



Sexual Violence Against Women And Their Human Rights In The Wa Municipality In The Upper West Region Of Ghana

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEDEP	Centre for the Development of People
CHIPRONET	Child Protection Network
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of all forms Violence against Women
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organizations
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
GHC	Ghana Cedis
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
ICPD	International conference on Population and Development
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UDS	University for Development Studies
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund Women
WAJU	Women and Juvenile Unit

Abstract

The last two decades have recognized the extent of damage caused by sexual violence against women. Many studies have unpacked the causes and effects of sexual violence on the lives of women, children and girls. This study contributes to these debates with an examination of the discourse on sexual violence against women and their health, social and economic development in the Wa Municipality. The study looks at the perceptions of sexual violence among the community and the extent to which different social groups are facing sexual violence in the municipality. The study's findings indicate that the lack of effective application of the law, the continuing inattention of the community towards sexual violence as well as the poverty which marks the community all contribute to sexual violence against women, children and girls.

Relevance to Development Studies

Violence is one aspect that women in poor communities such as the Wa Community in Ghana face in their daily lives. However, even if there are laws and policy in place the implementation can be very difficult. In the problem of violence against women there continues to be a problem of implementation. This study points out how much work needs to be done in Ghana if women in poor rural areas such as the Wa community are to have their sexual and reproductive rights recognized. The paper aims to contribute to building the political will need to enforcing the laws to end violence against women, particularly by ensuring the education of young girls to help build their knowledge and awareness of how to defend them against the violations of their rights

Keywords

Patriarchy, culture, poverty, power, sexual violence

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Summary

Chapter one sets out the background to the research paper. It examines the current situation of violence against women in Africa, Ghana, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives of the study relevance of the study and the study area.

Chapter two looks at the conceptual framework of the study. It highlights the patriarchal relations that help to perpetuate violence against women and girls. It also looks at agency which is denied women and girls and which has led to the continues suppression, oppression and exploitation of women and girls

Chapter three looks at global perspectives of violence against women and girls, as well as in Africa, Ghana and in the Wa Municipality.

Chapter four examines the data gathered from the field with empirical evidence from the victims of sexual violence, their relatives and other members of the community supported by secondary literature.

Chapter five analyses the findings of why sexual violence persists in the Wa Municipality on four indicators namely: poverty, perceptions, culture and traditions and national and international interventions to end sexual violence against women.

Chapter six proposes what is needed to end violence against women and girls. The chapter concludes with policy and its implications.

1.2 Background: Violence against Women

Violence against women has gained international attention since the ratification of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993. Violence against women also received significant recognition in the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (FWCW, 1995).

Over the years, many countries have made efforts to implement policies and programs to curb violence against women and find solutions to them. Sexual violence against women is manifested in all spheres of the society including the home and in the community. Harcourt (2009:95), points out that the, ‘widespread of violence against women, whether physical, sexual or psychological, has its roots in the power of patriarchy’. The forms of power, power structures, ideas and practices contribute to such violence. Sexual violence against women is entrenched in strong cultural values that cannot easily be solved by mere passage of laws.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW), defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical sexual, or mental

harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts as, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private” (UN, 1993 cited in Watts & Zimmermann 2002).

Despite years of interventions towards the elimination of violence against women, the act continues. For every three women in the world, one has experienced coerced sex, or beaten in her lifetime (Fried, 2003:91). Nearly one in four women may experience sexual violence by an intimate partner. About one-third of adolescent girls have experienced force in their first sexual intercourse (WHO, 2002).

Domestic violence is a serious cause of death and disability for women between the ages of 16 and 44 (Fried, 2003:91). Sexual violence against women not only violates human rights but also hampers productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth. Violence against women and girls and HIV/AIDS are among the most important threats to the health, and well-being and productivity of women worldwide. Violence along with threats of violence, limits women and girls’ ability to negotiate safer sex and control the terms of their sexual encounters especially within the context of marriage (UNIFEM, 2009).

1.3 Current situation in Africa

Violence against women takes various forms. The incidences of violence against women in Africa include domestic violence, rape, forced and early marriages, human trafficking, prostitution and female genital mutilation. According to (Ganny, 1996., Nosike, 1996., United Nations, 2000a cited in Okereke, 2006: 2), violence against women is a violation of women’s basic human rights and serves as a barrier to achieving gender equality, development and peace. Okereke (2006:6), argues that many countries in Africa have set the age at which young girls can be married at 15 and 21 years of age under both Islamic and customary laws. However, girls are married as early as 12 years of age and sometimes these young girls are forcefully married (Human Rights Watch, 2003b). Other forms of violence against women in Africa include widow inheritance, wife battering, denial of reproductive health rights and right to education. Some countries in Africa have discriminatory laws against women. For instance, men have the right to divorce their wives whilst women cannot (Amnesty International, 2005a)

Women in Ghana suffer violence of different kinds every day. According to Amoakohene (2004:2374), many women in Ghana suffer domestic violence. Ghana government has tried to reduce domestic violence and violence against women in general through the establishment of the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service (WAJU), and now Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU) to deal with violence against women. The nature of violence against women in Ghana can be viewed in the context of cultural practices, girls’ education, economic deprivation and social status of women.

1.4 Problem Statement

This study investigates the level of sexual violence against women in the Wa Municipality in the Upper West region of Ghana, the most recently created region in Ghana with less than 700,000 people. The region is the second poorest in Ghana and poverty remains endemic with per capita expenditure of GHC166.00 or US\$170 (GSS, 2008). HIV and AIDS is prevalent and increased from 1.8 per cent in 1999 to 3.2 per cent in 2006 (GSS, 2008). The poverty rate in the Upper West region is about 84 per cent for 2005 and 2006 (FAO/Ghana, 2012: 5). Female poverty is accentuated by the gender inequalities in access to land, education and economic opportunities. Male chiefs are the sole decision makers on land issues which is a disadvantage to women (ibid). Apart from land, economic and discrimination in education against girls, women also face the problem of credit of which men have more access to from the public sector than women (FAO/Ghana, 2012:6). The Wala, Dagaa-ba and Sissala ethnic groups are the three dominant tribes in the region.

The region's poverty is also marked by low enrolment in education for girls. The overall literacy rates of population aged 15 years and above in the Upper West region in 2005 and 2006 academic year was 25 per cent (FAO/Ghana, 2012:23). Girls are left at home to take care of their siblings and married off at a young age (also via abduction). There is little opportunity for women to earn income leading to tensions within the home which leads to abuse and violence.

The Domestic Violence Bill passed into law by Ghana's parliament on 21ST February, 2007, brought a new hope for women and women advocacy groups. The DOVVSU has 52 offices throughout Ghana to address issues of abuse and violence against women and children. Since the passage of the bill into law, a lot of cases have been reported but the abuse of women still continue with more reports of cases of abuse in various forms (Kamil, 2011).

Overall, violence against women in the region is on the rise. In 2008, the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service in the Upper West region reported that marriage by abduction cases in 2008 was 36 as compared to 15 in 2007. (GNA, 2009). Similarly, the refusal of husbands to provide for the upkeep of spouses and their children has increased from 40 in 2007 to 65 in 2008 while assault cases increased from 40 to 65 in 2008. There was however a decline in rape cases possibly due to the refusal of victims to report to the police (GNA, 2009).

1.5 Relevance and Justification

Women have faced and continue to face deprivation and abuse especially in rural areas in Ghana. Given the level of violence in these areas, it is imperative to engage policy makers to find out what policies and interventions are necessary to bring about a reduction in violence against women. The inheritance of women which is one of the violations of women's right is one of the factors that hasten the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region and in Africa (Centre for Housing and Eviction, 2005). Women are at the mercy of male terror-

ism every year in Ghana. Violence against women in Ghana increased from about 360 in 1999 to 3622 in 2002 (WAJU,2003).

The tradition of bride price paid by a prospective husband to a woman's family gives the man absolute authority on the woman and constitutes unlimited consent to sexual intercourse (Human Rights Watch, 2002).The cultural practices of the people makes it difficult for women to fight for their rights as even the women have accepted wife battering as "normal" in marriage (ibid).Abuses of women that are reported to relations are solved in favour of men over the women because women are seen to be inferior to men (ibid).

The motivation for my choice for this topic is my interest in the area of violence against women as a result of observations and witness to violence meted out to women in the communities I have taught where traditions, customs, poverty, belief systems pose serious challenges to women's well-being and poverty reduction. Also it is as a result of the fact that little efforts are being made to reduce violence against women due to the fact that people do not want to graduate from the belief systems traditions and customs and to recognize women's rights, could mean is to make women superior to men.

1.6 Main Objective of the Study

To find out why sexual violence persists in the Wa Municipality despite the state and customary interventions to end the practice.

Through an examination of:

the perceptions of sexual violence in the Wa Municipality in terms of women's gender human rights.

why international and national statements to end violence against women are not able to be applied.

the different forms of violations experienced by different groups of women and girls in Upper West Region.

1.7 Methodology

I undertook a focus group discussion (FGD) in the Wa Municipality in order to collect qualitative data about women's experiences of sexual violence. Four focus group discussions were conducted with boys, girls, married men and married women. Purposive sampling was used to select those who participated in the FGDs. I also interviewed and recorded administrators at the Regional Hospital, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Child Protection Network (CHIPRONET), and Child Support Services Ghana, in the Wa Municipality.

The study employed an explorative qualitative research using phenomenology as a primary research methodology. The rationale for this method of phenomenological research method is to understand the phenomena, things or situations and events in everyday world from the viewpoint of respondents. Unstructured questions were used as an interview guide. The Interpretative

Phenomenological Analyses (IPA) by Smith, Jarman and Osborn (1999, cited in Antoinette, 2011:4) was adopted as a guideline for this analysis.

The responses of the FGDs and that of the organizations were transcribed so that the women's exact phrases and descriptions could be examined. The female and male students were interviewed separately and as were the married men and women. Female students were between the ages of 17 and 19 years while the boy students were between the ages of 19 to 21 years. The married women were between 30 to 50 years while the married men were between the ages of 26 and 58 years (Field Interview, July, 2012). As I could not speak the local language the FGDs were moderated by local speakers and transcription was also undertaken by local language speakers. Although I had intended to undertake in-depth interviews I could only find three women in Wa and non in the village. I observed their interactions with the aim to understand their 'lived experiences, and belief systems that are part of the individuals, institutions, cultural groups and their everyday lives' (O' Leary, 2010: 114).

