2010. Nevertheless, 954 cases were decided, which resulted in only 118 prosecutions. These limited processed cases were in part attributed to the challenges associated with the legal system. This means that as institutions are essential to protect the rights and interests of citizens, they should be devoid of setbacks to enable them function effectively. While violence occurs between individuals, the discussion shows that sexual violence and abuse against women stem from systems of power and privilege that are deeply seated in the broader society. Women disproportionately experience sexual and domestic violence because they lack power in social relationships and the broader society compared to men. Thus, any campaign against male violence against women in terms of research, policy and practice should begin with the larger society.

2.3.2 Ontogenic and Microsystem Factors underlying Male Sexual Violence

Individual and interpersonal factors contribute to sexual violence against women. The most commonly cited factors include alcohol use, drug use, and witnessing family violence during childhood (Foran & O’Leary, 2008a; Faramarzi, Esmailzavi & Mosavi, 2005; Wenzel, Tucker, Hambarsoomian & Elliot, 2006; Obi & Ozumba, 2007).

2.3.2.1 Alcohol Use

Evidence showed that alcohol use is both a determinant and a consequence of domestic and sexual violence. In a review of possible causes of male violence against women, the European Commission (2010a) reported that 95% of the participants rated alcohol use as the underlying reason for violence and sexual abuse against women. In another study in the capital of Turkey, alcohol intake among husbands was found to influence violence against spouses (Akar, Aksakal, Demirel, Durukan, & Ozkan, 2010). Similarly, in the United States, the National Epidemiologic Survey on alcohol and related conditions revealed that alcohol and cocaine use were strongly cited as reasons for male-partner violence (Smith et al., 2012). Likewise, in Ghana, studies have found that excessive alcohol consumption among men contributed to sexual, physical and verbal violence against women (Bashiru, 2012, Chirwa et al., 2018; Ganle, 2016; IDI, GSS, & Associates, 2016). These studies demonstrate that alcohol use, especially in excess quantity among men significantly exposes women to domestic and sexual violence. This is because alcohol use may weaken a man’s social judgement and makes him misread social signs through cognitive impairment (Davis, George, & Norris, 2004; Testa, Livingston, & Leonard, 2003). As explained by Gondolf (1995), excessive alcohol use undermines people’s sense of reasoning and makes them engage in deviant behaviour.

While alcohol use is identified as a determinant of male-partner violence, some authors believe that it is not necessarily a precondition for the perpetration of sexual and domestic violence (Hopkins & McGregor, 1991). They explained that other additional and subtle conditions must be present for alcohol consumption to generate conflict and violence (Pernanen, 1991). It is argued that a man may commit violence frequently even if he does not drink alcohol (Murphy & Ting, 2010). Many male alcoholics rarely abuse their female-partners and the majority of men who abuse their wives seldom drink excessively (Murphy & Ting, 2010; Hopkins & McGregor, 1991; Pernanen, 1991; Roberts, 2007). As such, the role of alcohol in facilitating the perpetration of violence may intersect with some other factors. Gondolf (1995) indicated that an interaction of multiple influences on a male perpetrator would determine how violent he would be when intoxicated.

While there is a consensus among scholars that alcohol consumption contributes to violence, the available evidence does not support a relationship between the two (Murphy & Ting, 2010). However, it is imperative to note that alcohol use and violence are acts often deployed by aggressors to exercise power and control over victims of abuse, with consequences for survivors (Roberts, 2007; Shannon, 2009).

2.3.2.2 Childhood History of Trauma or Abuse

An interesting finding from some studies reveals that children who experience severe abuse are likely to experience or commit violence later in life compared to children who suffer less abuse (Bobonis, Gonzalez-Brenes, & Castro, 2013; Clark, Silverman, Shahrouri, Everson-Rose, & Groce, 2010; Wareham et al., 2009). A study conducted on child marriages in Turkey reported that 25% of the participants were survivors of sexual abuse and violence and this

experience doubled after marriage (Haber Sol, 2012). A nationwide Turkish data also showed that women who observed fathers abusing their mothers were vulnerable to abuse by husbands (Yuksel-Kaptanoglu et al., 2012). Similarly, there is evidence of association between child abuse and experience of violence among women in adulthood from studies in Africa (Abramsky et al., 2011; Jewkes et al., 2011; Kiene et al., 2017). For instance, a survey among men in four districts in the Central region of Ghana found that witnessing inter-parental violence increases the risk of sexual and intimate partner violence perpetration against women (Chirwa et al., 2018). These findings support models of the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence (Pollak, 2004). While understanding the relationship between childhood history of abuse and the future perpetration of violence may be complex, the social learning theory indicates that violence could be learned (Wareham et al., 2009).

The occurrence of family violence torments children. They may endure some complex and intersecting issues including the abusive behaviour of the perpetrator, the reactions of victims and the profound consequences on survivors. Not surprisingly, Magano (2004) reported that seeing marital violence and domestic abuse might have implications for children. Under such volatile settings, the dignity, self-esteem, welfare and overall development of children are threatened. For instance, Helander (2008) reported that children exposed to violence are more likely to commit violent offences, drink alcohol and attempt suicide. Such acts are serious public health problems and, therefore, policies must pay attention to the occurrence of family violence.

2.3.2.3 Education

Research has indicated that the educational level of intimate partners plays a role in the experiences of sexual violence and abuse among women. García-Moreno et al. (2005) noted that

intimate partner and sexual violence declined with increasing educational levels of women. This finding was supported by Tenkorang et al. (2013), who found that the more formal education a woman had, the less likely she was to experience domestic and sexual violence. This is because education provides women with social empowerment, and the ability to use information and resources to their advantage (Jewkes, 2002). Education can empower women and give them access to other opportunities such as resources, better employment, and higher self-confidence (WHO, 2010). These findings appear to suggest that education can considerably lessen women's risk for sexual and domestic violence. On the contrary, a significant body of literature emerged indicating that a woman's educational level does not necessarily reduce her exposure to domestic and sexual violence (Jewkes, 2002; Krug et al., 2002). For instance, in South Africa and Zimbabwe, small-scale quantitative studies found that educated women were more likely to resist discriminatory socio-cultural norms, which incited men to use violence to reclaim control and authority (Jewkes, 2002; Krug et al., 2002).

Similarly, the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey reported that rates of domestic abuse and sexual violence were lower for women with no education than those with primary education. Comparable results were found in Rwanda (La Mattina, 2013). In some other reviews, men with higher education were less likely to commit violence against their female-partners compared to the uneducated or less educated (Ackerson et al., 2008). A study in Northern India reported that between 18 percent and 45 percent of married men had perpetrated domestic and sexual violence against their female-partners (Martin et al., 1999).

A review of the extant literature also revealed that husbands' education served as a protective factor against male violence towards women (Ackerson et al., 2008; Martin et al.,

1999). The human capital theory explains that highly educated men commit less violence because they have more resources and opportunities and earn high incomes (Becker, 2009). This evidence is consistent with others who show that having low income may generate stress and frustrations, which consequently may lead to intimate partner and sexual violence (MacMillan & Gartner 1999). Another potential explanation is that highly educated men may be aware of the risks and consequences of violence and would be less likely to commit such acts against female-partners (WHO, 2019). Notwithstanding, men with higher education are also more likely to perpetrate partner violence (Goode, 1971). This is because highly educated men may have access to more resources and higher incomes, which gives them the power to dominate in domestic relations (Goode, 1971). These conflicting findings suggest that whether women are more or less educated than their male-partners, they are vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence. Nevertheless, higher education among women can significantly reduce their exposure to male-partner violence including sexual abuse than those who are less educated.

2.3.2.4 Age

The age of intimate partners was found to influence sexual violence against women (Luke et al., 2007; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). Aizer (2011) noted that the incidence of sexual assault is lower among older women. In urban Peru, 41% of women aged 15–19 years suffered sexual and domestic violence compared to 8% of women between the ages of 45–49 years old (García-Moreno et al., 2005). Other studies from Bangladesh, India and Nepal revealed that women who marry after the age of 20 were less likely to report sexual assaults compared to those who marry before age 20 (Joshi & Dhapolam, 2001; Khan, Townsend, & D’Costa, 2002).

Overall, these empirical findings suggest that several socio-cultural and economic factors contribute to domestic and sexual violence against women. It is important to note that none of these factors may exist in isolation, but the interaction of two or more can increase the likelihood of women experiencing sexual violence and abuse. Although sexual violence against women is a neglected area of research, measuring some of the underlying reasons and motivations behind male sexual violence and abuse toward women is a useful process of understanding the extent of this problem. Whereas some studies show a relationship between these factors and sexual and domestic violence, others seem to suggest weak connections. These contradictions indicate that studies on the determinants of sexual and domestic violence against women are inconclusive, and therefore further research is required in this area.

2.4 Consequences of Male Sexual Violence against Women

The literature shows that sexual violence has adverse consequences for women victims (Lampard, 2014; WHO, 2002, 2017). The identified impacts range from health problems such as physical injuries, mental and emotional difficulties to socio-economic challenges including reduced incomes and lost productivity.

2.4.1 Physical Health Problems

Research has found numerous physical health difficulties associated with male violence toward women. In Puri, Tamang, and Shah's (2011) study, many female survivors experienced muscle and joint pains. Most participants complained of backaches, body aches, headaches, and abdominal pains, while a smaller number of victims suffered vaginal itching, dark blood flow, and white discharge. In another study, 92% of victims complained about bruises, cuts, and scrapes, 11% suffered broken bones or dislocations, and 3% experienced gunshot wounds

(Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2002). Male-partner sexual violence is a crucial factor that contributes to unplanned pregnancies (WHO, 2005). It has been suggested that 5% of unwanted pregnancies are caused by rape (Beebe, 1991; Koss, Koss, & Woodruff., 1991). Other studies showed that sexual violence, especially involving unprotected vaginal, anal and oral penetration increases the risk of spreading HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (García-Moreno et al., 2005; Moosa, 2012). Sexually transmitted infections were found in up to 43% of rape victims (Beebe, 1991; Jenny et al., 1990), with research reporting the STI infection rate among women to be between 5% and 15% (Lacey, 1990; Murphy, 1990). Although numbers on the spread of HIV due to rape are not available, it is a significant worry to a high number of women victims (Baker, Burgess, Brickman, & Davis, 1990).

The World Health Organization (2013) reported that women who suffered sexual assault were 16% more likely to deliver low-weight babies compared to non-abused women. They also had twice the chance of their pregnancy being aborted. This finding was supported by Pool et al. (2014), who reported that violence had a detrimental effect on the health of unborn babies, including contributing to disabilities, body disfiguring, and pregnancy loss. These health difficulties are more pronounced and worrying among pregnant women with low educational and socioeconomic status (Koppensteiner & Manacorda, 2013).

2.4.2 Mental/Psychological Health Problems

In addition to physical injuries, survivors of sexual violence can suffer immediate and prolonged psychological and mental health problems (Josse, 2010). The most common symptoms include post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, insomnia, low self-esteem, perceived loss of control, and psychosis (García-Moreno et al., 2005; Moosa, 2012).

Amoakohene's (2004) study in Ghana found a variety of psychological and emotional consequences of violence, including fear, stress, depression, tension, and low self-esteem. Similarly, Adu-Gyamfi (2014) found mental and emotional effects of sexual abuse, including lost sense of dignity, lack of respect, confidence, and self-esteem.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) were common among victims of sexual assault (Dunmore, Clark, & Ehlers, 2001; Lang et al., 2004). PTSD frequently occurs, particularly among women who experience a series of sexual assaults. The national comorbidity survey in the US observed that PTSD is common among rape victims (Kessler et al., 1999). In a sample of victims of sexual assault, PTSD symptoms appeared more frequently after the incident (Dunmore et al., 2001). The cumulative effect of repeated sexual violence is more likely to cause substance abuse, despair, low self-esteem and perceived loss of control (García-Moreno et al., 2005; Moosa, 2012). Women victims may also experience shock, anxiety, intense fear and engage in self-blame. Also, if relatives, friends and acquaintances isolate victims due to shame and stigma, such feelings are more likely to be aggravated, with the consequence of prolonging and compounding the original trauma (WHO, 2002). The severe health problems coupled with blame, stigma and lack of social support often lead female victims to develop suicidal thoughts, believing that death may be the only the means of escape (Cybulska, 2007; Luce, Schragger, & Gilchrist, 2010). While the findings in the above discussion may come from different settings and methods of inquiry, they reveal similar patterns and themes. They show that sexual violence against women is associated with substantial health problems.

2.4.3 Economic Cost

Studies on the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence against women indicate that this social problem can affect victims' productive skills, access to, and control of resources, especially if they are unable to receive or access proper and timely medical treatment (García-Moreno et al., 2005; Heise & García-Moreno, 2002; Moosa, 2012). Consistent with this view, reports by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (2011) show that sexual violence greatly affects women's economic activities. This was corroborated by Morrison, Quadara and Boyd (2007), who reported that sexual violence against women is associated with economic costs.

The economic effects of sexual violence have been organized into direct and indirect cost (Miller, Taylor, & Sheppard, 2007). Economic studies on domestic and sexual violence against women reported that survivors might spend money directly from their pockets for things such as transportation and medication (Miller, Taylor, & Sheppard, 2007; WHO, 2008). Such direct expenses are more likely to affect family income and consumption significantly, preventing household members from having access to essential goods and services. Other scholars established that sexual violence and abuse could indirectly undermine women's livelihood activities and deplete their incomes (Delisi et al., 2010). For instance, Ribero and Sánchez (2005) found that domestic and sexual violence increased the unemployment situation of women in Columbia, leading to a 40% decline in earnings. Similarly, Lloyd (1997) reported that women victims of violence in the USA had higher chances of being unemployed and were more likely to receive assistance from the public welfare system compared to non-abused women. Depletion of incomes and unemployment arise from consistent missing of work schedules, lowered productivity and marginal work commitment.

While one can say that sexual and domestic violence should be prevented because of human rights violations and public health problems, these findings demonstrate that it has economic consequences for survivors. Assessing the economic cost of sexual and domestic violence is important for understanding the severity of this problem. Taken together, the studies reviewed show conclusively that male sexual violence against women is a significant global health and economic problem facing women. Previous research inquiries demonstrate that sexual violence and abuse are associated with adverse outcomes on women's health and wellness, emotional and social well-being as well as employment and income, which profoundly affect their overall socio-economic development. This calls for the identification of effective intervention strategies and treatment programs to stop this social problem and provide better care for survivors.

2.5 Conclusion

This review explored the prevalence, causes, and consequences of sexual violence against women across a diverse range of contemporary global societies. The review established that sexual violence against women is a relatively common phenomenon globally caused by several factors at the individual, community, and societal levels, which has harmful effects on victims' health and well-being.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodological Approach

3.0 Introduction

This study aims to understand the experiences and perspectives of sexual violence among married women in Ghana. The empirical data were obtained from a larger research project titled: *Marital Violence against Women in Ghana: Causes and Implications* funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The project was completed under the supervision of Dr. Eric Tenkorang, the principal investigator from the Department of Sociology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and his collaborator Dr. Adobea Owusu, of the Institute of Social, Statistical and Economic Research, University of Ghana. In addition to the research team, and considering the sensitivity of gender-based violence, especially sexual and physical violence, female research assistants were also trained to participate in the project. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine gender-based violence against married women in Ghana. The quantitative phase of the project mainly used the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS, 2008), a nation-wide dataset collected and managed by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and Macro International. This dataset contains in-depth information on fertility rates, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and the nutritional status of women, infants and children.

The dataset also contains rich and high-quality information on gender-based violence, providing data on women's experiences of intimate partner violence such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse. In the second component of the project, a qualitative study was conducted to complement the quantitative data by 'digging deeper' into contextual factors that lead to violence against women, especially the role culture and patriarchy play in perpetuating violence. This is mainly because a qualitative approach focuses on "describing, understanding, and clarifying a

human experience” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.140) via the usage of “broad, open-ended, and interconnected questions that are not always specifiable as conventional hypotheses” (NIH, 1998, n.p).

This chapter provides information on the profile of the study area, the research methodology used including the study design, data gathering instrument, target population, sampling procedure and sample size, data analysis and interpretation, as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Background of the Study Area

This study was carried out in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa. The Eastern Region is one of the ten administrative regions in Ghana. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, the region has about 2,633,154 people from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, making it the third most populated area in Ghana. Out of this number, females constitute 51%, while males represent 49%. The region covers a total land mass of 19,323 sq. km, making it the sixth largest region in the country (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The area is divided into several districts and municipalities including the Lower Manya Krobo District.

The study was specifically conducted in the Lower Manya Krobo District (LMKD). The map of the district can be found in *appendix A*. This area is an administrative district with a total land area of 304.4 sq. km, representing about 1.7% of the Eastern Region of Ghana (IDS, GSS, & Associates, 2016). The LMKD was created in 2008 and was later elevated to the status of a municipality in 2012 by a legislative provision, with Odumase-Krobo as the capital city (IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016). The municipality is bordered to the north by Upper Manya Krobo District, to the south by Dangme West, to the west by Yilo Krobo Municipality, and to the east

by Asuogyaman District. The main towns include Krobo Odumase, Agomanya, Akuse, Kponyokorpe, Paterwonya, Kpong, and Atua (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The municipality is more than 80% urban, and according to the 2010 population and housing census, it has a population of about 89,246 (IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016). Of this number, females (53.5%) represent a higher proportion of the population than males (46.5%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

While the people are predominantly Krobos, there are other tribes, such as Ewes, Akans, Hausas and Guans (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The main religious denomination is Christianity (92.8%), with a small number of Muslims and traditional believers (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). A third of the people live in single-parent households, while many live in extended family households (IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016). Close to one-third of women between the ages of 25 and 29 years are married (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Although agriculture, specifically farming, is the mainstay of the local economy, trading activities are also common, and those involved are mainly petty traders because of the scarce financial capital available to establish large-scale businesses (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Informal sector employees barely earn close to the minimum wage of \$2 US (Otoo, Osei-Boateng, & Asafu-Adjaye, 2009). Evidence has shown that the LMKD is one of the areas with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDs and has the highest unemployment rate in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The Krobo people practice patrilineal inheritance, where men exclusively inherit landed properties, thereby depriving women the opportunity to own properties (Kissi-Abrokwah, Andoh-Robertson, Tutu-Danquah, & Agbesi, 2015).

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2010), in the 2010 population and housing census, women constituted half of the population of Ghana, suggesting they are not only numerically significant but also fundamental to the general socio-economic development of the country. With a population of 29 million, women comprise nearly 50% of the labour force and are found in almost every sector of the economy including agriculture, industry and services (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Women's role in the formal and informal sectors helps strengthen the Ghanaian economy and enhance the country's extensive development agenda. Despite this, women persistently face challenges in both the private and public spheres, limiting their full participation in the local and national economies (Amu, 2005). Violence is identified as one of the key obstacles to women's development prospects and progress (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; IDI, GSS & Associates, 2016). In the Eastern Region and elsewhere in Ghana, violence against women is highly prevalent (IDI, GSS & Associates, 2016; Tenkorang et al., 2013). It occurs in multiple forms including physical, verbal and sexual with severe implications for victims' health and well-being. Women experience violence from several perpetrators such as family relations, intimate partners, community members and strangers. However, the most common experience of violence for women is by a current or former partner in an intimate relationship (Sedziafa et al., 2017; Temkorang et al., 2013).

Evidence has shown that the Eastern Region is one of the areas with the highest prevalence of intimate partner violence in Ghana (IDI, GSS & Associates, 2016). In 2013, the region recorded about 1,929 cases compared to 1502 cases in 2012, which shows a drastic increase in IPV cases (Ghana News Agency, 2014). Data from the Ghana Family Life and Health Survey show that sex without consent in the Eastern Region is about 0.7%, the second highest after the central region (1.2%) (Ghana Family Life and Health Survey [GFLHS] 2015 cited in

IDI, GSS & Associates, 2016). The same survey reported that other forms of sexual violence in the region include inappropriate sexual comments (0.8%), sexual touching (0.8%), sex without protection (0.6%), and sex because of fear (0.6%). Another report has shown that the total number of recorded defilement and rape cases in Ghana including the Eastern Region were 986 and 286, respectively, with 27 total attempted rape cases and 3113 assault cases in 2011 (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, 2011). Despite these statistics, anecdotal evidence suggests that there may be many undisclosed cases of domestic abuse.

Due to the high prevalence and deleterious consequences of interpersonal violence against women, several policies and programs have been designed and implemented to help prevent the recurrence of this pervasive problem. For instance, the Domestic Violence Act (237) was passed to protect against abuse in domestic relations (IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016). However, evidence shows that the majority of women in Ghana, including those in the Eastern Region, find it difficult to seek help from formal support units, and many perpetrators often go unpunished (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; Boateng, 2015; IDI, GSS & Associates, 2016). In particular, women in the context of marriage or cohabitation rarely disclose their experiences to formal support units (Archampong & Baidoo, 2011; Stafford, 2008). Some of the reported reasons for the underreporting of violence are poor institutional response to cases of abuse, poverty, low literacy levels, fear of stigma and shame, rape myths, and fear of being blamed or not believed (Ampofo & Boateng, 2008; Archampong & Baidoo, 2011; Boateng, 2015; Tenkorang et al., 2013). In this context, sexual violence and its impacts are more likely to be experienced by married women. Therefore, the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana provides an interesting case for analyzing the sexual violence experiences of married women.

3.2 Research Design

To unpack married women's experiences and perspectives of sexual violence, a qualitative research design was selected as a useful approach mainly because of its exploratory nature. While survey research oversimplifies findings, facilitates the formulating of hypotheses and relies on deductive reasoning, qualitative research is largely descriptive and interpretive (Choudhuri, Glauser & Peregoy, 2004) and implies "strong belief in context-dependent, multiple, and complex realities ... which emphasizes the particular over the universal" (Whitley & Crawford, 2005, p.109).

In addition, a qualitative design enables researchers to obtain in-depth information about participants' experiences and viewpoints on an issue (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016; Creswell, 2014). It emphasizes the inter-subjective interaction between the knower and the known in the knowledge construction of social realities in a specific socio-cultural and political context (Creswell, 2005). This design considers the researcher's self-awareness and reflection as well as respondents' meanings, opinions and experiences about a phenomenon. McLean-Taylor and his colleagues (1995) argued that a qualitative research design allows room for making explicit "the relationship between the interviewee's voice and silences and the researcher's voice, silences, and interpretation. In this way, the voices are differentiated" (p. 29).

3.3 Population, Sampling Procedure, and Sample Size

According to Hulley, Cummings, Browner, Grady, and Newman (2007) "a target population is selected on the basis that it would yield the required data [for a topic under study]." (p. 82). The target population for this study was women in the LMKD. Participants for this study were recruited after consultations with the local chief and his elders, who welcomed the idea of

domestic violence as an issue to be studied and documented in their community. While seeking entry permission was important, the researchers and one of the female research assistants had ties with the community, making it much easier to build trust and establish good interpersonal relations in the field. The gatekeepers were informed about the purpose of the study and the participants required for this research. After gaining approval, a series of contacts were made through local opinion leaders and a few survivors of male-partner violence were identified in which permission was obtained to participate in the study. Snowballing method was also used to access other participants through referrals from the initial contacts (Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003). Eligibility criterion included women who were 18 years, older who have been victims of domestic abuse, and were legitimately married or cohabitating for a minimum of one year (Tenkorang et al., 2013). This is because the topic under investigation was on male-partner violence and thus being a survivor of such violence was considered relevant to the discussions.

A significant component of qualitative research is the sample size. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on larger samples for the purpose of generalizing findings, qualitative research is more focused on gaining in-depth knowledge about social events (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Due to this, qualitative researchers are more reflexive of sample sizes until the point of data saturation. This is because the failure to reach data saturation can affect the quality of data collected and impede content validity (Kerr, Nixon, & Wild, 2010). Data saturation occurs when new participants start to duplicate what other participants discussed in previous interviews or when interviews fail to provide new themes or ideas in subsequent interviews (Bowen, 2008). The saturation point is reached when the sample size gives ‘rich’ and ‘thick’ data (Dibley, 2011). Thus, in choosing a sample size in qualitative studies, the aim should be “not

only to study a few sites or individuals but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individuals studied” (Patton, 2002, p. 157).

According to Crouch & McKenzie (2006), the maximum number of participants to be used in a qualitative study to minimize validity threats and provide in-depth data should be twenty (20). This idea was supported by Latham (2013) who suggested that a sample size between 15 and 20 homogenous participants is enough for many qualitative studies. He further indicated that saturation often happens in qualitative studies between 12 and 15 participants. For this study, fifteen survivors of male-partner violence including sexual violence participated in the face-to-face in-depth interviews.

The LMKD was purposively selected for this study due to several reasons. It provided access to participants with the requisite knowledge and information on male-partner violence. For instance, the area is geographically located in a region (i.e. the Eastern Region) that records high rates of domestic violence (IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016). This same region has the third highest HIV prevalence (2.6%), after the Brong Ahafo (2.7%) and Volta regions (2.7%) in Ghana (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2016). Emerging empirical studies show that the rate of intimate partner violence among HIV-positive women if not comparable is higher than for HIV-negative women (Gielen et al., 2007; Machtinger et al., 2012a).

In addition, compared to other areas in the Eastern region of Ghana, the LMKD is associated with high illiteracy levels and little knowledge about human rights and gender mainstreaming (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; Otoo et al., 2009). The district was created in 2008 from the Manya Krobo Municipality, thus, many educational facilities, law enforcement institutions and employment and credit opportunities are still lacking. Evidence has shown that

the LMKD has the highest unemployment rate in the Eastern Region in which women are mostly affected (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). Such situations may stifle women’s entrepreneurial initiatives and socio-economic growth, pushing them further down the poverty line. In such instances, women become less empowered and vulnerable to domestic violence including sexual abuse. Women may tolerate violent behaviours and fail to disclose cases of sexual abuse to formal support avenues.

3.4 Data Collection and Instrument

The study used face-to-face in-depth interviews for data collection, as they provide a more relaxed atmosphere for both interviewers and participants to discuss issues of domestic abuse in detail (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This approach involves conducting intensive interviews with a limited number of participants to explore their viewpoint about a particular phenomenon, idea or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This method of data collection in qualitative research is useful when a researcher is interested in collecting exhaustive information on participants’ thoughts and behaviours or examining new issues in depth (Creswell, 2005). Interviews are utilized to provide a complete understanding of the circumstances surrounding an outcome (Boyce & Neale, 2006). They provide much more comprehensive information about a subject compared to other forms of data collection such as surveys (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The biographical information of participants is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants’ Basic Information*

Pseudo-Names	Age	Occupation	Education	Children	Religion	Tribe
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Adjoa	50	Petty trader	Form 4	4	Christianity	Krobo
Abena	25	Petty trader	Primary	3	Christianity	Ewe
Maafia	28	Storekeeper	Tertiary	1	Christianity	Krobo
Serwaa	37	Petty trader	None	3	Christianity	Krobo
Ama	47	Farmer	None	8	Christianity	Krobo
Yaa	60	Farmer	None	9	Christianity	Krobo
Akua	38	Petty trader	Undeclared	4	Christianity	Krobo
Afia	65	Farmer	None	10	Christianity	Krobo
Nyamekye	37	Teacher	Secondary	2	Christianity	Krobo
Kukua	56	Petty trader	Form 4	2	Christianity	Krobo
Oforiwaa	26	Petty trader	Primary	3	Christianity	Krobo
Araaba	48	Petty trader	Form 4	5	Christianity	Krobo
Maame	43	Petty trader	Form 4	3	Christianity	Krobo
Ohemaa	55	Petty trader	Form 4	3	Christianity	Krobo
Teckyiwaah	28	Petty trader	Secondary	3	Christianity	Krobo

Source: data collected from the field October 2013

Participants who consented to participate in the study were given the opportunity to voluntarily narrate their experiences or share their thoughts on violence against women. The individual interviews were conducted at a convenient time and safe locations suggested by the participants. According to Clark (2017), “the power dynamics of the interview situation is critical...The generation of an environment in which respondents feel relaxed and able to speak at length is therefore of fundamental importance to the qualitative interview” (p. 84). The interviews began by reading out an informed consent sheet that outlined the purpose of the study, issues of anonymity and confidentiality, the right to withdraw from the study, and participants’ consent. Trained female research assistants moderated the interviews in a conversational manner and to ensure that they were less intimidating. This created a more relaxed atmosphere that allowed the interviewers and participants to discuss issues of male-partner violence in detail and avoid the problem of social desirability bias. All participants responded to the same set of questions, and interviewers occasionally probed for details, clarification, and the examination of key issues raised in the study when necessary. The rationale was to allow for triangulation and cross-comparison of participants’ responses to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. For instance, Rubin and Rubin (1995) argued that in semi-structured interviews, researchers need to construct, adapt and formulate questions and engage in probing when necessary to achieve the main objective of the topic being investigated.