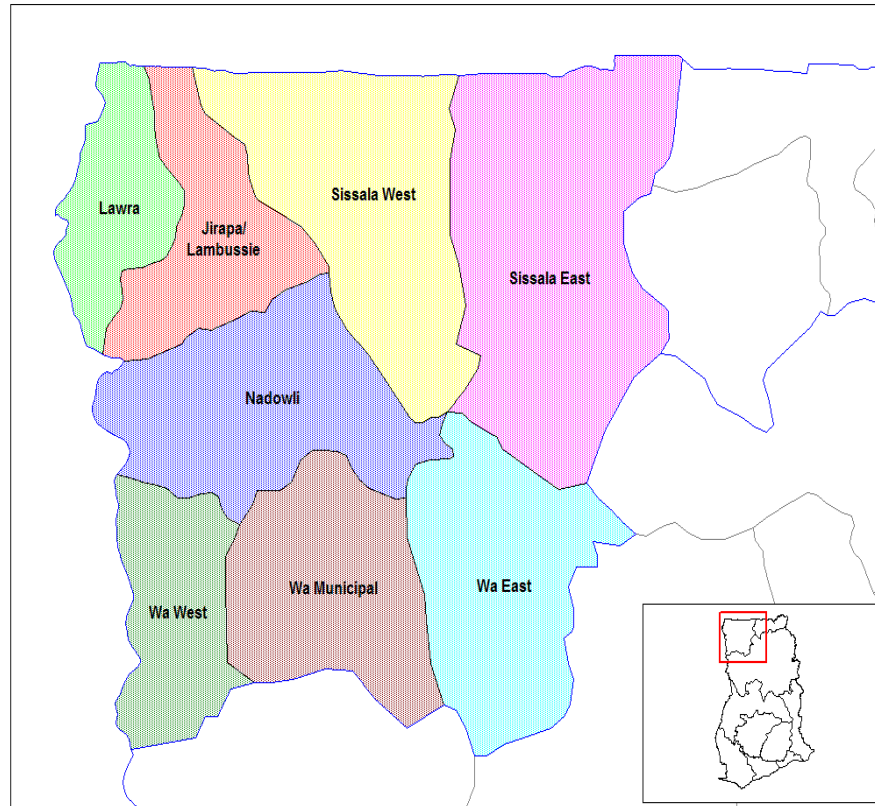
1.8 Study Area

The Upper West region is the newest of the ten regions in Ghana. It is part of the three Northern regions that constitute the savannah zone. The region has Wa as the administrative capital. As stated above, the Upper West region is the second poorest in the country in terms of education, economic opportunities, and infrastructure such as good roads, good drinking water, sanitation and natural resources. Additionally, the occupation of the people is predominantly subsistence agriculture. Crops produce include food crops, animal husbandry and sheanut picking. Comparatively therefore, the region is far behind the other regions in the southern part of the country.

The region is located in the western corner of northern Ghana close to the border with Cote d'Ivoire in the west and Burkina Faso in the north. The rainfall amount is low with a few months of torrential rains. The vegetation is made of grassland and shrubs. The houses in the study setting are made of mud-bricks. Population growth is very high. The land here is constantly under cultivation thus rendering it poor and therefore poor harvest and food insecurity. Wa Municipal has an estimated population of about 102,446. The religious beliefs of the people is traditional worship, Muslim and Christian faiths.

As in the rest of the world, women in Ghana experience sexual violence as well. The Gender Centre of Ghana has identified the culturally specific psychological, socio-economic, sexual and traditional practices which are deemed to be harmful and degrading to Ghanaian women and girls (Appiah and Cusack, 1999 as cited in Amoakohene, 2004:2374). Despite laws designed to protect women against violence and abuse, women continue to endure violence in the home and in the community, including: physical spousal abuse, sexual violence, and murder, defilement, threatening and causing harm, widow inheritance and rape within marriage (Appiah and Cusack, 1999 as cited in Amoakohene, 2004: 2375).

Map 1.1
Map showing the study area in Ghana



Source:
<http://images.search.conduit.com/search/?q=map+of+ghana+upper+west&ctid=CT3008668&SearchSource=2&FollowOn=true&PageSource=Results&SSPV=> Accessed 30th September, 2012

According to (Appiah and Cuasack, 1999 as cited in Amoakohene, 2004:2373), a third of the women face violence and more disturbingly according to WAJU, reports of violence against women increased in Ghana sharply from 360 in 1999 to 3622 in 2002 (WAJU, 2003 as cited in Amoakohene, 2004:[2374]. From January to December 2010, the DOVVSU recorded total reported cases of defilement of 986 and rape 286. Additionally, there were 27 attempted rape cases and 3113 assault cases reported (DOVVSU,2011).

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Violence against women is a sensitive issue that needs a lot of tact and diplomacy to gather and analyze information particularly in relation to primary data. Efforts were made to interview people (victims) of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, only a few individuals were ready to be interviewed because they were busy on their farms and also they thought it was a private matter. Some NGOs and the regional gynaecologist were interviewed. My key informants were the women and men of Chansa village, students of Wa Senior High School and six organizations in the Wa Municipality. Another problem encountered was that

the people in the Chansa village were busy on their farms therefore; it was only in the evening that they were available for the focus group discussion. Even at that period, the women were busy preparing their dinner (Field Interview, 2012).

Secondary sources were therefore key. Research was undertaken in the regional headquarters of Domestic Violence and Victims Unit of the Ghana Police Service in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

2.1 Background

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights that is only now being recognized by governments across the world as a major issue for development and well being. According to Heise et al (2002:S5), sexual violence is a health problem sapping women's energy, compromising their physical health, and self-esteem. Violence against women also result in protracted long-term health related diseases such as chronic pain, disability, depression, risk for unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and serious pregnancy related complications (ibid).

Additionally, a lot of harmful behaviours are directed at women and girls because of their sex, including abuse of wife, assault, marital rape, and dowry related murder, forced prostitution, sexual abuse of children and female genital mutilation (ibid). Furthermore, sexual violence has no political or cultural boundaries. It takes place in all societies and in every culture. Heise et al (1994:1167), argue that between one-third and two-thirds of known sexual assault victims are aged 15years or younger in countries such as Malaysia, Panama, Chile, Peru United States and Papua New Guinea. Although both boys and girls are victims of sexual abuse, girls are the most victims. Many factors account for the increase of likelihood of abuse by a man against his wife or partner. Many of those who violently abuse their partner were witnesses to marital violence at home, having an absentee father and control of wealth within the family. These acts of violence against women is due to the patriarchal system of control of women and their bodies by men (ibid)

As stated earlier, sexual violence occurs throughout the world. Sexual violence is defined as any 'sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to trafficking, or otherwise 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' (WHO, 2002). A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings as part of the patriarchal order. Intimate partner violence against women is a form of patriarchal social expression and control of women. Intimate partner violence in a relationship includes physical violence, forced sexual intercourse, psychological harm, aggression and controlling of women's behaviour. (Krug et al,2002: 1084).

Patriarchy is the term used to describe the systemic set of cultural, social economic practices through which men dominate and oppress women. Walby (1996:21) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, through which men dominate, oppress and exploit women and where older men exploit younger men. Patriarchy is also reflected in other economic and social institutions and organizations. Walby (1996:24) suggests that patriarchy is composed of structures namely: patriarchal relations in household, patriarchal relations in paid work (employment), patriarchal relations in politics (pow-

er), male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal relations in culture. Patriarchy according to Juliet Mitchell as cited in Bhasin (1993:5) is “a kinship system in which men exchange women, and to the symbolic power that fathers exercise within these systems which is responsible for the “inferiorised psychology of women”. A system of socially constructed structures and practices in men dominate women in almost all spheres of life.

Patriarchal relations in the household lead to women’s labour being exploited by their father, husband, brother, uncle and son. Traditionally women are responsible for household work including production and reproduction often for no income. In the patriarchal system of household, the head of the family is usually the oldest man who determines the rules and roles of the household including the young men. (Hartmann 1979; Moghadam 1992, Weber, 1974, as cited in Walby, 1996:21). In relation to productive work within the family and community, women’s reproductive and productive work is not valued and women are either unpaid or underpaid. (Walby, 1996:25).

The problem of violence against women in Ghana has to be understood within the historical and cultural context of both household and gender power relation and poverty. Traditionally, patriarchal domination has been the norm and men have been recognized as having a right to chastise their wives. Female members of household are subject to male domination that could be enforced through violence. Harcourt (2009: 110) explains that rape is one of the most difficult experiences to survive and to comprehend for many women, wherever they live. Rape is used as a weapon in conflict areas to humiliate not only the women and girls but men and boys as well (ibid).

2.2 Lack of Agency and Sexual Violence

In Ghana forced marriage is a common practice. Girls are forced to marry early and to men who they often do not know or love. For example, in 2011, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicates that 27 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were married before age 18years. Similarly, 36.3 per cent of women age 20-24 were married or in a relationship before age 18years (Ghana Gov., 2012). In this situation, they have to accept it because they have no agency to challenge the decision of the family. The power relations within the family structure and cultural norms limit the right of the girl to decide who to marry and when to marry. This constitutes an abuse on the right of the girl. As pointed out earlier, girls are married off at an early age following the custom that, it brings honour to the girl’s family because she has been married as a virgin.

Lack of income for women is another reason for sexual violence against women in the Ghanaian context. In general, access to economic resource is important to ensure stable relationship. Dutton (1988) and Gelles (1974), (cited in Macmillan & Gartner, 1999:949), argue that ‘lack of resources can lead to stress, frustration and conflict that can degenerate into violence between a husband and wife’. A shortage of money and work increases the risk of violence in marriage. Kalmus & Straus, (1990) as cited in Ross & Rosemary (1999:949), point out that a wealthy woman or a woman who has a regular paid income is less dependent on her husband. In contrast, an unemployed woman

who has less or no paid income depends on her husband and therefore is unable to leave abusive relationship and will continue to suffer violence.

If a woman has financial or economic independence it would be expected that there is less likelihood of violence against her. However, there are bottlenecks hindering women's ability to obtain economic and financial independence. The development of women is worsened by the dichotomy in gender patterns of production. There is discrimination in the ownership of land, control and distribution of income and access to other resources of production including extension services (Duncan, 2004:109). The lack of yield-increasing inputs for example, seeds, and fertilizer and credit facilities has further put women in agriculture in a very disadvantaged position. Women in Ghana lack assets to use as collateral which is usually demanded by the banks before loans are offered (ibid).