A semi-structured interview guide directed the interviews, where questions were posed by the interviewer for participants to willingly share their experience or thoughts on domestic violence. Merriam (1998) indicated that semi-structured interviews are flexible and useful because “either all the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions” (p. 74). The interview guide was designed in English. It included open-

ended questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of participants, the prevalence and forms of intimate partner violence, the perceived causes and consequences, responses to violence and survivors' support-seeking behaviours. Some of the specific questions asked were; has your husband/partner ever had sex with you in a way you disagree with? do you think the Ghanaian culture supports sexual abuse, has the sexual abuse affected you in any way? Have you heard of Ghana's Domestic Violence Act? Can you insist that your husband wears a condom before sexual intercourse? What about denying him sexual intercourse? However, the guide was interpreted in Twi and Krobo (widely spoken local dialects in the study area) by the research assistants for participants who found it difficult to understand questions in English or did not understand English at all; as indicated earlier, there is a high illiteracy level in the study area. As explained by Grewal and Ritchie (2006), a common dialect between a researcher and a participant can facilitate communication between them. The shared dialect between the interviewers and participants proved to be useful, as it fostered rapport and conversation with participants, thus enhancing the quality and robustness of the data collected (see Devereux, 1993). The interpretations also allowed for easy understanding of and responses to questions and the accurate presentation of women's experiences and perspectives of violence. The interview guide is attached as *Appendix B*.

Each interview lasted an average of an hour to allow for optimal and meaningful conversation. With approval from the participants, individual interviews were audio-recorded to capture fully each interview and to reduce distortions and the likelihood of confusion and the misrepresentation of responses (see Fontana and Frey, 1994). Recording interviews electronically was very useful, as it made unnecessary the hand taking of notes during the interview, which could have been stressful and impeded the conversational process. In addition,

there is a tendency to miss relevant portions of interviews when writing during interview sessions. Recorded interviews can be listened to multiple times to obtain a complete, unbiased, objective analysis and representation of results. Thus, it was beneficial to audio-record the qualitative interviews. For easy transcription and analysis of the data, all the individual interviews in English, Twi, or Krobo were later transcribed verbatim into softcopy.

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Merriam (2002) indicated that thematic analysis has been proven to be a useful method for analyzing qualitative data because it provides essential skills for analyzing data. Unlike other methods, thematic analysis emphasizes working with data, systematic and objective coding, organizing data, and searching for patterns to develop themes. Due to this, qualitative researchers are advised to become familiar with thematic analysis as an autonomous and reliable approach to doing qualitative analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The simplicity of thematic analysis, therefore, has led several studies to use it to analyze women’s experiences of violence (see Ghafournia, 2017; Howard-Bostic, 2011; Spruin, Alleyne, & Papadaki, 2015). Thus, thematic analysis was chosen to help detail participants’ lived experiences of sexual violence. Specifically, using thematic analysis assisted in organizing and coding the qualitative data in clearly defined criteria, searching for patterns and developing themes.

Although there are many types of software for analyzing qualitative data, the data for this study were analyzed manually. This choice was mainly because, as Warren and Karner (2015) indicated, analyzing data manually “gives the advantage of remaining true to the analysis”

(p. 216). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), researchers are likely to benefit if they take their time and engage with or read interview transcripts. This helps to understand the interview style and to recap the social and emotional aspects of the interviews. The analysis started by investing much time and effort to read the transcripts multiple times. This process helped in becoming familiar with the data including gaining a greater impression of the data, ascertaining the limitations of the data, and determining the kind of analysis to undertake.

The data were coded or indexed in relation to the research questions using coloured pens to highlight the textual data for easy identification of each code. Codes that related to the same issue were highlighted in the same colour. For instance, an extract like, “I don’t want to lose my husband, so I don’t refuse him sex even if it is against my will” was coded as “fear of divorce.” The generated codes helped organize the data into categories and sub-categories using descriptive labels, which were synthesized into themes. These themes were refined, and themes that contributed meaningfully to answering the research questions were used as final themes. The final themes were supported with statements and quotes to present the final report on married women’s experiences and perspectives of sexual violence in the LMKD. Some of the reasons that made it possible for married women to experience sexual violence include cultural beliefs about gender division of labour, poverty, traditional masculine norms, certain traditional marriage practices, substance use, childhood experience of violence and extramarital sexual affairs. The experiences of these women following sexual violence include physical violence, verbal violence, physical and mental health difficulties, sexual, reproductive health problems, suicidal ideation, and lost productivity and depleted incomes.

While quantitative research places emphasis on the validity and reliability of findings, qualitative researchers are also encouraged to be transparent and rigorous when analyzing and interpreting data to guarantee the credibility and trustworthiness of their research. For this reason, data from different sources with related information on sexual violence against women were triangulated for consistency in this study. The data coding was carefully monitored and interpreted for the sake of reliability. The study also included rich and verbatim description or quotes of participants' responses to back the findings.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations outline what is acceptable and unacceptable in conducting research. This is mainly to ensure that the rights of human subjects are not violated and to minimize risks in the conducting of research and includes but is not limited to social, psychological, and economic risks (WHO, 2001). As stated earlier, this study is part of a larger project that was approved by Ethics Committees at Memorial University (i.e. the Inter-Disciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research) and the University of Ghana (i.e. University of Ghana Ethics Committee for Humanities). After receiving approval, and in the field of data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants who participated in the study in written and oral form. Prior to an interview, a female research assistant read an informed consent sheet outlining the purpose of the study to the participant, whose consent to freely participate in the study was sought before involving them in the study. For instance, an interviewer asked a participant, "*Please, am I permitted to talk to you*"? In turn, the participant would answer, "*Yes, you have my permission.*" Participants were made to understand that they were free to ask any questions regarding the study and their participation in the study before, during, or after the research.

In the case of a language, all the female research assistants were fluent in English and the local dialects (i.e. Twi and Krobo) of the study area, which enabled them to explain the purpose of the study and seek consent from any participants, including those who did not understand English. Participants were also informed about the right to withdraw from the study anytime without impending consequences. Research assistants sought approval from all participants before using tape-recorders. Participants were assured that their human rights, dignity, and identity would be protected. Thus, the principles of the safety of information and the protection of the identity of participants were rigorously adhered to in the data collection and transcription. For instance, all the interview transcripts and other data were alphanumerically coded when the scripts were being analyzed for the current study.

Participants were also allowed to choose their own place and time for the interviews so that no third party would know they had participated in the study. While direct quotes were used to support this thesis, pseudonyms are used in place of the real names of participants to preserve anonymity of participants throughout the research. Due to the sensitivity of sexual violence, particularly involving women, female research assistants were trained to interview participants to minimize risks and ensure the voluntary narration of sexual violence experiences. Standby counselling services were available to help stabilize victims of violence who were distressed by recounting their experiences of violence.

Research assistants were provided with logistics such as mobile phones to prevent or minimize insecurity, especially during distress or emergency situations. Research assistants were also put in groups in order to reduce risks. In short, the research team worked in accordance with

the World Health Organization's (2001) ethical and safety recommendations on intimate partner violence. All secondary sources including works cited were duly acknowledged in the write-up.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The study area and the methodological approach used for the study have been presented in this chapter. The choice of research design, sampling scheme, sampling size, sample population, data collection method, and the instrument for the study were discussed. The data analysis used and ethical considerations in the research were also described.

Chapter Four: Results

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of male-partner sexual violence among married women in Ghana. The main research questions were: what are the reasons for married women's experience of sexual violence? And how does sexual violence affect married women? Data were collected through semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews purposively held with 15 women survivors of sexual violence. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis, the results of which are presented in this chapter. The chapter is divided into two major sections: (a) some of the reasons for male-partner sexual violence against women, and (b) the effects of sexual violence against married women. In each section, participants' responses are used to support the findings. For anonymity reasons, in each quotation, the respondent is identified by a pseudonym rather than their real name. Also, the quotes are not mutually exclusive and have been italicized to facilitate the reading and understanding of the arguments.

4.1 Background Information of Participants

This qualitative study was part of a bigger research project that recruited a sample of fifteen women in the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality who experienced domestic and sexual violence in their marriages. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are displayed in *Table 1*. The background information of the sample revealed that almost all the women were Krobos, except one who identified as Ewe. The age of the sampled women ranged between 25 and 65 years. All women were Christians, probably because Christianity is the dominant religion in the Eastern Region and Ghana in general. While some women married early, others married late and the number of biological children born to each woman at the time of data collection ranged from one to ten. The educational completion of women varied significantly. Whereas some women achieved some level of education, others were uneducated. Only one woman had tertiary education; two attained primary education, four left schools after the form-four level (secondary education) and the rest were uneducated. This educational variation may be associated with the acute socio-economic conditions of the municipality, making higher education unattainable for some women. Women were engaged in several economic activities including small-scale petty trading and agriculture, predominantly farming. Except for one woman who was a teacher by profession, the majority of women were petty traders while a few of them were into subsistence farming.

4.2 Some of the Reasons for Male Sexual Violence against Married Women

The reasons and motivations participants identified for married women's experiences of sexual violence can be classified as macro-level and exosystem factors and ontogenic or microsystem elements based on the conceptual framework for this study.

4.2.0 Macro-level and Exosystem Factors

Some of the macro-level and exosystem factors participants identified for sexual violence against married women include cultural beliefs about traditional gender roles, some traditional marriage practices, traditional masculine norms and poverty within families. Although separated in the social-ecological, for this thesis, these factors are grouped together because they operate at a broader or structural level.

4.2.01 Cultural Beliefs about Traditional Gender Roles

Participants identified cultural beliefs about rigid traditional gender roles as part of the reasons for sexual violence against married women. They indicated that males and females strongly believed in the sexual division of labour. To make women conform to their perceived responsibilities in the family, men often used physical force and aggression. The cultural emphasis on male sexual entitlement allowed husbands to control women's sexual behaviours and sexuality. Thus, women's experience of sexual violence was connected to the widespread belief that husbands are entitled to demand sex from their wives anytime without resistance. This impression was reflected in the following comments:

Some women must listen to their husbands when they tell them to do something. Some women disrespect their husbands, and this sometimes makes the men abuse them. When she reports to the elders, they will say she was wrong, and that called for the beating. I am not trying to say that wife abuse is justified, but the women must learn to perform their responsibilities to avoid some of these things. (Yaa, 60-years old, farmer, uneducated, nine children, Krobo)

Our Ghanaian culture accepts this because in Ghana, when a man cheats on his wife, it is normal, but when the women do the same, it is an abomination. I think the men in Ghana have been given authority over the women, so some of the men take advantage of this culture and maltreat their wives. (Araaba, 48-years old, petty trader, form-four school leaver, five children, Krobo)

4.2.02 Some Traditional Marriage Practices

The study found that the performance of some traditional marriage rites made it possible for women to experience sexual violence. This is because women were advised and cautioned during such ceremonies that under no circumstances should they refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands. As a result, husbands who strongly believed that women had no right to refuse sex after marriage sexually abused their wives when there were disagreements over sexual relations. These ideas are exemplified in the following quotes:

During marriage ceremonies, relatives and parents advise that as the woman prepares to enter marriage, she should be prepared to give her husband sex whenever he demands it. They say he is the head of family, and therefore, he must be treated as such. (Ohemaa, 55-years old, petty trader, form 4-school leaver, Krobo)

In the Krobo culture, a woman is advised to satisfy her husband sexually anytime. Therefore, the men take advantage of this and force the women to have sex with them. (Abena, 25-years old, primary education, three children, Ewe)

These quotations show that married women must always be ready to fulfil their husbands' sexual needs. In addition, husbands can have forced sex with their wives, as they consider it their right. Participants identified the payment of bride price during marriages as an intrinsic reason that motivated sexual violence against married women. More than ten participants explained that men who pay bride price to their wives' families often felt entitled.

Akua described a typical example:

In the Krobo culture, when they are performing marriage rites, there is money (called "sefiam") the man pays, which gives him the right to have sex with you and to have children with you. So, when he pays that money, he has the right to demand sex anytime, and if you deny him, he can force you. (38-years old, petty trader, four children, Krobo)

Most participants, therefore, concluded that husbands became aggressive and behaved violently towards their wives after completing the final marriage rites, as reflected in the following examples:

Before marriage, these men behave like angels and will go to any extent to make you [women] happy. But after he marries you, he thinks and behaves violently, because he thinks he owns you and is at liberty to do whatsoever with you, even if it means beating you. (Kukua, 56-years old, petty trader, form 4-school leaver, two children, Krobo)

What I know is when they [husbands] complete the marriage rite, they get the power to do anything to you. (Ohemaa, 55-years old, petty trader, form 4-school leaver, Krobo)

What I know is they boast of the fact that they are legally married to you. So, the woman has no say when it comes to sex (Maafia, 28-years old, storekeeper, tertiary education, one child, Krobo)

From the preceding narratives, a common perception among some women concerning marriage ceremonies including the payment of bride price was that it gave husbands the right to have sexual intercourse with their wives without consent. In cases involving sexual denial, force and violence were more likely to be deployed by husbands as a tactic to satisfy their sexual demands and to discipline the wife.

4.2.03 Traditional Masculine Norms

Another central driving force and motivation behind husbands abusing their wives was their desire to dominate domestic interactions including sexual matters. Husbands who believed and adhered to traditional notions of masculinity perceived women as passive and sexually abused their female-partners. Ten of the fifteen interviewed women indicated that their husbands believed that they should always be in charge and control of domestic affairs. As such, wives suspected that they were battered and forced to have sexual intercourse in response to challenging and questioning their husbands' authority:

He will tell you he is the head of the family, he was the one who married you, and not the other way; therefore, you have no right to tell him you are not ready to have sex with him, and he is the one who takes care of you. The days I am not in the mood for sex, he forces me and tells me that do I think he is small boy to choose when to have or not to have sex. (Maafia, 28-years old, storekeeper, tertiary education, 1 child, Krobo)

4.2.04 Poverty within Families

In addition to the aforementioned socio-cultural factors, participants attributed women's experiences of sexual violence to acute economic conditions. They described how the lack of income and resources made married women vulnerable to abuse. Participants expressed concerns that poverty makes women vulnerable to all kinds of threats including sexual abuse. They reported that a lack of financial autonomy made women economically dependent on their husbands. Such dependence often left women unable to make independent decisions in domestic relations, thereby increasing their vulnerability to sexual violence. Many of the women interviewed recounted that there were occasions where they were not in the mood for sex yet did not refuse their husbands. Other women narrated that they were physically forced to have sex if they resisted sexual contacts from their husbands. The following quotations clarify how poverty made it possible for women to experience sexual violence:

During marriage ceremonies, the woman's family makes it clear that when their daughter misbehaves, the man should report her, and if he thinks he does not want the woman anymore, he should bring her to them rather than beat her up. When the woman's family is rich, the man is afraid of maltreating her. But when the woman's family is poor, the men take advantage of that and treat the woman anyway they like. (Maafia, 28-years old, one child, tertiary education, storekeeper, Krobo)

He [husband] can refuse to give me housekeeping money for days just because I denied him sex. Alternatively, he starts to maltreat me in a way like shouting at me or insulting me publicly, disgracing me, and every little thing I do he gets irritated. So sometimes, when you think of all these consequences, you just allow him when he wants to have sex with you. (Adjoa, 50-years old, four children, form 4-school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

While these narratives show that poverty made some women vulnerable to sexual violence, participants reported that men's poor economic status also contributed to violence against women. This situation ensued because husbands who were unable to provide for their families as expected used violence to express negative emotions and to maintain power and control in the household. Some participants reported that the joblessness and the accompanying lack of income of their husbands generated conflicts and subsequently led to physical and sexual abuse. Explaining this situation, Ohemaa stated:

He [husband] forces me sometimes to have sex with him when he has no money and all his numerous girlfriends have abandoned him. When my husband has money, you hardly see him at home. He is always with another woman. (55-years old, three children, form 4-school leaver and petty trader)

In the following narrative, Araaba a 48-year-old woman with five children, left school after form four and a petty trader also shared her perception that:

When a woman is providing for the family, some husbands become very jealous and start to maltreat the woman. But it is not good for a man to abuse his wife just because she is helping to take care of the family.

In all, women's narratives showed that the role of poverty in women's experiences of sexual violence could be bidirectional: first, poverty among women can make them directly vulnerable to sexual abuse, as they must depend on their husbands for financial support. Second, husbands' low-income status could indirectly trigger violence against their wives, as a tactic to command respect and maintain power and control in the family.

4.2.1 Ontogenic and Microsystem Factors

Ontogenic and microsystem factors identified by married women for their experiences of sexual violence include substance use, extramarital sexual affairs and childhood experience of

violence on the part of husbands. While the social-ecological framework separates these factors, this thesis combines them as they focus on micro-level interactions.

4.2.1.1 Substance Use

From participants' narratives, it became clear that sometimes their husbands sexually abused them after they have taken in alcohol or used some drugs. A young female who was in her late 20s recounted such experience in the following extract:

When he is drunk, the urge to have sex increases, but his mouth smells so much, making it difficult to have sex with him. Sometimes, I get angry because I have advised him on several occasions to stop drinking, but he would not stop, so I just do not feel like having sex with him. I thought doing that could make him stop drinking. He slapped me, pushed me, and I pushed back. He got angry and started beating me. I managed to run from the room because there was no one around. I slept outside for the rest of the night because he had locked the door. I knocked on the door several times, but he never minded me. Sometimes too he will hit me with anything around him. He forces me to sleep with him when he is drunk, even when am not willing to have sex with him (Maafia)

A 55-year-old woman with three children also shared her experience and perception:

Drinking and smoking are the causes of violence; they make people do things they are not supposed to do. I have so many female friends who complain every day about their husbands' alcohol use. Most of them are often abused when their husband come home drunk. I am also a victim of such circumstance. My husband started to abuse me when he began to drink (Ohemaa)

4.2.1.2 Extramarital Sexual Affairs

Participants described husbands' extramarital sexual affairs as another salient reason for women's experiences of sexual violence. This was because wives suspecting or knowing that husbands had girlfriends or were involved in sexual relations outside the relationship tried refusing sex with their partners due to jealousy, frustration and anger. However, women's attempts to resist sexual advances from their husbands only contributed to forced sex and battery.

The following quotations depict the personal stories of interviewed women who tried refusing sex because of their husbands' extramarital sexual activities:

He forces me to sleep with me sometimes because I refuse to have sex with him, especially when he goes to town and his girlfriend ignores him. He only forces me to have vaginal sex with him. (Maafia-, 28 years, 1 child, tertiary education, storekeeper, Krobo)

I did not want to have sex with him because I was angry that he left me at home and went to chase other women, but because he did not meet them, he has now come to have sex with me. I wanted to punish him by preventing him from having sex with me, but he forced me to have sex with him (Kukua- 56 years, 2 children, form 4-school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

4.2.1.3 Past Experiences of Violence

Participants were of the view that their husbands were sexually violent because perhaps these men themselves experienced or witnessed violence during childhood. Some participants associated husbands' sexually aggressive behavior to witnessing family violence and having emotionally detached and uncaring fathers. Other participants mentioned that husbands raised in families with strong patriarchal ideologies had higher chances of behaving violently and using sexual coercion against women compared to men who grew up in homes that are less patriarchal. Boys who grow up and learn that violence is appropriate for resolving conflict in the domestic space are more likely to engage in similar behaviour to address family feuds in adult family life. In the following narrative, Oforiwaa, a married woman with three children shared her opinion about the relationship between child abuse and husbands' perpetration of violence:

Some men in certain families are noted for beating and abusing their wives when they marry them. This is because some boys grow up and see their fathers threatening and molesting their mothers, and they think it is a good thing. Therefore, they grow to become violent later in life.

Some participants believed young women and girls who grew up witnessing their fathers abusing their mothers were more likely to think that the use of violence and threats were normal in intimate partner relationships:

What I think is that some girls grow up to see to their fathers using violence against their mothers when there are misunderstandings. Some mothers in turn, do nothing when they are beaten or molested by their husbands. The girl child will see this as normal, and when she grows to experience the same thing in her relationship, she will accept it and do nothing about it. I can tell you that many women in this community are abused by their husbands, but they accept it in good faith. (Araaba- 48 years, form 4-school leaver, 5 children, petty trader, Krobo)

4.3 Effects of Male-Partner Sexual Violence in Marriages

The first section of this chapter presented the reasons underlying the sexual violence experiences of Ghanaian married women living in the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality of the Eastern Region. The current section will explain how sexual violence affected these women. The findings will be presented under two major sub-sections: (i) other forms of domestic abuse experienced by married women and (ii) the health-related impacts and economic cost of sexual violence against married women.

4.3.0 Other Forms of Domestic Abuse Experienced by Married Women

Participants' accounts indicated that married women did not experience only sexual violence but also physical violence and verbal violence.

4.3.01 Physical Violence

Participants narrated how they often experienced physical violence in addition to sexual abuse. About ten participants indicated that they were often beaten if they refused or resisted their husbands' sexual advances. Husbands used physical assault to coerce their wives into

having sexual intercourse. The most common physical attacks were slaps, kicks and pushing. Not only did husbands use their hands to beat their wives, but also threw metal objects at them if they attempted to flee. Nyamekye, a 37-year-old married woman with three children and a teacher by profession recounted her experience in the following excerpt:

Most of the time, he forces me to sleep with him. He even beats me sometimes when I try to deny him sex. He beat me until I was weak, and he had sex with me. Sometimes he hits me, and at other times, he says if I deny him sex, then I should not sleep in the same bed with him but should go and sleep on the floor.

Similarly, other women explained their experiences in the following quotes:

He [husband] shared the days amongst us [wives], where he sleeps at my place three times in a week and sleeps at the other woman's place three days in a week and will go out on the one-day left. One evening, he came back from work late, got dressed, and went out. Even though it was one of my days, I did not say a word. I locked the door and went to bed. Later in the night, he came knocking at the door, so I opened it for him, and we slept. When we were sleeping, he started touching me. He wanted to have sex with me, but I told him I was not going to allow him. He started forcing me out of anger, so I opened the door and went out of the room. Some few minutes later, it started raining, so I came back to the room and sat on the chair. He slapped me, beat me mercilessly, and had sex with me. The slap left a bloodstain on my eye. (Teckyiwaah, 28-years old, three children, secondary education, petty trader, Krobo)

On market days, after trading activities, I become very tired so when he starts touching me, I tell him I am tired, but he forces me most of the time to have sex with him. He sometimes beats me until I am weak before he will have sex with me. (Maafia, 28-years old, one child, tertiary education, storekeeper, Krobo)

4.3.02 Verbal Violence

Participants described how they experienced verbal violence in addition to the sexual violence. Many participants mentioned that their husbands insulted them if they refused to have sex. The following extract denotes the verbal abuse experienced by one participant:

My husband always insults me. One insult he used that really disturbed me I remember is that the kind of person he is and how my friends see him, when they came to see that I am the one he married, they will laugh at him. Also, I remember I told him I wanted to learn a trade. So, when the children were a little grown, I told him I now want to learn the trade. He said he could not put a woman into a trade, as she will use her profit for taking care of other men. When I think of it, I do not understand. What I got from it was that he has not accepted that he is married to me. (Akua, 38-years old, four children, petty trader, Krobo)

Additional verbal misconduct perpetrated by husbands toward women included yelling and name-calling in the presence of family members and neighbours, which consequently made victims feel embarrassed and worried. This experience was vividly captured in the following excerpts:

He shouts at me and disgraces me all the time, even in the presence of the children, and he calls me a prostitute. I feel I am a baby for him to be treating me that way. Sometimes, I cannot really understand his behaviour. I cry most of the time to calm myself down. (Oforiwaa, 26-years old, three children, primary education, petty trader, Krobo)

I feel embarrassed for the kind of insults my husband inflicts on me in the presence of our children and other family members. We live in a compound house, which is very embarrassing. Everyone gets to hear what is happening between you and your husband. (Maame, 43-years old, three children, form 4 school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

In addition, victims' relatives were verbally abused by husbands, accusing them of some altercations that occurred in their marriages. Many of the interviewed women mentioned that their husbands were unhappy when they involved family members in domestic affairs. A victim of such circumstances recounted her experience thus:

He insults not only me but also sometimes my family, especially my parents, thinking that they support me when there are problems. (Serwaa, 37- years old, three children, uneducated, petty trader, Krobo)

Survivors of sexual violence reported that verbal abuse seriously undermined their social relations with relatives, peers and community members. In most cases, women were made to feel

embarrassed by the violence, as if they were the cause of the family feuds all the time. The insults and name-calling created difficulties among peers and affected the quality of friendships. These constrained women's involvement in social activities and exposed them to emotional trauma that ultimately affected their social well-being:

I am a very shy person and do not have friends, but some members of my family do not respect me anymore because of my husband's attitude. People in the area do not also respect me because he insults me in public and calls me names like prostitute, witch, and many others, and this worries me very much. (Abena, 25-years old, three children, primary education petty trader, Krobo)

The disgrace I experience is very painful, and overcoming it is not easy. I wake up every morning to see the same people who have witnessed my husband insulting me. Sometimes, I wish I could beat my husband, but I am not strong. I often visit my mother to be able to recover from this bad attitude of my husband. (Ama, 47-years old, eight children, uneducated, farmer, Krobo)

These narratives suggest that sexual violence against married women does not exist in isolation but is often accompanied by severe physical and verbal abuse and other forms of unfair treatment. A critical look at women's experiences showed that sexual intimate partner violence was thought to occur much more frequently and with severe implications.

4.3.1 Health-Related Impacts and Economic Cost of Male-Partner Sexual Violence

Participants explained that married women experienced health and economic difficulties after suffering sexual violence and other dimensions of violence. These include: (a) physical injuries, (b) mental/psychological consequences, (c) sexual, reproductive health problems, (d) suicidal ideation, and (e) lost productivity and depleted incomes.

4.3.1.01 Physical Injuries

Participants described some injuries and pains they sustained when their husbands forced them to have sex. Some of these included body aches, headaches, heartaches and lower-abdominal pains.

It affected me because sometimes I am unable to run away, and he sleeps with me in a forceful way. This causes severe pain in my abdomen and around my vagina. Sometimes, I am unable to walk well due to the pain. (Akua, 38-years old, four children, petty trader, Krobo)

Some participants adopted personal strategies to treat their physical injuries. Oforiwaa provided an example of this:

Sometimes he forces me to sleep with him. I feel pain around my abdomen the next morning. The pain is always severe that I must sit on hot water before I get better a little. (26-years old, three children, primary education, petty trader, Krobo)

Due to the physical injuries, some participants developed intense fear and mistrust towards their husbands. The following is an example:

I sometimes get abdominal pain for days and severe pain around my vagina. I become afraid of my husband so much sometimes; therefore, I am unhappy when he comes home after work. I sometimes have difficulty hearing because the slap affected my ear. There was a bloodstain on my eyes for days; I had to go to the hospital to be treated. This prevents me from getting close to my husband. (Abena, 25-years old, three children, primary education, petty trader, Krobo)

The abusive behaviour of husbands made women express feelings or thoughts of leaving or divorcing their partners. One participant who was severely injured said:

After my husband and I struggle over sex, it makes me sick. Sometimes my head aches, and at other times, my heart hurts a lot. When he forces me and have sex with me, I feel pain in my lower abdomen. At times, I feel like leaving the marriage. (Serwaa, 37-years old, three children, uneducated, petty trader, Krobo)

4.3.1.02 Mental/Psychological Consequences

Participants also suffered psychological problems after having forced sex. Some of them expressed feelings of shock, confusion, depression, distress, and nervousness. Some women described how they could not sleep and had eating problems because of the shock and fear they experienced after a forced sexual experience with their husbands. Others mentioned that the mere thought of the sexual abuse brought back terrifying memories that were very painful. They never expected to be maltreated by their husbands.