Discrimination against women makes them vulnerable to economic shocks. Male agricultural extension workers offer information about farming and credit to men thus denying women the needed assistance (ibid). Married women according to Duncan (2004:109), receive little information and assistance through their husbands, with the unmarried women suffering the most. Female farmers in Ghana are unable to improve their economic status as farmers due to the gender imbalances in the current extension system. This gap leads to the overdependence of women on their husbands and which results in conflicts and violence against them. The agricultural extension service is dominated by male and male-oriented which has led to the marginalization of women because of the high educational requirement. Duncan (2004:99), explains that women's only source of land for farming is through their husbands and in the north of Ghana, women have no source of labour if the woman loses her children. This further leads to discrimination of women since it will be difficult for her to hire labour.

Connell (1995 as cited in Macmillan & Gartner 1999:948), argue that the division of labour which assigns women to work at home and men outside the home is the fundamental basis for the modern construction of gender. A woman's employment must be seen in relation to the husband's employment status. Masculinity therefore is 'constructed in reference to femininity' (ibid). Therefore in a relationship where the woman is employed and the man is not it may result in violence (ibid). Rather than lower her risk of violence, the employment of a woman may increase the risk of abuse if her husband is unemployed (ibid). Consequently, a man who loses his dominance over a wife according to (Denzin 1984, Hotaling & Sugarman 1990, as cited in Macmillan & Gartner, 1999:949), the man may use violence as a means of asserting his authority. Intimate partner violence against women is therefore is a form of patriarchal way of controlling women.

Jewkes (2002:1424) posit that education also plays a role in reducing sexual violence. Women's level of education is needed for women to make decisions about marriage and child-bearing and own assets that could make them autonomous. Women who earn good income and are economically independent and therefore they "can stand on their two feet". Furthermore, well-educated women with high socio-economic status are also victims of domestic violence. However, these are seen to be in the minority (ibid).

For equality, development and peace in any developing society, the girl-child should be given the opportunity to develop her full potential. This will enable women to be self-reliant of men. According to Tanye (2008:167), ‘male literacy rate in Ghana was 71 per cent while that of females was 46 per cent in 1998’. These account for the inability of women to realize their ‘civil, political, economic, social and cultural development’. A woman with high education will have an impact on her daughter’s level of education which will further improve the daughter’s economic productivity and social development (ibid). Lack of education of girls and women has far-reaching consequences for their ‘health, the society, population growth and environmental security’ (ibid). Some people see female education as unnecessary and waste of resources. One of the views held by a Professor of United Kingdom in Newell (as cited in Soumare, 1994 and quoted in Tanye, 2008:169), is

‘women will become familiar, boisterous, competitive with men, thus producing a type of women we devoutly pray to be spared of’.

This statement is engrained in the Ghanaian society where it is believed that a woman with a high level of education will not be marriageable, a good wife and therefore cannot prepare ‘good meals’ (ibid). It is also believed in Ghana that a ‘higher education endangers women’s moral lives’ (Anamuah-Mensah, 1995 as cited in Tanye, 2008:169). Women, therefore face difficult and insurmountable tasks of reducing violence and discrimination against them.

The violations of women’s rights are also exacerbated by the high illiteracy rate in the area. In Ghana, many women have not had the opportunity of going to school therefore are denied the chance of gaining employment to better their lives. Education ensures that the women are empowered to analyze situations and take appropriate decisions about their wellbeing. According to Jewkes (2002:1424), violence against women will be low if the woman is educated. Ackerson et al (2008, as cited in WHO, 2010) point out that differences in educational attainment between a husband and wife may result in the man using violence to gain power over the wife. In relationships within which a woman’s level of education is higher, the man may use violence to gain power over the wife. According to Ghana’s Ministry of Education, girls attending primary school during the 2010 and 2011 school year constituted 48.6 per cent of all students; at the Junior High School level, the proportion was 46.5 per cent. This indicates that girls’ education is increasing and could lead to a reduction in violence against women in future. (United States Department of States, 2012)

Additionally, lack of women’s agency puts them in a very precarious situation in Ghana. Kabeer (1999:438), points out that agency is crucial for an individual in defining his or her goals and acting upon them. In a positive sense, agency could be power to take decisions that will impact on the people and their own ‘life-choices and to pursue their own goals’. Similarly, agency can also be used to suppress the choices that people make through the use of ‘force, intimidation or threat’ (ibid).

In Ghana, women’s agency is denied given their limited participation in decision making in their sexual and reproductive lives (Antoinette, 2011:5).

Women in Ghana are expected to bear many children and to provide sexual satisfaction to their husbands when he requests it (ibid). Furthermore, women lack decision making with regards to safe sex thus exposing them to HIV/AIDS infection. Women can be raped or abused by their spouses if the women insist on the use of condoms (ibid).

In the Wa Municipality the culture of the Wala and the Dagaabas greatly influences gender inequality (Field Interview, July: 2012). The culture restricts women's active participation in decision making. Men are the custodians of the tradition. Women have to seek permission to leave the house, take decisions on anything related to her sexuality including marriage. Young girls in these ethnic groups are not consulted about their marriage. (Field Interview, July: 2012). According to the interviewees this leads to forced sex and unwanted pregnancy. Girls are unable to negotiate safe sex and the use of contraceptives. Similarly, forced marriage, in the form of widow inheritance occurs especially among the Dagaaba and Wala ethnic groups where a brother inherits his late senior brother's wife.

The interviews revealed power imbalance between men and women where the men feel entitled to rape their wife if she does not consent to sex. This form of violence is not reported to authorities because it happened within the confines of marriage where the men consider themselves to have absolute authority over the wife and that a wife has no right to refuse a husband sex anytime he demands it. Payment of a bride price by a husband to a prospective wife's parents means that the woman is considered the 'property' of the husband (US Department of State 2005a and 2005b).

Chapter 3

Global Perspectives

3.1 Violence against Women

. According to Krug et al (2002: 1985), up to 69% of women are assaulted by an intimate partner during their life time; about 20% of women and 5-10% of men reported having been sexually abused as children and between 4% and 6% of elderly people are abused in their homes'. The WHO (2000a), also reports that between 12% and 25% of women worldwide have experienced attempted or have actually been raped. The prevalence of armed conflicts in various parts of the world, political repression persecution of human rights campaigners religious conflicts, poverty and social inequality and violence against women, women in Africa are at risk of violence whatever their circumstances (Amnesty International, 2004).

Intimate partner violence or domestic violence according to Watts and Zimmerman (2002: 1233), takes various forms, including 'physical violence ranging from slaps, punches, and kicks to assault with a weapon and sexual violence involves forced sex, or forced participation in degrading sexual acts'. These acts of violence are in most cases accompanied by emotional behaviours such as prevention from seeing her family, chastisement, prevention from engaging in economic ventures and deliberate misuse of her money (ibid)

Women are sometimes forced to have sex when they did not want or are not interested. For example, in Zimbabwe, 26% of married women have ever been forced to have sex even though they were not interested. Although in some cases rape is perpetrated by a stranger, in reality, most rape cases are perpetrated by an 'intimate partner, a male family member and individuals in positions of authority' (ibid). Men sometimes may use threats of dismissal, blackmail, and offer of gifts as opposed to force to have sex with a woman (ibid).

Watts and Zimmerman (2002:1233), further argue that even though sexual assault by strangers are considered as crimes, however, when a man rapes his wife, sexual assault in schools, sex in return for paid work, and forced marriage are accepted and supported in some countries. Women are discriminated against, suppressed and oppressed because of their sex everyday throughout the world. According to Bunch (1990: 489), violence against females can be found in every society and in many cultures especially in Africa such as in the home and in the workplace in various forms including wife 'battery, incest, rape, dowry deaths, female circumcision and female sexual slavery' (ibid).

It should be noted that also women can perpetuate violence against men. According to (Straus and Gelles, 1986, cited in Fulcher & Scott 2011: 463), women are also violent in domestic situations. However, women appear to be the most victims of domestic violence because women are more likely to report to the police than men. According to Jewkes (2002:1423), women are the victims of violence because the men use violence in order to show how powerful and domineering they are over women but also one that is rooted in male

vulnerability as a result of social expectations of manhood that are not sometimes met because they are unable to provide for the upkeep of the home.

Men will always want to lord it over women to demonstrate their masculinity and any challenge to this can be looked at as threats to their authority as men. (ibid) Jewkes (2002:1423), further argues that violence against women is a means of resolving this crisis because it gives an expression of power that is otherwise denied. The man will use violence to demonstrate to the wife that he is the head of the family and has the power to ensure discipline in the home.

Violence against women will be low if the woman has high levels of empowerment. The attainment of power can be acquired from sources such as education and high income. Fulcher & Scott (2011:746), argue that the availability of resources in the society and in the family determines the power relations in that society and in the family. Women, when they have low status and financial autonomy and have to rely on their husbands for support, it is difficult to abstain from sex or negotiate use of condoms. Moreover, physical violence makes it problematic for women to protect themselves from infections (Kim & Watts, 2005:770). Education therefore, ensures both men and women confer social networks, self-confidence, and an ability to use information and resources available in society, which may also translate into wealth (ibid). Ideological conservatism of men about the status of women is more likely to result in abuse of women. Therefore, 'women who hold liberal ideas are at risk of violence. Furthermore, social support and interaction is a source of power to women that reduces the risk of violence' (ibid).

Men sometimes try to control the movements of their wives as well as their contacts with friends and relations. This situation may result in their isolation and further worsen their mental state which results in them withdrawing into themselves. Violence against women is also associated with alcohol and drunkenness. Jewkes (2002:1426), suggest that men are more likely to act violently when drunk because they think they may not be held accountable for their behaviour. Alcohol use increases the risk of intimate partner violence. The use of alcohol by some men as a result of frustration and lack of confidence increases the chances of sexual violence against their partner at the last provocation (ibid).

Similarly, most battered women according to Heise (1994:1170) is also as a result of alcohol, stress and poverty. In some societies, and cultures, according to Jewkes (2002:1426), physical violence by men against women is tolerated within certain limits; a clear violation and abuse of human rights. Violence against women is much more frequent in societies that have experienced violence in conflict situations. It is further argued that people who grow up in violent settings are more likely to be violent towards their partners. In such situations women tend to accept it as "normal" (ibid).