It worried me very much because when I thought of those days, I had no plans of marrying him, and he convinced me to marry him at a very tender age. After many promises, he disappointed me throughout the marriage. He travelled for three years but because of the love and trust I had for him, I waited patiently for him. Prominent men came to ask for my hand in marriage, but I ignored them and waited until he came back, and when he came, his attitude changed towards me. He treats me like a slave that is of no use. I was disappointed and heartbroken. I almost died. I felt seriously ill and was admitted for two weeks at the Atua³ government hospital (Teckyiwaah, 28-years old, three children, secondary education, petty trader, Krobo)

Other participants shared their opinions about the psychological consequences of sexual abuse in the following:

Sometimes the man does not beat the wife, but he treats her badly. This worries the woman psychologically. The woman's mind becomes unstable. That is, she begins to think, and this has several effects on the health of the woman. This has caused most women to die before their time. (Yaa, 60-years old, nine children, uneducated, farmer, Krobo)

I know violence disturbs the woman because it could be just a small issue that generates the quarrel, and the husband will beat her. But it could be the man is drunk before beating you, so when the woman thinks of it, and it disturbs her psychologically, and she weeps within. (Maafia, 28-years old, one child, tertiary education, storekeeper, Krobo)

³ Atua Hospital is a government health facility in the Eastern Region of Ghana, which works in collaboration with all stakeholders to provide services and improve the health status of the people living in the catchment areas including the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality.

Some married women adopted personal coping methods that enabled them to recover from their mental stress.

In my own case, I could think of my husband's behaviour to the extent that I was not able to sleep. So, I normally leave to go to where my late husband and I were staying to calm down a little before coming back. Because I realized I was thinking too much, and it could be a problem for me, I had to leave so I could calm down, since I am the only one left for my children, and he is the only one his children have. I should not also die, as my children will be left alone, so that is why I left for some time. It can even lead to death. (Ama- 47 years, 8 children, uneducated, farmer, Krobo)

4.3.1.03 Sexual and Reproductive Health Problems

Many participants expressed the fear that they could be infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. These concerns were more pronounced among women whose husbands had multiple sexual partners. They complained about the inability to negotiate safer-sexual practices, such as using condoms. Even if they wanted to refuse sex to their husbands, they were afraid of physical attacks or verbal abuse:

These days, there are many diseases and some husbands have multiple sex partners, which I am afraid. I have sleepless nights often because that was the time HIV/AIDS had come. I was scared my husband would be infected, and that he would infect me. I was scared we would both die and leave our children to suffer. He took me for granted, and he did what he liked all the time. (Akua, 38- years old, four children, petty trader, Krobo)

One problem with him that I have seen is that he drinks and likes women (having sex), and I am not like that. The problem with him is that he likes women, drinks and likes going out with friends. I tell him that now there is HIV; otherwise, I do not care about him having sex with other women. But if he will be having sex with women and will infect me with HIV, I will be worried. Even if you try to deny him sex, the insults I will receive, I wish I had not attempted it. Thank God, I was negative after the HIV test (when I was pregnant), and the doctors advised my husband to also come for the test so that we know our status. But he did not agree, and even when I gave birth, I saw him having sex with another lady who he had been dating long ago and stopped when he got to know I was pregnant. Now that I have given birth, he went back sleeping with that woman. So, if the

girl has any disease, he can pass it onto me. (Maafia, 28-years old, one child, tertiary education, storekeeper, Krobo)

In addition, experiencing sexual violence resulted in miscarriages. A 25-year-old married woman, Abena, a primary school leaver and petty trader, described what happened to her:

The other time he beat me, and I lost my 7-month pregnancy. I really wanted to have this baby. All the time, I blame him for killing my baby.

4.3.1.04 Suicidal Ideations

Participants described how they have had negative thoughts such as committing suicide because of their sexual violence experiences. This suicidal ideation among women arose from a sense of powerless and lack of control over their lives, which affected their well-being and quality of life. They were worried about the coercive and manipulative behaviour of their husbands, making them suffer from depression, alienation and hopelessness. Such precarious conditions increased women's vulnerability to suicidal thoughts, as they believed death was the only solution to escaping the horrors of violence. One of the participants complained bitterly:

I tried to forget most of the things he did to me, but in an attempt to forget such things, I realized I began to forget very important issues. Forgetfulness has become a part of me. It got to a point where my concentration at work was very bad. I cried all the time and even felt death would have been a better option for me, but I thank God that I am still alive. I was trying to work more so that I do not keep remembering what my husband did to me. My finances went very bad because I had borrowed some money from the bank ... the thought that I did not benefit from the loan I collected worries me so much. (Ohemaa, 55-years old, three children, form 4-school leaver, petty trader).

Coupled with suicidal thoughts and other devastating health difficulties, some survivors expressed regrets about ever getting married. Such a concern is portrayed in the following extract:

As for me, I made a big mistake by entering this difficult marriage. Sometimes, I feel like poisoning myself so I can die, if not for my children. I think of these things a lot, but I have resolved not to leave the marriage again. (Maame, 43-years old, three children, form 4-school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

While a shared perception within the Krobo tribe is that men are entitled to sex in marriages, Kukua believed that there should always be an agreement and understanding between spouses to enable them enjoy sex, as forced sex can potentially have deleterious consequences:

Sex is supposed to be enjoyed when both parties are happy but forcing one party can even lead to death or sickness. (56-years old, two children, form 4-school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

4.3.1.05 Economic Cost of Male-Partner Sexual Violence

From participants' accounts, it became clear that women experienced economic difficulties in the atmosphere of sexual violence. Many of the participants described how sexual violence made it difficult for them to carry out their daily activities, including delays getting to work or inhibiting them from working. For instance, survivors who were involved in small and large-scale trading activities as their main source of livelihood seldom opened their shops following sexual abuse for a period of time in order to recover from the trauma. Other survivors, who engaged in agricultural activities, predominantly farming, rarely visited their farms after suffering sexual assaults and other forms of domestic abuse. These circumstances destabilized and hampered their livelihood activities and income levels:

The beatings were very severe. There were marks all over my body. I could not go to work for about two weeks because of the marks on my face and I also did not want people to know so I hid in my room to prevent people from asking questions. I lost a lot of money and some of my customers because of how my husband has been beating me (Adjoa, 50-years old, four children, former 4-school leaver, petty trader, Krobo)

My face was swollen for days. I could not go out for days people were asking me what had happened to me, but I was shy to tell them my husband was responsible, so I decided not to even go out to prevent people from asking me questions. Due to the pain, I could not go to work for two weeks my husband realized it was serious, so he gave me money to go to the hospital, but I did not go. I went to buy drugs from the pharmacy, and I became better so the money I could have made within these two weeks I lost it. (Oforiwaa-26-years old, three children, primary education, petty trader, Krobo)

In some cases, many survivors spent their earnings and profits on medical expenses and transportation to health centers to seek medical attention. According to some participants, visiting hospitals and clinics and purchasing antibiotics were rampant in their lives, as forced sex and other forms of violence were recurrent:

It made me to think very much, I was very troubled, and nothing seem to go on well. My blood pressure was terribly high. I had to visit the hospital once every week to seek medical attention. This has helped me very much without it I would have been dead. It got to a point where I could not hear when someone is talking to me because I had many things on my mind. I could not work as I used to and the few days, I work the little money I get is used to buy drugs. People also abandoned me because they thought I was a witch and some stopped buying things from me it affected my business is very much. Every aspect of my life was affected badly (Teekyiwaah, 28-years old, three children, secondary education, petty trader, Krobo)

My eyes were swollen for days and I had severe pains around my neck and had to go to the hospital. I had to do that with my own money since my husband totally avoided me. I was not able to go to the market for days so I lost so much money. The few days I went, the little profit I made was used in buying drugs. Some believed what my husband was saying therefore they shun me and some of my friends avoided me completely. It got to point I became lonely and felt deserted since most of friends avoided me and my husband was living with another woman. Suddenly, I became very reserved even though I was not that kind of person (Nyamekye, a 37-year-old married woman with three children and a teacher by profession)

Borrowing money and items from friends or relatives for daily survival was common among women, as physical injuries and emotional and psychological burden of sexual violence disrupted their income-generating activities and depleted incomes. The following narrative clearly showed the pattern of borrowing among some survivors of sexual abuse.

It affected me very much in all aspects of my life. I became a quiet person suddenly meanwhile I was not that kind of person because I was thinking very much. My little business suffered so much because I was spending more than I was earning. The things I was selling got finished and I had no money to buy them. All my customers stopped buying from me because when they come, they do not get what they want to buy. I borrowed money from most friends and family members and I could not pay some of them. So they came to the house and embarrassed me. I could not relate to them as I used to because they no longer had any respect for me (Serwaa- 37 years, 3 children, uneducated, petty trader, Krobo)

4.4 Conclusion

Using qualitative in-depth interviews, this chapter presented results in relation to the sexual violence experiences of married women in Ghana. The first section outlined reasons for sexual violence against married women, while the second section presented the consequences of sexual violence against these women. The study found that sexual violence is commonplace in the lives of married women, with harmful effects for their health and well-being. The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature on male-partner sexual violence toward women.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings

5.0 Introduction

Previous studies suggested that married women, globally, are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to single women. Yet scholarship on this important topic remains limited, especially in the Ghanaian and sub-Saharan Africa context, where sexual abuse is pervasive. Applying Heise's social-ecological framework to document the life experiences and perspectives of sexual violence among 15 Ghanaian married women, this study fills a significant research gap in the intimate partner violence literature. The study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) what are the reasons for married women's experience of sexual violence? (2) how does sexual violence affect married women? Findings from the thematic analysis showed that sexual abuse was a significant concern among these women, which affected their quality of life.

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings. The discussion follows the order of the research questions as shown above.

5.1 What are some of the reasons for married women's experience of sexual violence?

This study found that several driving forces and motivations triggered sexual violence against married women. As indicated by Heise's framework, the reasons for sexual violence as identified by participants could be categorized as macro-level or exosystem factors such as poverty and adherence to traditional masculine norms, while other explanations constituted micro-level or ontogenic factors including substance use, past experiences of violence and extramarital sexual affairs on the part of husbands. The results obtained corroborated the core idea of Heise's (1998) social-ecological framework that women's experience of violence is driven by several reasons at different levels of the social environment.

5.1.1 Macro-Level or Exosystem Reasons for Male-Partner Sexual Violence

Consistent with previous research (Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes & Morrell., 2012; Sedziafa et al., 2018; WHO, 2013), this study found that cultural beliefs about gender division of labour exposed married women to sexual violence in the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality. As explained by the social-ecological framework, strict adherence to social and cultural norms within a community and the broader society is likely to influence the acceptance or perpetration of violence against women (Heise, 1998). Throughout Ghanaian society, deep-seated religious and cultural norms have nurtured a perception that a woman must be sexually available to her husband without restraint, though sex may sometimes be proscribed, especially during the post-partum period or menstruation (Adinkrah, 2011; Ampofo, 2001; Stafford, 2008). Women are socialized from childhood to be submissive and subservient to men (Ampofo, 2001; Archampong & Baidoo, 2011). The socialization of women as subservient to men places them in a subordinate position of being unable to make independent intra-family decisions and bargain in their marriages. Majority of the participants explained that they were forced sometimes to satisfy

their husbands' sexual demands when not interested in having sex. Higher rates of male-partner violence are expected in cultures and societies that promote and reinforce gender role divide and support men and their roles in the family (Daley & Noland, 2001). Under the pretext of cultural norms and traditions, some men are more likely to commit violence against their wives, when they attempt to resist sexual contacts. Thus, these findings highlight how some core elements of Ghanaian culture help perpetuate and reinforce violence against women.

Like previous research (Chireshe, 2015; Ellison et al., 2007), the current study reported that among the Krobo people, the payment of bride price was a driving force behind married women's experience of sexual violence and other forms of domestic abuse. This finding is not surprising as there is a common belief among this ethnic group that the moment a woman is married, she automatically consents to sex with her husband. This perception is partially driven by customary Ghanaian marriages, where a man pays a bride price to the woman's family. Some men consider this payment as a contract that gives husbands ownership of the woman as if she were a "property bought and paid for" (Archampong & Baidoo, 2011). Some scholars have argued that the payment of bride price during marriage ceremonies is taken to symbolize loss of rights by the woman's family and the transfer of rights to the husband (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2015; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). This cultural norm empowers men to believe they can have unlimited sexual contact with their wives, while disempowering women from taking part in these sexual decision-making processes (Chireshe, 2015). As revealed in this study, many participants described the ongoing bride price custom as a significant reason underlying sexual violence in marriages. Although a central feature of many marriages in Africa, the payment of bride price is often perceived to give husbands authority over wives leading to sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

In line with past research (Edström, Das, & Dolan, 2014; Freedman & Jacobson, 2012; Mann & Takyi, 2009), adherence to traditional masculine norms was identified as a central reason for sexual violence among married women in this study. The social-ecological framework theorized adherence to traditional masculine norms as crucial to intimate partner violence. This situation is especially true in the Ghanaian and sub-Saharan African context. For instance, in Ghana, a man is expected to maintain power and be in control of his family (Ampofo, 2001). The husband is recognized as the head of the family and an authority figure in the household. Many women also accept husbands' superiority largely because of the patriarchal culture in which they have been socialized. Adhering to and strengthening male supremacy exposes women to all kinds of risks, including violence. In the view of Langhinrichsen-Rohling, McCullars, and Misra (2012), the most frequent motivation for men's use of violence is to control their partners. As a result, some husbands may use violence as a tactic to satisfy their sexual demands. Violence emanates from a man's need to enforce power and to prove he is in control of his relationship (Jewkes & Morrell., 2012; WHO, 2013). Most of the married women in this study were sexually abused by their husbands because of their strong desire for power and to maintain control in domestic interactions. "He will tell me he is the head of the family and was the one who married me and not the other way; therefore, I have no right to tell him I am not ready to have sex, and he is the one who takes care of me. The days I am not in the mood for sex, he forces me and tells me that I cannot choose when to have or not to have sex". These statements underscore how masculinity is highly associated with power, dominance, control and domestic violence.

In agreement with previous studies (Amoakohene, 2004; Haj-Yahia, 2000; Hindin & Adair, 2002; Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2005), this study found that lack of income and resources made married women vulnerable to sexual abuse. Access to and control of economic resources is

relevant to maintaining and enjoying stable relationships. However, the “lack of resources can lead to stress, frustration and conflict that can degenerate into violence between a husband and wife” (Dutton, 1988, and Gelles, 1974, quoted from Macmillan & Gartner, 1999, p.949). Lack of access to resources such as cash, credit and employment is a significant factor in the prevalence of male-partner violence. For instance, an unemployed woman is more likely to depend on her husband and may not be able to promote her interests in domestic interactions, which makes her vulnerable to violence including sexual abuse (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottmoeller, 2002; Jewkes, 2002). In the context of the Lower Manya Krobo municipality (study community), several socio-cultural and economic problems exist including limited employment opportunities, especially among women. Those who participate in the formal economy earn below the minimum wage, and the patrilineal system of inheritance deprives women owning landed properties. Such conditions increase financial pressures on women, making them financially dependent on their partners; this ultimately increases women’s risks of experiencing violence. Majority of the participants in this study reported that they were involved in petty trading and farming activities for survival, and that these could not empower them to be self-sufficient and independent to bargain in intra-household decisions. This account shows that some men often exploit the financial weakness of women to control their sexuality and sexual behaviours leading to sexual violence.

Previous studies have also reported that poverty among men can indirectly trigger marital violence and domestic abuse against women (Faramarzi et al., 2005; Fulu et al., 2013; Krug et al., 2002; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). It is important to note that the relationship between poverty and violence may be understood through the concept of masculinity. According to this explanation, economic hardships and the accompanying lack of income among husbands make it difficult for

them to live up to their culturally expected role as breadwinners. Such circumstances can produce extreme stress and feelings of inadequacy among husbands, with some likely to resort to alcohol use and other means possible to suppress such frustrations; this can consequently lead to conflict and violence against spouses. Some participants reported in this study that the lack of job opportunities and the associated poor financial status of their husbands promoted marital conflicts, which consequently made women vulnerable to sexual violence and other forms of domestic abuse. From this discussion, it is clear that the relationship between poverty and women's vulnerability to sexual violence is complex. Therefore, empowering both men and women economically could be instrumental to reducing marital violence and domestic abuse.

5.1.2 Ontogenic and Microsystem Reasons underlying Male-Partner Sexual Violence

Individual and relational characteristics played a role in husbands committing sexual violence against their spouses. For instance, alcohol use is a significant factor that contributes to male-partner violence including sexual abuse (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2013). The social-ecological framework posits that substance abuse including alcohol functions as a situational factor that increases an individual's chances of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of partner violence. This situation arises because alcohol use, for example, may undermine a husband's ability to control negative emotions. Excessive alcohol intake can result further in limiting understanding, sympathy and opportunity for resolution without violence. Moser and Winton (2002) reported that substance abuse, specifically, alcohol use creates conflicts and misunderstandings between intimate partners who may end up assaulting each other, with women as the most frequent victims of such incidents. According to some participants of this study, excessive alcohol intake was a way of life among some husbands and a major reason for sexual violence against married women. Previous researchers linked alcoholism with aggressive

behaviour and found that men were more likely to behave violently and abuse women, especially intimate partners when intoxicated (Arpapirom, 2000; Chirwa et al., 2018; Graham, Wilson & Taft, 2017; Hongthong, 2000; Jewkes, 2002; Sarakarn & Kammanat, 2009).

Beyond substance abuse, extramarital sexual affairs among husbands were part of the reasons for sexual violence against married women in this study. Women who firmly believe that their husbands keep multiple sexual partners may decline sex for fear of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, women may deliberately withhold sex to punish their husbands for indulging in extra-marital affairs. The withdrawal of this sexual privilege could leave husbands feeling threatened, becoming upset and retaliating violently. Many of the interviewed women narrated their stories that when they tried resisting sexual contacts due to husband's extra marital affairs, they were beaten and forced against their will to have sexual intercourse. This finding is in line with previous studies that examined the determinants of intimate partner violence (Fleming et al., 2015; Fulu et al., 2013; Jewkes et al., 2001; Koenig et al. 2003; Santana et al., 2006).

Finally, this study found that husbands were sexually violent towards their wives because they might have experienced violence during childhood. Having a childhood history of violence and witnessing of violence are likely to increase children's chances of experiencing or committing violence in adulthood (Hines & Saudino, 2002; Wareham et al., 2009). Domestic violence in the family domain is likely to be transmitted across generations (Pollak, 2004; Yount et al., 2014). It has been argued that individuals learn social behaviours by witnessing others (Bandura & Walters, 1977). The social-ecological framework supports this assertion arguing that children socialized in violent family settings are more likely to accept or perpetrate violence in

adult life (Heise, 1998). Children who witness one of their parents, especially the mother, subjected to domestic violence may believe that this behaviour is acceptable (Yuksel-Kaptanoglu et al., 2012). They may learn to use or accept violence as a means of resolving family conflicts and disagreements. A critical look at participants' narratives revealed that women's experiences of sexual violence were widespread due to husbands' experiences of violence during their childhood. Perpetrators might have once been beaten or might have witnessed their fathers molest their fathers when they were children. In other words, violent husbands were more likely to have witnessed or experienced violence when growing up compared to non-violent husbands. Other studies have found that a childhood history of abuse or trauma by men exposes women to male-partner violence including sexual abuse (Bobonis, Gonzalez-Brenes, & Castro, 2013; Clark, Silverman, Shahrouri, Everson-Rose, & Groce, 2010).

5.2 How does sexual violence affect married women?

The first section of this chapter discussed the reasons for sexual violence against married women. This section will examine how sexual violence affected these women in the Krobo community. Results based on thematic analysis revealed that married women did not experience only sexual violence but also physical violence and verbal violence. The results showed that the experiences of married women following sexual violence and other forms of abuse were physical injuries, psychological problems, sexual, reproductive health problems, and suicidal ideations. These negative health outcomes significantly undermined women's economic activities and depleted their income.

5.2.1 Other Forms of Domestic Abuse against Married Women

Previous studies (Carlson et al., 2003; Montero et al., 2013; WHO, 2012) bear credence to the present finding that sexual violence against married women did not occur independently but coexisted with other forms of interpersonal violence including physical and verbal abuse. In other words, married women who were sexually abused also suffered physical and verbal violence. Several reasons could have accounted for such aggressive and violent behaviours. For instance, men's belief in sexual entitlement in Ghanaian marriages could have influenced husbands to use verbal or physical assault to coerce women to satisfy their sexual demands. In a qualitative study in Ghana, Gadzekpo (1999) reported that there is a long-standing perception among men that women are owned and that such perceptions may be partially explained by the bride price tradition.

Many of the women participants in this study reported that their husbands believed that they had no right to refuse sex; wives thought that they were beaten or insulted to coerce them into having sexual intercourse. Given such experiences, sexual violence may have important gender-related consequences that are more devastating for survivors compared to the experience of physical or verbal abuse alone. As will be noted in the following section, the majority of the participants in this study associated sexual violence with serious consequences in the short and long terms.

5.2.2 Health-Related Impacts and Economic Cost of Male-Partner Sexual Violence

Consistent with previous studies (Johnson et al., 2007; Koenig et al., 2003; Puri, Tamang, & Shah, 2011; Sedziafa et al., 2018; Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2002), this study found that sexual violence against married women resulted in physical injuries. Some of the commonly

cited physical injuries included cuts, genital sores, headaches, and abdominal and vaginal pains. Supporting this finding, Johnson et al. (2007) reported that as many as 20% of IPV victims suffer “cuts, scratches or burns, and the remainder suffered fractures, broken bones, head injuries, genital injuries and internal injuries” (pp. 68–69). Meanwhile, physical injuries resulting from sexual violence such as cuts or vaginal itching may cause other diseases through infections. These injuries may be devastating and life threatening in both the short and long term. Although such complications can be cured medically, many survivors do not receive proper medical attention because of their non-help-seeking behaviours (e.g. Evans & Feder, 2016; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016).

The experience of sexual violence among women affects not only their physical health and well-being, but also their mental/psychological health (Issahaku, 2017; WHO, 2017). According to Kilpatrick and colleagues (2007), survivors of sexual violence experience mental health problems including depression, eating disorders, sleep disruptions, anxiety and suicide attempts. This study revealed that survivors of coerced sex experienced mental and emotional health issues. The most endemic and recurrent mental and emotional health problems experienced by women survivors were nightmares, hopelessness, worrying, helplessness, sleep disruption, depression and eating disorders. Not surprisingly, participants often stated that they did not receive the love and affection they expected from their husbands and expressed regrets about being in such violent marriages. For instance, one participant said, “if I knew he would behave this way, I wouldn’t have married him”. Such expressions show the painful and harmful experiences women faced in their marriages. Study participants repeatedly suggested that sexual violence was common in most marriages in their community. They agreed that its perpetration is inhumane, and it should not be tolerated in Ghanaian society. Other scholars (see Adu-Gyamfi,

2014; García-Moreno et al., 2005, 2013; Josse, 2010; Moosa, 2012) have reported the trauma associated with sexual violence.

In line with previous research (Cybulska, 2007; Luce, Schrage, & Gilchrist, 2010; Ishida et al., 2010), this study found that survivors of sexual violence had suicidal thoughts. Such thoughts were products of distressful events that emanated from husbands' perpetration of sexual abuse. The idea of dying is an expression of emotional pain attributable to hopelessness, fear, shock, a loss of self-control and attacks (WHO, 2012). Women survivors are profoundly affected by the experiences of sexual, physical and emotional violence; they feel trapped and powerless, which may eventually lead to post-traumatic stress disorders, intimacy difficulties and intrusive memories (Hill et al., 2016; WHO, 2012). They may choose to end the severe pain and escape the terrors of domestic violence through suicide, believing that it is the only way out (WHO, 2012). A few of the participants entertained thoughts of dying because of the painful cumulative experiences of sexual violence, believing that suicide was the only solution to their ordeal. However, critical inspection of the women's narratives suggested that low disclosure of suicidal thoughts could have been possible, as an individual's display of suicidal behaviour is mostly conceived as a transgression of both divine morality and community morals in the Ghanaian cultural context. It is seen as a breach of religious values and societal harmony. Public attitudes towards suicidal behaviour are negative, and it is a criminal offence to engage in such practices according to the 1960 penal code of Ghana (Eshun, 2003; Hjelmeland et al., 2008). Suicide is a taboo, and among some nations and ethnic groups, the victim is required to undergo ritual ablution to prevent any calamity from befalling the family (Hjelmeland et al., 2008). Nonetheless, the findings provide evidence of a significant link between male sexual violence and female suicidal thoughts and actual suicide.

The findings also highlighted that concerns about sexual and reproductive health were a major issue among women victims. Violence, particularly involving penile penetration, has been identified as a critical factor in the spread of infectious disease, including HIV, due to victims' inability to negotiate condom use (Jewkes et al., 2011; WHO, 2013). In addition, post-sexual abuse of pregnant women in conjugal unions is more likely to cause additional harm to the unborn baby through battering, triggering placenta damage, early contractions and fetal disabilities and death (García-Moreno et al., 2013; Pool et al., 2014). Many participants in this study were worried about contracting sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV, due to their husbands' involvement with multiple sexual partners. Some participants also miscarried because of sexual violence. Participants' concerns about contracting HIV through sexual violence are understandable because the lower Manya Krobo municipality has the highest prevalence of HIV in Ghana (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2016). A salient deduction from these findings is that STIs, pregnancy complications and miscarriages are more likely to be high in environments where the perpetration of sexual violence is rife. This finding supports other studies that have linked male-partner violence with increased vulnerability to STI/HIV among women (Decker et al., 2009; Jewkes et al., 2011; Santana et al., 2006).

Finally, the economic cost associated with sexual violence in this study is also consistent with previous research (Farris, Schell, & Tanielian, 2013; Sedziafa et al., 2017). Apart from experiencing severe health problems by women victims, sexual violence also has economic costs (Morrison et al., 2007). These costs range from high medical expenses, lost work productivity to reduced incomes. Sexual violence is more likely to affect women survivors' incomes and access to an independent means of livelihood. For instance, there is a higher chance that survivors of sexual assault will experience short-term absences from paid work or be forced to leave paid

work for a longer duration after the assault due to severe injuries and psychological problems. It is also possible that survivors will have to use their savings to pay medical expenses to regain full health. According to the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (2011), sexual violence not only affects the health of victims, but also contributes significantly to reducing incomes and lowered productivity in paid and unpaid labour. Consistent with this report, in Australia, Morrison, Quadara and Boyd (2007) reported that sexual violence is one of the highest interpersonal crimes globally, causing lost productivity/earnings and a lowered quality of life. This finding supports observations made in the current study. Sexual violence did not only result in lasting physical and mental health problems for women but also undermined their economic activities and resulted in the loss of productive work and time, which ultimately affected their quality of life. Such harmful circumstances demonstrate how sexual violence affects women's empowerment, thereby perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty, the feminization of poverty and gender inequalities. In addition, it may affect women's financial autonomy, pushing them to be more dependent on their husbands for support and thus become victims of repeat assaults and other risks.