3.2 Violence against Women in Africa

Intimate partner violence as a serious health and human rights issue is mostly under-reported in most developing countries and in Africa in particular. Heise et al (1994:1170) posits that women will rather keep silent than report violence against them because they do not want to be blamed for having caused the violence against them or feel ashamed or due to the fact that the

offender is a close relation. Moreover, women in many cultures are brought up to accept physical and emotional discipline as part of the husband's marital 'prerogative'. To women, the injuries suffered by them as a result of patriarchal terrorism has caused serious physical and emotional problems to women may not be humiliating as the psychological trauma they suffer from men which will always haunt them throughout their lives (Johnson, 1995:284). In African culture and in many other cultures, the family as a socializing institution serves as a place where sexually differentiated roles begin (Kambarami, 2006). The girl-child is taught to accept the male as superior to the female. A patriarchal system of domination from tender age (ibid).

Enforcement of laws in Africa lacks political support which makes its problematic in its application. In 1998, for example, the parliament of Ghana passed the Criminal Code Amendment Bill banning all forms of ritualized enslavement (The Ark Foundation, (2005). However, ritualized forced labour is still practiced in Ghana (the *trokosi*). The '*trokosi*' is a system practiced in the Volta region of Ghana among the Ewes. 'It is an enslavement of young girls to atone for crimes that were supposed to have been committed by their ancestors'. According to Amoakohene, (2004:2375), these practices still go on specifically due to non-enforcement of the law

Female circumcision, a custom is practiced in varying degrees in many parts of Africa. This inhumane treatment of women has been criminalized and outlawed in many countries including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Senegal yet the practice still continues (Amnesty International, 2003 2004; Dowuona, 2005; WHO, 2000b). In Uganda, where the Succession (Amendment) Decree passed in 1972 was to recognize the rights of women to inherit from their husband and fathers and the 2003 Land Act (Amendment) Bill which was intended to provide widows protection from eviction from their matrimonial home following the death of their husbands are mostly not enforced (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

Tradition and culture pose a serious threat to women and girls' human rights. In Ethiopia for example, marriage by abduction is one of such practices. The girl is raped after she has been abducted; the family members of both the rapist and the victim meet to negotiate for the offender to marry the victim (Stormorken et al, n.d.). It is not uncommon in Africa to observe that laws are passed but people do not obey it (Human Rights Watch, 2001). These discriminatory laws against women and girls make them vulnerable to sexual violence.

In many African countries women and their children are thrown out of the home if the union breaks down regardless of the number of years the couple have lived together and the number of children they had together. Children born out of wedlock are not allowed to inherit from their father's estate while those born in wedlock can if their father dies without leaving a will (African News Agency- AFROL News, 2001). Marital rape is not considered a crime in some African countries since consent to marriage constitute unlimited consent to sexual intercourse (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Attempts to make marital rape an offence has been defeated by male members of parliament because the men are the majority in African parliaments (Amnesty International, 2006).

The culture of inheriting widows by their late husband's brother could account for the increasing spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa (Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction, 2005). Also, the payment of bride price to the family of the prospective wife has made women subservient and unbridled authority of their husbands because it reinforces the inferior status of women with customary marriages (UN, 2002).

Additionally, young girls are given away in marriage to men who are old enough to be their grandfathers to conform to tradition and to ensure that the girl is a virgin at marriage because the dowry for a virgin is higher than a non – virgin. (BBC, 2002:2) About one-third of adolescent girls in Africa have been married before the age of eighteen (UNICEF, 2012:8). The differential treatment of boys and girls within African societies is contributing to violence against women. Boys are treated and considered superior to girls therefore a woman may continue to give birth as long as she can until she gets a boy if she previously has no boy-child (Okojie, 1994:1241).

The issue of rape and defilement is problematic and a serious health concern in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is not only a violation of the sexual rights of the victim but her human rights as well. Most girls who are victims of sexual violence in Africa south of the Sahara suffer forced sexual initiation. Jewkes et al (2002:319), argue that 72 per cent of pregnant teenagers and 60 per cent of teenagers in Cape Town in South Africa who have never been pregnant experienced forced sexual initiation and girls under 15 years have suffered gang rape.

Many school girls who have suffered or experienced rape was by their teachers. The bodies of these young girls were not only violated but also their education suffered. The rape of these young girls has increased the likelihood of unsafe sexual practices during later years including having multiple sexual partners and risk of HIV infection (ibid).

3.3 Violence against Women in Ghana

As stated above, according to (Appiah and Cusack, 1999, as cited in Amoakohene , 2004:2373), one in every three women in Ghana has suffered physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner. Annual cases of violence against women rose sharply from 360 in 1999 to 3622 in 2002 (WAJU). Between January 1999 and December 2002, the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service (WAJU) recorded 5015 cases of violence against women of which 1869 were of assault/wife battering. A staggering 1072 cases of defilement and 249 cases of rape and 57 cases of harm were recorded (ibid). From January to September 2011, DOVVSU recorded 157 reports of rape, 82 were reported to have been arrested and 40 prosecutions resulting in five convictions, 126 cases yet to be investigated as at the end of the year (United States Department of State, 2011).

Despite attempts by government and civil society organizations to combat sexual violence against women, WAJU, (2003) reports that cases of spousal violence have increased throughout Ghana. Carter and Weaver, 2003, (as cited in Amoakohene , 2004:2374), argue that violence against women serves as a social control in which they remain subservient and make them more vulnerable. Robinson (1995) and quoted in Amoakohene (2004:2375) posit that tradi-

tional beliefs, customs, cultural attitudes, behaviours and practices, which often are so deeply rooted as to defy change, are the main causes of violence and human rights abuse against women.

From the research undertaken, it seems that violent practices perpetrated against women in Ghana include intimate partner violence, female circumcision, wife battering, witchcraft, widow inheritance, forced marriage, rape and defilement (Author, July:2012).

Young girls have their rights violated through female circumcision or the cutting of the clitoris. It is mostly practiced in the Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana. Witchcraft is a pseudo-religious practice in the Northern region of Ghana where women are banished for allegedly causing death or harm to a family member (ibid). According to (Appiah and Cusack, (1999), as cited in Amoakohene (2004: 2375), argue that violence against women in Ghana can be pseudo-religious, sexual, physical, socio-cultural, emotional psychological or economic.

These acts of violence result in injury, pain, lowered self-esteem, trauma, fear, depression, shame, guilt and loss of freedom. Moreover, violence against women as a human rights problem with its health implications for victims is facilitated by personal, socio-cultural and environment factors. Additionally, those who suffer intimate partner violence face problems such as life situations including low education, low income, financial dependency, poverty and resource-scarce situations (ibid).

Sexual violence is most often not reported or discussed in the open especially marital rape. A woman may suffer coerced sex by her husband but she thinks it is between herself and her husband. It is also a taboo for a woman to deny her husband sex. Denying your husband sex could be grounds for divorce (ibid).

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.1 Socio-Economic and Cultural Situations of Women in the Wa Municipality in Ghana

Women in the Wa Municipality face many challenges including illiteracy, poverty, economic dependence, outmoded culture and traditional beliefs systems and lack of power in decision making. One of the serious violations of the rights of women is dowry payment for a prospective bride. The payment of dowry has resulted in disputes between the families of the bride and the groom.

Lack of economic opportunities has further increased women's exposure to sexual violence in the municipality. The area has less economic resources therefore no investment in the area by either the state or private entrepreneurs. In an environment in which patriarchal dominance is the norm, decision making involving women is seen as usurping the power of men.

The traditional and cultural system of widow inheritance also exposes women to various forms of abuse and the violation of their sexual rights. A woman can be inherited by her late husband's brother against her wish. The system has rendered women vulnerable to rape and the infection of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The practice contributes to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa (Field interview, July, 2012).

Furthermore, the issue of widow inheritance is a violation of a woman's right to her choice of husband and who she wants to have sex with. Victims of force penetration have suffered injuries and trauma and may develop frigidity towards men in their future lives (ibid).

4.2 Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Wa Municipality

A few years ago, the people had little or no knowledge about the acts of violence meted out to women and children was a crime. However, the activities of government and non-governmental organizations have contributed immensely to change the perceptions of the people towards violence against women, children and girls. (July, 2012).

Despite the knowledge of the people about violence against women being a punishable crime, men still and continue to perpetrate such acts of violence as child molestation, wife battering, widow inheritance, rape, defilement and other serious violations of the rights of women and girls. According to the women in Chansa, men still think that they have power and authority over the woman and that whatever the head of the family decides the woman has little or no contribution either in the household and or in the society. Similarly, the organizations that were interviewed, argue that, once a woman has consented

to marriage, she has no cause to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband even if she is not in the mood to have sex. The organizations contend that sex is encompassed in marriage and that the men and even some of the women think that the dowry paid means the woman becomes the property of the man.

Violence against women in the area is informed by the system of dowry payment. As many as three to seven cows are paid for a woman's hand in marriage which is not given to woman but to the head of the family who is the man. These animals are kept for the males in the family to use as dowry for future marriage of the young men in the family. Therefore the woman remains poor. This reinforces the patriarchy which continuously serves as exploitative of women. Poverty of the woman put her in a position that exposes her to violence. Economic empowerment will give the women some degrees of power which will enable her contribute to the sustenance of the family and therefore the husband gives her the respect and dignity that has eluded her (CHRAJ, July, 2012)..

The size of a young girl in the study area is misconstrued as being matured and these young girls are married early to start bearing children who served as cheap labour on their farms. This policy of giving out young girls expose them to all forms of abuse due to the fact that they have no skills, no income generating activity, lack of sexual and reproductive knowledge and other factors that are injurious to women. These young married girls suffer sexual abuse, early marriage and pregnancy related problems and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS (CEDEP July, 2012). A girl who has developed physically is assumed to be matured therefore men who are interested in having "cheap sex" defile these young girls who eventually drop out from school and parade the streets as destitute and forced prostitutes (CHIPRONET, July, 2012). Some men who, according to the gynaecologists at the regional hospital in Wa as having low esteem and lack of confidence to propose to a woman take advantage of the young girls and either defile or rape them(July, 2012).

The evidence gathered from the study revealed that of all these statements and laws made the situation still persist. A significant number of people interviewed on the field attributed the situation to lack of political will to enforce the law. The study also revealed that many people use the name of tradition, culture and religion to perpetrate violence against innocent girls and women.

The people of the Wa Municipality in the Upper West region in Ghana agree that the practice or the act of violence against women is bad. Some also think that it is the devil that pushes them to violate the rights of women or have sex with women without their approval or even defile minors. Additionally, some of the inhabitants of the study area are aware that sexual violence is an offence that is punishable according to the laws of the country. The Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) posit that, "when women are abused sexually their dignity is abused".

Many of the educated men and women in Wa as well as men and women in Chansa village where the focus group discussions took place know that sexual violence is a violation of the sexual rights of a woman as such when a woman is not interested in sex the man or husband should not force her to have sex with her. Consequently, they agree that women must have a say in

deciding whether they are interested in having sex at a particular time or not. By contrast, some also think that women should not have a say in sexual matters since the dowry of the woman has been paid and as such the woman is the property of the man. Therefore, dowry payment contributes to the violence against women in the community (CHRAJ, July: 2012).

DOVVSU interviewee posits, 'from my observations I would conclude that poverty is one of the many causes of sexual violence against women'. The lack of economic resources makes the place unprofitable for developers to invest in the area therefore the people have fewer opportunities to earn income to take care of their children. According to a Non- governmental Organizations such as CEDEP, CHIPRONET, CHRAJ, and DOVVSU (July, 2012) operating in the area, poverty leads to violence against women who depend on the men for survival. Parents are unable to cater for their daughters therefore; they (daughters) ask and receive gifts and money from outsiders who take advantage of them to sexually violate their human rights. According to CHIPRONET an NGO in Wa, "some girls are lured into it due to poverty....., some men marry many wives and give birth to a lot of children and cannot take care of them. The children have to fend for themselves. The girls go out and they cannot get what they need at home, a man promises to give them, they give in". (July, 2012).

The Regional Commander of DOVVSU argues,

"I can say that the number one cause of this is poverty. This is because of the poverty of their parents. Their parents fail to take care of them. Accepting gifts is another cause of sexual violence especially people you do not know. It is not easy to receive gifts from people you do not know at this time of the day. Due to the fact that he wants something from you, that is why he is giving you gifts. When he gives you something, you have also to give him something in return".(July, 2012).

Lack of economic resources force parents to marry off their daughters at an early age of 12, 13, and 14 years old. These young girls who are sexually immature have their sexual rights violated because they cannot decide on who to marry, when to marry and when to have sex. They have no reproductive rights and as such they develop complications and may either have damage to their reproductive tract or even lose their lives. The young girls are physically, psychologically and mentally immature to go into marriage. Those of them who are bold reject and rebel against their parents and run from home into the streets only to experience the worse forms of sexual violence.

CHIPRONET, an NGO in the Municipality posits,

"we have a case where a girl in class six (6) and brilliant, unfortunately her parents took her out of the class to marry a Muslim man. We actually followed the case and at the chief's place, she told everybody that nobody was forcing her to marry. She wanted to marry. She wanted to marry the man from her own free will. She loves the man. On that day, the girl walked and went and sat by the man. In less than two years, the girl came back running to us and by then she was carrying a baby. She said she did not want the husband again and wanted to go back to school. She said she was forced and she did not want to disobey or disgrace her parents" CEDEP (July: 2012).

Furthermore, some women due to poverty push their daughters into early sex by demanding monies from them in order to put food on the table. For example, a twelve year old girl was told by her mother to give her money to

buy ingredients to cook. The woman said to her daughter, “you are sitting here doing nothing with yourself while your friends are out there making money with their bodies”. CEDEP (July, 2012)

Additionally, women due to their weak economic power depend on men for money to attend antenatal services during pregnancy. The pregnant women are denied the means to access antenatal service which may put them at risk due to the pregnancy. Economic power ensures some stability in the home because the man cannot push the woman around. Those women who have financial resources are able to negotiate sex and therefore have control over their sexuality. Consequently, the women who have financial resources are able to take proper care of their daughters and do not push their daughters into early marriages. CEDEP (July, :2012).

Economic empowerment of both husband and wife contributes to a better understanding of spouses and a violent free home. CEDEP, an NGO in the Municipality argues, “in situations where a woman is rich there is less risk of sexual violence. She can negotiate for safe sex or vice versa; this is what we have come across in our work”.

Lack of employment opportunities in the Municipality has created hardships in the area which has led to idleness of the youth. Consequently, the youth have taken to drug use and drinking which enables them to commit crime and violence. According to the regional police head of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service in the Upper West region, those who take drugs and alcohol violently violate the sexual and human rights of the young women of the University for Development Studies. The girls are raped and their belongings taken away. Similarly, in the villages due to lack of employment and income, the men spend the little money they make from the sale of their farm produce on drinking. They lose their senses and the result is battering of the wife at the least provocation. CEDEP (July: 2012).

4.3 Culture, Tradition and Sexual Violence

Beyond the perceptions of the people in the study area about sexual violence against women, the culture and tradition of the people is used to promote and perpetuate violence against women and girls. In a community where the people cherish their culture and tradition, a lot of the people find it difficult to do away with it. The male hegemony which is characterized by the low recognition given to women because of their gender has put them in a subordinated role and made the woman subservient in the society. Women are taught right from childhood to be submissive to men through the socializing process and to be obedient and respect for authority (Kambarami, 2006)..

Some of the women in Chansa community in the study area argue that they sometimes give in to the husband’s sexual demands when they (women) are not in the mood for sex. The men use gifts and deceit to convince them to yield to their sexual demands.

Secondly, the women posit that, their husbands sometimes rape them when they are not interested in sex. However, since the rape is by the husband,

they do not report to anyone or disclose it publicly. Furthermore, according to CHRAJ, it is common amongst the inhabitants of the study setting that sex is encompassed in marriage and therefore the woman has no right to deny her husband sex when he demands it. Ironically, those who are enlightened academically also accept the notion that a woman should not deny her husband sex. For instance, the gynaecologist at the regional hospital argues from the traditional background, that due to patriarchy and male hegemony, once a woman is married, she becomes the property of the husband. Culture therefore continues to play a serious role in the sexual violations of women.

Therefore, according to the gynaecologist at the regional hospital in Wa, “once you are a married woman, you will become the bonifide property of the man. Whatever the man does, when the woman complains about it, you are a bad woman”.

Consequently, a woman who refuses sex from the husband is considered stubborn. If the woman is not cooperating, the man can go in for another wife. Chansa man explains “if your wife denies you sex, you go to the next wife for sex” (July, 2012). A woman who has children with a man will stay in the abuse relationship to take care of her children. However, she will resist or quite if there are no children (CEDEP, 2012). Women who try to resist male domination are seen as challenging the authority of the man in a concept where it is said that a good wife should be the one that is domicile (CHRAJ, 2012).

Traditionally, according to an interviewee of CHRAJ, Traditionally sex is encompassed in marriage and therefore it is unacceptable for a wife to deny her husband sex. For example, when rape takes in a traditional home, they see it as normal. The person sees sex as a legitimate requirement that a man demands from his wife and as such, she is supposed to give in whether she is in the mood or not. So, when women resist sex from the husband, they do not see it as legitimate but see the woman as being stubborn. They see the woman as being mischievous and what does she expect in marriage. Therefore, if the wife is not cooperating, the man goes in for another wife (CEDEP, July, 2012)

Women shy away from reporting rape by the husband. Due to culture, a woman does not report rape against her by her spouse even though they often suffer this violation of their sexual rights. The issue of rape only comes up when other problems in the marriage crop up. According to some of the women in Chansa village in the Wa Municipality, sometimes they are raped by their husband. One of the women argues that,

“During a quarrel, the man can overcome you the woman and have his way in terms of sex. They sometimes deceive us with gifts or promises to have sex with us. You know as women, we are like children. With this deceit we give in to them”. Another woman posits, “we all experience it in our marriage just that we do not tell people outside the marriage circles” (FGD, Chansa July, 2012)..

Sometimes the men deny the wife food by refusing to provide for the upkeep of the house when their wives deny them sex. A woman in Chansa argues that, “When the head of the family has his eye ball on you for sex and you do not agree, it is always a problem when he wants sex at a particular time of the day or night and you are not willing, he makes the relationship a very difficult one in the house. He denies you food and money.”

However, the men sometimes engage the wives in a dialogue to have sex with the wife. Young girls are also raped by their boyfriends when they refuse to have sex with them. For instance, an NGO respondent stated,

“The boys said they want sex and there is nothing we can do. When we say no, the boy tells his friends and they will say you are a bad girl. They want sex and this is difficult to handle. Sometimes, we see children who are sent away by the parents. This is due to the fact that they cannot feed them and it is irresponsibility on the part of the parents. You see these children going to Wa to become kayayo¹ while others go to Kumasi and Accra. They face different problems such as prostitution and how to feed themselves. Some also sleep on the streets and that is what I called another form of violence. You give birth to children 12 to 15 years old and send them away as you cannot take good care of them-----“(An NGO staff Child Support Ghana). (July, 2012).

In situations where a woman’s sexual and human rights are violated, the woman opts for out of court settlement when she realizes that the offence is serious and the husband will face criminal charges. According to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ),

“there are situations where a woman comes to us to suggest that we threaten him (husband) and not punish him. We do tell her that we do not threaten but we act on the information made available. In such a situation, she says no, I do not want punishment for him but rather I want you to threaten him. They do not want to continue the case. Even in great pain, they still want to shelve their husbands. When the case is referred to DOVVSU and it turns out the case is becoming a criminal case and the man will be put behind bars, the woman pleads for out of court settlement”. This according to CHRAJ makes the fight against sexual violence problematic (July, 2012).

It emerged from the interview with an NGO (a local NGO CHIPRONET working in Wa) that,” girls are to marry early, produce many children to work on the farm. However, due to government policy that all girls must be in school, the men defile some of the girls so that when they get pregnant they drop out of school. This way they satisfy their cultural beliefs. Those who try to assist sexually abused girls end up either by raping or assaulting them. Also girls who get pregnant from either through defilement or rape are sent away from home to live with those who have sexually violated their human rights rather than deal with it as a criminal offence” (CHIPRONET; an NGO Staff, July: 2012).

Similarly, some teachers who are charged with the responsibility of training and moulding the youth for national development are seen to be encouraging those who engage in risky sexual behaviour. For instance the head of an NGO, Child Support Ghana, laments,

“ I worked with a JHS in a village. I mentioned to the headmaster that a lot of the students, who come to us for health care delivery, are pregnant. I wanted to talk to the children about the dangers of early sex. The headmaster said “why do you wear a raincoat when it is not raining?” I did not understand him. He said the use of condoms by the students was not good. I was very disappointed in him” (Field Interview, July, 2012).