In summary, the discussion shows that the consequences of sexual violence against women can be long lasting and severe. It established that sexual violence is a major public health and development problem and has important gendered-related implications including effects on the social, economic and political capital of women.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion on the research findings in relation to previous studies. The chapter discussed (a) the reasons underlying sexual violence against married

women, and (b) the consequences of sexual violence against married women. The discussion has shown that sexual violence among married women is a chronic experience, with serious implications for their health and well-being.

Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

6.0 Introduction

This study aimed at examining the sexual violence experiences of married women in the Eastern Region of Ghana, one of the areas with the highest prevalence of male-partner violence in the country. We employed a qualitative research approach for a better understanding of the research problem. Specifically, the study used fifteen qualitative recorded in-depth interviews purposively held with women who had experienced sexual violence in their marriages to answer two main research questions: (1) what are the reasons for sexual violence against married women? (2) how does sexual violence affect married women?

The study was guided by Heise's (1998) multidimensional social-ecological framework. This framework conceptualized women's experience of violence as a complex phenomenon facilitated by the interplay of factors at multiple levels of the biosocial environment. These levels included the macrosystem (such as rigid gender roles, male entitlement, and acceptance of interpersonal violence), the exosystem (such as low socioeconomic status/unemployment, isolation of women and family), the microsystem (such as use of alcohol and drugs, marital conflict) and the ontogenic system (e.g. childhood experience of violence, witnessing family violence as a child). The framework emphasizes how these multi-ecological systems are constantly interacting to promote violence against women.

The data collected were analyzed thematically. The results showed that sexual violence is a serious issue among married women in the Lower Many Krobo Municipality (study area) in the Eastern Region of Ghana. To a large extent, evaluating the findings of this study paralleled results reported in previous studies. The results obtained corroborate the social-ecological

framework, indicating that violence against women is influenced by interactive factors operating at multiple levels of the social ecology.

6.1 Summary of Findings

6.1.1 Rq1: What are the reasons for sexual violence against married women?

The reasons underlying sexual violence against married women in this study included adherence to traditional masculine norms, cultural beliefs about traditional social roles and certain traditional marriage practices. Rigid traditional gender roles, customary practices such as bride price, ideologies of male sexual entitlement, religious doctrines, sexism and male hegemony, often nurtured through the concept of patriarchy empower men to exercise control over the sexuality and sexual behaviours of women. Such traditional beliefs disempower women and render them subservient to the patriarchal establishment. The dominant patriarchal system has also structured society in a way that reinforces the authority of men, while women are relegated to subordinate positions. This increases women's risks of experiencing sexual violence.

The study also revealed that poverty played a role in the perpetration of sexual violence against married women. In most cases, the inability of men to provide for their families due to economic hardships and the accompanying lack of income strongly affected gender relations, traditional gender roles and led to frustrations and distress. This precarious situation consequently translated into conflicts and violence against women and children as a means of maintaining control and power in domestic interactions. Alternatively, poorer women had trouble meeting their needs and were compelled to depend on their husbands for support; this exposed them to the risk of sexual violence. The fact that men provided for the needs of women was assumed to give them some level of power over women.

In addition, the study reported that individual-level and relational characteristics (substance use and extramarital sexual affairs on the part of men) contributed to the perpetration of sexual violence against married women. Husbands' use of alcohol and extramarital sexual affairs were sources of marital conflict that influenced the perpetration of sexual violence against women. The study further reported that a childhood history of trauma or abuse in the family setting might determine whether an individual became a victim or a perpetrator of violence in adulthood. Thus, the perpetration and perpetuation of violence against women may be a learned behaviour among husbands. The findings show that sexual violence against married women stemmed from several factors; the root of this problem originates from the patriarchal culture and traditional norms and values that support male power, possession, control and dominance. The social-ecological framework suggests that women's experience of sexual violence is orchestrated by multiple influences at different levels of the social environment.

6.1.2 Rq2: How does sexual violence affect married women?

In my quest to understand how sexual violence affected married women, the study revealed that the majority of these women experienced not only sexual violence but also suffered other forms of domestic abuse including physical violence and verbal violence. Women who attempted to resist sexual contacts were beaten, slapped, kicked and insulted to force them into having sexual intercourse. These acts of violence resulted in severe health problems including physical injuries such as chronic pain, vaginal itching and abdominal pain, mental/psychological health difficulties (suicidal thoughts, social isolation, sleep disruptions, eating disorders, depression and fear) and sexual and reproductive health problems (pregnancy loss and pregnancy complications, and STIs including HIV). The experiences of such devastating health problems, especially physical injuries, affected the productivity of women. Sexual violence affected

women's sexual autonomy and integrity, dignity and self-esteem, and prevented them from contributing meaningfully to the welfare of their families. It affected their lives and full participation in social and cultural life. Such deleterious consequences highlight the need for action to be taken to end this pervasive social menace.

6.2 Conclusions

Based on the empirical findings, this thesis makes significant contributions to the limited but growing body of literature on male-partner sexual violence. The study broadens our knowledge about this complex phenomenon, especially in an area where little academic research has been done. The detailed exploration of sexual violence in the lives of married women using the nested social-ecological lens provides an exceptional and dynamic perspective on the subject. The findings clearly show that widespread sexual violence against women in marriages is a reality in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context, and the social-ecological framework identifies the reasons encouraging such aggressive and violent behaviour. Thus, the study underlines that the lived experience of sexual violence among married women in Ghana is driven by a complex interaction of factors at multiple levels of the biosocial environment.

While more empirical research is needed in this critical area, the results showed that sexual violence is chronic in the lives of the study participants, with severe implications for their health and well-being. This provides compelling reasons for designing broad-based effective preventive strategies to mitigate its occurrence. The underlying factors exposing these women to sexual violence should be eliminated. Campaigns against marital violence and domestic abuse should make sexual violence a top priority in Ghana. An effective response to sexual violence against married women should focus on improving the socio-economic needs of women,

dismantling the patriarchal structures of masculinity and femininity founded on the control of women, abolishing structural factors that reinforce gender inequalities, awareness creation, promoting the problem-solving and interaction skills of couples through counselling, and changing their knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards stereotypical traditional social roles and violence against women. Efforts should be made to address attitudes and behaviours that lay the grounds for marital conflicts and ultimately lead to spousal abuse. In short, it is imperative that legal and policy frameworks are enforced and strengthened to address the aetiology of male-partner sexual violence towards women in Ghana. More broadly, criminalizing marital rape in the Domestic Violence Act (237) in Ghana would be instrumental in preventing sexual violence against women and allowing them to live a decent and quality life. For instance, legal protection against sexual abuse within marriages would not only send the message that such acts are unacceptable but would also eliminate the long-standing perception that such violence is a family issue.

6.3 Recommendations and Implications of the Findings

“You should help us solve this problem after the interviews” (Kukua, 56-years old, petty trader, form 4-school leaver, two children, Krobo)

“Most men don’t respect women, especially after performing the marriage rites. They marry women and girls and think they can do whatever they like to them. But the law does not allow that. You are someone’s royal as others are peoples’ royals. You can’t be abusing someone’s daughter like that” (Abena, 25-years old, primary education, a petty trader, three children, Ewe)

Sexual violence against women is a major concern for policymakers in Ghana. Many women in marriages may be experiencing sexual violence, which has adverse health and economic implications for survivors. While the consequences of sexual violence are of a personal concern for women, its occurrence is also a serious social problem. For instance, the existence of sexual violence is a barrier to gender equality, a violation of women's rights and a public health problem. Macro-level and exosystem factors such as rigid traditional gender roles, poverty, male sexual entitlement and bride price payments have been identified as exposing married women to sexual violence (WHO, 2010). Other factors seen as contributing to the problem include substance use, childhood experiences of violence, marital conflict and personality disorders (Davis, George, & Norris, 2004; Testa, Livingston, & Leonard, 2003). The findings of this study corroborated these factors. Given the results, the following recommendations are made to support the design of preventive strategies to stop sexual violence against married women in the study area and Ghana in general.

Before presenting these recommendations, it is essential to highlight the implications of the findings. This study, to the best of my knowledge, adds to the first known documented evidence on the sexual violence experiences of married women in Ghana. Although exploratory, the findings will provide policymakers in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa with an understanding of the existence and implications of sexual violence against married women. The problem of sexual violence against married women requires serious and immediate attention and action. This call is because other forms of domestic abuse, leading to severe consequences for victims, may accompany the perpetration of sexual violence. Also, survivors are more likely to adopt maladaptive and ineffective coping mechanisms to escape the horrors of sexual violence, which can aggravate their health and socio-economic problems. The consequences of sexual violence

not only negatively affect the individual victim, but also the larger society, which provides a justifiable reason for eliminating it.

In addition, documenting the personal stories of married women, who in the past have often been neglected, may help raise awareness about this problem. Like some other countries in Africa, in Ghana, sexual violence remains a hidden and undisclosed issue in most marriages. The cultural expectations of married women in most societies, especially those in Africa, are for them to be submissive and obedient to their husbands (Shirwadkar, 2004). A major concern for many of these women is that reporting domestic violence, including sexual abuse, may taint their social status, and the image of their male-partners and families. Sexual violence against married women may be overlooked as cases of misconduct if reported. Such situations often lead victims to remain in abusive relationships and experience endless cycles of abuse. Through awareness creation, other women experiencing this form of violence in their relationships may be motivated to come forward and openly tell their stories to encourage intervention. Moreover, this increased awareness may lead to subsequent investigations on the subject in Ghana towards informing policy.

The recommendations include:

6.3.1 Invest in Formal Education

“I think the best thing the government must do is to encourage serious teaching on such issues [domestic violence]. I think it can start right from primary school. The men should be made to understand that their wives are not supposed to be treated as slaves but should be treated with so much care. I think this will be a better way of reducing such an act” (Maafia, 28-years old, storekeeper, tertiary education, one child, Krobo)

Formal education is an empowerment tool that can help female victims escape partner violence. It is recommended that the government commit resources for educating boys and girls as part of a long-term solution for addressing partner violence. Education empowers people in diverse ways such as through teaching them to read, write and speak. More importantly, education provides individuals with the skillset and expertise needed to participate in meaningful and satisfying occupations. Education gives individuals the opportunity to have access to and control of resources such as cash, credit and employment. A lack of education is associated with partner violence, especially against women. Evidence has shown that non-educated women are more likely to experience violence compared to educated women (Jewkes et al., 2002; Issahaku, 2012; Tenkorang et al., 2013).

On the other hand, educated men are less likely to engage in violent and aggressive behaviour than non-educated men (Ackerson et al., 2008). Also, poverty and lack of income in the family setting is a significant predictor of violence against women (Jewkes et al., 2002; WHO, 2005). While education may not entirely protect women against male violence, it can help them reduce the level of abuse and identify safety nets to escape violent incidents. Therefore, the Government of Ghana is encouraged to provide scholarship schemes for female and male students from the primary to the university level and, if possible, at the post-graduate level. Moreover, the Government of Ghana in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should broaden the school curriculum to include topics such as gender-based violence, human rights, harmful traditional practices, and the effects of stereotypical gender norms, male hegemony and sexism. This process should begin from the junior level and continue through to the university level. Incorporating such vital subjects in the curriculum will help reduce the level of violence in marriages in the long term and enable women to live a decent life.

6.3.2 Institute a Research Fund

Another strategy for tackling intimate partner sexual violence is to engage in further scientific, social research. Sexual violence within marriages remains an understudied phenomenon in Ghana. Investing in the study of sexual violence will help support fundamental human rights, reduce morbidity and mortality, address underlying social factors, accelerate economic development and improve revenues. It is proposed that a research fund devoted to the study of intimate partner violence be established in Ghana. This research fund would motivate researchers to embark on large-scale studies, producing evidence on the aetiology of this pervasive problem that will help shape policy and legislation to combat its manifestation. Conducting large-scale scientific research on domestic violence is fundamental to providing answers to the issue of violence against women.

6.3.3 Use Media Campaigns

“I have heard men forcing their wives to have sex on the radio, but for me to have met someone who went through that, no” (Araaba- 48 years, form 4-school leaver, five children, a petty trader, Krobo)

In addition to formal education, the use of media campaigns will be a significant means of curbing the problem of sexual violence within marriages. The media should be involved in discussing matters of sexual violence because of its ability to disseminate information extensively throughout a country. Both national and international experts in the area of violence should be invited to educate the public about the adverse individual and societal consequences of sexual violence. Regular media discussions would enlighten men and boys on the need to stop violence against women. Women survivors of sexual

violence should also be involved in media discussions. The media should engage in routine announcements to encourage women survivors of sexual violence to seek help. It is estimated that Ghana has more than ninety-two different ethnic groups with their distinct dialects. Thus, media campaigns against male violence towards women should include the use of local and audio-visual communication methods, particularly the use of folk media, as it represents the activities, beliefs, and customs of the people in the language and expressions that they understand and are familiar with. The essence of folk media in transforming behaviours in Africa stems from the “media’s originality and the audience’s belief and trust in the sources of the messages, which often come from people real to their audiences” (Panford et al., 2001, p. 1560).

6.3.4 Law Enforcement

“No law prevents violence that I know. Some time ago, we heard the government was trying to criminalize marital rape, but don’t know how far the government has gotten with this issue.” (Teckyiwaah, 28-years old, three children, secondary education, a petty trader, Krobo)

The enforcement of laws is the most promising pathway to preventing the problem of sexual violence against women in marriages. Female victims of sexual violence need to be assured that there are existing laws that enable them to seek redress when the need arises. Ghana has many legal instruments such as the Domestic Violence Act to protect against abuse in domestic relations. Although marital rape is a severe and frequent form of domestic abuse, this topic has not received the needed attention from policymakers and legislators in the Ghanaian context. In other words, Ghanaian laws do not criminalize marital rape. We firmly believe that this policy lax contributes to the problem of sexual violence against women in marriages. Thus,

it is recommended that the Government of Ghana in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection routinely enforce laws against domestic violence and respond effectively to incidents of abuse. If enforced, this would help prevent men from sexually abusing their wives and empower women survivors to come forward and report cases of sexual abuse.