Widow inheritance, one of the serious sexual violence against women is a practice which is common in the community though at a reduced occurrence

kayayo-¹Head pottering/ carrying peoples goods for money

According to the women in Chansa village some of them re-married their husband's brothers when their husbands died. They posit, "we married our husbands out of love and not force, some of us remarried our husbands' junior brothers after the death of our husbands'. Focus group discussion (FGD, July: 2012).

However, the educated few women in the area refuse to be inherited by their late husband's brother when asked to do so by their kinsmen when it is proposed. Mobile phone use has also contributed to the rejection of widow inheritance when a woman is asked to marry her late husband's brother. A widow can easily pick a phone and call a relative in a big town who will ask the widow to reject the proposal (CHRAJ, July, 2012)..

According to the gynaecologist at the Regional Hospital in Wa of the Upper West region, one of the effects of widow inheritance is the danger and complications of force penetration as a result of rape. "A woman had a longitudinal tear (a tear from the coitus) far beyond the limits". The woman was not interested in being inherited but due to culture she was inherited. Marriage has to be consummated and she suffered the consequences of that because she had sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS. Lack of agency, therefore, reduces the woman's ability to challenge patriarchal authority that has contributed to their sexual and economic exploitation. She was forced to marry her late husband's brother against her will. Failure could lead to the denial of inheritance of the husband's property by her children. (Gynaecologist, July: 2012).

Another aspect of the culture of the people which leads to sexual violence is giving away young girls to men for marriage. Girls of 12, 13 and 14 years of age are given out for marriage. According to an interview with CEDEP, an NGO operating in the area, men especially those in the rural areas find a way of flouting government policy of every child should be in school. It is part of the culture of the people of the area that girls should marry early and give birth to too many children. Male children were used as cheap labour on the farms therefore parents gave birth to too many children to serve as security at old age.

Consequently, the girls who are in school are forced into early sexual life with the young boys and men. These young girls get impregnated and drop out of school and start producing children at an early age. The education of these young girls is truncated, they drop out of school, they get married and they are sexually abused because they have no income generating activity to support themselves and their children. Some of these girls according to Child Support Ghana die through abortion some are infected with STIs and pelvic inflammation as argued by the gynaecologist. They have no reproductive rights and therefore they are unable to seek medical attention. Seeking medical attention is problematic because they have no money to access health care. Their reproductive rights are therefore violated.

Tradition and culture forbids a child disobeying his or her father, therefore, these young girls are unable to challenge their parents when they are asked to marry at that age. The girls are not allowed to make their choice of husband and the time they want to marry. Agency is an important aspect of an individual that enables him or she to take decisions that affects his or her life.

Unfortunately, these young girls in the Wa Municipality lack agency therefore they take decisions on their behalf whether that decision is in the young girl's interest or not (CHIPRONET, July, 2012).

Traditionally, the interrelationship of people in the area also makes the fight against sexual violence problematic. As stated in most literature on sexual violence, the perpetrator is most often a known person or an intimate partner. Sexual violence according to CHIPRONET is difficult to deal with. When the sexual rights of a girl or woman is violated, it is always said, "oh, we belong to the same people or the same clan therefore the offender goes unpunished. Additionally, due to culture, the girl should be protected so that she will get a husband in the future.

Defilement is also common in the community under study. Minors are defiled by both young and old men. The size of a young girl is a sign of sexual maturity and not age. According to DOVVSU, defilement cases are increasing while rape is declining in the community. Similarly, young boys are sexually abused. Some of them fall sick and are hospitalized. After undergoing tests some are found to be HIV positive.

Table 4.1
Rape and Defilement cases in Wa Municipality

Year	Rape	Defilement	Total No. Of Cases
2009	7	7	14
2010	4	7	11
2011	3	13	16
Total	14	27	41

Source: DOVVSU, Wa, 2012.

4.4 Power, Decision Making and Sexual Violence

The availability of resources in the society determines the power relations in that society. Fulcher and Scott (2011:746) Lack of resources available to women in the Wa Municipality has indeed made women prone to sexual violence and the violation of their human rights.

The available resource in Wa is land which is controlled by the men. The land is shared among the men in the family who cultivate the land. The women have no access to the land that could give them income and thereby access to education, housing and health care therefore, women are dependent on men. The women feel they have no power in determining their lives and their future and consequently have no control over their sexuality. For example, a woman argues," it is the man who makes the decisions concerning the household, For example when it comes to the number of children the family can bear, it is the man who makes the final decision. Even in terms of accessing healthcare services it is the man. We women do not have a major saying in household decision making" (July, 2012).

In an environment where polygamy is practiced, men marry more than a wife and to reproduce more children who will serve as security at old age. In doing this, the wife of the man is not consulted because she is a woman and therefore has no power to complain or disagree. The first wife is informed only when the woman is joining the husband (CEDEP, July: 2012). In some polygamous families women's sexual rights are grossly violated through infections especially with HIV/AIDS. A twenty-five year old woman who is the sixth wife of her husband is HIV positive. This woman cannot speak about this because the culture does not allow her to bring out sexual issues between a husband and the wife in the public domain. Additionally, the lack of economic power has further disadvantaged her decision making within the family (July, 2012). The decision to marry off young girls in the family is done solely by the man leaving out the mother and the daughter.

Women are subordinated, suppressed, and economically exploited which result in insecurity and keep them at home. Power differences between men and women are due to the social roles prescribed to them through generations. The lack of women empowerment in the area of knowledge and education render them powerless therefore they are unable to present a unified voice to challenge the violence against them by patriarchal ideology. Women in the study setting are educationally disadvantaged and therefore lack the capacity to challenge male domination except those with economic power (CEDEP July, 2012).

Economic empowerment can afford people with some degree of political power. The economic deprivation in the study area has therefore weakened the chances of women in challenging male superiority. Women's labour is exploited by the men as the work they do as housewives is unpaid labour. The men derive benefit from their domination of the women. It was found out from CEDEP and CHRAJ that women who have economic power experience lower risk of violence against them. Women with economic power contribute to household decisions. For instance, a woman argues "some women have the opportunity to decide especially when they happen to provide the needs of the family. If she earns an income in the government sector or self-employed, her economic power is recognized. Where the woman is not working and depends on the man, she has no say in decision making in the house" (July, 2012).

Similarly, according to CHRAJ, the risk of violence is lower in the well educated homes. Both spouses earn a regular income which enable them take care of their children. On the contrary in the rural areas where there is little or no employment opportunities, there are conflicts between spouses when it comes to financing the household budget. CHRAJ therefore argues that in the less educated homes where there is no regular income the risk of violence is very high. The only source of livelihood in the rural areas is farming on a piece of land owned by the head of the family; there is always conflict because there is little income for the family due to its size. For instance in Chansa where polygamy is practiced, the women have many children to take care of with little resources which creates problems for the children and the women.

It should be noted that husbands also face violence from their wives. But men do not report sexual violence against them. Violence against a man is known only when there are problems between a man and his spouse. It is con-

sidered an abomination for a woman to beat her husband. It emerged from the interview with CHRAJ that some women beat their husbands. When a woman beats her husband, she needs to flee. "If you the woman attacks your husband, people say you have beaten your husband. They think that it is an "abomination". When a man beats a woman, it is" normal" (CHRAJ, July: 2012)

4.5 Alcohol, Drug and Sexual Violence.

One other causes of sexual violence in the community is the use of hard drugs and alcoholism by the young men. The young men according to DOVVSU and CHRAJ take cannabis and sometimes cocaine to make them hard in order to rape their victims. It takes a man courage and determination to propose to a woman. For example, DOVVSU respondent expressed this;

“ The taking of drugs such as wee, cocaine and others can lead to sexual violence. Due to the drugs that they take, these people stand at vantage points around UDS campus, they forcefully take money and other things from the girls and rape or defile such girls” (Field Interview, July:2012).

Furthermore, women are violated when they find themselves in the arms of drunken men. For instance a woman posited, “some men abuse their wives. Some women are violated when they are found in the arms of men who are drunk and cannot control themselves when they take alcohol. When they take alcohol, they tend to be very violent in behaviour. When the woman tries to counsel them, they usually refuse with the excuse that where the power of women to make such is decisions and even counsel them. Even when some family members try to intervene he refuses and complains that they are interfering in his marriage”. Another woman argues, “when they take alcohol, they don’t think straight and cannot control themselves as their anger leads to something else. The woman becomes a ‘punching bag’ for such men” (Field interview July, 2012)..

4.6 Religion and Sexual Violence against Women

Religion is used as a way to benefit some of the men in the community who use religion to justify their own gains. For example, an interviewee of CHRAJ argues,

“ Religion plays a role in marriage in the community. Some people are adding tradition to religion for their own benefits. In Islam, as I am not a learned person in the Qur’an, I know some of the verses in the Qur’an promote human rights. When you look at people out of ignorance, people use the religion as they use tradition it in such a way it makes Islam look bad. It is due to ignorance and illiteracy; people are abusing the rights of women. In the Qur’an, there should be equity between men and women. So, I do not think Islam promotes the abuse of women but it is rather our attitude towards women. People go behind the Qur’an to say that the Qur’an allows him to marry more wives. Marrying many wives goes with a responsibility. If you cannot love them equally, take one. But because of our personal interest, we will interpret it to suit ourselves” (Field Interview July, 2012).

4.7 Social Groups that Face Sexual Violence in the Community

Sexual violence cuts across the social divide in the Wa Municipality. Married women, children, men, boys and unmarried women and girls experience sexual violence in the community. However, sexual violence is most prevalent among married women, young girls and sex workers.

Figure 4.1
Women in Chansa in focus group discussion on sexual violence



Source: Chansa village in Wa Municipality.

The women also suffer communication breakdown as a consequence of sexual denial. According to the women in Chansa, they value greetings so much therefore when a husband refuses to greet you, it creates problems for you. For instance a woman in Chansa village said,

“When he wants you and you do not agree, there are always little quarrels here and there. You the woman will know that he is angry with you as he sees you and decided not to greet you or say a word to you. When you are passing, he will be looking at you but no greetings as it used to be, in our area here, greetings are very important and part of us. Once he decided not to greet you intentionally, you know there is problem. When he sees you and you greet, he does not answer the greetings. This is due to the misunderstanding that he has with you. He wants you and you refuse his advances.”(Field Interview July, 2012).

Another woman in Chansa argues, “as for the tongue and the teeth, they usually quarrel and reunite at another time”. However, they do not suffer physical violence from their husband

Figure 4.2
Men in Chansa in focus group discussion



Source: Chansa village in Wa Municipality.

Sexual violence is pervasive among boys and their girlfriends in the community. This occurs as a consequence of cheating on the part of the other. Violence is used to punish the other for cheating on him or her. Young girls are sexually abused by both young boys and older men. In return for sexual favours they accept money and gifts from men who take advantage of them. These girls are threatened by their abusers not to disclose the violence meted out to them. The violence is only reported when there is pregnancy or complications. During the study it was also revealed that men deceive young girls to sexually abuse them. For example, a woman argues thus, ‘it is children and girls who are sexually abused. Can you imagine an elderly man will sexually abuse a small girl and gives her gifts such as toffees and tell her to go and she should not tell anyone about the sexual violence meted out to her? When such incidents are reported at the family level, they try to solve it at the family level by saying that they should keep it a secret and they know they are all the same people’ (July, 2012).

Additionally, these young girls are involved in sexual behaviours that are detrimental to their future sexual lives as a result of early sexual activity. Some of them suffer severe complications and infections and as a consequence traumatized and develop frigidity in later life. Similarly, young boys face sexual violence from older men by sexually abusing them. CHIPRONET reports that a boy was sodomized by an older man.

School children frequently have their sexual rights violated by their teachers. For example, a teacher in a primary school impregnated two primary school girls and a Junior High School student in the same school at different times. (CHIPRONET, July, 2012). It was also revealed during the study that all women face violence from men.

4.8 Poverty and Sexual Violence

One of the major problems facing women globally is the effects of poverty. Poverty makes it difficult for people to leave descent lives and this exposes them to all sorts of violence and abuse and the lack of political voice to contribute to policies and programs that will improve their lives. The majority of women are poor especially in the rural areas where there are no economic opportunities for them to exploit to help take care of their families in terms of education and health care (July,2012).

Land in the rural areas such as Chansa is controlled in trust of the family. The land is allocated in small acres which are cultivated all year round. The female members of the family have no claim to the land in a highly patriarchal society. The yearly yield of the land is not enough thereby leaving the family poor. The system keeps the women perpetually poor hence their inability to generate income from the farm produce. The woman is therefore unable to take care of herself and her children (July, 2012). This way the woman is kept under the control and influence of the man who uses economic power to sexually abuse her.

Men in the community are polygamous and therefore reproduce many children they cannot adequately take care of. The girls therefore have to take care of themselves. The girls have no education or any skills that can be used to earn a living rather than engage in prostitution.

Similarly, some mothers push their daughters into prostitution. For instance, a mother according to CHIPRONET, told her 12year old daughter thus, “you are sitting down while I need money to buy food to prepare supper”. This twelve year old girl is supposed to be in school and does no trade either and therefore does not earn income. “How then can she provide the money her mother is asking for?”, the interviewee asked. Furthermore, sexual violence of women and girls persist because some girls whose sexuality has been invaded get pregnant and the perpetrator is asked by the girl’s parents to marry her rather than punish him for either rape or defilement.

Education plays an important aspect of women empowerment which can lead to the reduction of violence against them. The knowledge acquired by an individual will empower him or her to take important decisions that will improve his or her life. It ensures that an individual can seek employment that will earn him or her some income that will enable the individual have some level of power to take decisions or contribute to household income. Education also ensures that women can take decisions about their reproductive lives (CEDEP, July, 2012). Despite the governments directives that all children especially the girl-child should be in school, some parents in the rural areas still find it expedient to educate the boy than the girl due the importance parents have for the boy than the girl. The discrimination of parents against the girl-child has worsened the plight of women in the political and social spheres in the society (ibid).

The cost of education has made it impossible for parents to educate their especially the girl-child despite the Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) of the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana. Hopefully howev-

er, the supply of free exercise books and school uniforms to school children in the deprived communities including those in the Wa Municipality will improve the situation and in the long run improve the economic and social lives of women that will liberate them from male dominance and exploitation (July, 2012).

4.9 Attitude and Sexual Violence

It was also found out that attitudinal change of the people in the area is important for the improvement of the quality of lives of women in the community. Although education on sexual violence against women and girls is being undertaken by NGOs and other agencies in the community, the attitude of the people against sexual violence is still problematic. The culture of the people is a hindrance to attitudinal change. The men in the community think that giving the woman the respect and dignity amounts to undermining the authority of the man therefore allowing women some empowerment in the area of education and economic opportunities will enable women overcome the domination of men (CHRAJ, July, 2012).

Additionally, the attitude of people in positions of authority is rendering women and girls vulnerable to sexual violence in the area. Teachers of educational institutions are perpetrators of violence against women and girls. For example, some teachers in some schools in the community sexually violate the rights of the young girls by having sex with them and in the process impregnate them. The young school girls lack the agency to challenge the sexual advances made towards them by their teachers especially those in the rural areas. Some of the girls lose their lives through abortion (Child Support Ghana, Wa July, 2012). Additionally, those who are unable to abort this unwanted pregnancy keep the pregnancy with serious medical complications including infections and inflammation of the pelvis. These young girls drop out of school have no skills to fetch them any jobs that will give them income that will enable them take care of themselves and the baby. They end up doing menial jobs which exposes them to dangers such as diseases, lack of accommodations and more serious forms of sexual abuse in the streets (Child Support Ghana, Wa, July, 2012).

Some members of the law enforcement agencies defile some of these young girls. For example, a policeman defiled a girl who got pregnant. The case was reported to the police but unfortunately, the case was never investigated. The police failed to punish the policeman but only transferred him to a different station (CHIPRONET, Wa, July, 2012).

4.10 Women's Rights Violation in Relation to Cultural and Social Status

Women have been relegated to the background due to our cultural norms and traditions in the Upper West region of Ghana. It became very clear from the study that most of the women who have been sexually abused were among the school going age. A significant majority of the people interviewed attribut-

ed this unfortunate situation to some teachers while others attributed the abuse to their peers. There was an interesting revelation which a young lady had given birth twice while in a basic school. The study revealed that early marriage had been practiced and most of the girls at school going age serve as raw materials for marriage. This unfortunate situation had left most of the girls uneducated and unemployed after such pre-marital rites (July, 2012). The culture of the people is keeping women subdued. They even find it difficult having discussions with their husbands. For example, a woman argues "It is due to cultural beliefs that men are superior to women. So, if you try to share ideas at home, it is assumed that you are challenging them (Field interview July, 2012).

Chapter 5

Findings

5.1 Traditional Cultural reasons leading to Sexual Violence against Women

Sexual violence against women is deep-rooted in cultural tradition which allows men to inherit their late brother's wife in clear violation of the right of choice of husband. The system of wife inheritance is due to the dowry payment for the woman. Once a woman's dowry is paid, she becomes the property of the husband and the family as was suggested by the UN (2002). The system has serious health implications on the woman including injuries and infections of STDs such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B as was posited by the gynaecologist at the regional hospital. (July, 2012).

5.2 Problems for Young Girls Specifically

It became clear from the study that most of the women who have been sexually abused were among the school going age. A significant number of the people interviewed attributed the unfortunate situation to some teachers while others attributed it to their peers. There was an interesting revelation which a young girl below 18 years had given birth twice while in basic school. The study revealed that early marriage had been practiced and most of the girls who are less than 18 years and are in school serve as raw materials for marriage. This unfortunate situation had left most of the girls uneducated and unemployed after such pre-marital rites. (July, 2012).

Additionally, it was revealed that young girls who get impregnated by boys or men are forced to marry these boys or men instead of putting these offenders before the court. Lack of agency has further worsened the plight of young girls and women to sexual violence against them. These young girls are so vulnerable that they cannot refuse sexual advances towards them. They succumb to the boys when they are threatened.

5.3 Marital Rape

Marital rape is still an issue in the community. Women who fall victim of this still do not find it appropriate to report or discuss it with anyone. The women in Chansa argue that their husbands use force sometimes or deceive them with gifts and promises to have sex with them when they are not in the mood. The women in the study area revealed that the men think that they (men) have the right to have sex with them anytime they so wish (Appiah & Cusack as cited in Amoakohene, 2004:2377). Evidence also suggest that women and their husbands are beginning to understand that it is better to solve their differences by peaceful means instead of resorting to violence as was the case ten to twenty years ago.

5.4 Women's Vulnerability leads to Sexual Violence

Although the study used a small number of FGDs in the Wa Municipality, the discussions revealed that the men controlled the resources as such the women have little or no power at all making them vulnerable to violence by men as posited by a CEDEP Official (July, 2012). The interviewee further stated that those women who have financial resources are able to resist violence from their husbands (Jewkes, 2002:1424)

5.5 Women's Inequality including lack of Education exacerbates Sexual Violence

Similarly, women with education are able to argue and offer suggestions to their husbands without any acrimony. According to a CHRAJ interviewee, those who are educated mostly do not fight or experience violence with their husbands from what they have observed as suggested by Fulcher & Scott (2011:746). The women in the municipality with economic power and have income especially regular income earners experience less violence from men. This suggest that their children especially the girl-child will have good education (Tanye, 2008:168).

5.6 Substance abuse and incidences of Rape

Alcohol and drug use in the area also account for the violence against women and girls. The young men in the area take alcohol and drugs to rape the young girls especially those of the University for Development Studies as was stated by an interviewee of DOVVSU (July, 2012). Men who take alcohol can be violent and may sexually abuse women (Jewkes, 2002:1426). Some married women also suffer sexual abuse from their husbands when they (men) are drunk.

5.7 Lack of Redress

Further, women who are raped by known persons or young girls who are defiled are usually denied justice at the courts because of supposed family ties with the offender. The perpetrator therefore gets away with it. The family of the offender and the victim prefer to settle the case amicably out of court and asking the offender to marry the victim. Some of the offenders run to other towns to avoid being asked to marry his victim. The teachers who sexually violate their students are also left unpunished. This also accounts for the continue abuse of the students by their teachers.

5.8 Perceptions

It was found out that attitudinal change of the people in the area is important for the improvement of the quality of lives of women in the community. Although the education on sexual violence against women and girls is being

undertaken by NGOs and other agencies in the community, the attitude of the people against sexual violence is still problematic. The culture of the people is a hindrance to attitudinal change. The people think that giving women the respect and dignity amounts to undermining the authority of the man therefore allowing women some empowerment in the area of education and economic opportunities will enable women overcome the domination of men (Field interview, July, 2012).