6.4 Proposed Future Studies

The findings of this study suggest that future research should contribute to the emerging body of literature on intimate partner sexual violence in Ghana by exploring the following topics. First, the findings of this study confirm that sexual violence is a major issue among married women in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Although necessary, the sample size of the current research does not permit the results to be extended to the broader social context. It is recommended that this topic is explored with a large sample size in other geographic settings in Ghana. The perspectives of husbands should also be included in such analyses. This will help to document and increase our understanding of the sexual violence experiences of married women across the country towards informing policy and intervention strategies.

Second, future research should investigate the relationship between sexual violence and suicidal ideation beyond what is captured in this study. Suicide is a serious public health problem, and increasing awareness about its prevalence will help strengthen prevention strategies. Further investigation of the coping strategies employed by married women to overcome sexual violence is needed. Many of these women may not report cases of sexual abuse, especially rape, because of a fear of stigma, shame, blame and reprisal in a patriarchal society like Ghana. It is, therefore, important that future research devote specific attention to this critical area to help understand how women are coping with sexual violence.

Moreover, future research should examine barriers to help-seeking among women survivors of sexual violence to inform policy. Although not captured in this study, the data analysis showed non-help-seeking behaviours among survivors of sexual violence. Such situations may have tremendous effects on women experiencing sexual violence. Finally, while this study has established that sexual violence against married women has economic implications for survivors, dedicating empirical research to this subject would significantly increase our understanding of the economic cost of sexual violence.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

As one of the few studies to apply Heise's social-ecological framework to document the sexual violence experiences of married women in Ghana, my thesis contributes to the scant but burgeoning body of literature on marital and intimate partner sexual violence in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa. The Lower Manya Krobo community presented an interesting case for examining sexual violence in the lives of married women. The lived narratives of married women from various socio-demographic and economic backgrounds greatly benefited the study. Providing married women with the opportunity to freely speak about their experiences and perceptions of the issue of sexual violence is an essential contribution to academic literature. This study lays the grounds for researchers to undertake nation-wide research on sexual violence among married women so that evidence-based preventive strategies can be designed to tackle this pervasive form of abuse. Most importantly, national or community-based studies are required to employ mixed-methods approaches to dig deeper into this complex topic to produce more nuanced evidence to inform policy. Sexual violence against married women is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and I strongly believe efforts to combat this issue could benefit

tremendously from using a mixed-methods approach, as the strength of one method will overcome the weaknesses of others.

Despite its strengths, it is important to highlight that there are weaknesses associated with this study. First, the findings cannot be generalized to Ghanaian married women across the country. This study's data were obtained from a more massive project in which qualitative in-depth interviews were purposely held with only 15 women who had experienced sexual violence in their marriages. The limited sample of participants would not permit the results to be extended to the broader population. This sample is not sufficient to represent all married women in Ghana. In addition, the qualitative component of the larger project was conducted in an urban setting, and the experiences of sexual violence among urban married women may not be representative of those in rural areas. Women's constructions of their sexual violence experiences may differ from place to place. Thus, the results may not be transferable to the larger social context. While the current study has provided an initial understanding of sexual violence among married women, future research with a larger sample should be conducted to examine this subject in detail across different ethnic groups in Ghana.

Moreover, due to the sensitive nature of sexual matters in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context, especially in the case of marital issues, the researchers may have encountered the problem of social desirability bias. Participants could have over-reported or under-reported their experiences of sexual violence. For instance, married women may have been pressured by societal norms and the fear of stigma and shame to under-report or avoid some questions relating to sexual abuse. Such situations could have affected the qualitative data on women's experiences of sexual violence.

Furthermore, the interview guide was designed in English and interpreted in the local dialect for participants who could not understand questions in English. The interpretation could have affected the original meaning of issues, thereby influencing the type of data produced for the analysis. In addition, the transcription of recorded data into text could have generated errors, especially from the local dialect into English, which could have affected the data produced. Regardless of these limitations, the narratives of the target sample provided a rich source of data for the current study. This study provides a detailed understanding of sexual violence in the lives of 15 married women, which may be transferred to their counterparts in other areas. The study has reported results that merit serious attention from researchers and policymakers in Ghana.

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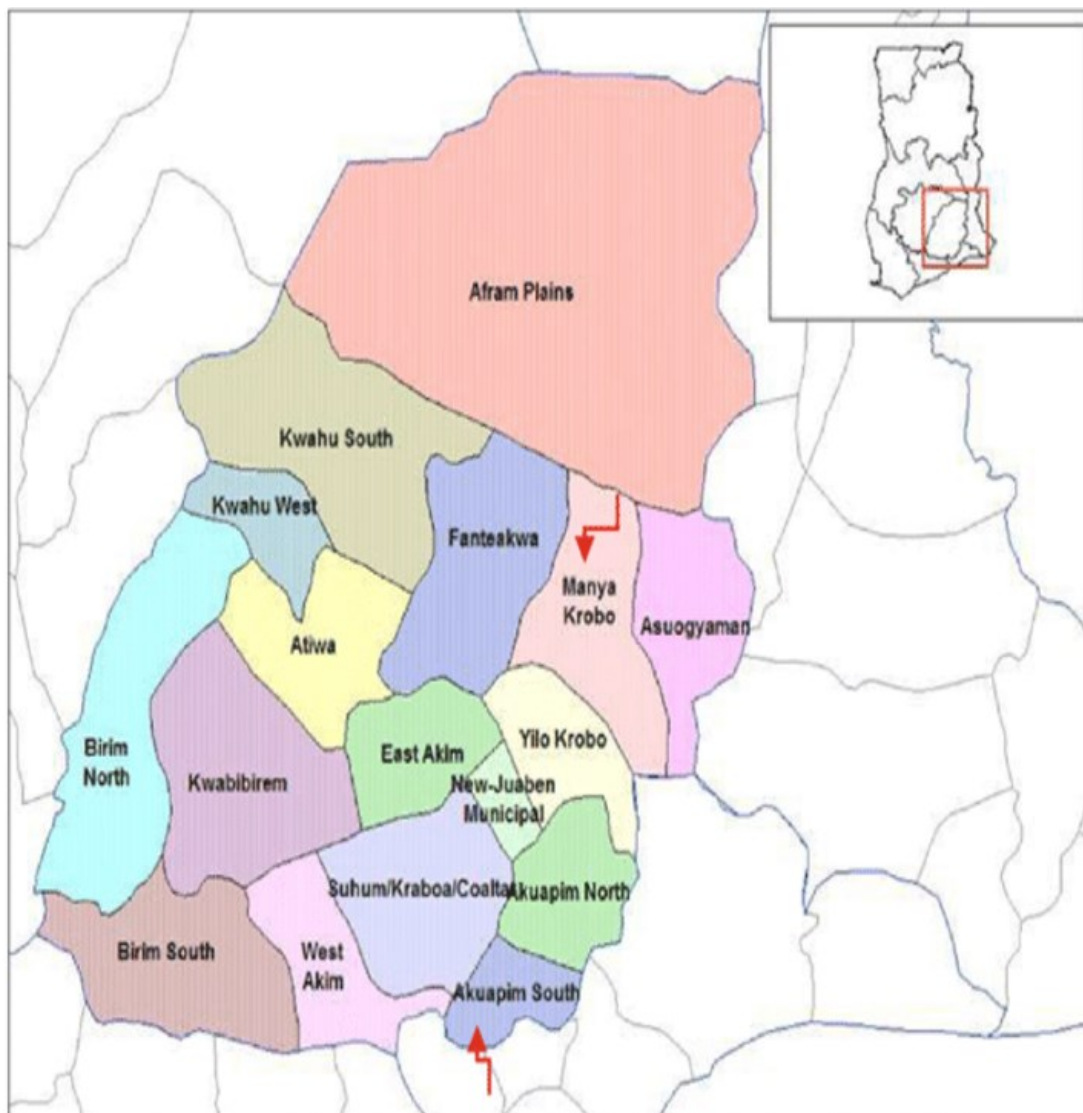
Appendixes

Appendix A: A map showing the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality

Appendix B: Interview Guide on Male-Partner Violence

Appendix A: A Map Showing the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality

Fig 2. A map of the Eastern Region of Ghana highlighting the Lower Manya Krobo District



Source: Lamptey et al. (2017)

Appendix: Interview Guide on Male-Partner Violence

MARITAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GHANA: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & INTERVIEWEES' CONSENT

[**READ OUT**] Good morning/evening. I am Eric Y Tenkorang, an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Memorial University and my colleague is Yaa A Owusu, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, Legon. We invite you to take part in a research project entitled: *Marital violence against women in Ghana: causes and implications*. We will however, want to get your consent for participating in the study, so what you are about to hear is part of the process of informed consent. We will give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. We will also describe your right to withdraw from the study at any time. This is the informed consent process. Please pay attention and listen carefully. Please contact either Dr. Tenkorang or Dr. Owusu, 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.

As you may be aware, domestic violence, which includes marital violence, is a worldwide problem that cuts across culture, class, ethnicity and age. While the evidence across sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular, suggests an increase in the incidence and prevalence of domestic and marital violence, the phenomenon remains unexplored. Also, little attention is given to the socio-cultural factors that enable such violence, and the implications thereof on the sexual autonomy of married women in Ghana. The research team will investigate the root causes of marital violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa, with Ghana as a case study. We will also examine the effects of such violence on the sexual autonomy of women, while discussing policy interventions aimed at curbing the increasing trend of the phenomenon in this part of the world.

This interview will involve you providing answers to specific questions asked by either Dr. Owusu or the research assistants. The interview process will last for about 50 minutes. While participating in the study is encouraged, participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any consequences or penalties. Depending on what you indicate on the participant withdrawal form, we will either analyze data provided before withdrawal or discard it completely.

Some measures will be taken to preserve anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected from you. These include using identification numbers instead of your real names, not disclosing your response to questions to members outside of the research team, reporting results of the study in a way not to disclose your identities. In fact, we highly value your participation in the study and will avoid behaviors that will compromise your anonymity. It is important to draw your attention to the Whistleblowers Act' passed in parliament in 2006 that encourages Ghanaians to report different types of wrongdoings or disclosures that could potentially jeopardize the health, safety and lives of others. As Ghanaians, we are encouraged to report any illegal information to the security services. However, as researchers who believe in your privacy, we would first want to know if you want such illegal information to be disclosed to the security services. If not, we will encourage and advise that you talk to the counsellors within DOVVSU. Interviews will be retained and stored by Dr. Tenkorang in Canada, and it is only members of the research team who can have access to them. We do not intend to retain the interviews for an indefinite period of time. We intend to shred or burn the questionnaires and scramble any electronic data 5 years after data collection. Although findings for the project will be disseminated through conference presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals, we will also share the findings with you by granting interviews, preparing media releases and policy briefs on the topic for the various media houses. We will present our findings to various government outfits including the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU), the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU). We also plan making our findings known to the various Non-Governmental Organizations committed to fighting the gender-based violence in Ghana. It is our expectation that you will benefit directly from the project from campaigns that will be launched against dealing with some of these socio-cultural factors that enable such violence.

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: *Dr. Eric Y Tenkorang (Tel: 0244599753) or Dr. Yaa A. Owusu (0243167783).*

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 709-864-2861. You may also contact Charity Nana Owusu at the DOVSSU unit of the CID headquarters at 0244953438 to relay your concerns to ICEHR.

Consent:

Please say whether you agree or not to these statements:

- That you understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- That you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- That you understand that any data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be destroyed (OR retained by the researcher for use in the research study) depending on what is indicated.
- That you agree to participate in the research project and that, that your participation is voluntary, and that you may end your participation at any time

GENERAL WARM-UP

Marriage is meant to be a supportive and enjoyable part of our lives. What have been your general experiences with your husband?

Like several aspects of our lives, marriages can turn into a conflict. What made you consult the police/DOVVSU/WAJU?

VICTIMS' PERCEPTION OF DOMESTIC/ MARITAL ABUSE

What are your views about marital violence in general?

Are you aware of the Domestic Violence Act (DV270)? If yes, tell me more about it?

Do you think there is something in the Ghanaian or your culture that allows intimate-partner violence? If so, tell me? Why is it so?

Do you think domestic violence in particular wife beating is justified in any way?

DIFFERENT FORMS OF MARITAL ABUSE

7a. SEXUAL ABUSE (If applicable)

Has he ever had sex with you in a way you disagree with? PROBE: If you are comfortable with telling me more about this please do. If you don't feel comfortable talking about it, we can move on.

Do you think there is anything in the Ghanaian culture that encourages this type of abuse?

Can you insist that your husband wears a condom before sexual intercourse? What about denying him sexual intercourse? Why? Why not? And if not, what do you think are the consequences of that?

Has the sexual abuse affected you in any way? If you don't mind talking about it?

Do you think marital rape should be criminalized in Ghana?

PYSHCOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE (If applicable)

Do you think intimate partner violence affects women emotionally or psychologically? Tell me about your experience if you do not mind?

In what ways have this form of violence manifested? (Insults, humiliation etc)?

What has been the consequence of that on you? (Probe for the effect on her health—mental, physical), work, career, relationships, finances, etc

Are there any special circumstances that led to this type of abuse?

7b. PHYSICAL ABUSE (If applicable)

Have you ever been physically hurt by your husband? (For e.g. kicked, slapped, pushed, hit etc.)

Can you tell me more about your experiences with regards to this?

Do you think there are some norms in the Ghanaian or your own culture that encourages physical violence?

If it does not bother you to talk about it I will like to know how it has affected you? (If it bothers you, we can skip this section): for effects on her health, work, finances, career, relationships, etc.

SECTION F: WRAP UP

SECTION G: Socio-demographic information (ask respondents individually)

- age
- education
- ethnic group
- employment
- region of residence
- district of residence
- religious affiliation
- type of marriage (customary, Christian, Moslem)⁴, co-habiting

SECTION I: Information for further contact

If you have any concerns or information on this study, please talk to Drs. E. Y. Tenkorang on (0246866441) and Adobea Owusu (0243167783)

Thank you again.

⁴ These three types of marriage are specified by the current Constitution of the Republic of Ghana