Additionally, the attitude of people in positions of authority is rendering women and girls vulnerable to sexual violence in the area. Teachers of educational institutions are perpetrators of violence against women and girls by having sex with the young girls and in the process impregnate them CEDEP (July, 2012) (Jewkes, 2002:319). The young school girls lack agency to challenge the sexual advances made towards them by their teachers especially those in the rural areas. Some of these girls lose their lives in an attempt to abort the pregnancy as a result of sexual abuse by their teachers. Additionally, those who are unable to abort the pregnancy keep it with serious complications including infections and inflammation of the pelvis (Gynaecologist, Wa July, 2012).

Having said this, the Non-governmental organizations operating in the municipality are playing a very important role in educating and sensitizing the people in the area to end violence against women and girls. From the field work in Chansa village in the Wa Municipality, it was revealed by the women and men that the NGOs are doing a very good job in educating them on the need to end violence in the community. According to the women, in Chansa, they no longer fight with their husbands as was in the past. However, these Non-governmental organizations face enormous challenges in their operations in the area. These challenges include lack of logistics such as vehicles, personnel, equipment and support of the police and the courts to prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence (July, 2012).

Additionally, the police also need some education since some of the personnel are offenders of sexual violence. Some personnel of the service perpetrate sexual violence against minors. A police officer defiled and impregnated a girl and he was only transferred to a different location. However, being the law enforcement authority, they fail to act against their own member, who commits this heinous crime (CHIPRONET, July, 2012).

5.9 Gender inequality and Sexual Violence

Women are subordinated, suppressed, and economically exploited which as a result of insecurity they stay at home. Power differences between men and women is due to the social roles prescribed to them through generations

The lack of women empowerment in the area of knowledge and education render them powerless therefore they are unable to challenge violence against them by patriarchal ideology (Jewkes, 2002:1424). Women in the study setting are educationally disadvantaged and therefore lack the capacity to challenge male domination (CHIPRONET, July, 2012).

Economic empowerment can afford people with some degree of political power. The economic deprivation in the study area has therefore weakened the

chances of women in challenging male superiority. The men are the ones who have the financial resources therefore they use it to control and abuse the women. Women's labour is exploited by the men as the work they do as housewives is unpaid labour. The men derive benefit from their domination of the women. It was found out from CEDEP and CHRAJ that women who have economic power experience lower risk of violence against them (Fulcher & Scott, 2011:746)

Similarly, according to CHRAJ, the risk of violence is lower in the well educated homes. Both spouses earn a regular income which enables them take care of their children (Jewkes, 2002:1424). On the contrary in the rural areas where there are less or no employment opportunities, there are conflicts between spouses when it comes to financing the household budget. CHRAJ therefore argues that in the less educated homes where there is no regular income the risk of violence is very high. The only source of livelihood in the rural areas is farming on a piece of land owned by the head of the family; there is always conflict because there is little income for the family due to its size. For instance, in Chansa where polygamy is practiced, the women have many children to take care of with little resources which creates problems for the children and the women (Field interview, July, 2012).

5.10 Poverty

One of the major causes of sexual violence in the Wa Municipality is poverty. The Municipality lacks infrastructure and investment therefore there are no employment opportunities for the people. This could be the cause of poverty in the area. Most of the people are engaged in self-employment activities to survive. Majority of the inhabitants therefore engage in subsistence farming as their source of food for the family. Women are the worse affected and therefore rely on men to provide their needs. The men therefore exploit the weaknesses of the women to violate their sexual and human rights. They deny their wives food and money when there is a slight misunderstanding between them (Field interview, July, 2012).

On the contrary, women who are economically resourced, have a lower risk of violence against them as such they are able to take care of their children in school as stated by an interviewee of CEDEP, (July, 2012).

Additionally, education plays an important aspect of women's empowerment which can lead to the reduction of violence against them. The knowledge acquired by women through formal education can lead to a substantial reduction in violence against them as revealed during the study (CEDEP, July, 2012). Furthermore, education empowerment enables an individual to take important decisions that will improve his or her life and reduce the risk of violence (Jewkes, 2002:1424). It ensures that an individual can seek employment that will earn him or her some income that will provide the individual some level of power to take decisions or contribute to household expenditure (CEDEP July, 2012).

Poverty has further made things difficult for parents to educate their daughters despite the Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) of the

Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana. Hopefully however, the supply of free exercise books and school uniforms to school children in deprived communities including those in the Wa Municipality will improve the situation and in the long term improve the economic and social lives of women that will liberate them from male dominance and exploitation (Field interview, 2012).

5.11 International and National Statements to end Violence against Women

In Ghana the law has prison terms specified for rape and defilement. For example, the law says that a person who has sexual intercourse with any other person without his or her consent amounts to rape and is liable to an imprisonment of between 5 and 25 years. Similarly, having sex with a minor with or without his or her consent is liable to imprisonment of between 5 and 7 years (DOVVSU July, 2012). However, lack of enforcement of the law on violence is a contributory factor to sexual violence of women and girls in the community. The law enforcement agencies fail to properly investigate sexual violence against women and girls in the community. Most sexual violence cases reported to the police use the mediation method to settle cases of sexual violence. Therefore, offenders of sexual violence go unpunished. The men who sexually abuse women and girls are sometimes asked or forced to marry their victims. The girls are therefore, forced to marry their offenders against their will. The girl's sexual and reproductive rights are violated due to the fact that the young boy who impregnated her has no income to take proper care of her (CHIPRONET, July 2012).

Furthermore, the law is not being enforced because of family ties in the community (Amoakohene 2004:2375). Most often the offender of sexual violence or abuse against women and girls is by either a known person or intimate partner. This makes it difficult for the prosecution of offenders. The families of both the offender and the victim often opt for out of court settlement because of blood ties. Therefore, pursuing the case in court will wreck the family ties and cause disaffection in the family (Field Study, 2012).

Chapter 6

Recommendations on How to confront Sexual Violence against Women in the Wa Community

In trying to deal with the problem of sexual violence against women in the Wa Municipality, it is important to build on the mechanisms already in place. For example, to improve the police service and DOVVSU in particular with logistics such as vehicles and skills training which they noted during the study that it is a major problem hindering their work to fight sexual violence. CHRAJ should also be strengthened in conflict resolution by offering training to the staff to resolve cases of sexual violence.

The elderly and the chiefs in the village should be given training and the power to deal with cases of sexual violence by imposing heavy fines on offenders. The traditional authority if given adequate training and provided with little incentives they will be able to deal with cases of violence and sexual violence with dispatch. Culture is very sensitive and difficult to change. Therefore, in trying to educate and sensitize the local people, organizations and government should respect the chiefs and elders of the community to achieve the desired objectives.

As well as improving policing and leadership awareness, another important area is the problem of sexual violence in schools and through the education system.

The government and the Ghana Education Service need to implement a code of conduct for all teachers. This code of conduct should have in-built mechanisms to discipline teachers including dismissal from the service and prosecution of teachers who sexually abuse school girls under their care.

Furthermore, the government and civil society organizations should organize and provide adult literacy programs in the rural areas to teach both men and women and to provide them with family life education. A project design on gender issues should be developed to offer services such as information, education and communication programs. The organizations should develop behavioural change communication materials such as posters, and flyers, sensitization workshops and seminars and the effective use of the media and at festivals to drum the message home to the people in the communities.

Additionally, women especially those in rural areas should be empowered with microcredit schemes to enable go into small scale businesses to generate income for their daily expenses. This will ensure a reduction in their over-dependence on men as a means of reducing violence against them.

Exchange and learning from other educational context could also improve the situation in rural Ghana by looking at what has successfully reduced Violence against women in other African or in other regions such as Latin America.

Reproductive rights as human rights which was advocated for by the ICPD in 1994, women in Ghana no longer need the consent of their spouse

for family planning services. Amendments were made to the Criminal Code in 1998 to criminalize harmful traditional practices such as widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and ritual servitude (trokosi). Women activism in Ghana is helping to bring about awareness of women's rights and their human rights. Women activism has to be intensified in the upper west region and to the Wa Municipality in particular.

The non-governmental organizations could also be provided with funding to widen their scope and area of operations to provide education and sensitization of the people especially those in the rural areas. The activities of some NGOs especially Action Aid Ghana and Plan Ghana are providing important resources to women in the municipality and should be built upon.

The United Nations should assist governments with funding and organize workshops and conferences to equip women with skills and capacity building to end violence against women. The UN must also find a way of compelling countries to enforce national laws to fight sexual violence. ECOWAS should increase awareness and social mobilization to end violence against women and girls. ECOWAS should demand accountability from all members to fulfil their commitments to end violence against women and girls.

Additionally, the UNFPA in collaboration with the NGOs in the Wa Municipality as well as the Federation of Women Lawyers and other women organizations in a drive to end violence against women in the municipality. Women in the municipality should be encouraged to send their girl-child to school as a first step to fighting violence against women. Furthermore, these organizations should help women in the municipality form groups to enable them access microcredit facilities to enable them go into income generating activities that will help them take care of their children's education.

Conclusion

The study sought to answer questions related to the perceptions of people, the social groups that suffer violence and why sexual violence persist in the Wa Municipality in Ghana despite the national and international interventions.

The results from the field interviews show that sexual violence is still widely perpetrated in the community despite the knowledge about sexual violence against women and girls.

Due to culture and traditions of the people, women in the community are dominated in almost all spheres of women's lives. Widow inheritance is still practiced in the Wa Municipality though at a reduced occurrence.

Marital rape is still prevalent in the community even though women especially those married do not make it public. Marital rape is not considered an offence because the concept is not part of the Ghanaian culture. Defilement of young girls between the age 12, 13, 14, and 15 years are kept secret and solved amicably within the family. It can be argued that people in the rural areas as Chansa are becoming aware that gender-based violence is an offence and that it is important to solve differences with spouses peacefully and not with violence.

The interventions of some non-governmental organizations and civil society groups and the media are educating the Ghanaian public on the effects of violence against women. Education awareness creation, counselling, investigation and prosecution of offenders, women and girls will begin to live decent lives. Women should be empowered with education which will provide the important weapon to fight violence against women. This should begin with the girl-child who will eventually be tomorrow's woman. The women in Wa Municipality who have had the opportunity to have education should be proactive in the fight against violence against women.

United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNFPA in partnership with the NGOs in the municipality try carry out outreach programs to sensitize the people and to educate them on the implications of violence against women in national development by providing funding and organizing seminars and workshops for women to help fight violence against them.

Although the study used a small FGDs as well as non-representative sample, the results provided the level of violence against women in the community. The study revealed that women who have lower socioeconomic opportunities are more likely to experience violence and sexual violence. However, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all women in the Upper West region.

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